

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



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ZBA 2017-33
Petition of Wellesley Congregational Church
2 Central Street

Pursuant to due notice, the Special Permit Granting Authority held a Public Hearing on Thursday, April 6, 2017, at 7:30 p.m. in the Juliani Meeting Room, 525 Washington Street, Wellesley, on the petition of Wellesley Congregational Church requesting a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section IXC, Section XXIIA and Section XXV of the Zoning Bylaw for installation of three externally illuminated signs, consisting of two replacement standing signs and one new standing sign that will exceed the number of standing signs and the maximum area allowed. Two of the signs will have less than required setbacks. The property is located at 2 Central Street, in the Wellesley Square Commercial District.

On February 27, 2017, the Petitioner filed a request for a hearing before this Authority, and thereafter, due notice of the hearing was given by mailing and publication.

Presenting the case at the hearing was David Himmelberger, Esq. Also present was Jim Mongiardo, Wellesley Congregational Church, the Petitioner.

A Board member said that there are three nonconformances. He said that the number of standing signs at three exceeds the one allowed per lot. He said that the number of total signs is three versus two that are allowed. He said that there is a nonconforming setback.

Mr. Himmelberger said that ground lighting will be shielded and will only illuminate the three signs. Mr. Mongiardo said that each of the signs will be illuminated by one spotlight from the ground, aimed three quarters of the way up the sign with very little spillage over the sign. He said that the lights will be placed on timers.

The Board asked why additional signage is needed. Mr. Mongiardo said that the church is located on the corner of Washington and Central Streets. He said that the two existing signs have been in existence for the past 25 years. He said that the Church did a massive renovation project in the early 2000's. He said that part of the thought behind that was to incorporate the cemetery that appeared to be separate and not part of the Church. He said that the Church was subsequently designated as one of a handful of places in the United States as a historic church and cemetery. He said that the Church also found a way to reopen the cemetery so that ashes can be buried there. He said that the Cemetery is now an integral part of the Church and they would like to have a sign there to let people know that it is part of the Church.

The Board confirmed that there is no intention to open up a path.

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The Board asked why the existing sign on Central Street was not moved to the corner. Mr. Mongiardo said that traffic is on Washington and Central Streets. He said that the third sign is to let people know that the cemetery is part of the Church property. The Board asked if it is important that the third sign be illuminated. Mr. Mongiardo said that there is existing outdoor lighting at the Church but you cannot read the signs at night. Mr. Himmelberger said that the lights will be on a timer and will be turned off at 10 pm, which is earlier than when many of the Central Street lights go off. The Chairman said that the Church is surrounded by commercial properties. He said that he would not be concerned if the lights stayed on until 11 pm.

Mr. Himmelberger said that it is a very unique property in that there are few properties in Town that are entirely bound by streets. He said that the bylaw does not contemplate that configuration.

A Board member said that the Church property is at the center of Wellesley and been a focus of the community for a long time. He said that the existing signs are a little long in the tooth. He said that he did not have any objection to what was proposed. He questioned whether the sign that captures traffic off of Crest Road is appropriate. Mr. Mongiardo said that there are two staircases coming up from Central Street. He said that there is an entrance on Washington Street that is the main entrance. He said that with the renovations there is now an entrance by Church Street by the cemetery that is also used.

The Board asked where people park to use the Central Street entrance. Mr. Mongiardo said that people park in the municipal lot across the street on Sundays. He said that people can go through the Cloister with the large windows to get to the Sanctuary or go further around through what they call the Village Common which is the room that overlooks the cemetery. He said that there are multiple ways to get to the Sanctuary.

The Board asked about the wattage for the lighting. Mr. Mongiardo said that they have taken all of the incandescent lighting out and replaced it with LED's. He said that they have dramatically reduced wattage and have much better coverage. A Board member said that he prefers to see minimalist lighting whenever possible.

A Board member said that he would have preferred that sign information was shown in the pictures rather than just described in the submittal letter.

There was no one present at the public hearing who wished to speak to the petition.

Statement of Facts

The Petitioner is requesting a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section IXC, Section XXIIA and Section XXV of the Zoning Bylaw for installation of three externally illuminated signs, consisting of two replacement standing signs and one new standing sign that will exceed the number of standing signs and the maximum area allowed. Two of the signs will have less than required setbacks. The property is located at 2 Central Street, in the Wellesley Square Commercial District.

Sign Information, Letter to Zoning Board of Appeals, dated 2/27/17, from David J. Himmelberger, Esq., Photographs, Final Sign Design, Text Height and Plans L3.1 and L3.2, dated 11/30/01, prepared by Michael Rosenfield were submitted.

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On February 23, 2017, the Design Review Board reviewed the application and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the signs.

On March 28, 2017, the Planning Board reviewed the petition and recommended that the Special Permit be granted.

Decision

This Authority has made a careful study of the materials submitted and the information presented at the hearing. The subject signs are two replacement standing signs and one new standing sign that will exceed the number of standing signs and the maximum area allowed. Two of the signs will have less than required setbacks. The property is located at 2 Central Street, in the Wellesley Square Commercial District.

It is the opinion of this Authority that installation of two replacement standing signs and one new standing sign that will exceed the number of standing signs and the maximum area allowed, with two of the signs having less than required setbacks will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of Section XXIIA of the Zoning Bylaw, as the sign scale will be in reasonable relation to development scale, viewer distance and travel speed, and sign sizes on nearby structures; sign size, shape, and placement will serve to define or enhance architectural elements of the building and will not unreasonably interrupt, obscure or hide them; sign design will be in reasonable continuity with the mounting location, height, proportions and materials of other signage on the same or adjacent structures; sign materials, colors, lettering style, illumination and form are reasonably compatible with building design, neighborhood context and use; and sign size, location design and illumination are not judged to present a safety hazard to vehicular or pedestrian traffic.

Therefore, a Special Permit is granted for installation of two replacement standing signs and one new standing sign that will exceed the number of standing signs and the maximum area allowed, with two of the signs having less than required setbacks, in accordance with the submitted plans.

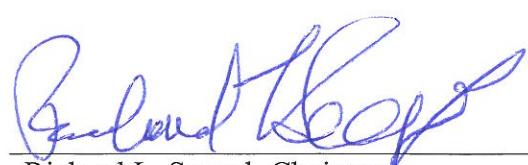
The Inspector of Buildings is hereby authorized to issue a permit for the sign upon receipt and approval of a sign application and any other materials he may require. No sign shall be installed until said permit has been issued.

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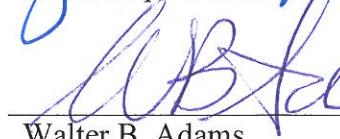
APPEALS FROM THIS DECISION,
IF ANY, SHALL BE MADE PURSUANT
TO GENERAL LAWS, CHAPTER 40A,
SECTION 17, AND SHALL BE FILED
WITHIN 20 DAYS AFTER THE DATE
OF FILING OF THIS DECISION IN THE
OFFICE OF THE TOWN CLERK.



Richard L. Seegel, Chairman



J. Randolph Becker



Walter B. Adams

cc: Planning Board
Inspector of Buildings
lrm