

Prince George's County Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. 566

Applicant: Norman David Birkett, Owner

Location: The subject property is located at the end of Bellefonte Place west of its intersection with Bellefonte Lane

Request: Departure from Sign Design Standards

R E S O L U T I O N

WHEREAS, the applicant is requesting a reduction in main building setback and an increase in height and area for the freestanding sign; and

WHEREAS, the advertisement of the public hearing was posted on the property in accordance with the adopted Rules of Procedure of the Prince George's County Planning Board; and

WHEREAS, the Technical Staff Report released May 24, 2000, recommends DENIAL; and

WHEREAS, after consideration of the Technical Staff Report and testimony at its regular meeting on June 1, 2000, the Prince George's County Planning Board disagreed with the staff recommendation; and

WHEREAS, the Prince George's County Planning Board decision is based on the following DETERMINATIONS:

- A. Location and Field Inspection: The subject property is located at the end of Bellefonte Place, 730 feet northeast of the intersection of Bellefonte Lane and Old Alexandria Ferry Road in Clinton. The site is currently vacant. The property lies in an industrially-zoned area just south of Andrews Air Force Base. While the area is industrially zoned (I-1 and I-4) and many industrial uses are located southwest of the subject site, several residences abut the property to the south, at the corner of Bellefonte Place and Bellefonte Lane.
- B. Request: The applicant proposes to develop the site with a consolidated storage use, a permitted use in the I-4 Zone. The applicant has received approval of a detailed site plan, DSP-99031, for a consolidated storage use. In conjunction with this development, the applicant proposes to construct a freestanding sign along the southwest property line. This sign requires several departures.
- C. Surrounding Uses: The subject property is surrounded entirely by industrially-zoned land with a mix of uses. To the north and east is vacant land zoned I-3. To the southeast are existing residential uses zoned I-3. To the southwest is primarily developed land with heavy-industrial uses including outdoor storage in the I-4 Zone. The Old Alexandria Ferry Road corridor, located approximately 800 feet further southwest of the subject site, is zoned primarily industrial and developed with industrial strip centers and freestanding industrial buildings. The majority of these structures do not exceed one story in height.

D. Design Requirements:

In the original submittal the applicant had proposed a 35-foot-tall freestanding sign of 240 square feet. The applicant has revised the request for a departure to construct a 30-foot high, 170 square-foot sign.

1. **Section 27-614(a)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance allows a freestanding sign on properties where the main building associated with the sign is located at least forty (40) feet behind the front street line.**

The site plan proposes five consolidated storage buildings and one office building with a second-story resident manager unit. The office building with a second-story resident manager unit is an accessory structure to the consolidated storage use by definition. The consolidated storage buildings are the main buildings on site, with Building AE@ being located closest to the street line. Building AE@ is located 25 feet behind the front street line. A 15-foot departure is necessary from the requirement that all main buildings on site be located a minimum of 40 feet from the street line to allow a freestanding sign.

2. **Section 27-614(b)(1) of the Zoning Ordinance specifies that the maximum height of signs in the I-4 Zone shall be 25 feet, measured from the finished grade at the base of the sign to the top of the sign.**

The proposed freestanding sign to be located along the southwest property line is 30 feet high. A departure of 5 feet is required.

3. **Section 27-614(c)(3)(B) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that in all Industrial Zones (except the I-3 Zone), the area of the freestanding sign shall be not more than one (1) square foot for each four (4) lineal feet of street frontage, to a maximum of two hundred (200) square feet for each sign.**

Based on the final plat of subdivision (VJ 188@ 5), the subject site has 330.68 linear feet of street frontage. Therefore, the maximum permitted area of a freestanding sign on this site would be 82.67 square feet ($330.68 \div 4 = 82.67$). The applicant is proposing a 170-square-foot sign. An increase in sign area of 87.33 square feet is requested.

E. Required Findings:

- (A) **Section 27-239.01(b)(9) of the Zoning Ordinance provides that in order for the Planning Board to grant the departure, it shall make the following findings:**

1. The purposes of this Subtitle will be equally well or better served by the applicant=s proposal.

In general, the purposes of the Sign Ordinance are to regulate unsightly and hazardous signs, to provide adequate identification and advertisement, to promote the general welfare of the residents of the County and to foster the appropriate use of land, buildings and structures.

The applicant requests departures from three sections of Part 12 of the Zoning Ordinance to erect this one freestanding sign. In particular, Section 27-614(a)(1) sets forth specific guidelines regarding the site layout that is to be used to determine the appropriateness of a freestanding sign. Because three of the five main buildings on site are within 40 feet of the street line of Bellefonte Place, a freestanding sign is not permitted.

