

**CAUCUS PRIOR TO STRONGSVILLE BOARD OF ZONING &
BUILDING CODE APPEALS**

**Meeting of
March 8, 2023**

Board of Appeals Members Present: Ken Evans, Dustin Hayden, John Rusnov, David Houlé, Richard Baldin

Administration: Assistant Law Director Daniel Kolick

Assistant Building Commissioner: Steve Molnar

Recording Secretary: Kathy Zamrzla

The Board members discussed the following:

1) **SWEETIES OLYMPIA, Matthew Ranallo with Ranallo Concept Studio, Representative**

Requesting a 2'6" Wall Sign Height variance from Zoning Code Section 1272.12 (c), which permits a 5' Wall Sign Height and where a 7'6" Wall Sign Height is proposed; property located at 11606 Pearl Road, PPN 392-26-001, zoned General Business (GB).

Mr. Baldin stated the proposed signage is still too large and it needs to be scaled down. Mr. Houlé said that the building is only 100' off the street and the building is highly visible. In addition, Mr. Houlé stated that the monument sign will be highly visible. Mr. Evans stated that he thinks the sign will look bigger than what it really is. Mr. Hayden stated he might be more inclined to approve of a larger wall sign if the building was situated further back from the road. Mr. Rusnov stated that the business is already well known. Mr. Molnar stated that the sign is under the overall square footage allowed.

The Board members approved the minutes from February 22, 2023.

STRONGSVILLE BOARD OF ZONING & BUILDING CODE APPEALS

MINUTES OF MEETING

March 8, 2023

The meeting was called to order at 8:00 PM by Mr. Hayden.

Present: Mr. Evans
Mr. Hayden
Mr. Rusnov
Mr. Houlé
Mr. Baldin

Also Present: Mr. Kolick, Assistant Law Director
Mr. Molnar, Assistant Building Commissioner
Ms. Zamrzla, Recording Secretary

Mr. Hayden – I would like to call this March 8, 2023 meeting of the Strongsville Board of Zoning and Building Code Appeals to order. May we have a roll call please?

ROLL CALL:	MR. EVANS	PRESENT
	MR. HOULÉ	PRESENT
	MR. HAYDEN	PRESENT
	MR. BALDIN	PRESENT
	MR. RUSNOV	PRESENT

Mr. Hayden – I hereby certify that this meeting has been posted in accordance with Chapter 208 of the Strongsville Codified Ordinances. Before us we also have minutes to approve from our meeting on February 22, 2023. We discussed this in caucus and there were no other corrections or changes needed. We will file those accordingly. We have one item on the agenda this evening, and if you are here this evening and you plan on addressing the Board, I would ask that you stand and be sworn in by our Assistant Law Director, as well as our Secretary and Building Department representative.

Mr. Kolick administered the oath to those standing.

1) **SWEETIES OLYMPIA, Matthew Ranallo with Ranallo Concept Studio, Representative**

Requesting a 2’6” Wall’ Sign Height variance from Zoning Code Section 1272.12 (c), which permits a 5’ Wall Sign Height and where a 7’6” Wall Sign Height is proposed; property located at 11606 Pearl Road, PPN 392-26-001, zoned General Business (GB).

Mr. Hayden – Thank you, Mr. Kolick. All right, if we could have the representative step up to the podium, please, and we will need your name and address for the record.

Mr. Ranallo – My name is Matthew Ranallo representing BA Sweeties Candy Company, 6770 Brook Park Road, Cleveland, Ohio.

Mr. Hayden – Thank you, Mr. Ranallo. Welcome back. You were here for our caucus and heard our comments. Why don’t you talk us through the changes that you made and why they were needed?

