

Minutes - Goshen Board of Zoning Appeals
Tuesday, February 28, 2023, 4:00 p.m.
Council Chambers, 111 E. Jefferson Street
Goshen, Indiana

I. The meeting was called to order with the following members present: Lee Rohn, Tom Holtzinger, Hesston Lauver, and Michael Potuck. Also present were Assistant City Planner Rossa Deegan and Assistant City Attorney James Kolbus.
Absent: Bethany Campbell

II. Approval of Minutes from 1/24/23: Lauver/Potuck 4-0

III. Filing of Zoning/Subdivision Ordinances and Official Staff Reports into Record: Rohn/Potuck 4-0

IV. Postponements/Withdrawals - None

V. Use Variance – public hearing item

23-02UV – Goshen Community Schools and Commonwealth Engineers, Inc. request a use variance to permit one illuminated freestanding sign and four non-illuminated freestanding signs up to 19' in height, 38 SF in area, and located in paved areas, in addition to an existing freestanding sign, where schools are a conditional use permitting one monument-style freestanding sign not exceeding 36 sf in area and 5' in height and located in a landscaped area, for the construction of a new entryway plaza to the outdoor athletic facilities. The subject property is generally located at 501 Lincolnway East and is zoned Residential R-1, Industrial M-1, and Commercial B-1 District.

Staff Report

Mr. Deegan explained this request is for Goshen High School, noting that schools are a conditional use in all zoning districts, and one of those conditions allows one monument and one wall sign. For that reason a use variance is required when a new sign is requested. Today's sign request is part of a larger project for the proposed Alumni Plaza, which is currently being reviewed by the City. Changes include a redesign of the entrances, with a ticketing area on the north side of the outdoor athletic facilities. New ticket buildings will be located at the east and west entrances, along with new paving, landscaping, bench seating, and five large, arched gateways with a sign. The signs are considered freestanding signs, exceeding the one allowed sign, and also exceeding the maximum 5' permitted height, and they will not be located in a landscaped area as required by the ordinance. He went on to explain the largest sign is illuminated and 38 sf in area, located at the main entrance.

Staff recommends approval of the request, noting this is a 30 acre campus, with an approximate 12 acre outdoor athletic area, and pointing out the conditional use requirements apply to all schools, regardless of size. He went on to say this project is unlikely to harm the character or value of adjacent residential properties, explaining the signs are far from property lines and the materials and design are aesthetically pleasing. He also noted for the record that the Comprehensive Plan seeks to incorporate plazas and gathering places in public facilities and this project appears to do that.

Mr. Deegan advised that no inquiries or comments were received by the Planning Office regarding this request.

Petitioner Presentation:

Andy Bearman, Commonwealth Engineers, 9604 Coldwater Road, Fort Wayne, spoke on behalf of the petitioner. He is also here with Dr. Steve Hope, Superintendent of Goshen Community Schools. He stated he agrees with Staff's findings, noting this project is for the betterment and enjoyment of the community. When questioned about the need for one illuminated sign, he explained they are trying to direct the public to the main entrance on the west side and that's the reason for the illumination.

Mr. Lauver asked if the existing parking spaces in this area will be totally eliminated.

Mr. Bearman stated that the area will function the same way and will be open 99% of the time, but it will be blocked off for events at the stadium.

Mr. Rohn asked about the bollards shown on the renderings.

Mr. Bearman stated they are removable and will only be in place for events at the stadium.

Audience Comments:

Nancy Brown, 511 E Purl Street spoke to the petition. She had multiple questions for the petitioner including the funding and cost of the project, number of signs, sign material, illumination of the sign, etc.

Mr. Holtzinger asked if Dr. Hope would like to respond to Ms. Brown's questions.

Attorney Kolbus advised Dr. Hope that the funding and cost is not relevant to the zoning decision and legally those questions do not have to be answered. Dr. Hope can answer if he wishes, but the only relevant question asked was about the need for the signs. He reiterated that the other points the audience member asked were not relevant and not legally required.

Petitioner Response:

Dr. Steve Hope, Superintendent Goshen Community Schools, responded to the audience member's questions. He stated he would be happy to have a private conversation with Ms. Brown about her questions. Regarding the signs, he explained it's a grand parkway plaza between the high school and the football field, track, and soccer fields. He went on to say this plaza will be open to the public at any time and can be used by anyone in Goshen. He agreed with Mr. Bearman's comments that it will greatly enhance the experience at all sporting events.

Mr. Rohn asked what type of lighting will be used for the sign.

Mr. Bearman commented that the lettering on the sign will be internally lit.

The public hearing was closed.

Staff Discussion:

Mr. Lauver asked if the fire department will look at this for access prior to approval.

Mr. Deegan stated that yes, this project is being review by multiple City departments.

Action:

A motion was made and seconded, Rohn/Potuck, to adopt the Staff recommendations as the findings of the Board and based on these findings, approve 23-02UV with the 5 conditions listed in the Staff Report. The motion passed unanimously by a vote of 4-0.

VI. Audience Items
None

VII. Staff Board Items
None

VIII. Adjournment: 4:14 pm

Respectfully Submitted:

/s/ Lori Lipscomb
Lori Lipscomb, Recording Secretary

Approved By:

/s/ Tom Holtzinger
Tom Holtzinger, Chair

/s/ Lee Rohn
Lee Rohn, Secretary