

- a. 1 - Letter for variation and hardship request, per Chapter 30, Section 30-802 (Page 6).

**Village of Arlington Heights
Planning and Community Development Department
Steve P. Hautzinger AIA, LEED AP
Design Planner**

Dear Mr. Hautzinger,

Please review our letter for variation and hardship request. Arlington International Racecourse hopes this letter along with all the other information included in this document will satisfy the Department of Planning and Community Development. Please let us know if any other information is necessary in order for the board to make their decision.

Sincerely,

Kevin Clarke

**Kevin Clarke
Director of Operations
Arlington International Racecourse
2200 Euclid Avenue
Arlington Heights, IL 60005**

Section 30-802 Standards. The Design Commission and the Village Board of Trustees will base their recommendation for a variation on the following facts:

- a. the particular difficulty or peculiar hardship is not self-created by the petitioner; and,

Arlington International Racecourse has been in existence since 1927 and predates all the residences and businesses that have been built in its proximity since that time. The property is owned and operated by Arlington International Racecourse is very expansive and is composed of approximately 326 acres with property borders that touches three municipalities. The location of the digital sign is completely insulated from all three municipalities and poses no inconveniences of light or visual obstructions to any resident within any of the municipalities.

- b. the granting of the variation shall not create a traffic hazard, a depreciation of nearby property values or otherwise be detrimental to the public health, safety, morals and welfare; and

Arlington has an expansive parcel of property entirely located within the Village of Arlington Heights with approximately two-thirds of its property borders adjacent to City of Rolling Meadows and the City of Palatine. The most western property line is adjacent to State route 53 which provides an excellent opportunity for advertising and promoting Arlington with a digital billboard. The north/south gateway of State route 53 currently has numerous digital billboards located to the north and south of Arlington Heights on both the east and west sides of the highway. The property owned by Arlington along state route 53 is vacant of any signage and serves as an ideal location for Arlington to construct a digital billboard without any impact on the surrounding communities. There are no residences impacted by the location of the sign not will there be any additional impact on traffic or depreciation of the property of any business in the areas as many static and digital signs exist along route 53. The distance of the sign to any commercial building exceeds that of many other digital billboards in the area.

- c. the variation will serve to relieve the applicant from a difficulty attributable to the location, topography, circumstances on nearby properties or other peculiar hardship; and not merely serve to provide the applicant with a competitive advantage over similar businesses; and

Over the last 5 years, Arlington has repositioned itself in the marketplace by remodeling its business from a “racing entity” into an entertainment destination.

For the past decade, wagering on horse races has declined 40%. The wagering activity accounted for 70% of a racing facilities revenues. With the decline in a major source of revenue, Arlington has changed its business model from a dependency on wagering to

being dependent on income derived from consumer's discretionary entertainment dollars.

Today, Arlington competes in the entertainment market at the height of the demand for the consumers discretionary entertainment dollars offering various entertainment events every weekend from May through September and a schedule of trade shows, ride and drives and holiday events October through April. With the rebranding and redefining of its business the customer base has become much broader and the need for advertising and marketing multiple events with a changing message has increased ten-fold at the property. Currently, there is no signage on the property to advertise the multitude of events conducted on the property. To successfully promote the facility and events requires dynamic messages to the public and clearly earmarks the facility as the point of destination.

- d. the variation will not alter the essential character of the locality; and

The most western property line is adjacent to State route 53 is the location selected or the digital billboard. This location provides an excellent opportunity for advertising and promoting Arlington with a digital billboard. The location insulates the digital billboard by many acres of property the has numerous buildings and dense tree lines and is not visible to any resident of any of the three surrounding municipality, and therefore will not affect the character of the locality in negative manner. The north/south gateway of State route 53 currently has numerous digital billboards located to the north and south of Arlington Heights on both the east and west sides of the highway. The property owned by Arlington along state route 53 is vacant of any signage and serves as an ideal location for Arlington to construct a digital billboard without any impact on the surrounding communities.

- e. the applicant's business cannot reasonably function under the standards of this Chapter.

With the decline in its primary source of revenue (wagering on horse races) over the last decade Arlington has changed its business model from a wagering facility to a major entertainment and tourist destination with almost 70% of its revenue dependent its ability to compete for consumer's discretionary entertainment dollars.

Arlington is at a competitive disadvantage. There is no signage on the property to advertise the multitude of events with dynamic messages at the facility or signage that earmarks the facility as the point of destination that permits Arlington to compete on a level playing field with other major entertainment destinations in the Chicagoland market. Other major entertainment destinations have large digital marquee or billboards signs that prominently mark their destination and market and advertise events to the public.

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The current source of digital advertising is not a cost effective medium to advertising, market and promote the many events that Arlington offers each weekend. Arlington currently spends approximately \$100,000 a year to advertise on three digital billboards for two weeks, its opening of the race season in May and the Arlington Million in August. This is very limited and insufficient for a year round entertainment destination to adequately promote its brand and market its events. These digital billboards are located miles from the property and do not provide the destination reference that is necessary to adequately establish the facility as the landing point.

Sincerely,

Kevin Clarke

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Arlington Heights, IL 60005**