

June 6, 2016

TO: Chris Stacey - Zoning Specialist
Department of Permitting & Inspections
City of Portland
389 Congress St.
Portland, ME 04101

REF: Variance Request
Sign Permit Application #201600999
University of Southern Maine, Glickman Library
44 Bedford Street, Portland ME

On behalf of the University of Southern Maine, we would like to submit a sign variance to allow a cumulative area of 240 sqft, in accordance with the City of Portland, Code Ordinance, Section 14-526 a.(iv)(a)-(d) Waiver Criteria:

- 14-526a.(iv)(a) – The proposed signs do fully comply with Section 14-526 (ii)(e).
- 14-526a.(iv)(b) – The City of Portland sign ordinance states that signage “shall be designed to complement and enhance the architectural attributes...shall be appropriate to the scale...and shall be designed to suit the conditions from which it will be viewed...” Basically, limiting cumulative sign square footage to only 150 square foot for a building this large and prominent would be woefully mis-sized and mis-proportioned. The building frontage involved is 111’ and 121’, the signs are 87’ high, and the closest street is Forest Avenue which is 160’ to the far side of the street, and the closest point to Route 295 is 525’. The existing signs appear quite tiny at these great viewing distances, even without taking moving in a vehicle into consideration. There are many different ways to calculate the minimum and optimal sign lettering height for readability. All methods point to an absolute minimum size of 18” letter height, which is the size of the smaller text (“University of Southern Maine”)
 - The standard letter height on a Snellen acuity eye chart is 0.35” viewed at 20 feet. For 20/40 vision acuity, which is allowed for driving, the letter height is 0.7”. At 525’ on Route 295, this equates to a minimum of 18.4” letter height – and the eye chart is viewed at 0 mph.
 - For highway signs, viewed head-on and near the road shoulder in optimal conditions, the Federal Highway Administration uses a minimum standard of one inch of letter height for every 35 feet of distance. (This is called the “Legibility Index”.) The Legibility Index decreases for signs away from the road or at angle to the drivers, as is the case with the Glickman Library. For the optimal case, the letter height should

be at least 15", but given the distance from the road side, a minimum height of 18-24" is reasonable.

- The Glickman Library is not a typical "business". For a more standard large business building, of say 75' frontage and 20' height, 150 sqft of signage would be adequate. This represents 10% of the face area. Even at the current proposed sign area of 240 sqft, this represents a mere 1.2% of the face area.
 - The final rationale is simply design scale and proportion. If one stands on Forest Avenue or Rt 295 and looks up 87' high on the side of the Glickman Library, it is readily apparent that a sign of 75 sqft would look out of place, and not fit the building or campus.
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- 14-526a.(iv)(c) – The proposed signs are in response to the unique characteristics of the subject property. In addition to the rationale above, we believe the City of Portland, and the State of Maine, should rightly be proud of our local higher education institutions. Given the high degree of non-local resident traffic along Route 295, having a readable sign is an effective method to advertise to potential future students or residents. With a minimum distance to Route 295 of 525 feet on the southeast elevation, and considerably more on the northeast elevation, one could easily argue a sign of this proportion is indeed far too small to take advantage of the "advertising" opportunity.
 - 14-526a.(iv)(d) – The provisions of the Waiver subsection are limited to use in the B-2 zone.

Please let me know if you need additional documentation to process the Waiver request.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeffrey T. Glidden". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Jeffrey T. Glidden