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Board of Appeals
Hingham, MA

SUPPLEMENT TO SIGNAGE APPLICATION
ROCKLAND TRUST
1 TECHNOLOGY PLACE, HINGHAM

A. Zoning Relief Sought

The Applicant, **Rockland Trust Company** ("Rockland Trust"), seeks a Special Permit A1 under Section V-B of the Hingham Zoning By-Law ("By-Law"), and to the extent deemed necessary a Variance from Section V-B, as well as any additional relief as may be determined by the Board, to allow for the implementation of a signage program relating to the operation of its corporate headquarters at the property located at **1 Technology Place, Hingham** (the "Property"). Specifically, the Applicant seeks (i) a Special Permit A1 to allow for the construction of two (2) parallel building signs, with halo-lit opaque individual letters, which comprise only 0.68% and 2.18% of the wall area to which they will be affixed; and (ii) to the extent deemed necessary by the Board, a Variance from Section V-B (3), fn. 5 for the illumination of the signs. The By-Law permits by building permit one parallel building sign not to exceed 10% of the wall area of the façade of which it is affixed. Therefore, the Applicant seeks a Special Permit A1 to allow for the installation of two (2) parallel building signs for the 200,000± s.f. office building. The Property is located within the Industrial Park District and South Hingham Development Overlay District.

B. The Property

The Property and existing building thereon are bisected by the town line of Hingham and Rockland. The Property is approximately 22 acres, with 13.5± acres located in Hingham and 8.5± acres located in Rockland. The Property is improved with a 200,000± square foot building that was constructed in 2002, with 55% of the building located in Hingham. The modern brick and glass façade building is three-stories and was previously the corporate headquarters of EMD Serono. The existing building is one of the largest buildings in Hingham.

The Property is accessed via Commerce Road in Rockland (which then changes to Technology Place at the Hingham line) and is visible from both Route 3 and Commerce Road/Technology Place. The Property is an irregularly "U-shaped" retreat lot with limited frontage in Rockland and Hingham and is accessed via a shared private drive from Commerce Road/Technology Place. There exists no direct vehicular access to the Property from Hingham other than via the Rockland road network.

C. Rockland Trust – New Corporate Headquarters Investment

Rockland Trust was founded in Rockland in 1907. Over the last 119 years, Rockland Trust has grown steadily from a trusted local bank into a major regional financial institution. Rockland Trust currently employs more than 2,300 colleagues entrusted with nearly $25.0 billion in assets, and operates over 150 branches, 21 commercial lending centers, 12 investment management offices, and 5 mortgage centers in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

Rockland Trust is now in the process of relocating its corporate headquarters to 140,000± square feet in the existing building at the Property. As a part of this major relocation, Rockland Trust will consolidate various operation and functions that are currently taking place in five (5)

separate locations into a single centralized modern corporate headquarters. With its proximity to Route 3, the new corporate headquarters will provide an easily accessible location for Rockland Trust's customer facing commercial lending group and wealth management group, and be fit out with meeting spaces to host regional business conferences, and the centralized training space for Rockland Trust's 2,300 colleagues spread out over three states. The relocation of the corporate headquarters is a major reinvestment in the community and the bank's future in the region, and its proximity to Route 3, its off-ramps, and access via Hingham Street/Commerce Road/Technology Place in Rockland will provide broad accessibility to visitors.

D. Proposed Corporate Headquarters Signage Program

As part of its corporate headquarters relocation and consolidation, Rockland Trust seeks to install a parallel building sign stating "Rockland Trust" (73.6 s.f.) on both the northwesterly façade and southeasterly façade of the building (two total). The proposed building signs comprises *only 0.68%* of the wall area of the portion of northwesterly façade to which it is affixed and is located approximately 600 linear feet from Route 3, and *only 2.18%* of the portion of the southeasterly façade to which it is affixed and is located over 700 linear feet from Commerce Road/Technology Place. No building signs are proposed for the southwesterly or northeasterly façades of the building. The signs are proportional to the scale of the modern, three-story, 200,000± square foot building and layout of the surrounding area. The By-Law permits by building permit one parallel building sign per building; therefore, the Applicant seeks a Special Permit A1 to allow for the installation of two (2) parallel building signs.

