

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
FOR THE REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
JULY 12, 2017  
AT THE GAINES CHARTER TOWNSHIP OFFICES  
8555 KALAMAZOO AVENUE SE • CALEDONIA, MICHIGAN 49316**

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chair Werkema. A quorum was present.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michael Alex Brew, Connie Giarmo, Don Hilton, Ruth Ringnalda, Tom Werkema, Phil Tietz (Alternate Member)

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Mark Sisson, Township Planner / Zoning Administrator, Matt McKernan, Assistant Planner

**II. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING AGENDA**

None

**III. CONSIDERATION OF MEETING MINUTES**

April 12, 2017 – Regular Meeting Minutes

**MOTION:** By Member Giarmo supported by Member Ringnalda to approve the minutes for the April 12, 2017 Regular Meeting with changes noted by ZBA members.

**Ayes:** Brew, Giarmo, Hilton, Ringnalda, Werkema

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

**IV. INQUIRY OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

None

**V. ADVERTISED PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

**1. Alliance Beverage- 4490 60<sup>th</sup> Street SE (I-1)**

*Variance from Section 17.11 (A) to allow for installation of a 467 square foot wall sign in a location where wall signs are not normally permitted.*

**Shannon Gary Partner/Owner of Alliance Beverage**

Alliance Beverage is a beer/wine wholesaler. Alliance operates 3 facilities in Michigan. The 60<sup>th</sup> Street facility opened in 2014 and is their primary location. Alliance Beverage has 200 employees in Gaines Township. Board members and employees have approached Gary on numerous occasions about the need for a sign on the south side of the building to better advertise the business. Gary invited Matt Jarka from Postema Signs to give further information on the request.

**Matt Jarka of Postema Sign Company**

Alliance Beverage has very limited visibility from 60<sup>th</sup> Street. They would like permission to place a sign on the south side of the building that would allow them to better advertise their business. A 467 square foot sign in this location would provide a balance between Alliance’s desire to advertise to M-6 and the Township’s desire to limit visual clutter along roadways.

**MOTION:** By Member Brew, supported by Member Hilton to open and close the public hearing at 7:12 pm.

**Ayes:** Brew, Giarmo, Hilton, Ringnalda, Werkema

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

Members Giarmo and Ringnalda contended that the location of the building makes identification and advertisement toward 60<sup>th</sup> Street very difficult. Allowing a sign larger than 100 square feet on the south side of the building would be preferable in this instance because an illegible sign could be a distraction to drivers if they have to strain to read it.

Member Hilton expressed reservations about approving a sign of this size. The Township was involved in a court case several years ago for denying a sign company’s request to place a billboard be placed on or near the property that is now owned by Alliance Beverage. The Township’s position was ultimately upheld in that case.

Planner Sisson asked Jarka to explain the guidelines that were used to determine sign visibility and legibility. Jarka explained that sign companies typically consult several industry standard guides for determining sign visibility. Jarka explained that he had designed the sign to be legible from M-6, but not large enough that it would create visual clutter or become a distraction to drivers.

Chair Werkema explained that the staff report indicated that the Township might consider revising Chapter 17 to allow wall signs to face toward M-6 in the industrial district. Werkema asked Planner Sisson to explain how an ordinance amendment would work. Sisson explained that the Township could decide to allow them by right or make it a discretionary decision for the Planning Commission in the form of a special use permit.

**MOTION:** By Member Ringnalda, supported by Member Giarmo to enter the staff report dated July 5, 2017 into the public record.

**Ayes:** Brew, Giarmo, Hilton, Ringnalda, Werkema

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** Passed

Member Brew asked whether or not Steelcase had made any inquiries about this request as they own the property that runs between Alliance Beverage and M-6. Planner Sisson stated he had a discussion with Steelcase’s property manager about whether or not this request would interfere with their ability to place a billboard in this location if they’d like. Sisson explained that Steelcase would have to alter their PUD to allow billboards, but would otherwise be able to place a billboard in this location. Sisson explained that Steelcase or a future property owner would also have the ability to erect a building in this location that might block the view of Alliance Beverage’s wall sign from M-6.

Jarka asked for clarification about the condition of approval listed in the staff report. Jarka was unclear as to what staff meant by the term “specifications.” Jarka wanted to be sure that Alliance Beverage would be able to alter the colors, lettering, or logo on the sign in the future. Planner Sisson explained that staff’s intention is that the Alliance may make alterations to their sign in the future provided it remains under 467 square feet in size and is located in the same location on the south side of the building.

**MOTION:** By Member Ringnalda, supported by Member Giarmo, that based on the findings 1-7 of the staff report, to grant a variance from Section 17.11 (A) to allow for construction of a 467 square foot wall sign on the south side of the Alliance Beverage building. The approval is subject to the following condition:

1. That the sign be of the size, location, and specifications indicated on the sign rendering provided with the application.

**Ayes:** Brew, Giarmo, Ringnalda, Werkema  
**Nays:** Hilton  
**Abstain:** None  
**Motion:** Passed

## VI. GENERAL DISCUSSION

### 1. Discussion Pertaining to the Adoption of Zoning Board of Appeals Bylaws

Planner Sisson presented the ZBA with the most recent draft of the bylaws. Sisson explained that state enabling legislation doesn’t leave a lot of flexibility in what can be adjusted. The ZBA does have the ability to set their own rules for procedural issues.

Chair Werkema asked that the Section 2 (E) be changed to match the wording found in Section 26.2 (4) of the GCTZO.

Member Giarmo asked that Section 6 (A) be altered to include Township Staff as a point of contact for reporting absences. Giarmo also requested that the bylaws specify that the ZBA secretary calls roll on all votes. The ZBA expressed that they would like the bylaws to require voice votes on decisions.

Member Hilton expressed that he would like the bylaws to contain a firm time limit for speakers at public hearings. Other members agreed that the bylaws should contain a time limit for speakers at public hearings, but would prefer the chair have the discretion of when and how to enforce it.

Members of the ZBA instructed staff to revise the bylaws to reflect the requested changes to allow for a vote on adoption at the next scheduled meeting.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

**MOTION:** By Member Giarmo, supported by Member Ringnalda to adjourn.

**Ayes:** Brew, Giarmo, Hilton, Ringnalda, Werkema

**Nays:** None

**Abstain:** None

**Motion:** **Passed**

Meeting Adjourned at 8:15 PM.

**CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that the above is a true copy of the minutes from the July 12, 2017 Regular Meeting of the Gaines Charter Township Zoning Board of Appeals held at the time and place mentioned above pursuant to the required statutory procedures.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Alex Brew", written over a horizontal line.

Michael Alex Brew, Secretary  
Gaines Charter Township  
Zoning Board of Appeals

Dated: September 13, 2017