

**MINUTES**  
**COLUMBIA CITY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**  
**REGULAR MEETING**  
**TUESDAY, JUNE 4, 2019**  
**7:00 P.M.**

**WHITLEY COUNTY GOVERNMENT CENTER**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Dennis Warnick, Chairman  
Dwayne Knott, Vice Chairman  
Cathy Gardner  
Jon Kissinger (entered just after 7:00 P.M.)  
Anthony Romano

**STAFF**

Nathan Bilger  
Amanda Thompson

**ATTORNEY**

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

None

Dawn Boyd

**VISITORS**

Three of five visitors signed the guest list at the June 4, 2019 Columbia City Board of Zoning Appeals meeting. A guest list is included with the minutes of this meeting.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Warnick called the meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

**ROLL CALL**

Ms. Thompson read the roll call with members present and absent listed above.

**CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE MAY 7, 2019, REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

The May 7, 2019, meeting minutes were not yet available. Mr. Warnick stated consideration of the minutes would be continued to the next meeting agenda.

**ADMINISTRATION OF THE OATH TO WITNESSES**

Three guests were sworn in by Ms. Boyd during the meeting.

**OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. 19-C-VAR-4**

Columbia City United Methodist Church requested a Variance of the sign code in order to allow a 12' ground sign with an electronic message center at 605 Forest Parkway, Columbia City. Mr. Bilger summarized the Staff Report and described that the proposed sign would replace the existing sign. Mr. Bilger explained that because the church property is zoned residential, they would be limited to a 12' tall sign, no greater than 50 square feet per side, and illuminated by constant light. He stated that the proposed sign is 12' tall but 102.33 square feet per side, including a 66 square foot electronic message center; thus, the proposal requires consideration for two variances. Mr. Bilger added that the surrounding properties are zoned commercial and would permit EMC signs, so having one at this location would not be out of character for the area.

Mr. Knott recalled the sign for Parkview had needed special approval from INDOT because of its proximity to the highway. He wondered if this sign needed the same approval. Ms. Thompson replied that the distance between the highway and the sign was adequate and would not require consideration from INDOT. Ms. Gardner questioned whether or not the Board could grant approval for an EMC when §11.10(A)(7)(h) strictly prohibits EMCs in residential districts. Mr. Bilger said the Board can consider requests for variances regarding development standards but not land use; a sign is not related to land use. He added that an approval would need to specify unique criteria in the findings of fact. Ms. Gardner asked if the Board had previously approved any EMCs in a residential district. Mr. Bilger could only recall EMCs downtown in commercial districts, signs located directly adjacent to residential districts. Mr. Warnick said this property was given to the church by the Gates', and he felt Mr. Gates had specified that the woods to the east and south never be developed. He said Mr. Gates had said he would not allow direct access to US 30. Based on those thoughts, Mr. Warnick considered whether or not Mr. Gates would be in favor of an EMC on this property. He wondered if there were any relevant notes in the development files.

Mr. Warnick invited the petitioner to speak. Carl Siler was present on behalf of the church. He stated that he was on the church's original building committee. He confirmed that the property was partially purchased, partially donated, from the Gates family and that there were restrictions against developing the east and south woods. He did not recall there being any other restrictions. Mr. Siler said a hill to the west and the woods to the east both block visibility of the current sign. He said the church is seeking a sign that is eye-catching, colorful, and contemporary, and they found that EMCs are becoming very common. He added that they also found EMCs more economical than standard signs. Mr. Knott asked if the church planned any other development for the property. Mr. Siler said very long-term, they have considered adding a sanctuary on the north side of the church. The Board discussed the narrow visibility of the current sign. Mr. Siler described that the proposed sign would display upcoming events. He said he had spoken with INDOT and obtained their regulations on the transition rate for EMCs, and they had no issues with the proposal.

Jake Weber, Bright Signs Marketing, was also present and told the Board he felt strict application of the Code would result in a practical difficulty. He said that because this property is between commercially zoned properties, the nature of the area is commercial,

despite this property having residential zoning. He added that because the sign faces US 30, it needs to be a larger sign in order to be effective. Mr. Weber asked the Board to consider the content of the sign and did not feel the sign would have an adverse effect on the area.

There being no further comments, Mr. Warnick closed the public portion of the meeting for Board discussion. Mr. Romano made a motion to approve 19-C-VAR-4. Mr. Knott gave the second. The Board voted 3-2, with Ms. Gardner and Mr. Warnick in opposition. Ms. Gardner stated for the record that she felt the sign would be visually appealing and beneficial to the church, but she felt she could not vote in support of an item specifically prohibited by the Ordinance.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further discussion, Ms. Gardner made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Knott gave the second, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 P.M.

### **GUEST LIST**

1. Aaron Keebler ----- 6004 Dichotomy Court, Fort Wayne
2. Jake Weber ----- 7719 Butterstone Court, Fort Wayne
3. Carl Siler ----- 310 N. Oak Street, Columbia City