



**CITY OF BRIDGEPORT  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
REGULAR MEETING  
JULY 11, 2023**

45 Lyon Terrace  
Bridgeport, CT 06604  
(203) 576-7217 Phone  
(203) 576-7213 Fax

**ATTENDANCE:** Ira Nachem, Chair; Robin Shepard, Vice Chair; Mary Gaits, Secretary  
Pierre D'Haiti, Paul Miller

**OTHERS:** Paul Boucher, Zoning Official; Jackson Strong, Design Coordinator

**CALL TO ORDER**

Commissioner Nachem called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. He then announced the Commissioners seated. A quorum was present.

Commissioner Nachem reviewed the process for those present and noted that any application needs four votes in favor to pass.

**#1 - 299 WORDIN AVENUE – Seeking a variance of section 9.50.4 (C4) of the maximum allowable height of a wall sign to install three (3) 120-sq. ft. signs approximately 39-feet above grade incidental to a self-storage facility in the CX zone.**

Mr. John Morrison came forward and greeted the Commissioners. He then turned in the green mailing receipts.

Mr. Morrison displayed an elevation drawing and a photograph of the parcel. He indicated where the signs would be place. When the original application was presented, there was no problem with the sign placement on the building. The regulations have since changed and the sign cannot be more than 25 feet from the ground. He also displayed a roof top sign structure that was pre-existing and non-conforming. and offered to cover the exposed bracing in the back. He also displayed a number of nearby buildings that have signs by their roof line.

Mr. Boucher asked for clarification on the number of signs, which Mr. Morrison reviewed with them.

Mr. Strong explained that the building was three stories high and the zoning regulations do not specifically speak to buildings between 2 and 5 stories tall.

Commissioner Nachem asked if there was anyone present in favor of the application. No one came forward.

Commissioner Nachem asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak against the application. Hearing none, Commissioner Nachem closed the public hearing on Agenda Item #1, 299 Wordin Avenue.

**#2 RE: 1661 & 1673 MAIN STREET – Seeking a height variance of section 3.20.6; primary and nonprimary facade transparency variance of section 3.20.8; and a rear setback variance of section 3.20.4 to construct a new facility with eight (8) squash courts, classroom/flex space, offices, locker rooms and a small snack and beverage café in the MX1 zone.**

Atty. Charles Willinger of Willinger, Willinger and Bucci, came forward and greeted the Commission. He stated that he was present to present an application for Squash & Education Alliance Inc. [SEA]. SEA is both the applicant and the owner of the property, which is located in an MX-1 zone. This is a permitted use. The SEA organization will be moving their headquarters to this site.

Atty. Willinger noted that this is the former location of a night club. The application is requesting four variances. One involves a variance for the rear set back. The second variance involves the height requirement. The third and fourth variance involves the amount of window coverages.

SEA just celebrated their 25th anniversary. The organization was started by a professional squash player and also a social worker in Boston. Shortly afterwards there were some other organizations that opened in other cities. 95% of their students go on to secondary education.

Atty. Willinger outlined the program that SEA offers and stated that SEA will be recruiting students. They are also required to volunteer in a formal organization to provide community based service. They travel to squash competitions. The plan is to start with 75 students and can handle up to 200 students. When the building is not in use by the program, it can be open for the community.

Mr. Manny Marchado, the architect came forward and gave an overview of the drawing. He indicated where the classrooms would be for students enrichment.

Commissioner Nachem asked how many courts there would be. Mr. Marchado said that there would be 8 courts in the building.

Commissioner Shepard asked how old the youngest students in the program would be. She was told that the program would start with sixth graders.

Commissioner Gaits asked about the parking available. Mr. Marchado said that there was a nearby church that will rent them parking.

Commissioner D'Haiti asked how the students would arrive and depart. Atty. Willinger said that the students would either walk or there would be vans to drop them off.

Atty. Willinger said that Mr. Strong had reviewed the plans and had issued a report on July 3rd. The plans now reflect Mr. Strong's comments.

Atty. Willinger said that the existing building is right on the property line. He said that if the developer reduces the non-conformity, that would be sufficient.

Regarding the height variance, one section is 22 feet in height and the middle section is two stories.

There is a requirement that 75% of the building has to be windows. However, if the center section of the building and the right section of the building are included, it becomes 92% transparency.

The portion of the building that faces George Street is where the squash courts will be and the sport requires four solid walls for the court. There will be a mural on that solid wall.

Regarding the CPOD, the building must be in harmony with the neighborhood. Demolishing the night club will be a positive thing.

In the MX-1 zone, the regulations allow this as of right. The goal of the Master Plan is to improve access to physical recreation.

Mr. Strong came forward to confirm that the developers had worked to implement his suggestions.

Commissioner Gaits asked if there would be adequate lighting in the back of the Building. JS said that there would be

Commissioner Nachem asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak against the application. Hearing none, Commissioner Nachem closed the public hearing on Agenda Item #2 1661 & 1673 Main Street.

### **RECESS**

Commissioner Nachem announced a recess at 6:58 p.m. He reconvened the meeting at 6:59 p.m.