Mr. Ranallo – We changed our branding from our last meeting, a lot. We designed the sign and we’re way under our square footage; however, about eight square feet of that is over the height permitted. To ruin the whole sign and then change the sign out front again to match the new branding would defeat the purpose. Again, there are only eight square feet that are above the five-foot mark. After that we have a whole bunch, 30 percent to 40 percent, of unused space. As it

trickles down, we're losing a lot of unused space. I could go back and change it and make it two and ½ feet shorter and change everything but then we're going to need to pull out more space. Right where we placed it is not an ideal spot but I would like to use some of that signage to break up some of the ugly ac units as the changes are being made. This isn't Olympia Chocolate anymore, it's now Sweeties Candies. They are rebranding it. There is a reason by Bob McGrath is getting out of it. I haven't looked at the books but it's not making as much as it could or should be. So, they are rebranding everything. It's not going to be the same old store anymore. If you have seen his other stores then you would understand completely; however, we are trying to appease the City and also stick to a nice-looking sign. I could hack the bottom off two and ½ feet and it would look like the sign in the front yard. It would have the same exact layout. They're nearly the same size; however, I need some of that space above it to support the sign. So, it is for multiple purposes. It's dialed down as far as it can go. I could go back again and knock it back up and add some other stuff in there but now we're talking about using up more square foot over eight square feet. From what we dialed down to before and completely change the branding 100 percent from being a 14' foot tall sign, we've come way down to fit everything. Our sign up front is not elevated at all. It's at a little bit of an angle. We're right at the five-foot mark. As far as the wall sign, I did everything I could to dial it back again and still fit the branding that he is requesting. The changes that we're looking for in the future depend on these changes we're making now.

Mr. Hayden – Thank you, Mr. Ranallo.

Mr. Houlé – The monument sign is 3 ½' high and then on top of that is the 5' sign?

Mr. Ranallo – There's no pedestal. The sign is 5' high from the ground. We'll add flowers around the base of it to match the sign.

Mr. Houlé – I thought the drawing indicated a pedestal.

Mr. Evans – Mr. Ranallo, you alluded to the fact that you didn't want to cut the rounded bottom off for the building sign like the monument sign. My question would be, if it worked on the ground sign why couldn't it work on the wall sign on the building for the same signage.

Mr. Ranallo – I can't cut anymore off the face of the sign. A sign like that doesn't weigh a lot but the shear force of the wind is going to cause a little bit of a problem so we want to make sure there's a nice solid frame to sit it on. In order to do that we need to add some cushioning. I wanted the weight on there so we solidified it. I had my engineer on site and we came up with a preliminary sketch that will work just fine. It's going to be bolted into the beams that actually runs along the building. It will support that sign.

Mr. Evans – If you took the bottom roundness off then you could lower it. That would reduce the amount of wind resistance.

Mr. Ranallo – But then I can't attach it to the front of the building and I need an A-frame to support it.

Mr. Evans – Wouldn't the A-frame anchor in the back?

Mr. Ranallo – It wouldn't be an A-frame. That would add a lot of shear force and we can't attach it to the front of the building. There's nothing there.

Mr. Rusnov – How many square feet are we over?

Mr. Evans – It's under the square feet allowed.

Mr. Rusnov – So, what we're over is on the height.

Mr. Hayden – Two feet, six inches.

Mr. Ranallo – If I was to cut it off at the top and bottom then I would be less than 8'.

Mr. Rusnov – It's within Code of the square footage but the fly in the ointment is the height variance.

Mr. Evans – Correct.

Mr. Baldin – The height of the sign is 7'6"?

Mr. Ranallo – Yes.

Mr. Kolick – We measure at the highest point so the rest of it would be under that.

Mr. Ranallo – A lot of it is way under. We're probably 40 percent of unused space.

Mr. Rusnov – So, there's a lot of difference between the height of a circle and the height of a square. I'm waiting to hear some comments.

Mr. Evans – The problem with setting a precedent like this is that others may want something as big.

Mr. Rusnov – That's right. It's one of our major issues, setting a precedent. Every person that gets a new building comes in here wanting a huge sign.