The parallel building signs are proposed to be halo-lit opaque individual letters stating "Rockland Trust." Halo-lit signage operates by placing the light source behind opaque channel letters, projecting a soft, indirect glow onto the building surface behind the letters rather than illuminating the face of the sign itself. The letters remain opaque and non-illuminated; only the halo-effect created by reflected light on the mounting surface is visible. As the illumination is indirect and reflected, halo-lit signage does not illuminate the advertising surface or letter faces; and, therefore, does not function as a traditional backlit sign. Instead, it produces a subtle ambient glow that enhances legibility while minimizing glare, light spill, and visual impact. In many respects, halo lighting more closely resembles the visual outcome of externally illuminated signage, as the building surface becomes the reflective element while the light source remains concealed behind the letter forms.

The proposed signage has been carefully designed to complement the architecture of the building while maintaining the intent of the Hingham Zoning By-Law regarding sign illumination. The illumination of the building signage conforms to the lighting specifications of various signage programs approved by Special Permit A1 and constructed at the abutting BMW/Mini dealership (0 Route 3), Bone and Muscle Center (2 Pond Park), Herb Chambers Lexus (141 Derby Street) and the Launch at the Hingham Shipyard. In approving halo-lit signage at Herb Chambers Lexus, the Board stated that "[t]he building signs are proposed to be halo backlit behind opaque individual symbols, without light spill or glare emanating from the signs" and includes a finding that "[t]he Board determined that the halo-type lighting proposed for the building signs meets the technical requirements previously approved by the Board for similarly situated commercial properties." The Applicant respectfully asserts that the proposed lighting specifications conform with Section V-B of the Zoning By-Law; and, specifically, is permitted under Section V-B (3), fn. 5, which allows

lighting that is "exterior to the advertising matter by white steady stationary light shielded and directed solely at the sign. No backlighting is permitted." Attached hereto as Supplement A is a memorandum discussing the compliance and implementation of so-called "halo" lighting in Hingham. Notwithstanding its stated position, to the extent deemed necessary by the Board, the Applicant seeks a Variance from Section V-B for the lighting of the signage, as well as any additional relief as may be determined by the Board, to implement the proposed signage program for its corporate headquarters.

I. Special Permit A1 – Findings of Fact

Based on the above, Rockland Trust respectfully requests that the Board of Appeals make the following specific findings of fact in accordance with Section I-F and the provisions of law, and grant such additional relief as may be determined by the Board at hearing:

1. The proposed use will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning By-Law, for the following reasons.

The proposed parallel building signs are in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the By-Law, and specifically Section V-B. The proposed signage is designed to promote and allow the safe and efficient identification of the corporate headquarters by customers and colleagues travelling in motor vehicles to the Property. The proposed signage is appropriate to properly identify the 200,000± s.f. office building, of which Rockland Trust will occupy 140,000± s.f. The proposed sign on the northwesterly façade of the building comprises only 0.68% of the wall area and is located approximately 600 linear feet from Route 3 and the proposed sign on the southeasterly façade comprises only 2.18% of the wall area and is located over 700 linear feet from Commerce Road/Technology Place. The proposed signage is proportional to the layout of the modern building and surrounding area, and is harmonious with the general purpose and intent of Section V-B.

2. The proposed use complies with the purposes and standards of the relevant specific sections of this By-Law.

The proposed parallel building signs are consistent with Section V-B. The By-Law permits by building permit one parallel building sign not to exceed 10% of the wall area to which it is affixed. The installation of two (2) parallel building signs is sought due to the size (200,000± s.f.) of the office building, and the distance the building and signs are setback from the adjacent roadways (over 600 linear feet).

3. The specific site is an appropriate location for such use, structure, or condition, compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area.

The Property is approximately 22 acres and is located within the Industrial Park and South Hingham Development Overlay Districts. The proposed signage is consistent with signage for in the immediate area (e.g., BMW/Mini) and within the zoning district(s) (e.g., Bone and Muscle Center), and is appropriate to properly identify the 200,000± s.f. office building that will include Rockland Trust's corporate headquarters. The proposed sign on the northwesterly façade of the building comprises only 0.68% of the wall area and is located approximately 600 linear feet from Route 3 and the proposed sign on the southeasterly façade comprises only 2.18% of the wall area

and is located over 700 linear feet from Commerce Road/Technology Place. The proposed signage is proportional to the layout of the modern building and surrounding area. As such, the signage as proposed is proportional to the layout of the building and surrounding area

4. The use as developed and operated will create positive impacts or potential adverse impacts will be mitigated.

The proposed parallel building signs are designed to promote and allow the safe and efficient identification of the Property, and the commercial uses, and to allow customers, visitors, invitees and colleagues to readily identify and visit the Property. The proposed signage is significantly less than allowed under Section V-B, is simple in design, utilizes shielded white steady stationary light and will allow easy identification of the corporate headquarters at the Property. The proposed signage is designed to be both effective and consistent with other existing commercial signage in Hingham.

