

**DECISION
GRAFTON PLANNING BOARD**

SPECIAL PERMIT (SP 2015-11)

**Installing of Second Wall Sign, Installation of a New Freestanding Directional Sign,
Replacement of two (2) Non-Compliant Signs, and Installation of Two (2) fixed Banners
Homefield Credit Union, 86 Worcester Street, North Grafton, MA**

Homefield Credit Union (Applicant / Owner)

Decision of the Grafton Planning Board (hereinafter the Board) on the petition of Homefield Credit Union, 86 Worcester Street, North Grafton, MA 01536 (hereinafter the APPLICANT / OWNER), for a Special Permit under Section 4.4.4 (Special Cases / Relief) of the Grafton Zoning By-law for relief from the requirements for signs in a Community Business (CB) zoning district. Said petition seeks approval for: installation of second wall sign, installation of an additional single sided, directional sign for the drive through lanes, two double sided banners to be affixed to light posts for the property, and replacement of non-compliant entrance and exit signs at 86 Worcester Street, North Grafton, and shown on Grafton Assessor's Map 55, Lot 95 and owned by Homefield Credit Union by deed recorded in the Worcester District Registry of Deeds in Book 17023, Page 192.

I. BACKGROUND

The application for the above referenced Special Permit (hereinafter Application) was submitted on July 23, 2015. Notice of the public hearing and the subject matter thereof was published in the Grafton News on August 27 and September 2, 2015, and posted with the Town Clerk's Office. Abutters were notified by First Class Mail. The public hearing on the Application was held on September 14, 2015. At the public hearing, all those wishing to speak to the petition were heard. Following public input the hearing was closed on September 14, 2015.

The following Board members were present throughout the public hearing: Chairman Sargon Hanna, Vice Chairman Michael Scully, Clerk Robert Hassinger, and Members Linda Hassinger and David Robbins. At the hearing, Attorney Joseph Antonellis presented the application to the Board on behalf of the Applicant.

II. SUBMITTALS

The following items were submitted to the Board for its consideration of this application:

EXHIBIT 1. Unbound application materials submitted the Applicant / Owner, received on July 23, 2015, including the following:

- Application for Special Permit; 1 page.
- Certificate of Good Standing; signed by Treasurer /Collector on June 12, 2015; 1 page
- Certified Abutters List; signed by Assessors Office Manager; dated June 16, 2015; 1 page.

- Project Narrative, 2 pages.
- Photograph, Permit Request #1, South facing side of building; black & white, 8½ x 11”; no date; 1 page.
- Photograph, Permit Request #2, Shows distance between entrance and proposed sign location; black & white, 8½ x 11”; no date; 1 page.
- Photograph, Permit Request #2, South facing side of the building, sign to be located in mulched area; black & white, 8½ x 11”; no date; 1 page.
- Photograph, Permit Request #3, Lamp post on Homefield lot shows proposed location of fixed banner; black & white, 8½ x 11”; no date; 1 page.
- Photograph, Permit Request #3, Shows typical traffic activity with sign line to our entry way being blocked; black & white, 8½ x 11”; no date; 1 page.

EXHIBIT 2. Email correspondence from Town Planner to Kelly Benoit; RE: Special Sign Permit App; dated July 29, 2015; 3 pages.

EXHIBIT 3. Set of Photographs, Existing (conditions); submitted by Applicant; black & white, 8 ½ x 11”; received July 31, 2015; 3 pages.

EXHIBIT 4. Set of Photographs, Proposed; submitted by Applicant; black & white, 8 ½ x 11”; received July 31, 2015; 4 pages.

EXHIBIT 5. Site map / illustration showing proposed sign locations; color, 8 ½ x 11”; received July 31, 2015; 1 page.

EXHIBIT 6. Department Comment Form – Special Permit – Homefield Credit Union, SP 2015-11; Board of Health Comments; received August 20, 2015; 1 page.

EXHIBIT 7. Department Comment Form – Special Permit – Homefield Credit Union, SP 2015-11; Conservation Agent Comments; received August 20, 2015; 1 page.

EXHIBIT 8. Department Comment Form – Special Permit – Homefield Credit Union, SP 2015-11; Treasurer / Collector’s Office; received August 21, 2015; 1 page.

