



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

**County Board Agenda Item
Meeting of February 20, 2010**

DATE: February 2, 2010

SUBJECT: USE PERMIT U-3238-09-2 of Wilson Boulevard Christian Church for comprehensive sign plan for addition of a bulletin board sign located at 3850 Wilson Boulevard (RPC #020-003-001).

Applicant:

Wilson Boulevard Christian Church
3850 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22203

By:

William B. Lawson Jr., Attorney
Lawson, Tarter, & Charvet, P.C.
6045 Wilson Boulevard, Suite 100
Arlington, Virginia 22205

C.M. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the use permit request for a comprehensive sign plan subject to the conditions of the staff report.

ISSUES: This is a request for a bulletin board sign which, like all freestanding signs, are not ordinarily permitted in commercial districts. Members of the adjacent Ashton Heights community have expressed concerns regarding illumination of the proposed sign.

SUMMARY: This is a request for a comprehensive sign plan for a new 30 square foot bulletin board sign at the Wilson Boulevard Christian Church, and the retention of two (2) wall signs on the rear façade of the church. Because the church is located in a commercial district ("C-2"), a bulletin board sign is not allowed as of right. The comprehensive sign plan allows the County Board to provide some flexibility to modify signs. Churches are typically located in "R" zoned districts; there are very few churches located in "C" districts. A reasonable way to address signs for churches in "C" districts is to allow the church either the type and amount of signage permitted in the "C" district, or permit the church the type and amount of signage permitted in the "R" district. The latter would allow the church to have a bulletin board sign, but would

County Manager: BMD/GA

County Attorney: SAM

Staff: Matthew Pfeiffer, DCPHD, Planning Division

PLA-5511

greatly reduce the amount of total sign area allowed in a “C” district. In this case staff is supportive of a sign that would be allowed if the church was located in a residential district as long as the total amount of signs allowed are limited to what is allowed in the “R” district with some changes to address the existing signage at the church. Approval of the use permit does have implications for future requests for bulletin board signs in commercial districts. Staff believes that this situation would be unusual enough so that the impact would be minimal. Members of the surrounding community have expressed concerns regarding the lighting of the sign; however the applicant has agreed to a condition limiting the hours of lighting for the proposed sign to mitigate any potential impacts. Therefore, staff recommends that the use permit be approved subject to the conditions of the staff report.

BACKGROUND: The Wilson Boulevard Christian Church is proposing a bulletin board sign to be placed on the western portion of their property so as to be visible to vehicles traveling on Wilson Boulevard. The following is additional information about the property and site.

Site: The property is bound by Wilson Boulevard to the north, North Piedmont Street to the west, and 7th Street North to the south.

Zoning: “C-2” Service Commercial Community Business Districts.

General Land Use Plan Designation: “Residential Low-Medium” (16-36 units/acre).

Neighborhood: The property is located within the Ashton Heights Civic Association. Comments have been received from some residents living near the Wilson Boulevard Christian Church expressing concerns about the sign’s lighting and size. The president of the Ashton Heights Civic Association has expressed that while the association does not have a formal comment on the applicant’s request, some individual members may have concerns with the sign’s lighting. No adverse impacts as a result of the sign’s illumination are anticipated, as the applicant has agreed to a condition limiting the sign’s illumination to the hours between dusk and 11 pm.

DISCUSSION: The Wilson Boulevard Christian Church is requesting a use permit for a comprehensive sign plan including a new bulletin board sign on their property to be directed towards vehicles and pedestrians traveling on Wilson Boulevard. The comprehensive sign plan for the subject church would include the proposed new bulletin board sign. Staff is also amenable to the applicant keeping two (2) existing wall signs. The following chart summarizes the proposed comprehensive sign plan:

WILSON BOULEVARD CHRISTIAN CHURCH SIGNS		
Sign	Text	Size
Bulletin Board Sign	Wilson Boulevard Christian Church (5 lines of changeable type)	30 sq ft
Wall Sign	Wilson Boulevard Christian Church Disciples of Christ Visitor's Welcome (worship hours)	24 sq ft
Wall Sign	Day Care Preschool Ballston Children's Center	24 sq ft

The proposed new bulletin board sign would consist of three segments; a concrete base structure, a middle supporting segment, and a top segment. The top segment would contain the name of the church above five (5) lines of changeable type. The sign would measure approximately 30 square feet in size, would reach approximately 10 ½ ft in height, and would be placed behind an existing landscaped area at the intersection of Wilson Boulevard and North Piedmont Street on the church's property. The applicant would like the option of having the sign illuminated. In addition to the bulletin board sign, the church is proposing to keep two (2) existing wall signs (24 square feet each) located on the rear façade of the church.

