

The Richland Township Zoning Hearing Board met on August 10, 2023, at 6:30 p.m., as per the request of Mark Rychak, representative of Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, 1000 Scalp Ave. Johnstown, PA 15904, who requested a variance from Richland Township Ordinance 240-114B.(2)(One freestanding business sign or identification sign not to exceed 50 square feet for any one business) to install a second sign on the church property. This hearing was conducted in the Richland Township meeting room, 322 Schoolhouse Road, Johnstown, PA 15904.

Present:

Bill Patrick

PJ McGowan

Pat Wess

Rodney Kniss

David Strushensky

Eric Hochfeld, Solicitor

Tiffany Shomo, Secretary

Absent:

Mark Rychak

Attorney Hochfeld began the hearing by listing exhibits. Board Exhibit #1 was the appeal application with attachments. Board Exhibit #2 was the Richland Township Zoning Ordinance, by reference, and Board Exhibit #3 was the posting of the municipal building, the property involved, advertising in the Tribune-Democrat and notification of this hearing to adjoining property owners.

Court stenographer, Lori Behe, swore in the following individual(s):

1. Mark Rychak, acting President of Church Council

Mr. Rychak stated that for special monthly events, the church uses an apex sign. The church has been fundraising to get a new message board sign. When the property committee decided to move forward with that project, they found that the current sign could not be retrofitted for the old sign. The old sign is ten (10) years old. The thought was to remove the sign without damaging it and reinstall it in the rear of the church. The church feels there is a lot of traffic on Luray Ave so this would help with church visibility. It will be the same sign that was on Scalp Avenue. It is a 2-sided sign but once moved, the back would be covered and be 1-sided. It would be installed at an angle so it would only be visible from Luray Avenue. The sign will meet setback requirements. The sign will be internally lit with power from the church. There will be no site distance impairment from Frances Street. It would be located at the base of their detention pond. The sign height is a little over 10'. The detention pond is 40' high. From Scalp Avenue, the sign would not be visible. There are multiple entrances from Frances St., including a gravel drive

by the detention pond. Mr. Rychak explained that it is a very busy church with a lot of people coming to the church daily. He believes this could relieve some traffic from Scalp Ave. There currently isn't any real identification at the back of the church.

The sign was originally purchased at a cost of \$30,000. It is custom made of aluminum. If they are unable to reuse the sign, it would go to scrap. There is no way to retrofit the sign. It was built to be an identification sign.

Mr. Rychak stated that the acreage of the church property is between 3-4 acres.

As for timeline, the new sign was permitted a few months ago. The contractor started foundations this week. The new sign will be installed by Labor Day. They would like to put both signs up at the same time. The average person won't notice a big difference. The new sign has 3 crosses at the top to match the church symbol and is 10.6' high by 5.6' wide.

The board had a discussion on square footage of sign allowance because one sign is allowed up to 50 square feet. The sign was permitted prior. Mr. Rychak could not recall if a variance was granted at that time.

Mr. Rychak requested to amend the request to include an additional request for eight (8) additional square feet.

There were no township comments.

The board has no further questions.

Mr. Wess motioned to grant a variance for the installation of a second sign on the property as noted on the application. Seconded by Mr. McGowan. All in favor.

Mr. Wess motioned to grant a variance for the sign to exceed the 50 square foot allowable size dimension by an additional 8 square feet. Seconded by Mr. McGowan. All in favor.

At 6:58 pm, Mr. Kniss motioned to adjourn the hearing. Seconded by Mr. Strushensky. All in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

T. Shomo

Tiffany Shomo, secretary