EXHIBIT 9. Public Hearing Sign-in Sheet, September 14, 2015; 1 page.

III. FINDINGS

At their meeting of _____ after due consideration of the exhibits submitted and the entire record of proceedings introduced and accepted in this matter, the Grafton Planning Board (motion by _____, seconded by _____) voted - in favor to make the following Findings:

- F1. That determinations regarding the following findings are based upon the plans identified in this Decision, as well as the information and materials submitted and presented in association with the Application.

- F2. That determinations regarding the following findings are also predicated upon satisfactory completion of the work shown on the Plans in accordance with this Decision, as well as all applicable Federal, State and Local regulations, except where modified by this Decision.
- F3. That the subject site (as identified by the Applicant and shown in EXHIBIT #1 of this Decision) is located within a Community Business (CB) zoning district. The site is located within the Water Supply Protection Overlay District.
- F4. The Board finds that the Applicant is seeking approval for: installation of second wall sign, installation of an additional single sided, directional sign for the drive through lanes, two double sided banners to be affixed to light posts for the property, and replacement of non-compliant entrance and exit signs at 86 Worcester Street, North Grafton (See EXHIBIT #1.)
- F5. The Board finds that the Applicant's requests for new or modified signs requires relief pursuant to Section 4.4.4.4 regarding from the following sections: Section 4.4.4.3.1 – Exterior Signs; Section 4.4.4.3.2 – Directional and Informational Signs.

At their meeting of [REDACTED] after due consideration of the exhibits submitted and the entire record of proceedings introduced and accepted in this matter, the Grafton Planning Board (motion by [REDACTED], seconded by [REDACTED]) voted [REDACTED] in favor to make the following Findings:

- F6. That during the public hearing the Board and the Applicant discussed the reason for the requested relief. The Owner, Homefield Credit Union, recently changed the bank's name from the Grafton Suburban Credit Union. The Application has several requests for sign relief that will help further identify the site with the new name (see FINDING #F7, #F9, #F10) or to direct traffic on site (see FINDING #F8).
- F7. That during the public hearing the Board and the Applicant discussed the request to install a second wall sign on the south facing side of the building (see EXHIBIT #4). The proposed sign is identical in size and design as the existing wall sign on the front (west) facing side of the building. The dimensions are: 9.6 feet long x 2.44 feet high for a total square footage of 23.4 feet. It was noted that the second proposed sign was intended to identify the bank for traffic travelling north along Worcester Street. The Applicant noted that the road alignment combined with the juxtaposition of the building on the site made it difficult to easily identify the bank in a timely and safe manner. In addition the primary, free standing sign at the front of the lot is not easily visible to those travelling north along Worcester Street. The corner of the bank building is approximately 175 feet from the site entrance. The Applicant stated that the second wall sign on the south facing façade would be in the direct line of sight for those travelling north on Worcester Street and would provide for easier site identification thereby enabling motorists to enter the site in a safer and more timely manner.

The Board and the Applicant discussed this request based on the following requirements of the Zoning By-Law:

- **Section 4.4.3.4.1** – *If the store has a direct entrance into the store in a wall other than the store front, there may be a secondary sign affixed to such wall and, if the store has a wall*

other than the store front, that faces upon a street or parking area, there may be a secondary sign affixed to such wall whether or not such wall contains an entrance to the store; provided, however, that no store shall have more than two (2) secondary signs in any event. The requested second wall sign meets all three of these criteria (see EXHIBIT #1 and EXHIBIT #4). It would be installed on the façade that has a limited access entrance / exit for the staff of the bank only and facing one of the site’s parking areas.