Part 12 of the Zoning Ordinance would allow 520 square feet of combined building signs on site. Section 27-613 (b)(1) allows a building sign to extend up to 12 feet above the roof line or parapet wall. This would allow a building sign on the office to extend to a maximum height of 36 feet above grade and would allow a maximum of 60 square feet of sign area. The proposed office building is located within 40 feet of the right-of-way of Bellefonte Place, the front street line. Staff recognizes that Bellefonte Place is virtually a dead end street and that vehicular traffic would be limited generally to customers with prior knowledge of the location of this business. Therefore, it is appropriate that for a sign to provide adequate advertisement and identification for this site, it would need to be visible from other public rights-of-way.

The applicant has requested a departure to erect a 30-foot-tall freestanding sign along the southwest property line abutting generally vacant industrially-zoned land with the Old Alexandria Ferry Road corridor further to the southwest. The purpose of the freestanding sign at this location is to advertise this use on Alexandra Ferry Road. For the sign to be visible on Alexandra Ferry Road the applicant has requested a 87.33-square-foot departure from what would normally be allowed, if a freestanding sign was permitted. Old Alexandria Ferry Road is approximately 800 feet southwest of the subject site. This site does not have frontage on or direct vehicular access to Old Alexandria Ferry Road.

The purpose, location and size of the proposed sign does not conflict with the following purposes of the Subtitle:

- (6) To prevent the proliferation of signs that could detract from the scenic qualities of the landscape or the attractiveness of development.**
- (7) To control the location and size of signs, so as to provide for**

adequate identification and advertisement in a manner that is compatible with land uses in the Regional District.

2. The departure is the minimum necessary, given the specific circumstances of the request.

The requested departure is the minimum necessary to provide adequate identification and advertisement for the property. The applicant's proposal has been designed to attract motorists traveling along Old Alexandria Ferry Road.

In order to provide adequate advertisement and identification for this site it is necessary to provide visibility on Old Alexandria Road. The Sign Section of the Zoning Ordinance would not allow a free standing sign on this site with adequate square footage or height to be seen from Old Alexandria Ferry Road. The applicant's proposal is the minimum necessary to accomplish this objective.

3. The departure is necessary in order to alleviate circumstances which are unique to the site or prevalent in areas of the County developed prior to November 29, 1949.

In 1993, the subject site was rezoned from R-R to I-4 through the Sectional Map Amendment process. The property is currently vacant and was recently the subject of a preliminary plat to consolidate several industrial lots into this building site for purposes of constructing this consolidated storage use.

This site is not located in an area of the County that was developed prior to November 29, 1949. This property is the first on Bellefonte Place to be developed industrially. It is unique to the surrounding properties because of its location at the end of a cul-de-sac and the exceptionally elongated shape. The site is buffered around the perimeter by significant tree stands primarily on adjoining properties, essentially isolating this site from surrounding industrially used properties.

4. The departure will not impair the visual, functional or environmental quality or integrity of the site or of the surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed departure will not impair the functional and visual integrity of the surrounding neighborhood. The applicant has proposed a freestanding sign which is in keeping with the industrial nature of the surrounding community. Moreover, PGCPB Resolution 99-223, File SP-99031, Condition 2 requires that the Urban Design Section review and approve the freestanding sign prior to permits for compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. This review will ensure that the freestanding sign will not impair the functional and visual integrity of the surrounding neighborhood. The request for a freestanding sign

and the proposed increase in sign height and area is the minimum necessary for adequate identification and advertisement. Furthermore, the requested departure is needed to alleviate circumstances which are unique to this site.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that Departure from Sign Design Standards Application No. 566 is hereby APPROVED.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appeal of the Planning Board=s action must be filed with the District Council of Prince George=s County within thirty (30) days following the final notice of the Planning Board=s decision.

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This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the action taken by the Prince George's County Planning Board of The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission on the motion of Commissioner McNeill, seconded by Commissioner Boone, with Commissioners McNeill, Boone and Hewlett voting in favor of the motion, and with Commissioner Brown absent, at its regular meeting held on Thursday, June 1, 2000, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland.

Adopted by the Prince George's County Planning Board this 22nd day of June 2000.

Trudye Morgan Johnson
Executive Director

By Frances J. Guertin
Planning Board Administrator

TMJ:FJG:WC:aj