

CITY OF WASHINGTON

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

301 Walnut St. · Washington, IL 61571

Ph. 309-444-1135 · Fax 309-444-9779

<http://www.washington-illinois.org>

joliphant@ci.washington.il.us

MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Manier and City Council
FROM: Jon R. Oliphant, AICP, Planning & Development Director
SUBJECT: First Reading Ordinance – Sleep Inn Sign Height Variance
DATE: June 9, 2017

Gary Matthews from the Sleep Inn has requested a variance to allow a new ground sign to be 35' in height, which is 10' higher than allowed in the C-2 (General Retail) zoning district. It is proposed to be located near the northwest corner of the hotel property. Because this is a sign height variance request, the City Council is granted final voting authority following a public hearing and recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Commission. Please note that this is a change from the original request for a 52' sign.

The property is 1.46 acres and has about 507 feet of frontage adjacent to both N. Cummings Lane and W. Cruger Road. Mr. Matthews has indicated in his application that the increased height would give the hotel better visibility from US 24 and allow travelers to be aware of their special rates. The hotel currently has a ground sign near the southwest corner of the property and a wall sign on their tower structure, which has a height of approximately 59 feet. Because this property has between 501-1,000 feet adjacent to a public street, it can have up to three ground signs.

It is hard to justify that a hardship exists for the granting of this variance when the hotel already has a sign that extends considerably higher than the proposed ground sign. Staff has visited the site and reviewed the submitted PhotoShop renderings of the proposed sign at 25' (which meets code) and 35' (which does not—see both enclosed) to gauge the visibility of the existing wall sign and the proposed sign from afar. The new sign would be approximately 175 feet closer to US 24 than the wall sign. But at 24 feet lower than the wall sign, there does not appear to be much advantage gained by placing this sign at the desired corner location. The height at 35 feet is clearly more desirable than the original request of 52 feet.

Additionally, it is not clear what impact having a taller ground sign would have on attracting potential customers who do not already have a hotel reservation. Mr. Matthews has indicated that this would assist in attracting possible customers from the Bypass to help with meeting the necessary break-even financials. Finally, such a request could lead to other significant sign height variance requests and staff would be concerned about how this would impact the visual appeal throughout the city. While the success of the hotel is important to the City, staff recommends denial of the variance request.

The Planning and Zoning Commission held a public hearing on the 52' ground sign variance request at its meeting on May 3 and had a split 3-3 vote. The approved minutes from that meeting are attached. This is scheduled as a first reading ordinance at the June 12 City Council meeting and a second reading on June 19.

Enclosures

ORDINANCE NO. _____

(Adoption of this ordinance would grant a height variance of 10 feet for a ground sign for the Sleep Inn located at 1101 N. Cummings Lane.)

AN ORDINANCE GRANTING A VARIANCE FROM THE TERMS OF THE ZONING CODE OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON, TAZEWELL COUNTY, ILLINOIS, TO THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 1101 N. CUMMINGS LANE TO ALLOW A VARIANCE OF THE GROUND SIGN HEIGHT

WHEREAS, Gary Matthews of GEM Washington Group, LLC, has petitioned the City Council for a variation from the literal terms of the Zoning Code of the City of Washington for the construction of a ground sign of thirty-five feet (35') in height on his property located at 1101 N. Cummings Lane in the City of Washington, which will exceed the permitted height of a ground sign by ten feet (10'); and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Commission did on May 3, 2017, hold a public hearing for the purpose of hearing testimony regarding the granting of the variation to the property located at 1101 N. Cummings Lane in the City of Washington, pursuant to property notice; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Zoning Commission had a split 3-3 vote in recommending the granting of a variance to the City Council and directed city staff to prepare an ordinance; and

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WASHINGTON, TAZEWELL COUNTY, ILLINOIS, does make the following specific findings of fact:

Section 1. The Petitioner, Gary Matthews of GEM Washington Group, LLC, is the owner of the property located at 1101 N. Cummings Lane in the City of Washington, Tazewell County, Illinois, which is more particularly described as follows:

Legal Description: SEC 15 T26N R3W MALLARD CROSSING COMMERCIAL PARK LOT 1 NW 1/4

PIN: 02-02-15-101-038

Section 2. That the findings and recommendations of the Planning and Zoning Commission are accepted and the findings of fact made by the Planning and Zoning Commission are made a part of this ordinance.

Section 3. That Section 154.150 (B)(4)(b) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Washington, provides, in part, that no ground sign in a C-2 (General Retail) zoning district shall exceed twenty-five feet (25') in height.

Section 4. That the proposed construction of a ground sign thirty-five feet (35') in height would exceed the maximum of twenty-five feet (25') in height allowed by ten feet (10').

Section 5. That the real estate described herein consists of approximately 1.46 acres.

Section 6. That the granting of the variance will not alter the essential character of the locality within which the property is located.

Section 7. The facts show there are practical difficulties which would result in a particular hardship if a variation were not granted.

PASSED AND APPROVED in due form of law at a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Washington, Tazewell County, Illinois, on the _____ day of _____ 2017.

Ayes: _____

Nays: _____

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk



25' pylon sign