- **Section 4.4.3.4.1** - *The display surface of each of the secondary signs shall not exceed six (6) square feet. The proposed second wall sign exceeds this limit by approximately 75%. The Applicant stated six square feet allowed under this provision would not be large enough to identify the site for the traffic travelling north on Worcester Street. It was further noted that the southern façade of the building is first visible to the north travelling motorist. And while it is not the “front” of the building, it is the first and largest side of the building seen when travelling north along Worcester Street.*
- **Section 4.4.3.4.1.3.C.1** – *For any building fully occupied by a single store / business, the area of the sign shall not exceed one and one-quarter (1 ¼) square feet for each lineal foot of the store wall to which the sign will be affixed; The front of the building (not including the drive thru canopy) is approximately 75 feet x 1.25 allowable square footage for signage = 93.75 total square feet allowed for a wall sign. The existing wall sign on the front of the building is 24.4 square feet, well below the allowable maximum square footage. The Applicant stated that total square footage of the existing wall sign and the proposed second wall sign would be 46.8 square feet, approximately 50% less than the total maximum allowable square footage of 93.75. The Applicant acknowledged that the proposed second wall sign exceeds the allowed six square feet (Section 4.4.3.4.2) but it was well below the maximum square footage allowed under this section of the By-law.*

In the Applicant’s opinion, the proposed second wall sign is required due to circumstances unique to the site including setback, roadway alignment, juxtaposition of the building on the site, and the close proximity of the site’s entrance to the abutting retail / commercial plaza.

F8. That during the public hearing the Board and the Applicant discussed the requested new free standing, single sided sign to direct traffic around the back of the site to access the drive thru and automatic teller machine (ATM) lanes on the other side of the building. The sign would be placed near the southeast corner of the building in the existing landscaped area (see EXHIBIT #4). The Board notes that the Applicant submitted conflicting information regarding the size of the proposed sign. The narrative submitted with the original application stated that the proposed sign would be 2 feet x 3 feet for a total of six (6) square feet (see EXHIBIT #1). A later submission stated that the proposed sign would be 2.3 x 1.7 feet for a total of four (4) square feet (see EXHIBIT #4). The Board and the Applicant discussed this request based on the following requirements of the Zoning By-Law:

- **Section 4.4.3.4.2** – *Directional and Informational Signs – Directional or information assigns shall be limited to two (2) square feet in overall area. The Applicant noted that motorists entering the site have no clear visual path to direct them around the back of the building to access the drive thru services. The angle of the building on the site and the lack*

- of signage causes confusion of which direction to travel to access these services. The ATM located on the north side of the building is visible from Worcester Street. Some motorists have entered the site on the south side and have travelled around the front of the building and then turned into oncoming one way traffic of the drive thru lanes (see EXHIBIT #1). Additional signage on the south side of the site is, in the Applicant's opinion, an important safety improvement. The need for additional square footage is based on the distance from the site entrance to the rear of the building where the drive thru traffic needs to be directed. The Board asked if the Applicant had considered using directional arrows painted directly on the pavement. The Applicant did not see that as a viable option for a number of reasons including that the markings would be difficult to keep clear during snow events and the long term maintenance issues.
- F9. That during the public hearing the Board and the Applicant discussed replacement of entrance and exit signs which are currently non-compliant. The current signs are approximately 5.7 square feet in size (35" x 22.5") which exceed the allowable two (2) square feet for directional signs (Section 4.4.3.4.2). The Applicant is proposing to change the signs by inserting and replacing the new bank logo. No additional language or change is proposed to the size or location of either sign. The Applicant acknowledges that the existing signs are non-conforming but asks that the Board allow the ongoing non-compliance for safety reasons. Of particular concern was the entrance sign which is located at the southern edge of the site. This entrance is approximately 50 feet from the abutting retail / commercial plaza entrance. The larger entrance sign, while non-compliant, provides additional visibility in marking the site entrance which the Applicant sees as important safety consideration.
- F10. That during the public hearing the Board and the Applicant discussed the request to install two (2) double sided banners, each 2.5 x 3.5 feet, to be affixed to two existing light posts located along the front of the site (see EXHIBIT #3 and #5). The Board notes that the Applicant submitted conflicting information regarding the size of the proposed banners. The narrative submitted with the original application stated that the proposed banners would be 1.5 x 2 feet for a total of three (3) square feet each (see EXHIBIT #1). A later submission stated that the proposed sign would be 2.5 x 3.5 feet for a total of 8.75 square feet (see EXHIBIT #4).
- The Applicant stated that the requested banners would provide for additional site visibility, especially for traffic travelling south on Worcester Street. The Board noted that banners are not allowed in the Zoning By-law. The Board notes that the Applicant could apply for relief pursuant to Section 4.4.4.3 – Use of one sign, which is not otherwise permitted by right by these By-laws, per lot. It is further noted that the Applicant did not submit a request for relief for this request in the Application. The Board notes that the banners will not be considered as part of the ongoing evaluation of the Application with regards to its FINDINGS.
- F11. That during the public hearing the Board solicited public comment. No public input was received.

