Southampton Town Zoning Board of Appeals
Public Hearing Agenda February 15, 2024, at 6pm

Comments following the hearing by Pamela Harwood, Bridgehampton Civic Association

#3. 2331 Montauk Highway. **(FARRELL Building Company)**
Applicant requests relief from the following provisions of the Town Code to legalize an existing monument sign on a nonconforming lot:

1. 330-205 (General provisions): (i) §330-205B(1) **to allow NEW MONUMENT SIGN where the building has a front yard setback of 30.5 feet and said building is required to have a 40 foot front yard setback;** (ii) §330-205B(2) **to allow the sign a front yard setback of 16.5 feet where 20 feet is required and a side yard setback of 5 feet where 20 feet is required**; (iii) §330-205B(5) **to allow the sign to have a height of 7 feet where a maximum of 6 feet is permitted** and **to allow the sign to be a total of 45.8 square feet where a maximum of 32 square feet is permitted**;
2. and 2. §330-207A (Illuminated signs): (i) **to allow the sign to be internally illuminated** in a Hamlet Office District where internally illuminated signs are only allowed in Highway Business Zoning Districts; and (ii) **for an externally illuminated sign** that is not constructed with an opaque background, translucent letters and symbols as permitted by the code and any other relief necessary.

Farrell Building Company is requesting new “monument” signage at his finished office building at 2331 Montauk Highway and has been turned down by the Building Department. The Bridgehampton Civic Association would like to offer our point of view to support the denial of this permit as the request does not adhere to Town Building Code.

Except now this building is located not just in the Hamlet Office Zone, but also in the newly created Bridgehampton Main Street Historic District,

Farrell would like to have signage that is larger, taller, and closer to the property lines than is allowed. He would also like to have the sort of illuminated signage that is not allowed in this Zone.

It is our understanding that “State Law requires the Applicant to show that the benefit the applicant stands to receive from the variance will outweigh any burden to the health, safety, and welfare that may be suffered by the community,” and that the ZBA is required to take the following factors into account:

An undesirable change will be produced in the character of the neighborhood. As of December, 2023 and predating this application, this property became part of the Bridgehampton Main Street Historic District, overlaying the Hamlet Office Zoning. The proposed signage will now need a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Landmarks and Historic Districts Board before any new signage can be installed. Oversized, illegally placed, and (especially wrongly) illuminated signage is one of the most frequent grievances communicated to the Bridgehampton Civic Association by our members and other residents, which indicates that the community finds such signs undesirable.

Whether the benefit sought can be achieved by some method that will not require a variance. There is existing, large signage attached to the top, front-facing façade of the building. There is also a second existing, large, west-facing sign attached to the building façade. The benefit of advertising and branding this business has already been achieved with existing signage. As to the argument put forth by the applicant that people coming from east to west can’t see the existing signage, we argue that 1) Farrell is a well-known brand already, 2) with the existing technology that most customers use today to locate their destinations, potential customers will Google the address and see the location on a map. An oversized and illuminated, free-standing sign on the front lawn is not necessary. 3) The applicant can put a QR code in all of its advertising to show interested parties the location of the building.

Is the requested variance substantial
Yes, it is a very large sign that needs significant setback relief to achieve legal placement. One office building on Main Street does not need 3 identification and advertising signs. The illumination being request is substantial.

Will the proposed variance will have an adverse effect or impact on the physical or environmental conditions in the neighborhood or district.
Yes, an oversized, illuminated, free-standing sign that is very close to the property lines is an ugly physical presence on an historic district street and the requested illuminated has an adverse impact on the environment. One of the original reasons that the Hamlet Office Zone was created in 2003 was the notion that office buildings would create less traffic and customers than retail spaces. It seems that Farrell would like to use this third signage to increase foot and vehicular traffic to the building, in contravention of the intent of the Town Board when creating this Zoning.

Is the difficulty self-created?
Absolutely and this is one of the most important points and reasons to deny this application. The Hamlet Office zoning allows a 3,000 square foot building as of right. The applicant applied for, and got the ZBA to approve, among other variances, setback relief and a special exemption to build to 6,000 square feet. In order to achieve this goal, the applicant worked with the Planning Board and was allowed to build closer to the neighbors and the street to accommodate parking in the rear. These setback variances meant at the time, as they do now, that the applicant would not be able to fit a monument sign on the front lawn because they had willingly lost the space to do so in order to achieve their goal of a larger office building. That is probably why they did not install a monument sign at the time of construction. It wouldn't fit.