

APPEAL FOR SIGN VARIANCE FOR THE FRONT OF 1020 MADISON AVENUE

INTRODUCTION: The College of Saint Rose engaged the services of AJ Signs to request a variance to install a six-inch-high sign (exhibits A, A1 and A2) on the front of 1020 Madison Avenue. The sign company reported back to the College that the City required additional information. Thus, we are providing the below and attachments as additional information.

BASIC ISSUE: The College believes this was an oversight by the architect. They proposed a sign over the side entrance which cannot be seen from the street (exhibits B and B1). That sign was installed and is a design fault. The sign is 12 feet from a six-foot high fence along the side property and garage of our neighbor to the west. The building has two purposes and two entrances. Kindly see dual Certificate of Occupancy (exhibit C) and Dual Use section below:

DUAL USE: The side entrance is card activated so the seven resident students who live on the second floor have access. They do not have access to the front entrance. The front entrance is for use by The Women's Leadership Institute which has meeting rooms and offices on the first floor. The front door is next to the staff offices that monitor the entrance for the Institute. Visitors attend meetings and workshops on that floor. They are greeted by the full time director and her staff. This is consistent with the dual Certificate of Occupancy from the City and building diagram (exhibits C and C1).

RESPONSE TO INITIAL CITY CONCERNS: The College contracted with AJ Signs to complete the required paperwork to obtain City permission for the sign and installation. In October, AJ Signs reported to the College that they had received a call regarding the application. The sign representative reported that they were told that what they had submitted (exhibit D) was not enough for the board to hear our variance request. Specifically, two aspects were pointed out:

Part 4: Character of the Neighborhood

Demonstrate the statement to be valid - "The proposed signage would not be out of place". The College's response is that the vast majority (all but three private residences) are institutional buildings on that block. The Massry Center, four buildings to the east at 1002 Madison, has signs on both the front and side of the building (exhibits E and F). The Huether School of Business, six buildings to the east, has both front and side entrance signage (exhibits G and H). Directly across the street from the proposed sign addition is St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, which has three entrances and three signs (exhibits I and J). The building to the east of St. Andrew's is the Thelma P. Lally School of Education at 1009 Madison. It has multiple entrances and signs (exhibits K and L). *Please note that the proposed sign only has six- inch high letters, which we felt was more consistent with the size of the building.

Part 5: Alternatives Considered

The second aspect reported to us by the sign company was that the City wanted to know if alternatives were considered.

We considered a variety of alternatives. One was to move the existing letters over the side door to the front. The concern being the letters may not easily be removed and the side entrance sign area will need refinishing. This could actually cost more than new lettering and installation. Another alternative was to use temporary sandwich board style signage when guests are

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expected. That of course would not look as professional. For early morning meetings the sign would have to be put out the night before. Another alternative was to rely on the sidewalk sign (seen in exhibit B). However, from October until February visitors to the Women's Leadership Institute were confused as to the location and entrance of the building. We resorted to posting a newsprint size sign on the door when guests were expected. That was very unprofessional and does not speak to the quality of the renovation and transformation of this building. The College has concluded that we have not found a suitable alternative most specifically for the reason noted below:

OF SIGNIFICANT IMPORTANCE TO THE COLLEGE: The College is dependent on donors to contribute to its programs. We have a donor who deserves to have her name on this building in a prominent place, consistent with our other buildings. The donor made it possible for us to totally renovate this building, which was supported by local stakeholders and the Historic Albany Foundation. We have received only positive feedback regarding this renovation.

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS: The College emailed local stakeholders with copies to Brad Glass, including neighbors next to the house on both sides, council representative, four neighborhood leadership and most recently the new President of the Pine Hills Neighborhood Association (exhibit M). We included the sign diagram (exhibits A and A1) and a photo of the front of the house (Exhibit A2). We offered to meet or discuss by phone. The only response was one of the neighbors next door to the east (Exhibit N) saying he liked how we improved the property and supports the sign being installed.

SUMMARY: The College readily admits that this was a design fault we wish we had discovered earlier. The sign on the side entrance for the seven residents living on the second floor is all but useless for the visitors and guests to the Women's Leadership Institute and does not adequately honor the enormous contributions of our donor. This building and program not only benefit the College and our students but the greater community as well. We humbly request permission to install the proposed sign on the front of the building consistent with other building on that block.

Dated this 11 day of May, 2020

Debra Lee Polley

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