

TOWN OF WELLESLEY



MASSACHUSETTS

## ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

TOWN HALL • 525 WASHINGTON STREET • WELLESLEY, MA 02482-5992

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ZBA 2020-04

Petition of Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills  
309 Washington Street

2020 JAN 23

WELLESLEY HILLS  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

Pursuant to due notice, the Special Permit Granting Authority held a Public Hearing on Thursday, January 9, 2020 at 7:30 p.m. in the Juliani Meeting Room, 525 Washington Street, Wellesley, on the petition of Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills requesting a Special Permit pursuant to the provisions of Section 22A and Section 25 of the Zoning Bylaw for installation of a standing sign that will exceed the number of and the maximum total area of signs that is allowed by right at 309 Washington Street, in a General Residence District.

On December 12, 2019, the Petitioner filed a request for a hearing before this Authority, and thereafter, due notice of the hearing was given by mailing and publication.

Present at the public hearing was Lise Olney, representing Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills, the Petitioner. She said that the Church already has two signs, a small hanging sign that is perpendicular to the street, and a sign that is parallel to the street and held up by two granite posts. She said that their new Minister was interested in having a banner that could be changed out to reflect a change of time for services in the summer and to increase the street presence of the Church, similar to the banner signs at the Village Church. She said that the minister would like to put a banner by the parking lot so that it is not blocking the building in any way but would be highly visible to people passing by. She said that it would be one banner for the Church year from September to June and another for the summer. She said that the signs will be essentially the same but will reflect the different time for services.

Ms. Olney said that they went before the Design Review Board (DRB) and were asked to have a black frame instead of aluminum and a piece running underneath to keep the sign from flapping. She said that they discovered that it is extremely expensive to do that because it would be a custom frame. She said that they can make it out of colored PVC but that may not satisfy the DRB. She said that another option is to use something similar to what is at the Village Church and anchor it at bottom with a stake. She said that there is also a similar sign at Ten Acre School that inspired the DRB to ask for the bottom piece. She said that, being a church, they were hoping to be able to go with a less expensive option. A Board member said that it is possible to paint aluminum.

The Chairman confirmed that the sign will be three feet by twelve feet. Ms. Olney said that the reason that the sign is so high is that there are lilac bushes along the front. She said that the sign material will be vinyl.

A Board member said that the proposed signs are not banners, as described in the Zoning Bylaw. He said that the sign seems to be for periodically updating changes. He questioned whether it is more of a temporary sign.

The Chairman said that the two proposed signs are in addition to two existing signs. He asked if the Church considered removing one or more of the existing signs. Ms. Olney said that the hope is to revamp the front eventually by re-landscaping and replacing the existing signs. She said when they discovered how expensive that will be, they thought about what would serve the purpose of increasing the presence on the street and would allow them to make the change from the Church year to the summer with the change in hours. She said that the proposed signs would be permanent for the next few years, long enough for the Church to build the funds to revamp all of the signage, at which time the proposed signage would come down and be replaced by permanent signage. The Chairman questioned how this would not be a temporary with the interchanging through the year. He discussed time limitations for temporary signs.

A Board member said that there seems to be a lot of information in the text of the sign. He said that it is a beautiful building and the existing signs are understated.

The Board confirmed that it will be a one sided sign.

The Chairman said that this is a General Residence District that is stuck in the middle of principally commercial properties.

Catherine Johnson, Planning Board, said that the side of Washington Street between Cliff Road and the intersection of Wellesley Hills Square is zoned either General Residence or Conservation. She said that there is no business until you get to the other side of Cliff Road where the Post Office is. She said that across the street from 309 Washington Street is business zoned. She said that 323 Washington Street, which is next to the Church parking lot, will be re-zoned as a single building Historic District.

A Board member said that there was no plot plan submitted that shows the setback. He said that the Board will need to see a plan that shows where the sign will go and that it meets the requirements of the bylaw. Ms. Johnson said that the Engineering Division can provide a map of the block that has street dimensions and property boundaries.

