

**MEDINA TOWNSHIP
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
ORGANIZATIONAL/PUBLIC HEARING
JANUARY 20, 2016**

Acting Chairperson Ed Morel called the organizational meeting of the Medina Township Board of Zoning Commissioners to order at 7:30 p.m. Permanent Board members Morel, Blakemore, West, Stopa, and Gray were in attendance.

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

Election of Officers

Secretary Ferencz called for nominations for Chairperson.

Mr. West made a motion to nominate Ed Morel as Chairperson of the Board of Zoning Appeals for the calendar year 2016. It was second by Mr. Stopa. The nominations were closed.

ROLL CALL-West-yes, Stopa-yes, Blakemore-yes, Gray-yes, Morel-yes.

The meeting was turned over to Chair Morel. Chair Morel then called for nominations for Vice Chairperson.

Mr. West made a motion to nominate Carey Blakemore as Vice Chairperson of the Board of Zoning Appeals for the calendar year 2016. It was second by Mr. Stopa. The nominations were closed.

ROLL CALL-West-yes, Stopa-yes, Gray-yes, Morel-yes Blakemore-yes.

Set hearing dates/Confirm hearing posting

The Commission stated they would continue to meet on the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:30. Posting of the meeting would be placed on the Town Hall marquee, website and The Gazette accordingly.

The Board's October 21, 2015 meeting minutes were approved as written. The organizational meeting was closed at 7:32 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chairperson Morel called the public hearing of the Medina Township Zoning Board of Appeals to order at 7:32 p.m.

Chair Morel explained the procedures of the hearing.

Mr. Ray Carlyle (3521 Foskett Rd.) was sworn in. He stated the Trustees met on Martin Luther King Day and he was visibly upset. Chair Morel stated that the Board of Appeals

only holds public hearings on variance requests. The Board directed Mr. Carlyle to attend the Trustees meeting to voice his opinion.

Summa Health Center-3780 Medina Rd.

Secretary Ferencz read the application into the record. The applicant was Summa Health System. Address of the property requiring the variance-3780 Medina Rd. Present Zoning-BL. Previous variance requests-none.

Variance being requested-Section 605H. Ground Sign

Reason-Requesting a larger ground sign to increase visibility.

Letter attached read as follows:

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Summa Health Center at Lake Medina, I would like to formally request a variance to Section 605 H. regarding the ground sign in front of 3780 Medina Rd. I am asking to increase the sign square footage by an additional 6 sq. ft. with additional 2 ft. in height. While I recognize the need for consistency and limitations regarding ground sign, I feel that the current limitations are creating a hardship for the organization and a hazardous situation for patients and families.

- a) How does the strict application of the provision of the Resolution result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship that are inconsistent with the general purpose and intent of the Resolution.

The strict application of the provision of the Resolution has resulted in several hardships for both Summa Health System and the greater Medina/Montville communities. Due to the location of the building itself (atop a hill, removed from Rt. 18), roadside visibility of the facility is minimal thus we rely heavily on the ground sign to help patients and families find our facility. We receive regular, frustrated reports from patients and families that they did not see the ground sign until they had driven past it or they missed it all together. The sign is located on a hill (the only space available due to the land layout) thus when approaching from the east, the sign can easily be hidden by the hill. When approaching from the west, the sign is somewhat obstructed by trees on neighboring properties. The result is that patients struggle to find the driveway for the facility (the only entrance) and often end up missing the driveway or brake frequently to look for the driveway. This results in potential traffic hazards due to patients being distracted/anxious about finding the driveway, late appointments which cause backups for all patients and unnecessary delays when patients are seeking emergency care. While the intent of the Resolution is not to create chaos or hardship, I feel strongly that the limited visibility due to the size of the ground sign creates several practical difficulties, hardships and safety risks.

- b) What exceptional circumstances or conditions apply to this property that do not generally apply to others in the same district?

The Summa Lake Medina located is seated atop of a hill and tucked away from Rt. 18. While this creates a healing, comforting environment for our patients, it also creates a serious visibility problem. Most other businesses/organizations on Rt. 18 are easy to spot from Rt. 18 thus helping patrons easily find what they're looking for. Due to the lack of road visibility, Summa Lake Medina must rely on a ground sign far more than other entities. For example, approximately 1 mile past Summa Lake Medina (going westward) is Cleveland Clinic Medina General Hospital which is directly off Route 18, with no hills or obstructions to the view of the building. Patients and families can easily see Medina General Hospital from several blocks away thus they are prepared to turn into the driveway with ease. Summa Lake Medina does not have that advantage and thus patients are left struggling to find the driveway while trying to adhere to the flow of traffic.

