

Board denies request for higher sign

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A request from the owner of a tire and auto maintenance business to put up a higher sign was denied by the Calvert County Board of Appeals Thursday, Oct. 3. The request for a special exception to the Calvert County Zoning Ordinance was submitted by Dino Granados, the owner of Granados Tire and Automotive in Owings on behalf of the property owner, Bay State Insulation. Granados requested permission to increase the height of his freestanding sign from 18 to 26 feet. His business is located just off northbound Route 4 on Meadow Run Lane on property that is zoned light industrial. The tract was once strictly farmland but now is considered an industrial park.

Granados told the board he opened the Owings location in February. "A corn field was planted in front of me," he said, explaining that the corn grew to be 10 feet high. "You couldn't see my building. Customers cannot find me."

Granados explained that he and his staff have had to spend considerable time on the telephone giving potential customers directions to the shop. Furthermore, he has had to spend over \$10,000 a month on advertising. "I need some kind of signage," Granados said. "I know if I had that sign out there it would help my business."

Engineer Dan Kelsh explained that Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative "placed a large metal pole" along the road adjacent to the industrial park and declined a request to relocate it. Because of that the industrial park has only one way in and out. Kelsh added that because of a change in the Calvert County Zoning Ordinance enacted in 2006, the industrial park is prohibited from having a "monument sign" that would include signs for all of the businesses located within the confines. He told the panel Granados is seeking "minimum relief" from the zoning law by requesting the exception to the sign height restriction. "We are trying to overcome deficiencies in the zoning ordinance," said Kelsh.

Granados' attorney, Mark Davis, advised the board of appeals that Calvert's Comprehensive Plan calls for "flexibility" in applying the zoning ordinance.

"This [prohibition of monument signs in front of industrial parks] is a glitch in the zoning ordinance the county commissioners need to take care of," said board member Daniel "D.O." Baker. He added that he felt Granados' problem was not having a taller sign but a need for better access from Route 4.

"This would give Mr. Granados temporary relief," said Kelsh, who added if the county allows the industrial park to erect a monument sign, Granados would take down his larger sign.

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