



City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

Department of Planning & Community Development

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Building Inspections
Engineering
Planning & Zoning

To: Eric Campbell, City Manager
From: Adam Fletcher, Director of Planning and Community Development
Date: December 11, 2018 (Meeting Date)
Re: Comprehensive Sign Plan request for 1756/1760 East Market Street

Summary:

Consider a request from May Mountain LLC & 1756 EM VSB LLC & 1756 EM TTR LLC for a comprehensive sign plan as per section 11-7-6.1 (7) of the Sign Ordinance. The request is to allow off-premises signage within the B-2, General Business District. Approval of the request would allow businesses on separate, adjacent properties to advertise on one freestanding sign, which would be located on one of the subject properties.

Background:

In May 2018, an engineered comprehensive site plan was approved for “East Market Shops” located at 1760 and 1756 East Market Street. The site plan depicted how the property would be redeveloped with the construction of two buildings for commercial uses on two adjacent parcels.

Without getting into the specifics of the Sign Ordinance and unusual circumstances, the City’s sign regulations generally only allow one freestanding sign per property and the sign is to be located on the site on which the use or business operates. The request herein described gives the ability for a business to advertise on a sign that is not on the site on which it operates.

Key Issues:

May Mountain LLC & 1756 EM VSB LLC & 1756 EM TTR LLC is requesting a comprehensive sign plan to advertise the businesses at 1760 and 1756 East Market Street on the existing freestanding sign located on 1760 East Market Street. (For location reference, prior to being demolished, the Long John Silver’s restaurant was located at 1760 East Market Street.) The property addressed as 1756 East Market Street is planned to be developed with a single tenant building while the property addressed as 1760 East Market Street is being developed with a two-tenant building. The two properties are under the same ownership and the same plan of development but are located on two different parcels. The parcels are both zoned B-2, General Business District.

Per Section 11-7-6.1 (1) of the Sign Ordinance, off-premises signage is not permitted within the B-2 District. Off-premises signage is defined as *any sign that is used to attract attention to an object, person, product, institution, organization, business, service, event or location that is not located on the premises upon which the sign is located*. Although generally off-premises advertising is not permitted, Section 11-7-6.1 (7) of the Sign Ordinance allows for City Council to provide this ability as this section states: *a shopping center or multiple tenant building on a single or multiple parcels of common ownership, managed by a single entity as a unified commercial project, may, by presenting a comprehensive sign plan to city council, request approval of otherwise non-permitted signage to include wall signage*

advertising a business on walls not occupied by that business and off premises free standing signage for the development. As noted above, this request is for off-premises freestanding signage.

Section 11-7-6.1 (7) goes on to state that *[f]or a development of multiple parcels, the total square footage of the combined freestanding sign shall not exceed what the total would be if the development was located on one (1) parcel. A freestanding sign permitted by this provision may not exceed thirty-five (35) feet in height or two hundred forty (240) square feet in area.* The applicant is requesting approval of a comprehensive sign plan for a single, freestanding sign with a total face area of up to 199 square feet to serve the development. As illustrated in their application, the applicant is planning to use an existing sign that has a total face area of 96 square feet. The street frontage of the subject development (two parcels) is 199 linear feet, and thus, as a part of this plan, the applicant wishes to reserve the right to expand the freestanding sign to a total face area of 199 square feet.

Section 11-7-6.1 (7) further states that *the right of individual establishments to have individual freestanding signs shall be waived.* In other words, if the comprehensive sign plan is approved, any business operating on 1756 East Market Street shall waive the ability to install a separate freestanding sign.

Wall signage is not included as part of this comprehensive sign plan. The property owner would maintain the ability to install wall signage as permitted by the Sign Ordinance.

Environmental Impact:

N/A

Fiscal Impact:

N/A

Prior Actions:

N/A

Alternatives:

- (a) Approve the comprehensive sign plan as submitted;
- (b) Approve the comprehensive sign plan with conditions determined by City Council; or
- (c) Deny the comprehensive sign plan request.

Community Engagement:

N/A

Recommendation:

Staff recommends alternative (a) approval of the comprehensive sign plan as presented. Staff believes having one sign for both parcels will reduce sign clutter along the East Market Street Corridor and may reduce any traffic confusion by consolidating the signage for the development, which shares one point of entry into the two parcels.

Attachments:

1. Applicant's letter of request and supporting documents (3)

Review:

N/A