A Board member said that other than announcing the times of the services, the sign is just advertising. He said that the existing sign could have something that hangs off of the bottom for the hours of service and that can be changed twice a year. Ms. Olney said that the intention of the sign is not just about hours but also to raise visibility. She said that the Minister felt that the Church was not sufficiently visible and its mission of inclusivity was not obvious enough.

A Board member said that it is a beautiful Gothic building and the proposed sign is contemporary.

The Board discussed the limitations of having a temporary sign. The Chairman said that the supporting structure is light and insubstantial and the sign itself is not designed to last through ten winters. Ms. Olney said that the hope was to come up with an inexpensive solution while they raise funds to redo the

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309 Washington Street

permanent signs. She said that it will take them years to raise the money for that. She said that the proposed signage is not meant to be a long term solution but more than a temporary one.

Ms. Johnson discussed changes to the Sign Bylaw, the sign at the Village Church and the sign at Ten Acre School.

A Board member discussed the possibility of granting this through the Dover Amendment. He said that he was concerned about granting a permit for a temporary solution. He questioned whether the Board would be approving two signs or one sign with interchangeable copy. The Board discussed setting a time limit via an expiration date.

A Board member asked Ms. Olney if there had been any discussion about changing the time without changing the whole sign. Ms. Olney said that the whole format of the service changes when the Minister goes on leave for the summer. She said that the Minister wanted to communicate that it is a different program during the summer. She said that they wanted a Church year look and a summer look.

The Chairman discussed the required findings in Section 22A of the Zoning Bylaw. He discussed inserting a condition about the overall duration of installation of the sign and/or the changeable copy from season to season and how many would be permitted. He said that approval would be for the two signs that were submitted and cannot be substituted without coming back before the Board.

A Board member said that there are ways to respond to DRB concerns about anchoring the sign without having a continuous bar at the bottom. A Board member said that the Sign Bylaw prohibits signs that are not in good repair. Ms. Olney said that the plan is to anchor the sign in concrete. She said that they can add wind relief panels.

A Board member discussed permitting the two panels that were submitted, subject to the condition that they be maintained in good order and repair and subject to an expiration date. He said that the panels would be used interchangeably. He said that it is not intended to be a long term solution.

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 22A and Section 25 of the Zoning Bylaw for installation of a standing sign that will exceed the number of and the maximum total area of signs that is allowed by right at 309 Washington Street, in a General Residence District.

Sign Information, Photosimulations, Letter Height, Photographs of signs that are similar to the proposed sign, and Photographs of existing signage were submitted.

On November 13, 2019, the Design Review Board reviewed the application and voted unanimously to recommend approval of the project, subject conditions.

On January 8, 2020, the Planning Department staff 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 signage is a wall sign at a height that will exceed the maximum allowed by right in a Business District.

It is the opinion of this Authority that installation of a standing sign that will exceed the number of and the maximum total area of signs that is allowed by right at 309 Washington Street, in a General Residence District 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 a standing sign that will exceed the number of and the maximum total area of signs that is allowed by right at 309 Washington Street, in a General Residence District, subject to the following conditions:

1. The sign frame shall be maintained in good working order
2. The sign frame shall be black
3. The sign and frame shall be kept in good working order and structural integrity
4. The loose foot of the panel shall be sufficiently anchored
5. The sign shall not be illuminated
6. A site plan showing the location of the sign that conforms to the 15 foot setback requirements shall be submitted
7. Only one of the two panels approved by the Board shall be installed at one time
8. This permit shall expire in two years.

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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE

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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Petition of Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills  
309 Washington Street

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.

*J. Randolph Becker*  
J. Randolph Becker, Chairman

*David C. Sheffield*  
David C. Sheffield

*Robert W. Levy*  
Robert W. Levy

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TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE  
WELLESLEY MA 02481

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Applicant Unitarian Universalist Society of Wellesley Hills  
Address 309 Washington Street

**NOT VALID FOR RECORDING UNTIL CERTIFIED BY TOWN CLERK**

In accordance with Section 11 of Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws, I hereby certify that twenty (20) days have elapsed after the within decision was filed in the office of the Town Clerk for the Town of Wellesley, and that no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied.

