

**MINUTES OF PUBLIC HEARING  
HELD BY THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
LINCOLN CENTER HEARING ROOM  
JANUARY 24, 2024**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

In Person: Robert Haley, Vice Chair  
Sandra DeCampos, Secretary  
Edward Slegeski  
Kevin Hood  
Electronically: Jim Stevenson, Chair

**ALTERNATES PRESENT:**

In Person: Harun Ahmed  
Electronically: Linda Harris

**ABSENT:** Gailyn Hill

**STAFF PRESENT:**

In Person: Megan Pilla, Principal Development Planner  
Electronically: James Davis, Zoning Enforcement Officer  
Nancy Martel, Recording Secretary

The Chair opened the Public Hearing at 7 PM. The Secretary read the legal notice for the application when the call was made.

**MANCHESTER PUBLIC SCHOOLS** – Application #VAR-0060-2023 – Request variances from Art. IV, Sec. 13.06.01 and 13.09 for the height of signage and for use of an electronic message board in a residential zone at 134 Middle Turnpike East, Residence A and Residence B zones.

Mr. Lindsey Boutilier introduced himself as the Director of Operations for Manchester Public Schools, as well as the Athletic Director. He noted that this is ultimately a project for the students of Manchester High School (MHS). He commented on questions from the prior meeting:

- There will be no additional signage. They are replacing a sign.
- The sign does have the ability to dim.
- The sign will not change more than twice in a 24-hour period.

Mr. Evan Austin, senior at Manchester High School, introduced himself and reported his school credentials. He is in support of the signage, as many people utilize technology and digital signs are becoming more common.

Ms. Chloe Fontaine, junior at Manchester High School, introduced herself and reported her school credentials. She is in support of the sign to highlight sporting events and students' successes for the community. The information on the signs would be very inclusive and helpful to both students and the community, as some sports are underrepresented and unrecognized within the community.

Ms. Madelyn Spina, President of the Senior Class, Manchester High School, introduced herself and reported her school credentials. Such signage would help to showcase the students' talents and opportunities.

Ms. Zoe Evans, senior at Manchester High School, introduced herself and reported her school credentials. She noted that, when planning fundraising events at the school, the digital sign would enable them to broadcast to the entire town.

Ms. Savannah Smith, senior at Manchester High School, introduced herself and reported her school credentials. As representatives of the school, they believe the cohesiveness of the newly implemented sign will emphasize the professional image of the school and promote a positive school image.

Ms. Ella Golas, senior at Manchester High School, introduced herself and reported her school credentials. In her opinion, community members may not look online for various events at the school, but the signage can bring the community together.

Ms. Ohanna Boahen, junior at Manchester High School, introduced herself and reported her school credentials. She stated that many of her clubs and others have been overlooked. A digital sign is important for events and clubs, as it would provide a dynamic way to promote and showcase activities. It is important to note that the sign can be updated in real time, which increases the interest in clubs and activities in the school.

Ms. Samantha Maneri presented a survey conducted with students. The survey displayed the current and proposed signage. Ms. Maneri detailed the responses to the survey.

Mr. Austin summarized that students believe a new sign would allow a broader flow of information to students and the public.

Mr. David Eisenthal, 40 McDivitt Drive, member of the Board of Education and a member of the Board's Buildings and Sites Committee, introduced himself. Mr. Eisenthal praised the students' presentations. He is in support of the sign as an efficient, attractive, and relatively unobtrusive way for the school to convey information to the students and the larger community.

Mr. Lindsey Boutilier thanked the students for their presentations.

Mr. Slegeski expressed that the students' presentations were beyond amazing and he believes they do not receive the recognition they are due. Comparing the two presentations, he asked how this application tonight is different than last year's. Mr. Boutilier stated that it is identical.

Mr. Slegeski asked whether this was presented before the Planning and Zoning Commission in an effort to creatively modify the regulations. Mr. Boutilier stated that they did not, as they were given a second chance to come before the ZBA.

Mr. Slegeski provided information about the role of the Zoning Board of Appeals, noting that the ZBA also looks at hardships with applications. In addition, the ZBA looks at past applications. Noting the comments about getting the word out to the community, he speculated how else it could be handled. In his opinion, MPS Pride could do a better job of getting the word out. He asked whether, with regrading, they could avert setting a precedent in a residential area.

Mr. Boutilier stated that he was unaware that the sign height was the major concern.

Mr. Slegeski distributed copies of a traffic study that Ms. Pilla had provided to him.

Mr. Jim Davis commented about the change in topography. The maximum height for a sign in a residential zone is 5 ft. If the general area was enlarged, that would be fine. Another consideration is that, although there appears to be a need for the sign, this is not unique to this school. He recommended that changing the zoning regulations to address the uniqueness of any school in town for these types of signs would be a better option than each school applying for a similar variance.

Mr. Slegeski stated that he likes the concept but is not comfortable with this approach. He asked whether this is the appropriate location for the sign, or if it should be in the center of town. Mr. Slegeski described the traffic study results, noting a higher traffic flow in the center of town.

Mr. Haley inquired whether the sign could be changed immediately in the event of a Town or school emergency. Mr. Boutilier stated that it would be through the Student Activities Office utilizing a WiFi code.

Mr. Boutilier reported that the sign would be no larger than the current sign.

Mr. Haley detailed the reasons for the hardship.

Mr. Stevenson reiterated the time of operation of the sign and the hours it will be dimmed, with which Mr. Boutilier agreed.

Ms. Pilla stated that there were no technical comments from staff on the application. As discussed, the traffic engineer requested the sign be dimmed between 10:00 P.M. and 6:00 A.M. She stated that, in terms of an update to the zoning regulations, the signage regulations are quite difficult. She reported that the Planning Department is planning to undertake rewriting the zoning regulations. Noting Mr. Slegeski's remark, Ms. Pilla explained that the property in the center of town is Town-owned and the Board does not have the ability to propose anything on non-school property.

Mr. Slegeski inquired how many times an application can come before the ZBA. Legally, there is no limit in terms of the number of times. The Board does not have to hear the same application

within six months of a denial, but after six months, the Board is obligated to rehear the application, stated Ms. Pilla.

The Chairman closed the public hearing at 7:45 P.M.

I certify these minutes were adopted on the following date:

February 28, 2024

Date

James Stevenson, Chair

**NOTICE: A DIGITAL RECORDING OF THIS PUBLIC HEARING CAN  
BE HEARD IN THE PLANNING DEPARTMENT**