

**MINUTES
CITY OF SUWANEE, GEORGIA
ZONING APPEALS BOARD MEETING
August 17, 2021**

PLANNING AND ZONING APPEALS BOARD MEMBERS: Present: Ray Brown, Donald Lee, David Sullivan, and Paul Altnauer. Staff members present: Alyssa Durden and MaryAnn Jackson.

CALL TO ORDER

David Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Ray Brown moved to approve the agenda as presented, second by Donald Lee. Motion carried 4-0.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Donald Lee moved to approve the June 15, 2021 minutes, second by Ray Brown. Motion carried 4-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

V-2021- 009 – Owner: S & W Real Estate Investments, LLC. Applicant: Seaside Oyster Bar. The applicant requests a variance from Section 1612.C.3.b of the City of Suwanee Zoning Ordinance to allow for an additional wall sign. The site contains approximately 1.36 acres in Land Lot 212 of the 7th District and is located at 3890 Lawrenceville Suwanee Road.

Alyssa Durden presented the staff report as follows: The applicant seeks a variance from Section 1612 of the City of Suwanee Zoning Ordinance to allow for an additional wall sign for an individual tenant within a multi-tenant commercial building. The applicant is requesting two signs on the front of the building for a new restaurant, Seaside Oyster Bar.

The subject property is located at 3890 Lawrenceville Suwanee Road within an existing building in Suwanee’s Town Center. The one-story building faces Lawrenceville Suwanee Road but also has frontage on Boston Common Street and has access from both streets.

Section 1612.C.3.b of the zoning ordinance allows each tenant in a multitenant commercial building one wall sign per exterior wall provided that the sign is a maximum of 5% of the square footage of the wall area. The applicant is requesting a wall sign on the building front that is 44.4-square feet and a second 64.2-square foot wall sign in the form of a painted mural on the same wall. The two signs total 108.6 square feet, which is less than the 108.9 square foot maximum signage that is allowed on the subject wall. While the amount of signage is within the permitted parameters for wall signage, the number of signs, two, exceeds the maximum allowed. As such, a variance would be required in order for both signs to be permitted.

The applicant plans to have two additional signs, one on the wall facing Boston Common Street and one on the third wall that faces the parking lot. These two signs are not proposed to exceed 5% of the wall area, so no variance is required for these other signs.

The subject property is located in the heart of Suwanee's downtown mixed-use center. The property is surrounded by a mixture of residential and non-residential uses. To the north of the subject property, along Town Center Ave is a building with commercial and office uses (zoned PMUD). To the east, across Lawrenceville-Suwanee Road, is a commercial zoned credit union (Old Town Commercial District). Townhomes are located to west, across Boston Common Street, and to the south, across Suwanee Avenue. The townhomes are zoned to the PMUD district.

Because the subject property is located within the Town Center PMUD (Planned Mixed Use Development) there are high expectations for the quality of design. The proposed signage design, which includes a traditional sign paired with painted signage, would be proportionally appropriate and aesthetically pleasing for the wide façade of the tenant's frontage. Additionally, the uniqueness of the painted sign would add to the character of Town Center.

The City of Suwanee Zoning Ordinance allows for one wall sign per wall elevation. The total area of each sign may not exceed 5% of the wall area. (Section 1612.C.3.b). The square footage of the building's front elevation is 2,178 square feet. The permissible sign area for the front is 108.9 square feet.

The subject property has a wide façade because the business occupies several bays of the multitenant building. A single large sign would create a sign bigger than either of the proposed signs and would leave a lot of empty space on the façade. The proposed design to split the square footage into two signs, one being a painted mural, creates more visual interest and a more balanced façade.

It is not unusual for the City to include a condition of zoning with a PMUD project to address potential deviations from sign regulations in exchange for a more cohesive, thoughtful, and/or creative approach to providing signage for a project. In this case, the City did not include this type of condition with rezoning approval, and therefore, a variance is required in order to deviate from the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance. In this case the project is demonstrating the type of thoughtful, creative design the City seeks in mixed use projects.

Approval of V-2021-009 would allow the applicant to post one additional sign to the front of the subject building. It would be appropriate to grant an increase to the number of signs on this wall to better fit on the wide façade provided the total square footage of signage does not exceed the allowed square footage for a wall sign and provided signage for the front façade is executed in the thoughtful, creative approach shown in Exhibit A. Therefore, staff recommends approval with conditions of V-2021-009 with the conditions.

David Sullivan called upon the applicant.

Dickson Rivas, 3890 Lawrenceville Suwanee Road, Suwanee, GA. Mr. Rivas attended the meeting for the applicant. He stated that he is present to answer any questions that the Planning Commission may have.

David Sullivan called for opposition.

Elaine French, 3891 Portland Trail, Suwanee, GA. MS. French indicated that she was not opposed to the variance request. She had a question about lighting.

Paul Altnauer moved to approve V-2021-009 with staff conditions, second by Ray Brown. Motion carried 4-0.

1. The combined square footage of signage on the front elevation (the elevation facing Lawrenceville Suwanee Road) shall not exceed 108.9 square feet.
2. Signage shall be consistent with Exhibit A.
3. Signage shall comply with *Suwanee Town Center Tenant Signage Requirements*. No box signs or internally lit signs shall be permitted.

OTHER BUSINESS

ANNOUNCEMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Ray Brown moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 pm.