Signs – Special Cases / Relief – Section 4.4.4 - Conditions for Granting Worksheet

Permit #: 2015-11 – Homefield Credit Union – Request for Relief for 4 types of signs

- Last Plan Set to be submitted: EXHIBIT #1

F#	Signs - Relief - Conditions for Granting	Staff Notes	2 nd Wall Sign	ATM Directional Sign	Entrance / Exit Signs - Logo
4.4.4 (a)	Safety				
	Improved public safety	Applicant provided information about traffic incidents that justify the request for entrance & exit signs but not verifiable data was submitted. The safety rationale for the 2 nd wall sign is based on the Applicant's rationale that the site juxtaposition to the roadway alignment requires additional visibility for the safety & convenience of the motorist.			
	Improved public convenience				
	Improved traffic flow				
Nuisance or Hazard to Vehicles					
	Nuisance or Hazard to Pedestrians				
4.4.4 (b)	Should sign be allowed in the Public Interest based on:				
	Architecture of Building	See above with regards to location of building. No information provided that specifically addresses the architecture or nature of establishment.			
	Location of Building: With Reference to the Street				
Location of Building: Nature of Establishment					
4.4.4 (c)	Visual Impacts – to neighborhood or surrounding properties				
	Visual Confusion	No illuminated signs proposed. The issue of visual confusion has yet to be addressed.			
	Glare				
Offensive Lighting					

Signs – Special Cases / Relief – Section 4.4.4 - Conditions for Granting Worksheet - continued

F#	Signs - Relief - Conditions for Granting	Staff Notes	2 nd Wall Sign	ATM Directional Sign	Entrance / Exit Signs - Logo
	4.4.4 (d) – Necessity based on:				
	Topography unique to proposed location	Site is relatively flat and topography does not appear to be a factor in any of the requests. The issues of site conditions need to be addressed for all three requests.			
	Site conditions unique to proposed location				
	4.4.4 (e) – Is additional signage necessary to adequately identify the premises based on:				
	Uniqueness of the type of use	The existing use is not changing and is typical of the zoning district and surrounding businesses / uses.			
	Particular type of use				
	4.4.4 (f) – With regards to Proper Use , is the sign:				
	Appropriately Located	The ATM directional sign was determined to be appropriately located given the distance from the entrance. . However the Board will have to determine if the logo is appropriate as it a directional sign. No changes are proposed in terms of size and location of the entrance / exit signs – just looking for permission to keep the logo which is not allowed by the ZBL. The issue of appropriateness and adaptation of the 2 nd wall sign needs to be discussed.			
	Reasonably Adapted				

Signs – Special Cases / Relief – Section 4.4.4 - Conditions for Granting Worksheet - continued

F#	Signs - Relief - Conditions for Granting	Staff Notes	2 nd Wall Sign	ATM Directional Sign	Entrance / Exit Signs - Logo
	<p>4.4.4 (g) – Will the Sign:</p> <p>Significantly alter the character of the Zoning District</p> <p>Be a detriment to the Surrounding Area</p>	<p>The 2nd wall sign and the logos on the exit /entrance signs need to be evaluated. The ATM sign was deemed to be appropriate given the proposed location. However the Board will have to determine if the logo is appropriate as it a directional sign.</p>			
	<p>4.4.4 (h) – Will the sign be detrimental to the public safety and welfare?</p>	<p>The ATM sign was deemed to be appropriate from a public convenience perspective but not necessarily from a safety and welfare perspective. The 2nd wall sign will need to be evaluated by the Board. With regards to the non-conforming entrance / exit signs the only request is to allow the existing logos to remain</p>			
	<p>4.4.4 (i) - With regard to the Intent and Purpose of the Zoning By-Law, will the granting of the Special Permit:</p> <p>Derogate substantially from</p> <p>Be in harmony with</p>	<p>To be determined.</p>			