

GRAND JUNCTION BOARD OF APPEALS
MINUTES
May 8, 2013
12:03 PM to 12:55 PM

The regularly scheduled Board of Appeals meeting was called to order at 12:03 PM by Chairman Reggie Wall. The public hearing was held in the City Hall Auditorium.

In attendance, representing the Board of Appeals, were Reggie Wall (Chairman), Joe Carter and Rob Burnett. Steve Tolle and Bill Wade were absent.

In attendance, representing the Public Works, Utilities and Planning Department were Dave Thornton (Planning & Development Supervisor) and Senta Costello (Senior Planner). Scott Peterson (Senior Planner) was in the audience. Jamie Beard (Assistant City Attorney) was also present. The minutes were recorded by Pat Dunlap and transcribed by Leslie Ankrum.

No citizens were present.

I. ANNOUNCEMENTS, PRESENTATIONS AND/OR PRESCHEDULED VISITORS

None

II. CONSIDERATION OF MINUTES

None

III. PUBLIC HEARING ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE BOARD

Variance - Pilot Freestanding Sign

Consider a request for a Variance from the sign standards to allow for a 75' freestanding sign on 10.1 acres in a C-2 (General Commercial) zone district.

FILE #: VAR-2013-115
PETITIONER: Brad Alsup - Pilot Travel Centers
LOCATION: 2195 Highway 6 and 50
STAFF: Senta Costello

STAFF PRESENTATION

Senta Costello, Public Works, Utilities and Planning Department, presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding a request from applicants, Pilot Travel Centers, for a variance to allow a 75' freestanding sign on 10.1 acres in a C-2 (General Commercial) zone district located at 2195 Highway 6 and 50. The properties surrounding the site were a mix of Commercial Industrial, Industrial and General Commercial.

The applicant recently received approval for construction of their project. Ms. Costello indicated where the sign would be placed on her presentation. The maximum height for a sign according to the Code was 40' and the applicant had requested a 75' sign.

Ms. Costello presented numerous slides supplied by the applicant that showed what the sign would look like once it was constructed and from different locations. She stated the grade difference between the property and the overpass/interchange was not typical of most properties within the City. Most sites sat at grades consistent with the surrounding properties and rights-of-way. There was approximately a 30' grade difference between the height of their property and the top of the highway. Due to that fact, it was her opinion that it met the criteria for the variance request.

QUESTIONS

None

PETITIONER'S PRESENTATION

Brad Alsup, representative for Pilot Travel Centers, stated it was important for their business to have good sign visibility from Hwy 6 and 50 and I-70. People traveling needed to be aware that a Pilot Travel Center was ahead and they needed enough time to adequately change lanes and make a safe exit. He stated that because of the 30' grade difference, the 75' sign would be keeping with the intent of the Code. If the 30' grade difference were taken away, the sign would be 45'.

QUESTIONS

Board Member Carter asked Ms. Costello if there were other 75' signs in the area. She stated there were not. Board Member Carter asked if the sign rotated and she stated it did not. Board Member Carter asked if the sign would be illuminated all night. Mr. Alsup stated they were open 24 hours a day and the sign would be illuminated by sunlight during the day and internal illumination at night. Board Member Carter asked if there were any flashing or running text along the sign face. Mr. Alsup stated the only item that would change on the sign would be the cash price and credit price for fuel. Board Member Carter asked if the height of the Acorn gas station sign was 40'. Ms. Costello stated she believed that was the height and added that they were on the flat area of ground. They were not used as a comparison because of that fact.

Chairman Wall asked if the goal was to see the sign where it was located or to see it a distance prior. Mr. Alsup stated that if travelers could not see it from a distance, they would not know to get into an exit lane from I-70 or a turn lane from Hwy 6 and 50. The sign was pointless if seen right at the location because traffic would already have passed by. Chairman Wall asked if the variance was more for travelers on Hwy 6 and 50 or I-70. Mr. Alsup stated it was more for I-70 visibility but Hwy 6 and 50 was also a well-traveled road. More truck traffic would be on I-70, but passenger cars were 80% of their business and an important part of their business. Chairman Wall referenced photo C and stated the view was traveling east bound on I-70. Mr. Alsup stated from that photo, the sign could be seen one half mile before the exit. Chairman Wall asked if a 40' sign would be visible at that half mile point. Mr. Alsup stated it would be visible but it would be far less noticeable and distinguishable. Chairman Wall referenced photo D, which was one quarter mile before the exit, he stated that the Subway lettering

would possibly be visible on the sign. Mr. Alsup stated the entire sign would not be visible and the Subway sign would probably not be visible from that point.

Mr. Alsup stated that the sign location was determined to be the best location to get the most visibility traveling eastbound or westbound. Chairman Wall asked if the sign location were moved, would it lessen the visibility if traveling westbound. Mr. Alsup stated that was correct. It was a balancing act to make sure the sign could be seen from both directions.

Chairman Wall asked what the most important feature was of the sign: The Pilot name; McDonald's; fuel prices or Subway. Mr. Alsup stated that it depended on what the customer was looking for, but the Pilot and McDonald's signs were most important, next were fuel prices and then Subway.

Board Member Burnett asked if there would be billboard advertisements a few miles before the Pilot exit. Mr. Alsup stated that typically they did advertise if space was available but they would not build any signs if space were not available.

Chairman Wall asked why a 75' sign height was decided upon. Mr. Alsup stated the height of the sign was to overcome the grade differential between their site and the interstate. He added that most sign codes were written from the road elevation.

Board Member Carter asked Ms. Costello if there were any 75' signs in the city limits. She stated there were not. A variance had been granted for a previous site from 25' to 40' to overcome surrounding obstacles around that property.

Chairman Wall stated that he would be drawn by the Pilot and McDonald's portion of the sign if traveling and asked why the sign would need to be 75' in height. He asked why they couldn't go with a 45' tall sign. Mr. Alsup stated that if a car or truck were in between him and the sign, the sign would not be visible. He added that they always seek to obtain a sign that would be visible from the interstate location at least one half mile out. That would enable travelers the time needed to safely move into the right lane to exit.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

DISCUSSION

Board Member Carter stated he understood that every business wanted an unobstructed view of their sign, but there were no guarantees that something would not eventually obstruct the view of that sign, such as maturing trees. He asked if the City should grant variances because trees were in the way or should the City remove all trees in the way of signs. He stated he also had a difficult time with a 75' sign for Pilot because the Acorn gas station on the east side of the interstate had existed for many years with a 40' sign. He stated that a national park may be coming to the area and he wondered if a 75' sign impacted

the beauty of that area more than a 40' sign. Also, the site conditions existed when the site was purchased and they were aware of the grading issues.

Board Member Burnett stated that if there were signs prior to the exit stating the Pilot Travel Center were at a certain exit, travelers would have ample warning in time to take that exit. He also stated that if heading east on Hwy 6 and 50, the sign would be awfully high.

Chairman Wall stated he struggled with the 75' sign. When traveling east on I-70 and being one half mile out, he felt a 40' sign could easily be seen and his decision to exit as a driver would be made prior to the overpass. He thought it was asking too much to be traveling on Hwy 6 and 50 and having it necessary to see the sign from the other side of the overpass. He believed a 75' sign was too tall for the City and believed the biggest draw and most important part of the sign were the Pilot and McDonald's names, which would be visible.

MOTION: (Board Member Carter) "Mr. Chairman, on variance request VAR-2013-115, I move that the Board of Appeals approve the request to allow a 75' free standing sign with the facts and conclusions listed in the staff report."

Board Member Burnett seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion failed by a vote of 0-3.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:55 PM.