



CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

A COAST GUARD CITY

Planning and Community Development Department

AGENDA ITEM

Case No: VAR 25-04
Proposal: Variance for directly illuminated freestanding sign
Applicants: Ryan Gluth
Owners: Sitka Assembly of God
Location: 214 Kimsham Street
Legal: Lot 2, Block 1, U.S. Survey 3303 B
Zone: R-1 - Single-Family/Duplex Residential District
Size: 16,793
Parcel ID: 1-4505-000
Existing Use: Church
Adjacent Use: Residential
Utilities: Existing
Access: Kimsham Street

KEY POINTS AND CONCERNS

- Proposal is for a freestanding monument sign with direct lighting

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Aerial
Attachment B: U.S. Survey 3303 B
Attachment C: Site Plan
Attachment D: Lighting Information
Attachment E: Photos
Attachment F: Applicant Materials

BACKGROUND/PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The applicant is requesting a variance to directly illuminate a 6 feet by 3 feet (18 sq. ft.) freestanding sign for the Sitka Assembly of God at 214 Kimsham Street in the R-1 single-family and duplex residential district. This sign will be backlit by LED strips behind the steel plate through the logo cutout. The proposed site of the sign is located next to a rock wall on the north side of the property adjacent to Kimsham Street. While there are houses on Kimsham Street, most neighboring properties have substantial vegetative buffers, with the exception of the two houses directly across from the site where the sign will be placed. The sign will be directed down Kimsham Street towards Peterson Avenue.

ANALYSIS

The Sitka General Code 22.20.090 15.a. states, “*signs in zones other than CBD, C-1, C-2 or I zone districts may be illuminated. Signs in all other zones may be indirectly illuminated, provided the light source for indirectly illuminated signs shall be no farther away from the sign than the height of the sign; b. indirectly illuminated signs shall be arranged so that no direct rays of light are projected from such artificial source into residences or any street right-of-way.*” This provision speaks to the intent of the regulations around illumination – preventing light pollution or glare in residential areas or directly into any rights-of-way.

Alaska Statute 29.40.040(b)(3) states that a variance may not be granted solely to relieve financial hardship or inconvenience; the applicant must demonstrate that the variance is warranted due to a unique need/circumstance surrounding the request. This development is unique as churches are a nonconforming use within the R-1 single-family and duplex residential district. While the property is within a residential area where sign illumination could create undesirable light pollution, current LED technology allows for minimally invasive lighting that does not create any more glare and light pollution than would be created by lighting the sign indirectly. The proposed signage will produce 1075 lumens which is equivalent to a 75-watt light bulb. The freestanding identification sign will have illumination limited to the borders of the sign and the lettering, significantly reducing the potential for hazardous glare.

Comprehensive Plan Guidance

While the Comprehensive Plan does not specifically address signs or sign illumination, it does support development for existing organizations to create visitor friendly spaces.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the variance to allow for direct sign illumination at 214 Kimsham Street.

MOTIONS TO APPROVE THE ZONING VARIANCE

1. **“I move to approve the zoning variance for direct illumination of a freestanding monument sign at 214 Kimsham Street in the R1 – single family and duplex residential district subject to the attached conditions of approval. The property is also known as Lot 2, Block 1, U.S. Survey 3303B. The request is filed by Ryan Gluth. The owner of record is Sitka Assembly of God.”**

Conditions of Approval

- a. One freestanding monument sign is approved to be directly illuminated.
 - b. The plans shall remain consistent with the narrative and plans provided by the applicant for this request. Any substantive changes to the plan will require additional Planning Commission review.
 - c. The Planning Commission, at its discretion, may schedule a public hearing at any time for the purpose of resolving issues with the request and mitigating adverse impacts on nearby properties upon receipt of meritorious complaint or evidence of violation of conditions of approval.
 - d. Substantial construction progress must be made on the project within one year of the date of the variance approval or the approval becomes void. In the event it can be documented that other substantial progress has been made, a one-year extension may be granted by the Planning Director if a request is filed within eleven months of the initial approval.
2. **“I move to adopt and approve the required findings for minor variances as listed in the report.”**

Before any variance is granted, it shall be shown¹:

- a. Required Findings for Minor Expansions, Small Structures, Fences, and Signs: The municipality finds that the necessary threshold for granting this variance should be lower than thresholds for variances involving major structures or major expansions *because signs are a minor improvement to a property, and the overall impact of the development was appropriately considered in the permitting process;*
- b. The granting of the variance is not injurious to nearby properties or improvements *the design of the sign prevents glare into neighboring properties;*
- c. The granting of the variance furthers an appropriate use of the property *because it provides visible roadside signage located on the same property as the organization it is intended to serve.*

¹ Section 22.30.160(D)(2)—Required Findings for Minor Variances