



MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

DATE: April 21, 2015
CONSENT
ITEM # 8

AGENDA ITEM: Sign Variance – 8515 Eagle Point Blvd. N.

SUBMITTED BY: Nick M. Johnson, City Planner

THROUGH: Dean Zuleger, City Administrator

REVIEWED BY: Planning Commission
Kyle Klatt, Community Development Director
Washington County Public Works

SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS (should the item be removed from the Consent Agenda):

- Introduction of ItemCommunity Development Director
- Report/Presentation.....Community Development Director
- Questions from Council to Staff Mayor Facilitates
- Call for Motion Mayor & City Council
- Discussion Mayor & City Council
- Action on Motion..... Mayor Facilitates

POLICY RECCOMENDER: Planning Commission

FISCAL IMPACT: None

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED: The City has received a request from BDH + Young, 7001 France Ave. S., Edina, MN, on behalf of Eagle Point Medical, LLC to allow for the construction of a permanent ground sign at the Eagle Point Medical Center, 8515 Eagle Point Blvd. N., that exceeds the maximum permitted height by four feet. The proposed sign would be located along Inwood Ave. N. in the southwest corner of the site. To consider the request, the Planning Commission held a public hearing on April 13, 2015. The Planning Commission is unanimously recommending approval of the proposed variance. Should the item be removed from the Consent Agenda, the motion to take the recommended action on the request is as follows:

“Move to adopt Resolution No. 2015-28, approving a variance to allow for the construction of a 16-foot tall ground sign along Inwood Ave. N. at the Eagle Point Medical Center.”

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

On behalf of Eagle Point Medical, LLC, BDH + Young has submitted a variance to allow for a permanent ground sign at the Eagle Point Medical Center that exceeds the maximum permitted height by 4 feet. According to the City's signage provisions, the maximum height ground sign allowed at the Eagle Point Medical Center site would be 12 feet. The applicants are proposing a ground sign that is 16 feet in height, but otherwise complies with all other elements of the Sign Ordinance. The proposed 16-foot tall sign would be located in the southwest corner of the site along Inwood Ave N. (CSAH 13). The applicants have submitted the variance request based on two unique circumstances on their property:

- 1) The existence of a 40-foot wide drainage and utility easement causes the ground sign to be located further from Inwood Ave. N. than would otherwise be required under the City's Sign Ordinance, reducing visibility for the proposed sign; and
- 2) The existing topography of the site creates a situation where the base of the proposed ground sign is lower in elevation than Inwood Ave., as the site is lower than the adjacent roadway, causing further challenges for visibility.

The details of the staff review of the variance can be found in Attachment #2, which is the staff report to the Planning Commission.

In addition to the staff review, the proposed variance was reviewed by Washington County, as Inwood Ave. (CSAH 13) is a County roadway. The County's review comments are found in Attachment #8. The County noted no objection to the proposed variance.

PLANNING COMMISSION REPORT:

The Planning Commission reviewed the proposed variance on April 13, 2015. In addition, a public hearing was held on that date. During the public hearing, no testimony was received and no other written comments were submitted to staff. After discussion of the proposed ground sign and the requested variance, the Planning Commission unanimously recommended approval of the variance request (Vote: 7-0). Further detail of the Planning Commission discussion can be found in the draft Planning Commission minutes.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, THREATS:

Strengths: In the judgment of the Planning Commission and staff, the circumstances on the property are unique and are not created by the landowner. The request represents a reasonable use of the property. The variance would allow the landowner to construct a ground sign that would allow for visibility to Inwood Ave. given the unique circumstances of the property.

Weaknesses: Some argue that variances set precedent for future cases, and thereby encourage additional variance applications. However, under Statute, each variance case must be evaluated on its own merits, and one case does not set precedent for another. In addition, the subject property has multiple unique circumstances that would be unlikely duplicated on other properties in the City.

Opportunities: N/A

Threats: N/A

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the aforementioned, the Planning Commission and staff are recommending that the City Council approve the proposed variance to allow for a permanent ground sign that exceeds the maximum permitted height by 4 feet. Should the item be removed from the Consent Agenda, the motion to take the recommended action on the request is as follows:

“Move to adopt Resolution No. 2015-28, approving a variance to allow for the construction of a 16-foot tall ground sign along Inwood Ave. N. at the Eagle Point Medical Center.”

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution No. 2015-28
2. Staff Report to the Planning Commission, 4/13/15
3. Location Map
4. Application Forms and Project Narrative
5. Proposed Ground Sign, Site Sections and Site Plan
6. Existing Conditions Survey
7. Site Photos
8. Washington County Review Email