Staff supports the Comprehensive Sign Plan for the church. Under the existing "C" zoning the applicant is entitled to up to 203 square feet of sign area (total of sign area may not exceed the amount of linear street frontage of the subject building). However, no bulletin board sign would be permitted. The applicant has agreed to remove two (2) existing signs on the church's Wilson Boulevard façade and understands that no additional sign area would be allowed thus reducing their allowed sign area to a maximum of 30 square feet plus two (2) remaining wall signs measuring 24 square feet each. Staff supports the inclusion of these two (2) existing wall signs located on the rear façade of the church because they would not be visible from Wilson Boulevard, and would be used mainly for identifying the rear entrances to the church and the day care, respectively. The applicant agrees that these two (2) signs shall not be replaced or altered in any way.

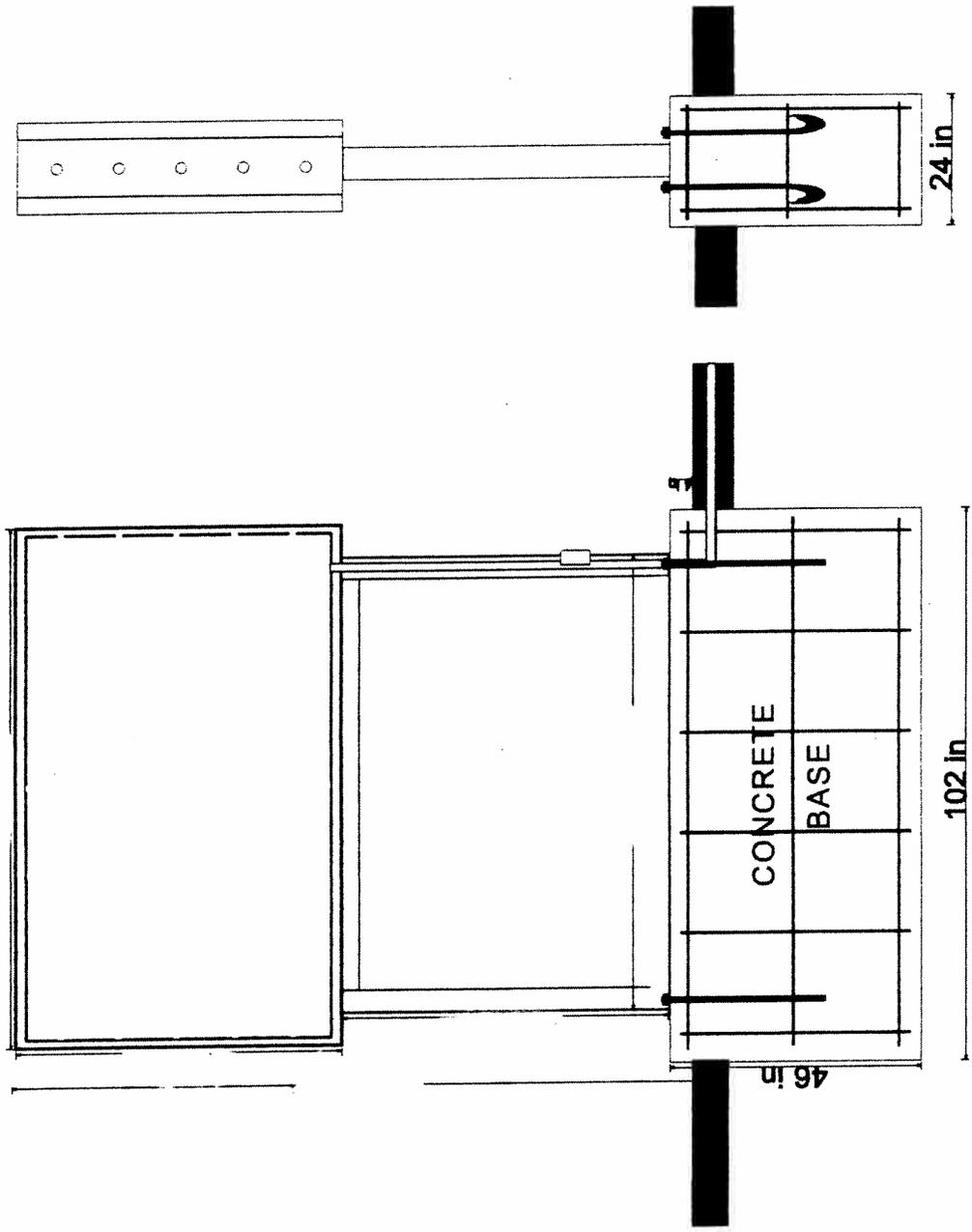
CONCLUSION: The applicant is requesting a comprehensive sign plan for a bulletin board sign at the corner of Wilson Boulevard and North Piedmont Street. The applicant is also requesting that two (2) 24 square foot signs remain on the back facade of the church. Staff supports the applicant's request because bulletin board signs are allowed for churches in "R" districts in Arlington County and the applicant is limiting the amount of commercial sign area they would be allowed. The Ashton Heights Civic Association has indicated that some members may have issues with the sign's lighting, but the applicant has agreed to a condition requiring the lights to be turned off at 11 pm. Therefore, staff recommends that the use permit for a freestanding sign be approved subject to four (4) conditions:

