

**Zoning Board of Appeals
December 7, 2022 Regular Meeting**

STAFF REPORT

Subject: ZBA 22-2025; 314 S. Main St.

Summary:

Louis Goral, representing Blue Llama Jazz Club, is requesting relief from Section 5.24.4C(2) Changeable Copy and Electronic Message Signs. An electronic message sign may only be included as a component of a larger sign and may not exceed 25% of the total sign area of the sign. The electronic message sign is located in the east facing window facing S. Main Street. The applicant is seeking a variance to allow the electronic message sign to be 100% of the sign area.

Background:

Per City permit records the Blue Llama opened in 2018. In early 2022 it was noticed an electronic message sign was placed on the eastern, front entrance of the business. City staff has been coordinating with the business regarding sign permits and a variance application to allow for the electronic sign.

Description:

The petitioner proposes to allow the electronic message sign to remain in the front window of their business facing S. Main St.

Standards for Approval- Variance

The Zoning Board of Appeals has all the power granted by State law and by Section 5.29.12, Application of the Variance Power from the UDC. The following criteria shall apply:

- (a). ***That the practical difficulties are exceptional and peculiar to the property of the person requesting the variance and result from conditions which do not exist generally throughout the City.***

We are requesting a variance to allow for this screen to help with our neighborhood marketing and to garner awareness of events at Blue LLama Jazz Club.

- (b). ***That the practical difficulties will result from a failure to grant the variance, include substantially more than mere inconvenience, inability to attain a higher financial return, or both.***

This is a screen that is one of our only small marketing pieces that showcases events and information to Ann Arbor downtown.

- (c). ***That allowing the variance will result in substantial justice being done, considering the public benefits intended to be secured by this Chapter, the individual hardships that will be suffered by a failure of the Board to grant a variance, and the rights of others whose property would be affected by the allowance of the variance.***

We would have less of an impact on folks who do not know or understand our brand and concept. It is a great tool to raise awareness and inform our neighbors and public about upcoming events. This has a direct financial impact to our business because we are able to bring in more guests to experience our restaurant/club.

- (d). ***That the conditions and circumstances on which the variance request is based shall not be a self-imposed hardship or practical difficulty.***

The general public is very interested in the variety of events that happen at Blue LLama Jazz Club. This variance will allow a greater percentage of downtown Ann Arbor to realize the amazing programming that we offer 6 nights a week, which is always different. This also benefits the local artist community that performs at our club in raising awareness of their performances.

- (e). ***A variance approved shall be the minimum variance that will make possible a reasonable use of the land or structure.***

There should be no practical difficulty with this. We control the content of this screen and make sure it is always relevant and appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Cheng

Chris Cheng -
City Planner