

**Zoning Board of Appeals  
August 10, 2021**

The City of Sturgeon Bay Zoning Board of Appeals was called to order at 12:00 noon by Chairperson William Murrock in Council Chambers, City Hall, 421 Michigan Street.

**Roll call:** Members William Murrock, Bill Chaudoir, Dave Augustson, Nancy Schopf and Alternate Michael Marit were present. Excused: Member Morgan Rusnak. Also present were Community Development Director Marty Olejniczak, Planner/Zoning Administrator Chris Sullivan-Robinson and Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Laurie Spittlemeister.

**Adoption of agenda:** Moved by Mr. Augustson, seconded by Ms. Schopf to adopt the following agenda:

1. Roll call.
2. Adoption of agenda.
3. Approval of minutes from May 25, 2021.
4. Public Hearing:           Petition for variance from Section 27.12(4) of the City of Sturgeon Bay Sign Code, to install an Electronic Variable Message Sign for the Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church, located at 836 Michigan Street.
5. Consideration of:       Petition for variance from Section 27.12(4) of the City of Sturgeon Bay Sign Code, to install an Electronic Variable Message Sign for the Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church, located at 836 Michigan Street.
6. Adjourn.

All ayes. Carried.

**Approval of Minutes from May 25, 2021:**

Moved by Mr. Chaudoir, seconded by Mr. Augustson to approve the minutes from May 25, 2021. All ayes. Carried.

**Public hearing: Petition for variance from Section 27.14 (4) of the City of Sturgeon Bay Sign Code, to install an Electronic Variable Message Sign for the Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church, located at 836 Michigan Street:**

Mr. Sullivan-Robinson stated that the property is zoned Residential (R-1). Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church has requested a variance of the Sign ordinance 27.12 (4). This Committee has reviewed a request from Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church in 2018, in which it was denied because of the negative impact on the surrounding neighborhood and effect on pedestrian/vehicular traffic. This Committee had a similar request from St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in 2016 that was approved. St. Peter’s Lutheran Church property is not within a strictly residential area and abuts commercial property.

Mark Holey, 410 N 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Chairman of Trustee for Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church explained the church had a campaign to raise money to make improvements to their property. Those improvements include a new driveway, redesigned parking lot, boiler replacement and installation of

an electronic variable message sign to increase communication and membership. When the request was denied in 2018, church leaders took concern and made the following changes.

- Sign content more static, changing every 20 seconds
- Reduce sign from 30 square feet to 24 square feet
- Changed frame color and added cross and trim to be more visually pleasing
- Background color of church name and message portion changed to darker color to reduce brightness
- Sign will be operated from 5:00 am to 10:00 pm
- Each message change of the sign will be quick
- Will display static messages without movement, animation or scrolling, and will not use flashing signs or lights
- Sign will be equipped with photosensitive equipment that will automatically adjust brightness

Mr. Holey continued that the sign will need footings and be flat on the ground, not on a pedestal. The church's intent is to landscape around the new sign once installed.

Chairperson Murrock opened the public hearing at 12:20 p.m.

Kirsten Reeths, 124 N 8<sup>th</sup> Place, also Alderperson for District 7 stated that students and millennials notice electronic signage more, as they view many things on a screen or electronically. Many organizations have already installed electronic signs for their businesses. She is in favor. As a side note, only one constituent reached out to Ms. Reeths in regards to the electronic sign.

Ron Vandertie, 818 Oregon Street, mentioned that when these signs were first introduced, he voted against while on City Council. Over the years, there have been many good changes to the ordinance. He is in favor.

Ms. Spittlemeister read two letters in favor of petition for variance from:

Karl Bethke, 908 Michigan Street

Nancy and Don Ziegelbauer, 137 N 10<sup>th</sup> Place

Brian Bergee, 907 Michigan Street, is opposed. He is not in favor, as it would be disruptive having a light shine into his house 17 hours a day. The church and his residents are located at the edge of historic district and would like to preserve it's charm.

Erika May, 107 S 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue is opposed. We are living in a digital age with people spending a lot of time on those devices. Does not want a larger sign in from of the church.

Kathy White, 833 Michigan Street, is opposed. She like to read, meditate and relax in her front yard and feels a digital sign across the street would be distressing and out of place. Student drivers and pedestrians would be distracted and fear property values might go down.

Ms. Spittlemeister read one letter in opposition of petition for variance from:

Diane Evenson, 32 N 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Mr. Murrock offered rebuttal testimony. Mr. Holey stated that they are not trying to make this a moving sign, but more static. However, they would like to get their information out in a easier fashion than standing out in the elements. Students may not notice the sign. The church is willing to work

with neighbor's and willing to make additional changes if necessary. Their vision is to have a tasteful and a pleasing sign.

Steve Graf, 833 Michigan Street, mentioned that most people will use the internet to find a church and does not think a new sign is necessary.

Brian Bergee, 907 Michigan Street, stated that this new sign would be like having a TV in the yard, which is not appropriate.

Kathy White, 833 Michigan Street, asked if the church is willing to change their pattern if the sign is approved and what recourse people in the neighborhood would have if they would like the church to make additional changes.

Mr. Sullivan-Robinson stated that the nuisance ordinance on related issues would got through his office or the Police Department.

Mr. Olejniczak recited what the ordinance states the definition of an electronic variable message sign. The church would have the option to keep the sign lit 24 hours a day.

Mr. Chaudoir inquired if the sign was approved, could anyone zoned Residential (R-1) get an electronic sign in their front yard.

Mr. Olejniczak responded that anyone who would like to place a sign in a residential area would need to come before Zoning Board of Appeals and request a variance.

The public hearing was declared closed at 12:53 p.m.

**Consideration of: Petition for variance from Section 27.12 (4) of the City of Sturgeon Bay Sign code, to install an Electronic Variable Message Sign for the Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church, located at 836 Michigan Street:**

Regulations of brightness for the electronic variable message sign was discussed. Mr. Chaudoir stated that Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church has gone out of their way to please everyone.

Moved by Mr. Chaudoir, seconded by Mr. Augustson to approve variance from Section 27.12 (4) of the City of Sturgeon Bay Sign code, to install an electronic variable message sign for the Sturgeon Bay United Methodist Church, located at 836 Michigan Street with the conditions of changing the message to 30 second intervals and installing a planting bed with flowers around the sign to look more residential. Roll call: Carried with Ms. Schopf voting no.

Moved by Mr. Chaudoir, seconded Ms. Schopf to adjourn. All ayes. Carried. The meeting adjourned at 1:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Spittlemeister,  
Deputy Clerk/Treasurer