

GROVE CITY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

MEETING MINUTES

November 24, 2025

The regular meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeals was called to order by Chair Holinga at 5:30p.m., at the Grove City Municipal Building, 4035 Broadway.

- 1) Roll was called. The following members were present:

George Holinga

Tony Haughn

John Brant

Staff Present: Michael P. Boso, Chief Building and Zoning Official, Laura Scott, Planning and Zoning Manager/Secretary to the BZA, Anthony Severyn, Office of the Law Director.

Also Present: Joe Woodrum, Ken Flaute and David Flannigan representing the American Legion Paschall Post 164.

- 2) Motion by Chair Holinga to approve the minutes from the October 27 meeting as written. Second by Mr. Brant.

VOTE: Brant – YES; Holinga – YES; Haughn - YES; **APPROVED.**

All representatives addressing the board were sworn in.

- 3) Hear the appeal of Kenneth Flaute representing American Legion Paschall Post 164, 3363 McDowell Rd., Parcel #040-0-005964, for the following variances;

1. Section 1145.06 c: to replace a non-conforming sign with a prohibited electronic changeable copy type sign.
2. Section 1145.16 (e) (2): to allow a prohibited sign and associated landscaped area to encroach the 10' setback along McDowell Rd. by approximately 1' for the sign and 3' for the landscaped bed.

Ken Flaute stated the following. We plan to use the electronic sign to announce upcoming events such as blood drives and veteran's day events. It will also be used to communicate important information about resources available to the veteran community during emergencies, such as the recent government shut down. The post would be yet another source for the general public like the fire stations. It would not distract from the small town feel and charm of Grove City. We feel using temporary signs and banners would degrade and detract from the charm. Other means is needed.

As for other methods of communicating our message, we currently have a website and Facebook page but many of our older members, as well as the younger members, do not use these types of social media. He said because they are a veteran's organization, they could be grouped with fire stations. The approval would not extend to general businesses for selling products. In closing he stated a lot of things have changed in 30 years including this new technology. He felt the other points were well covered in the staff report.

Chair Holinga stated he wanted to work out a solution but needed to stay within the rules. He agrees the sign is in poor repair. One of his issues is how they came to own the sign without getting any approval. Joe Woodrum said a donor said I will buy this sign for you but I am going to do it right now ok? And we said yes considering the expense of the sign. Materials from Stewart Sign indicate the sign sold for \$20,000. Chair Holinga asked if they had much communication with the city or did anyone review the building code before purchasing. Joe Woodrum said no. We just knew we needed a new sign and all we would have to do is apply for a permit. Our sign is old and paint and the letters won't stay. Putting events in paper or magazine does not work as we do not know that far in advance when Congressman Carey is coming.

John Brant wanted noted in the record he is a Legion member, not this post. He asked Mrs. Scott if she sent out letters to adjoining property owners. She said yes but received no responses. He asked the group if they read the 8 recommendations listed in the staff report that are currently available to them for advertising. Some banners and signs are permitted by code just for non-profits/semi-public organizations only. Other options are available from the city and other community organizations for communicating events. They said yes, but they acquiesced to all of them. If they can use their sign there will be no flashing, scrolling or rolling it will just have messages on it.

David Flannagan said his parents don't have Facebook. We have tons of older members who do not know what's going on. A lot of the community just drives by our sign and doesn't know the legion is there. They don't want anything flashy. They have an older commander who doesn't need to walk out there to do the sign. They are trying to pull in younger members.

Chair Holinga showed the group the changeable copy sign they use at the Grove City First Baptist Church and spoke of the banners they use for special events like the car show and he asked if the Legion could simply update their sign. He said he is 78 and he thinks it is someone older than he who changes the sign at his church. He asked if they could exchange the sign for something compliant or have the sign modified to change the electronic board to something static. The group said they already tried that and the answer is no. It's all one piece. The bottom part is an electronic pixel board and the top is plexiglass.