5. There will be no nuisance or serious hazard to vehicles or pedestrians.

The proposed signage is consistent with Section V-B. The proposed parallel building signs are designed to promote and allow the safe and efficient identification of the corporate headquarters by customers and colleagues travelling in motor vehicles to the Property. The proposed parallel signs increase visibility of the corporate headquarters from both directions of travel and are reasonably sized, given the size of the building, setback, and Property, and the Property's point of access from Commerce Road/Technology Place.

6. Adequate and appropriate facilities exist or will be provided for the proper operation of the proposed use.

An interior renovation of the existing building is currently being undertaken for Rockland Trust's use as a corporate headquarters. No changes to the layout of the site are necessary for the operation of the offices at the Property.

7. The proposal meets accepted design standards and criteria for the functional design of facilities, structures, stormwater management, and site construction.

An interior renovation of the existing building is currently being undertaken for Rockland Trust's use as a corporate headquarters. No changes to the layout of the site are necessary for the operation of the offices at the Property.

II. To the Extent Required – Variance – Findings of Fact

To the extent deemed necessary by the Board, Rockland Trust seeks a Variance from Section V-B (3), fn. 5 of the By-Law for the sign illumination at the Property. Under M.G.L. c. 40A, §10, as amended, the Board may grant a variance if it specifically finds that a strict enforcement of the By-Law would result in a practical difficulty. In making its determination, the Board shall weigh the benefits to the Applicant and to the public interest against the detriment to the public health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood, and may also consider: (i) whether the practical difficulty relates to the soil conditions, shape or topography of the land or structures; (ii) whether strict enforcement would impose a financial hardship on the Applicant; (iii) whether the

benefit sought can be achieved by some other method feasible for the Applicant; and (iv) whether the practical difficulty was self-created. Rockland Trust presents the following findings of fact in support of the requested relief.

1. **A strict enforcement of Section V-B (3), fn. 5 of the By-Law would result in a practical difficulty.**

A strict enforcement of the By-Law to require exterior white light directed solely at the sign – whether by uplighting or by the use of projecting exterior fixtures such as "gooseneck" fixtures – would result in a practical difficulty. On the three-story, 200,000± square foot Technology Place building, directed spotlighting produces lighting hot spots, uneven illumination, glare at upper sightlines, dark sky impacts and light trespass, and would impair rather than promote the safe and efficient identification of the corporate headquarters. Projecting fixtures, including gooseneck lighting, are rooted in early 20th-century 1-2 story commercial and industrial buildings featuring signage at pedestrian scale; the fixtures themselves were, and when specified today are, visually prominent and intended to be seen as part of that lower architecture. Directed spotlights illuminate both the signage and the background wall, reducing contrast and resulting in glare and spillage which blurs the edges to the eye, and this lighting is increasingly ineffective for signs on taller façades.

Halo lighting is common to modern office building design, and is superior to spotlighting, particularly when applied to taller façades such as the 3-story Technology Place headquarters. Modern buildings such as the brick and glass subject rely on concealed or integrated light sources that avoid protruding hardware clutter, and produce an even, controlled illumination. The proposed steady white ambient glow lighting (i) provides more uniform distribution across the larger vertical planes, (ii) is shielded and directed away from the viewer, reducing the glare and spill resulting from uplighting or direct lighting, and (iii) is capable of calibration to advance dark sky and light trespass standards. Importantly, halo lighting allows for easier visual identification as it emits a soft glow which creates a clear silhouette contrast that allows the eye to read the shape of each letter – a feature that is important on taller façades which are viewable from varied angles.

