

**SOMERSWORTH ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**SEPTEMBER 6, 2017**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Paul Maskwa, Chair, Matt Keiser, Vice Chair, Donald Routhier, Richard Brooks and Roland Dumont.

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None.

**STAFF PRESENT:** Shanna Saunders, Director of Planning and Community Development and Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary.

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

**1) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF JULY 5, 2017.**

**Motion:** Dumont moved to approve the minutes of the meeting of July 5, 2017.

Seconded by Keiser. Motion carried with a 5-0 vote.

**2) OLD BUSINESS**

A) Any old business that may come before the Board.

None.

**3) NEW BUSINESS**

A) NH Signs, on behalf of Storage Girls, LLC is seeking a variance from Section 20.D.4.a of the Zoning Ordinance for the size of the wall sign on property located at 240 Route 108, in the Commercial Industrial (CI) District, Assessor's Map 61, Lot 13, ZBA #13-2017.

Public hearing opened 7:02 pm.

**Peter March** with NH Signs represented the applicant and addressed the Board. Stated that they are requesting a variance for the size of a new wall sign. Stated that the property is in the Commercial Industrial (CI) District and read what the allowed signage is from the regulations. Stated that they are allowed 44 square feet of wall signage but that they are requesting 140 square feet. Stated that the existing freestanding sign has been permitted. Explained the new facility and stated that it is one of the biggest buildings surrounded by smaller ones. Stated that the clientele that generally use storage facilities are temporary like people that are moving or college students that are usually not familiar to the area. Stated that often there are renters that are driving rented vehicles for moving. Stated that the existing freestanding sign is at the north end of the property and the wall sign would be erected at the south end. Reviewed the variance criteria and stated that the use is not contrary to the spirit of the ordinance and read from the purpose and goals of the Sign Ordinance. Stated goals of the Sign Ordinance are to allowed signs that are compatible with the area and are clear and readable. Stated that the existing freestanding signs is 80 square feet in size and is at one end of the property so visibility is limited. Stated that the ordinance allows 44 square feet of signage, which would be hard to see when approaching the property. Stated that it would only allow for 10 to 12 inch letters with a small reaction time for vehicles. Showed a rendering of the

building with the sign as it is allowed by ordinance and a rendering with the sign at 140 square feet. Stated that the proposed sign is more visible for traffic heading north. Stated that it is a reasonable size based on the size of the building. Stated that the code on signs is not to limit businesses but to help them. Stated that the spirit of the ordinance is met and read from the regulations. Stated that the property is unusual as there are limited windows and it is a large building surrounded by smaller ones that have larger signs. Stated that this property has long road frontage and two curb cuts. Stated that they are proposing effective, modest, well-proportioned signage. Stated that allowing this sized sign will have no harm on the public. Stated that granting this will do substantial justice as the letters would be unreasonable small if they keep it to what is allowed. Stated that the sign will not diminish surrounding property values as it will be an improvement to the area as a whole. Stated that adjacent to this, many local businesses have more and larger signs. Stated that this will be the only sign on the building and will have no negative effects on surrounding property values. Stated that not granting this would result in an unnecessary hardship as this property is clearly unique in the area and there are special conditions making it different from others in the area. Stated that the building is larger than others in the area and the clientele that will use the facility are generally new and unfamiliar to the area. Stated that the existing freestanding sign is on the other side of the property. Stated that it will not serve the purpose of the ordinance to deny the sign and there would be no benefit to the public to deny it.

Routhier stated that the application shows that some letters are two feet tall and some are three feet tall and asked why three feet. Asked how large the letters are at Interstate Glass.

**Dan Hutchins** with NH Signs addressed the Board and stated that the letters that are three feet are the most important part of the sign. Stated that the word "storage" is larger because that is what people are looking for.

Routhier asked if the signs across the street at Seacoast Orthopedics are smaller.

Hutchins stated that the total combination of that sign is larger.

Routhier asked if the curb cut by the mobile home park is an entrance or exit.

Hutchins stated that it is an exit.

Maskwa asked if the sign letters will be lit.

March replied yes, during the evening.

Maskwa stated that he sees that there is a tree between the existing freestanding sign and the building and asked who owns that tree.

March stated that he assumes the storage facility owns the tree.

Maskwa suggested that a solution would be to move the tree or the existing sign.

March stated that he doesn't know how that tree fits in with the landscaping plan.

**Public hearing closed 7:16 pm.**

Keiser stated that the Board is charged with determining if this proposal meets the purpose of the Zoning Ordinance. Stated that he feels that the sign fits in and doesn't look too big and doesn't cause an eyesore. Stated that there is a purpose to the size calculations in the ordinance but asked if the Zoning Ordinance creates a hardship by requiring a sign that is too small. Stated that he doesn't know of the history regarding the sizes of the other business' signs.

Maskwa stated that the Board has talked about the signage for a number of businesses in this area and that he feels that they had different issues, like roof signs.

Saunders stated that there are a lot of grandfathered signs in this area that have been resurfaced overtime.

Routhier stated that this Board recently granted sign variances for Staples and Cumberland Farms. Stated that this property is unique because the building is close to the road and large. Stated that this side of the building faces a private road for the mobile home park. Stated that he feels that this sign is tastefully done and is in keeping with the signage in the area. Stated that he is in favor of this proposal.

Dumont stated that the size that is allowed is too small and could create a hazard. Stated that he supports the request.

Maskwa stated that there are two other storage facilities near here and they may want larger signs if the Board allows this. Stated that he doesn't want to show favoritism to one facility.

Brooks stated that he feels the existing sign is hard to see and that the tree could be taken down.

Dumont stated that each request stands on its own.

Keiser concurred and asked if this proposal meets the criteria and why.

Keiser stated that regarding the criteria, he feels that property values won't decrease and that it is not tacky. Stated that the sign is respectful and fits in with the building and is not too large. Stated that he doesn't think it would be contrary to the public interest. Stated that regarding the hardship criteria, the building is so big and has a long frontage so driving north it is hard to see the freestanding sign. Stated that it is unique because there is a long frontage and that the allowed signage won't serve any purpose because it is too small.

Routhier stated that they have a large building that is close to the road and they are being penalized on signage because if the building was set farther back they would be allowed more signage. Stated that this building looks different from others in the area and makes it unique.

Keiser stated that having appropriate signage fulfills the substantial justice criteria. Stated that regarding the spirit of the ordinance, signage is useful and allows people to recognize the building and operate their vehicle safely.

Routhier stated that it is not larger than other signs in the area.

**Motion made by Keiser:** After review of the application, the file and all the information presented to the Board, I feel that all five criteria have been satisfied and move that the request of NH Signs, on behalf of Storage Girls, LLC for a variance from Section 20.D.4.a of the Zoning Ordinance for the size of the wall sign be **GRANTED WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITION:**

1. The sign shall be no more than 140 square feet in size.

Seconded by Routhier. Motion carried with a 4-1 vote with Maskwa opposed.

B) Any other new business that may come before the Board.

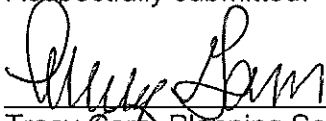
None.

**Motion:** Dumont moved to adjourn the meeting.

Seconded by Routhier. Motion carried with a 5-0 vote.

Meeting adjourned at 7:31 pm.

Respectfully submitted:



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Tracy Gora, Planning Secretary  
Somersworth Zoning Board of Adjustment