BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS MAY 15, 2026

MINUTES BOARD OF ADJUSTMENTS
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 15, 2026

The Helena Board of Adjustments met in a regular meeting on Friday, May 15, 2026, at 8:00am in the Helena Municipal Building, regular time and place for holding said meetings.

1.**Scott Hassler** called the meeting to order at 8:04am
2.**Scott Hassler** led the prayer.
3. **Jeff Latham** led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4.Roll Call
Present:
Members: Scott Hassler, Sean Dassau, Jim Wathen, Chris Copeland and Jeff Latham
Absent: None
Visitors: See attached list

There was a quorum, and the meeting was open for business.

5. Minutes Approved/Corrected from Prior Meeting(s)

No minutes from previous meeting noted.

6. Communication from Council

Jeff McDaniels council liaison did not have any communication from the city council.

7. Hearing of applications

1. Approve/Deny variance request-4969 Highway 17-B-2-Russell Pate requesting a for a pole sign which is 30 feet to be seen over the O'Reilly's Auto Parts.

The request is a variance of 16 feet as the current sign is 14 feet. Keith Martin stated that the 30-foot sign request is well over the current sign ordinance for B-2 which allows for an 8-foot tombstone sign.

Russell Pate was present to present the information to the board and residents. Mr Pate is the owner of the property and stated that Marco's (prior tenant) elected not to renew their lease and that has left the property open for other opportunities. Starbucks is interested in this location but only if they can have the 30-foot sign which is visible from the corridor where the Walmart, chic-fil-a etc. are located. The company sent representatives from California to check the site and drive through the city for visibility purposes. They feel that they can only be successful at this location with a pole sign that can be seen from the trade area. They must weigh their options, which is why the request was put before the Board. Russell Pate stated that he would be putting in a significant investment as would Starbucks to make this into a sought-after Starbucks.

Jeff Latham asked how tall the current sign is and was told it is exactly 14 feet 2 inches. Scott Hassler then summarized the current sign ordinance and the responsibility the board has in dealing with a variance of this type. He then brought up the current sign ordinance where it states that by April of 2027 all signs must be conforming to the new sign ordinance.

Mayor Rosener brought up that there is a committee formed to amend the current zoning ordinance and the sign ordinance is a big part of the change. Russell Pate stated that other municipalities approach this as they need to update it then they must conform to the new sign ordinance. Chris Copeland stated that the 30-foot requirement could set a precedent. The site line is limited as this is a mature area and the elevation goes downhill. Scott Hassler then brought up the issue with the corridor businesses and the parking spaces that were an issue then. They then worked on the parking ordinance, and the approval was contingent upon the changes to that. Mayor Rosener re-iterated that the entire zoning ordinance was being looked at by the committee. Jim Wathen brought up historically that the reader board sign was approved for Northcutt Dental and that did not set a precedent. This should be looked at on a case-by-case basis.

Chris Copeland asked about the size of the overall sign and Russell Pate said it is a total of 63 square feet and that the request would be for less sign face than the Marco's sign.

Public Comment:

1. Tom Stanbury-146 Cedar Bend Helena- Helena is a bedroom community and the topography is hilly there. It is his opinion that a sign that large and would be a spoiler. In our community name recognition would get the people in the door not a sign. I am opposed to this request as a resident of this city.

Scott Hassler then brought up the 4 guidelines in which the board must make their decision on a variance (page 192) and each point was read. Jeff Latham stated that point 4 is an issue and traffic would be an issue.
Jeff McDaniels (council liaison) then brought up that the board's job is the granting of variances which is a deviation of the zoning ordinance. Scott Hassler stated this is contiguous and not with the current rules. We must be cognizant of this issue. Each variance is on a case-by-case basis, and this variance can't be used as a precedent.

There being no further discussion Jim Wathen made a motion to approve the variance request with a second from Jeff Latham. The following votes were cast:

AYE: Jim Wathen
NAY: Scott Hassler, Jeff Latham, Chris Copeland and Sean Dassau.

Motion to approve denied 4-1.

Jeff McDaniels then asked if the board would re-consider and allow a continuance subject to the sign ordinance being amended. The board discussed and Jeff Latham made a motion to re-consider with a tentative 60-day continuance with a second from Chris Copeland. The following votes were cast:

AYE: Jim Wathen, Scott Hassler, Jeff Latham, Chris Copeland and Sean Dassau.
NAY: None

Motion carried unanimously.

8. Unfinished Business- No unfinished business brought up at the meeting.

There being no further business Jeff Latham made a motion to adjourn the meeting with a second from Sean Dassau. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40am

The meeting was attended, and minutes taken by Kym Rollan

ATTEST:
Kym Rollan
Building/Zoning Clerk

SIGNED:
Scott Hassler
Chairman Board of Adjustments