Conditions:

1. The applicant agrees that the bulletin board sign for the Ballston Christian Church shall be limited to the location and design as shown on the drawings by Sign-A-Rama, and attached to this report. The applicant also agrees to remove the two (2) existing wall signs on the Church's Wilson Boulevard frontage and may retain the two (2) 24 square foot signs on the rear façade of the church; however neither of these two (2) wall signs may be replaced or altered in any way, and shall be removed when they reach the end of their useful life. Sign area for the church shall not exceed 30 square feet for the bulletin board sign and 24 square feet each for the two (2) existing wall signs.
2. The applicant agrees that the bulletin board sign may be illuminated between dusk and 11 p.m., seven (7) days per week. The applicant further agrees that if the County Manager finds that the bulletin board sign lighting has an adverse effect on the surrounding area, it will immediately carry out any recommendation by the County Manager to reduce the hours of operation and/or lighting intensity.
3. The applicant agrees that the Zoning Administrator may approve a minor change to the bulletin board sign. For the purposes of the preceding sentence, minor changes shall include only the following: (i) a minor adjustment in the location of the sign to meet field conditions (less than 1 foot in any direction); (ii) a minor change in the area of the sign (less than 5%), or (iii) a change in the wording of the sign. All other changes to the approved Comprehensive Sign Plan, including changes to the two (2) wall signs on the rear façade of the church, will require use permit approval or amendment.
4. The applicant shall identify a liaison who shall be available to receive and respond to community concerns. The name and telephone number of the liaison shall be sent to the Ashton Heights Civic Association and the Zoning Administrator.

PREVIOUS COUNTY BOARD ACTIONS:

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| June 2009 | Deferred resolution granting density credit in exchange for fee simple dedication of a portion of church property to the Arlington County Board. |
| July 2009 | Approved resolution granting density credit in exchange for fee simple dedication of a portion of church property to the Arlington County Board. |



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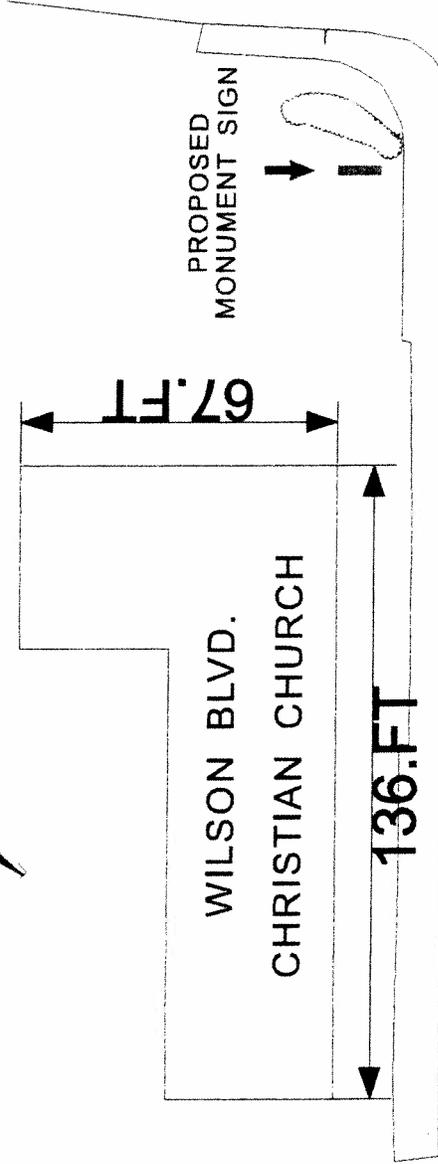
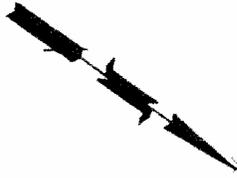
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SIGNARAMA

Approved: _____

Approved W/Changes: _____

N. PIEDMONT



WILSON BLVD

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