Mr. Ranallo – We've spent tons of money changing our brand. I don't know what we could do to change it except when you take away height, you get width. It's going to look bigger if I change it. When you make a sign with ornamental pieces it always mimics the other sign to get a nice even

flow to it. It's just going to start getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger. We're going to add more weight to it and it's going to sit above. I'm trying to stick to a design that everybody is happy with and if the owner was well enough to be here I'm sure he would be. I don't know what to do. I guess we will have to table it again.

Mr. Rusnov – In other words, you try to make everybody happy but you only have so much to work with.

Mr. Ranallo – The way the front of the building is I'm going to be above. If I change it it's going to look even larger to everyone that doesn't know anything about it. To make the sign shorter and wider I'm going to have to go higher to get more support.

Mr. Rusnov – This current design is within the square footage limits set by the City, not by the height and there is a difference between a circle and a square.

Mr. Ranallo – I agree. We did discuss it with the legal team. It is an art piece and I didn't want to make it part of the front of the building and the façade and I probably could have got a stucco permit and did all this on the front of the building and then added the sign on the top of it. The art is being hindered greatly. His designs are based on a lot of years in the business. His place is a landmark. It might be... Strongsville has their landmark with Olympia Chocolate and he's trying to further that and bring in his community and his area and what he does there. It's larger than life in a lot of ways, but the world's largest candy store and American's largest candy store is right here in Cleveland, and he's now bringing it to Strongsville and they want to represent that.

Mr. Rusnov – We understand that you're trying to get the Sweetie's brand name out there but honestly, if you didn't even have a sign I still think that you would have a line out the door.

Mr. Ranallo – I don't think so.

Mr. Evans – Sweetie's did have the store on the East Side and closed it after two years of not having success there. Our problem is that the variance stays with the property so if Sweetie's closes this store like they did on the East Side then at that point the variance stays with the building and that's part of our concern. The next business could have a big red chicken out front and that is part of the reason that we have the Code and we have to work with following it.

Mr. Rusnov – The variance stays with the property.

Mr. Ranallo – That's why I looked at the Fiat sign. That's a tricky one too. They're actually over their 5' too. It's probably part of the branding. Coming here they could have easily put that sign sideways and made everyone happy, but they didn't and now we have a store that is sitting right next to it that has their variance and you're not setting a precedent. We have a vacant property right next to us for twelve years and you're concerned about a sign with a 2' 8" overage on it? You talk about a chicken that would be 6' tall and only 2' wide. So, its small little tweaks being made

to fit the situation. I feel like with all the changes that we've made and rebranded and they've bought this building and purchased everything and we can't get a special ordinance to settle the eight square feet that is hanging over us. It's crazy to me, especially considering the amount of money. It's not even about the money. You're right, we don't even have to put the name on the lollipop. That's why I can't mess with it. On the ground it looks great because it looks like it's coming out of the ground. I was going to put a big twirly stick on it but that would have put me way over size. The stick would be considered part of the sign. To make it look real I did everything I could. I don't think you're going to be happy with the change it is going to go through without your approval on this because if we do shrink it down it sounds like we don't have to come back here. We could just put it to the Building Department and it could be any old crazy thing. I don't necessarily agree with that. We have taken the popcorn off of it and that's a huge thing to fit this angle and he sells a lot of popcorn. They made 100,000 popcorn balls yesterday and they're going to space in a couple of weeks with an astronaut from Euclid. That's one of the things that we're bringing to the table.

Mr. Kolick – Mr. Chairman, for the applicant, although the variance stays with the property it would have to be the same type of sign. Someone couldn't make this into a square then and say you got a 2' 8" variance. You can't do that. If they used the same sign and just changed it to a new name then that would stay with the property. So you understand, this round sign couldn't be made into a square sign and it would be okay. That is not the way the Code works. So, it would have to be utilizing the same type of round circle. It's different than a square up there. For the karate place down on Pearl Road I think that was a size variance. That was also a circle which made it a little less intrusive than a big square would be up there. And this applicant has tried to work with us. We pushed a little to get this to something that wasn't crazy for the City, so to speak.