Date:

Attest:

Cathryn Jane Kato  
Town Clerk

cc: Planning Board  
Inspector of Buildings  
lrm

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brought you here,*

[uuwellesleyhills.org](http://uuwellesleyhills.org)



*UU Wellesley Hills  
welcomes you!*

Sundays 10:00am



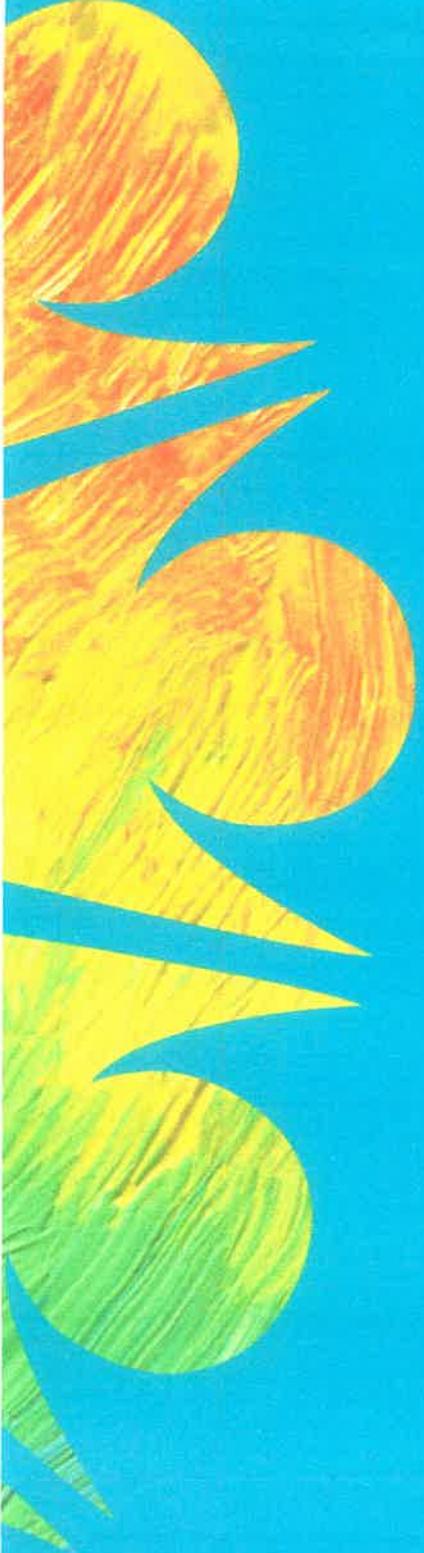


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Ce

2.9"

2.15"

W a

4"

2.9"

Jo

2.25"

1.75"

Similar to proposed

# TENACRE



## OPEN HOUSE

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29  
7:00 - 8:15 PM



Similar to proposed  
(Village Church)

Welcome  
is our favorite word!

[www.wellesleyvillagechurch.org](http://www.wellesleyvillagechurch.org)



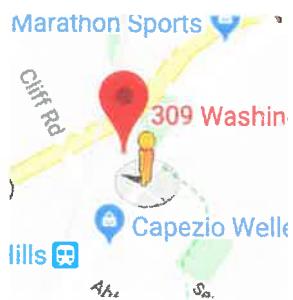


Image capture: Oct 2018 © 2019 Google

Wellesley, Massachusetts



Street View - Oct 2018



Existing signage - see attached photos  
of these two signs



UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST  
**SOCIETY OF WELLESLEY HILLS**

A WELCOMING CONGREGATION



WE LOVE OUR  
NEIGHBORS  
WELLESLEY  
WE ARE

309

UNITARIAN  
UNIVERSALIST  
SOCIETY

OF WELLESLEY HILLS

SUNDAY 10:30

WUS CONCERT

MOTHER'S DAY

Sun., May 12 at 4 pm

Unitarian Universalist Society of  
Wellesley Hills