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PLANNING BOARD

Planning Board Report: ZBL-2009-2 Institutional Directory Signs Article 44: May 11, 2009 Town Meeting

April 28, 2009

At their meeting on April 13, 2009, the Grafton Planning Board conducted a public hearing to consider proposed amendments to the Grafton Zoning By-law (ZBL) to change the definition of “Institutional Directory Sign” under Section 2.3 and to amend language pertaining to Directory Signs under Section 4.4.4.2 (2). Board members present were Chairman Christophe Courchesne, Vice-Chairman Robert Hassinger, and member Bruce Spinney III. Those individuals wishing to speak to the proposed amendments were heard.

The proposed amendments seek to amend the following:

- Section 2.3: delete the words “erected and maintained by the Town” from the definition of Institutional Directory Sign, which currently states “ A freestanding outdoor sign erected and maintained by the Town that directs the public to civic, educational, cultural and/or religious facilities for reasons of public safety, convenience and improved traffic flow,” so that it now reads “A freestanding outdoor sign that directs the public to civic, educational, cultural and/or religious facilities for reasons of public safety, convenience and improved traffic flow.”
- Section 4.4.4.2 (2), change the title from “Alternative Location for a Directory Sign” to “Alternative Location for a Directional or Institutional Sign;” and likewise replace the words “directory sign” in the first sentence of said section with the words “directional or institutional sign.”

Through testimony, the Board understood that the proposed amendments arose from the Town’s denial of an application by a fraternal organization to place informational signs relating to its organization within public ways because the ZBL did not clearly make provision for such signs. The proposed language is intended to remedy that lack of clarity.

The Board determined that the change to the definition under Section 2.3 was supportable but had concerns regarding the proposed changes to Section 4.4.4.2. It believes that such signs could be adequately addressed under the existing provisions of Section 4.4.4.2(1) “Off-Premises Institutional Directory Signs,” and that the proposed changes to Section 4.4.4.2 (2) “Alternative Location for a Directory Sign” would further confuse the issue. Overall, the Board found that the proposed amendments did not accomplish what was intended and needed additional refinement

to achieve the proponents' goals. The Board also noted that the sponsorship for the amendments was unclear, and that any future amendment should be advanced by a specific proponent consistent with G. L. c. 40A, § 5, and be supported by a clear written explanation of the rationale for the changes.

Therefore, after receiving testimony and reviewing the proposed amendments, the Planning Board voted to recommend that the amendment be referred to the Planning Board for further study and consideration at a future Town Meeting.