Mr. Baldin – What if you did cut the bottom down a little bit, like you did in the monument sign?

Mr. Ranallo – I thought about moving it down to the bottom so it looked like it was cut off at the windows but I need that support and the A frame up top.

Mr. Baldin – So it doesn't blow away.

Mr. Ranallo – It weighs less than 800 pounds even with the frame. It's plastic.

Mr. Baldin – I'm sure you came up with a lot of drawings. What else did you come up with?

Mr. Ranallo – You have no idea. I have hundreds of drawings. If you have a couple of hours then we'll go get some drinks and we'll go over it. There's a lot. I've been doing this for him...he moved over from his old store because he wasn't getting any recognition and he was still the largest candy store because of his shipping. He deals with Heinen's and everybody all over. He's charged more for the root beer than he makes just to have it in the store. He knows what he's doing. And he's looking for the experience as well. You want to walk in the store and feel nostalgia and change everything. You can go through there and see the store and you'd be impressed.

Mr. Baldin – I’ve been in the Brookpark store.

Mr. Hayden – I’ve been there too.

Mr. Baldin – It’s impressive.

Mr. Rusnov – They have stuff that’s been around from thirty years ago.

Mr. Ranallo – Or longer.

Mr. Baldin – When you were a kid, John.

Mr. Kolick – Why don’t we just take a vote on this as it is and let’s see where it falls. I think that’s the best thing at this point. We know what we’re voting on, a round sign as opposed to a square one. Let’s just take a vote on it. It’s not going to change anything.

Mr. Hayden – Okay. We already had our Public Hearing at the last meeting and that was closed. So, I will entertain a motion.

Mr. Houlé – Mr. Chairman, I would like to request a 2’6” Wall’ Sign Height variance from Zoning Code Section 1272.12 (c), which permits a 5’ Wall Sign Height and where a 7’6” Wall Sign Height is proposed; property located at 11606 Pearl Road, PPN 392-26-001, zoned General Business (GB) be approved.

Mr. Rusnov - Second.

Mr. Hayden – Thank you, Mr. Houlé, for the motion and Mr. Rusnov for the second. May we have a roll call please?

ROLL CALL: MR. EVANS – YES
 MR. RUSNOV – YES
 MR. HOULÉ – YES
 MR. BALDIN – YES
 MR. HAYDEN – YES

MOTION GRANTED

Mr. Hayden – Mr. Ranallo, your variance has been granted by this Board. There is a twenty-day waiting period during which City Council has an opportunity to review our decision. You will hear from the Building Department after twenty days if City Council doesn’t review the decision. You are all set for tonight.

Mr. Ranallo – Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Kolick – Mr. Ranallo, have you been before the Architectural Review Board?

Mr. Brown – No, not for this.

Mr. Kolick – During the twenty-day period, you can schedule yourself onto the Architectural Review Board. They will hear you during the twenty-day period. So, if you contact Carol Brill at City Hall, she can schedule you before the Architectural Review Board.

Mr. Ranallo – Thank you.

Mr. Rusnov – When you talk to the City officials, please present yourself the way you are today and explain in detail the reasons why.

Mr. Ranallo – I’ve been working with Ted Hurst a lot. He’s been guiding me along.

Mr. Rusnov – Or any City Council members.

Mr. Ranallo – I appreciate it.

Mr. Baldin – We’ll be hearing about it, I’m sure.

Mr. Rusnov – Oh darn, they could fire us.

Mr. Hayden - If there is no other business to come before this Board, we are adjourned.

<u>Signature on File</u>	<u>Signature on File</u>	<u>March 22, 2023</u>
Mr. Hayden, Chairman	Kathy Zamrzla, Secretary	Approval date