John Brant wondered what the reason was for the prohibition of the sign and could we make some accommodation by putting restrictions on having the sign change only at night. Mr. Boso stated the reason is because of distraction to motorists and intrusion on residential homes. He spoke of his experience living in Creekside across from the

firehouse on Buckeye Parkway. He doesn't like having an electronic sign across from his home because it reflects on his house and -his neighbor's house across the street. The sign is on all night. It's a lot. But it's there now and that's the way it is. Do I see these things causing a big problem? No, as long as the sign is not in the right-of-way and there is no residential area nearby. We could possibly allow it with stipulations that would say if the Legion vacated the property, the sign would be removed or if the Legion shares the building with a new tenant, the new tenant could not use the sign. The proposed sign will be somewhat smaller in area at 35sf and shorter in height, with the proposed landscaping. When looking at the location, there is a disadvantage to the Legion because the building sits way back off the road and you can't see it from the entrance on McDowell Rd. It sits far enough back so it will not impact traffic on Stringtown Rd.

Discussion amongst the board and Legal Counsel continued. Would we be opening a Pandoras Box? What if a Marijuana dispensary wanted one too? I suppose we could limit it to only non-profits, a school, a church. Anthony Severyn asked whether the question was, essentially, if you set a decision here, is it precedent setting that would be relied on in the future? The short answer is no, because every application that comes before the board needs to be adjudicated on its own merits. However, as this discussion has shown, there are times when you look at a comparable decision and say this is at least persuasive. Or, here are the reasons these businesses or these non-profits should be treated similarly or differently. So, everything is case by case, but there are some consistencies that the board should attempt to maintain.

The Legion group said the sign is very smart and all the info is set up ahead of time. Ken Flaute said they can plant the boxwoods and so the flower bed. That is no problem. The group seemed to agree the sign at the Jackson Township Firehouse 202 station on Hoover was pleasing to look at. Something like it would be okay.

Mr. Boso suggested if the applicant wanted to table tonight that would give staff time to come up with conditions or a proposal that addressed timing and detail on operation of the sign that could possibly be acceptable to the board. Joe Woodrum preferred the board voted tonight because he had many upset veterans at the post. And if you turn it down tonight, we can come back to city council and talk to them about getting the ordinance changed to get it approved the way we want it approved.

John Brant asked again, would you have a problem if we adopted a provision that said you can only change the sign one time at night? Joe Woodrum said yes he would, because there are times, we want one, two or three messages to come up. We would not be flashing those messages up or running them across the screen like a ticker. Then Mr. Brant said he might not have a problem voting on something like that.

Anthony Severyn clarified for the applicant who stated they believe they have a right to go to council if the board of zoning appeals were to deny the variance request. He said it is the law director's opinion that is incorrect. He read for the record, Section 1133.07 Titled Appeal of Board Decisions. The first sentence states, if the board zoning appeals grants a request for variance, the applicant and the aggrieved person or any elected official of city

council may appeal such decision of the board to council. The opinion of the law director is that by limiting this appeal to only applications that were granted, any application that is outright denied is not going to be accepted by council as an appeal and, instead, has appeal rights under code chapter 2506 of the Ohio Revised Code. The board's decision would be final on a denial. Joe Woodrum said then that means we have no right of appeal. Anthony Severyn said if the board denies the variance request, you have the right to proceed with an administrative appeal to the local court or the court of common pleas under Chapter 2506.

Mr. Boso said he jotted down some items he feels should be addressed as conditions. The signs at the firehouse do change but only change every so often. I think we can work something out to present to the board. Staff would need some time to pull those stipulations together. Tabling until the December meeting would allow us to do that. Joe Woodrum said he thought we already agreed to the stipulations.

Chair Holinga said he wanted to work with them and suggested they consider tabling the application so staff can come up with the proper language. If he had to vote now, it would be a no. Mr. Haughn agreed he thought a compromise could be reached but wanted something cleaner and detailed to vote on.

David Flannigan asked the matter be tabled until the next meeting. He asked staff to share the recommendations when available. He said he appreciated what the board is trying to do. We really want to reach the young veterans.

Motion by Chair Holinga to table the application until December 22, 2025. Second by Mr. Haughn.

VOTE: Brant – YES; Holinga – YES; Haughn - YES; **APPROVED.**

There being no new business, Chair Holinga adjourned the meeting at 6:28pm.

Adjournment.

Approved
George J. Holinga 12/22/25
Chairman Grove City BZA