Few businesses on Rt. 18 offer emergency services, other than Medina General Hospital and Akron General Hospital (both of which have far better road visibility and much higher EMT traffic). The Summa Lake Medina location houses a free-standing Emergency Department in which the majority of patients are transported by their families or support people versus EMT services. Due to this fact, I believe that Summa Lake Medina is at a disadvantage because the ground sign visibility is so poor. Families that are in crisis and transporting a loved one to the emergency room have often reported missing the turn to the driveway which wastes precious time during an emergency situation. I feel strongly that a larger sign, more easily spotted from Rt. 18 would help patients and families find the correct driveway on the first try. If there were other emergency departments on Rt. 18 that struggled with the same visibility issues as Summa Lake Medina, I would advocate for larger ground signs as well out of concern for public safety. To my knowledge, Summa Lake Medina is unique in this situation and deserves further consideration for a variance.

- c) Why granting the variance will not be detrimental to the public interest or to property or improvements in such district and will not materially impair the purpose of the Resolution.

Granting the variance will benefit the public interest and the residents of Medina County. The increased size of the ground sign will not be disruptive or offensive and will provide the public with a clear indication of where to turn when receiving healthcare services at Summa Lake Medina. I do not believe this variance would materially impair the purpose of the Resolution as Summa Lake Medina is quite unique in the hardships and hazards that are present when adhering to the strict application of the Resolution. On the contrary, approving the requested variance would be doing the public a service as it would recognize the true hardship related to poor visibility of a health care facility.

Molly Menton, Director of Ambulatory Services
Summa Lake Medina.

The applicant, Ms. Menton (3780 Medina Rd.) representing Summa Health Center was sworn in. She stated the new sign request was not intended to be hyperbolic or superlative in any way. Patients truly are not able to find the location. Ms. Menton stated personally she has driven past the entrance herself. She commented that if individuals are in an anxious state of mind trying to find the emergency facility it is easy to miss where to make the turn.

Chair Morel asked how many acres does the facility occupy? Ms. Denton stated she did not know the exact number but could get that information. Chair Morel asked if the ground sign was the only sign on the road, to which Ms. Menton said yes, adding there is only one entrance to the building as well. Ms. Menton continued that Summa serves a lot of the elderly population and has a lot of family medicine practices at this clinic. A car with small children needing to come to an appointment and the adult not being able to find the facility can lead one to feeling exacerbated and add to the stress of the situation. Ms. Menton stated that it really was not the intent for Summa to have a bigger sign, but to make a situation easier for all those who come to the clinic. She commented that one does not drum up more business in health care by having a bigger sign. Typically an individual knows where one is going for health before any signs are erected.

Ms. Gray stated that Rt. 18 was going to be widened. Wouldn't then this new sign have to have to be moved as a result? Ms. Menton stated possibly the sign would be affected depending on how much right of way the State takes; in which case the widening would make the current visibility even worse.

Alliss Strogin, Chair of the Zoning Commission was sworn in. She stated that Rt. 18 is proposed to be 5 lanes all the way to Medina General Hospital. Currently there are three. That means that a minimum of 12 ft. would be taken from either side of Rt. 18. The widening will significantly impact all the signage on Rt. 18. Where Summa's current sign is located there is a ravine which makes it difficult to move the sign anywhere. However when Summa bought the property they knew the building would be 2500 ft. off the road. There is a traffic light right there, and the sign is lite at night...

Mr. Blakemore asked why not just raise the ground under the sign instead of making the sign bigger? Chair Morel stated he felt just the opposite. Chair Strogin stated it was suggested to Summa to raise the ground as there really was no suitable ground placement for the sign. Mr. Blakemore stated he felt as one was coming down the hill on Foote Rd. the sign could not be seen.

Mr. West stated that one must be careful when giving verbal comments of patients who were frustrated as that was anecdotal situations. Ms. Denton confirmed there were no

packets, letters or other physical evidence about individuals frustration and difficulty in finding the building just the comments that she has heard as Summa usually does not track such information. .