### **DECISION SESSION**

**#1 - 299 WORDIN AVENUE – Seeking a variance of section 9.50.4 (C4) of the maximum allowable height of a wall sign to install three (3) 120-sq. ft. signs approximately 39-feet above grade incidental to a self-storage facility in the CX zone.**

Commissioner Miller said that they were in conformity with the surrounding properties. He said that Mongers Market sign was higher. Commissioner Gaits noted that this was located in was an industrial area.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER SHEPARD MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM #1 - 299 WORDIN AVENUE – SEEKING A VARIANCE OF SECTION 9.50.4 (C4) OF THE MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE HEIGHT OF A WALL SIGN TO INSTALL THREE (3) 120-SQ. FT. SIGNS APPROXIMATELY 39-FEET ABOVE GRADE INCIDENTAL TO A SELF-STORAGE FACILITY IN THE CX ZONE WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITION:**

**THE EXISTING ROOF SIGN SKELETON IS TO BE ENCLOSED WITH MATERIALS AND COLORS TO MATCH THE PUBLIC STORAGE BUILDING.**

**FOR THE FOLLOWING REASON:**

**THE SIGNS ARE AT A HEIGHT THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH PREVIOUSLY APPROVED SIGNS ALONG THE I-95 CORRIDOR.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GAITS SECONDED.  
\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**#2 RE: 1661 & 1673 MAIN STREET – Seeking a height variance of section 3.20.6; primary and nonprimary facade transparency variance of section 3.20.8; and a rear setback variance of section 3.20.4 to construct a new facility with eight (8) squash courts, classroom/flex space, offices, locker rooms and a small snack and beverage café in the MX1 zone.**

There was a discussion about the fact that one of the field cards state the address is 1691 Main Street, but this is incorrect.

Commissioner D'Haiti said that it was important to have this facility for children.

Commissioner Nachem said that the variances do not seem to be very significant and explained why. One of the reasons the ZBA exists is because there are unique requirements. He said that the hardship was the type of use that the building was being utilized for.

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GAITS MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM #2 RE: 1661 & 1673 MAIN STREET – SEEKING A HEIGHT VARIANCE OF SECTION 3.20.6; PRIMARY AND NONPRIMARY FACADE TRANSPARENCY VARIANCE OF SECTION 3.20.8; AND A REAR SETBACK VARIANCE OF SECTION 3.20.4 TO**

**CONSTRUCT A NEW FACILITY WITH EIGHT (8) SQUASH COURTS, CLASSROOM/FLEX SPACE, OFFICES, LOCKER ROOMS AND A SMALL SNACK AND BEVERAGE CAFÉ IN THE MX1 ZONE WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITION:**

**THE BUILDING SHALL BE CONSTRUCTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LATEST PLAN SUBMISSION INCORPORATING THE DESIGN CHANGES INDICATED IN THE RENDERINGS PROVIDED IN THIS REPORT AND THE ART MURAL LOCATED ON THE GEORGE STREET-FACING FAÇADE.**

**FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

- 1. THE REQUESTED VARIANCES ARE A MINOR DEVIATION OF THE ZONING REGULATION STANDARDS.**
- 2. THE NEW BUILDING WILL REDUCE THE NON-CONFORMITY OF THE EXISTING BUILDING’S SITING.**
- 3. THE UNIQUE USE OF THE BUILDING JUSTIFIES THE REQUESTED VARIANCES.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER D’HAITI SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**OTHER BUSINESS.**

There were no additional items to consider at this time.

**OTHER MATTERS THAT MAY PROPERLY COME BEFORE THE BOARD**

There were no additional items to consider at this time.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

**• July 11, 2023**

The following corrections were noted:

Page 3, paragraph 4, line 3: please change the following from:

“It is. Not permitted and shouldn't be. there are numerous examples of haphazard”

To: “It is not permitted and shouldn't be there. There are numerous examples of haphazard”

Page 3, paragraph 5, line 1: please change the following from:

“were three difference variances” to “were three different variances”

Page 3, under Decision Session, please change the following motion from:

**\*\* COMMISSIONER SHEPARD MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM D-2  
RE: 3 ARMSTRONG PLACE – REQUESTING VARIANCES OF TABLE 2-2 OF  
PERMISSIBLE BUILDING TYPES AND OF SECTION 4.10 OF PERMISSIBLE  
USES TO ALLOW FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 1.5 STORY INDUSTRIAL  
GARAGE WITH OFFICE IN THE NX2 ZONE.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GAITS SECONDED.**

**\*\*THE MOTION TO APPROVE FAILED TO PASS WITH THREE (3) IN  
FAVOR (GAITS, MILLER AND SHEPARD) AND TWO (2) AGAINST  
(NACHEM, D’HAITI).**

To: **\*\* COMMISSIONER SHEPARD MOVED TO APPROVE AGENDA ITEM D-2  
RE: 3 ARMSTRONG PLACE – REQUESTING VARIANCES OF TABLE 2-2 OF  
PERMISSIBLE BUILDING TYPES AND OF SECTION 4.10 OF PERMISSIBLE  
USES TO ALLOW FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A 1.5 STORY INDUSTRIAL  
GARAGE WITH OFFICE IN THE NX2 ZONE.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GAITS SECONDED.**

**\*\*THE MOTION TO APPROVE FAILED TO PASS UNANIMOUSLY.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER SHEPARD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE  
JULY 11, 2023 MEETING AS CORRECTED.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER MILLER SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER GAITS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**\*\* COMMISSIONER SHEPARD SECONDED.**

**\*\* THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Telesco Secretarial Services

City of Bridgeport  
Zoning Board of Appeals  
Regular Meeting  
August 8, 2023