

**Zoning Board of Appeals  
September 25, 2024, Regular Meeting**

**STAFF REPORT**

**Subject: ZBA 24-0029; 2015 West Stadium Boulevard**

**Summary:**

George Haddad, business owner, is seeking a 10 foot wall sign height variance from Table 5.24-3 Other Mixed Use and Nonresidential and Special Purpose District Permanent Signs. The maximum height of a wall sign for a building less than 45 feet in height is 20 feet. The applicant is proposing to install a 72 square foot wall sign with an 18 square foot electronic message sign at a height of 30 feet. The property is zoned C3, Fringe Commercial District.

**Background:**

The subject property is located on the west side of Stadium Boulevard and is in the Dartmoor neighborhood. The building was originally constructed in c. 1978 as a Ace Barnes Hardware retail location. The building is now occupied by PROCAM.

**Description:**

Table 5.24-3: Other Mixed-Use and Nonresidential and Special Purpose Zoning Districts Permanent Signs requires wall signs to be a maximum height of 20 feet in height when installed on a building less than 45 feet in total height. The subject building is approximately 31 feet in overall height. The applicant requests a variance to install a wall sign at a maximum height of 30 feet instead of the required 20 feet.

**TABLE 5.24-3: OTHER MIXED-USE AND NONRESIDENTIAL AND SPECIAL PURPOSE ZONING DISTRICTS PERMANENT SIGNS**

SIGN TYPE	HEIGHT	PLACEMENT	MAXIMUM NUMBER
Projecting Signs	Max.: 30 ft. but no higher than the top of the <i>building</i> Min.: 8 ft. if projecting into <i>public right-of-way</i>	May not project more than 4 ft. from the <i>building</i>	1 per <i>business frontage</i>
Wall Signs	Min.: 8 ft. if projecting into <i>public right-of-way</i>	Must be within lowest 20 ft. of the <i>building</i> . If the <i>building height</i> is 45 ft. or higher, may be placed within the uppermost 15 ft. of the <i>building</i> and may extend up to 3 ft. above the top of the <i>building</i> .  May not project more than 2 ft. from the <i>building</i>	No maximum
Freestanding Signs	Min.: 1 ft. for each foot set back from the nearest <i>lot line</i> , up to 25 ft. maximum	Min. <i>required setback</i> 5 ft.  Min. 200 ft. between each <i>freestanding sign</i> on the same <i>premises</i>	1 per street frontage
Awning Signs	Max.: 20 ft.	Entirely within the <i>awning</i>	1 per <i>business frontage</i>
Canopy Signs	Max.: 20 ft.	Entirely within <i>canopy</i>	1 per <i>business frontage</i>

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## **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 Unified Development Code (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.***

Applicant response: *“The practical difficulties are exceptional and unique to this property. This building and the sign structure were built many decades ago and may well have reflected a vernacular “Mid-Century Modern” architectural style. The structure was always used for signage for the commercial occupant of the building (prior occupants- Ace Barnes Hardware, Bike store, others...) The integral sign structure is unique to this building and creates a practical difficulty in placing a sign on the structure because of the height of the roof of the building, which is very near the top of the permitted height limit for signage, and which is lower than previously permitted. Complying with the current height limit would locate the sign too close to the roof of the building for it to be an effective sign, plus it would not be aesthetically pleasing given that a major portion of the sign structure would then remain blank.”*

- (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.***

Applicant response: *“If the variance is not granted, it will be difficult for the public to see the signage, a critical component in the success of any retail establishment. Particularly in this commercial corridor, which has many other signs. Without appropriate signage, the store will be lost in the jumble of the Stadium corridor.”*

- (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.***

Applicant response: *“Allowing the variance will result in substantial justice. There will be no adverse impact on the public. The sign structure is set back from Stadium Boulevard. It will not cast shadows or infringe on any neighbors. The sign itself is not unusual; it is just the placement of it on the structure that requires the variance. Using the existing sign structure will eliminate the need for any other sign structure on the property, which could detract from the streetscape.”*

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

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Applicant response: *"The need for the variance is not self-imposed, given that the sign structure has been part of the building for decades, and was intact when Haddad purchased it."*

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

Applicant response: *"This is the minimum variance required to create a useful and aesthetically-pleasing sign."*

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Barrett". The signature is stylized and cursive.

**Jon Barrett- Zoning Coordinator  
City of Ann Arbor**