Mr. Carlyle asked when Rt. 18 would be widened? Chair Morel stated it was an unknown at this time. Chair Strogin interjected that it is projected to occur in 2018-2019. Mr. Carlyle stated Summa wants to put up this sign now so the widening project should not matter. Ms. Gray stated she thought it would be cost effective that if Summa is permitted to put up a new sign, that they contact ODOT so the sign would not have to be moved again and more money spent.

Chair Strogin stated when the site plan for Summa was before the Zoning Commission, the terrain was a large obstacle. She added she told them to build up the ground where the sign was going to be located as there really wasn't a flat area for the sign to be placed.

Mr. West stated Summa was asking for a 2 ft. variance for the height and a 6.1 sq.ft. variance for the size. It appears there is ample room on the base of the sign for this increase to be accommodated without having to move the base of the sign. Ms. Menton stated they had no intention of moving the base at this point.

Mr. Stopa stated this facility has been open for approximately 5 yrs. Why now the request for the variance? Ms. Menton stated she just came on board 6 months ago and this is a new position and part of her responsibility is to look for issues like this. She added when she asked why the facility did not have a larger sign the response was the Township would not allow it. Ms. Menton stated it seemed like nobody pursued the possibility of a variance; nobody was dedicated to Lake Medina and this center to see if this was even an option. Ms. Menton commented that this is where Summa lapsed in action, and hoped by her coming on board and pursuing an appeal process, this variance request could be accommodated for the positive for the patients and families who come to the facility.

Mr. Stopa asked by making the sign bigger, was this to increase the emergency department traffic? Ms. Menton responded no, it wasn't to increase the volume coming to Summa but to help those patients and families who already come to the facility to find them easily.

Ms. Gray asked if the sign would be digital? Chair Morel stated no, it would be exactly the same sign that is there now just larger. Ms. Menton stated their sign company came out and took measurements to see the best size and height of the sign without it being a monstrosity or obnoxious but increase visibility.

Chair Morel stated the Township has worked very hard on signage especially to keep signs low and not like popsicle sticks along Rt. 18. He added he did not think one larger sign for a 50 acre site was an outlandish request but he did not want everyone to start

raising the height of their ground signs into monument sign size. Chair Morel stated he did not have a problem with the larger square footage but did not particularly like the height increase.

Mr. West stated generally he felt the same way, but due to the unique topography the height of the sign is related to basic visibility.

Ms. Menton stated she wanted to stress the request before the Board was not about competition. It is a fact that the Medina General/Cleveland Clinic has the market in the medical care business.

Chair Morel added that one's insurance company usually dictates where one can go for medical care. Chair Morel asked each Board member their opinion on the variance request. Mr. Stopa said he was fine with both the increase in square footage and height. Mr. West stated he felt the same because of the fact this is a health care facility and sometimes you do have people under high stress situations trying to get to this specific location. He added he did feel the traffic light helped significantly showing where to turn to reach the facility as well as the two State markers and arrow that take one into the right hand turn to reach the facility. He concluded that even with that said, that does not mean everyone will react to those markers and did not have a problem with either of the variance requests.

Hearing no further comments by the Board members, the Board considered the Duncan Factors:

1. Will the property yield a reasonable return or whether there is a beneficial use without the variance? The Board stated yes.
2. Is the variance substantial? The Board stated yes. A 20% increase in size and height.
3. Whether the essential character of the neighborhood would be substantially altered or adjoining property owners suffer a substantial detriment if the variance is granted? The Board stated no. Mr. West stated this point was key for him.
4. Will the granting of the variance adversely affect the delivery of governmental services? The Board stated no. Mr. West stated theoretically it might help.
5. Did the property owner purchase the property with the knowledge of the zoning restrictions? The Board stated yes.
6. Whether the problem can be solved by some other manner other than the granting of the variance? Mr. West stated given the topography he did not know another way this

problem could be resolved. There is clearly a visibility issue at this location. The board agreed.

7. Does the granting of the variance uphold the spirit and intent of the Zoning Resolution? The board stated yes.

Mr. Stopa made a motion to approve to a 6.1 sq. ft. area variance in overall size; and a 2 ft. area variance for height for a ground sign for Summa Health Center located at 3780 Medina Rd. not to exceed 88.5" x 62" x 12. (38.1 square ft. x 12 ft. in height). It was seconded by Mr. West.

ROLL CALL-Stopa-yes, West-yes, Blakemore-yes, Gray-yes, Morel-yes.

Having no further business before the Board, the hearing was officially adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kim Ferencz, Zoning Secretary



Ed Morel, Chairperson