In summary, halo lighting improves legibility because it produces uniform, low-glare illumination that defines letter shapes clearly, whereas spot lighting tends to create uneven brightness and glare that can obscure those shapes, along with other negative impacts that are exacerbated on taller façades. In this respect, steady white halo lighting not only complies with Section V-B but promotes its underlying purposes of clarity, safety, and appropriate design. Requiring the Applicant to instead deploy directed spotlighting that fails to provide efficient, effective and safe identification of the corporate headquarters of a regional financial institution – on a tall façade set back approximately 600 to over 700 linear feet from the adjacent roadways – is precisely the practical difficulty that a strict enforcement of fn. 5 would create.

2. **The benefits to the Applicant and to the public interest outweigh any detriment to the public health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood.**

The benefits of the proposed halo-lit signage to the Applicant and to the public interest substantially outweigh any detriment to the public health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood. The proposed signage location will enhance the visibility of the permitted use of the Property and

eliminate any potential traffic hazards, as motorists and pedestrians will be able to view the signs with increased clarity and identify the business more readily. The steady white halo lighting is shielded, directed away from the viewer, and capable of calibration to minimize glare, light spill, dark sky impacts and light trespass – producing less off-site illumination impact than the directed spotlighting the By-Law would otherwise require.

There will be no detriment to the neighborhood. Comparable halo lighting is already present on the most proximate building (BMW/MINI) and has been approved by the Board for similarly situated commercial properties, including the abutting BMW/Mini dealership, the Bone and Muscle Center, Herb Chambers Lexus and the Launch at the Hingham Shipyard. The requested relief is consistent with the purposes of the By-Law and with the Town's track record of efficient and safe signage located proximate to state highway layouts, and would neither introduce a new or incompatible condition nor cause harm to the public good. The relief, if necessary, will permit sign illumination designed to effectively promote the use of the Property as a corporate headquarters and to reduce potential confusion in locating the Property.

3. **The discretionary considerations enumerated in G.L. c. 40A, §10 further support the requested relief.**

(i) Soil conditions, shape, or topography. Although no longer a required finding, the physical circumstances of the Property support the requested relief. The Property is an irregularly "U-shaped" retreat lot with extremely limited frontage in Rockland and Hingham and is accessed via a shared private drive from Commerce Road/Technology Place, via Rockland. The 22± acre Property and existing building thereon are bisected by the town line separating Hingham and Rockland. The existing 200,000± square foot, three-story building is located over 700 linear feet from Commerce Road/Technology Place and approximately 600 linear feet from Route 3. That height, scale and extreme setback – unique and atypical for the Industrial Park and South Hingham Development Overlay Districts – are the very conditions that render directed spotlighting ineffective and give rise to the practical difficulty. Critically, this is an existing three-story structure; the Applicant is not building anew, but is working with what exists and doing the best it can to comply with the stated purpose of the By-Law set forth in Section I-A (2). Although the Applicant is not engaged in Site Plan review, the By-Law reflects a consistent municipal interest in preventing light pollution and adverse lighting effects, as further evidenced in Sections I-I (1), I-I (5)(l)(ii) and I-I (6)(j). While directed exterior lighting may be less impactful on lower-story buildings, on a building of three stories or higher it produces greater glare, uplight and light spill – the very light pollution and adverse effects the By-Law seeks to avoid. The height of the existing structure is therefore a physical condition that both gives rise to the practical difficulty and makes the proposed steady white halo lighting the option that best advances the By-Law's own anti-light-pollution purposes.

(ii) Financial hardship. A strict enforcement would compel the Applicant to install a directed-lighting system that does not achieve safe, legible identification on this façade, and to expend additional resources on supplemental measures to compensate for the resulting hot spots, glare and uneven illumination, all without delivering the intended benefit. The practical and financial burden of a lighting method ill-suited to the building weighs in favor of relief.

(iii) Feasibility of an alternative method. The benefit sought – safe, effective, low-glare identification of the corporate headquarters – cannot reasonably be achieved by the directed spotlighting prescribed by fn. 5. On a three-story façade set back approximately 600 to over 700 linear feet from the roadway, directed lighting produces glare, spill and uneven illumination that obscure the signage, while halo lighting is the method that actually accomplishes the By-Law's purposes of clarity and safe identification. Directed lighting on a building of this height would also aggravate the light pollution and adverse effects that the By-Law expressly seeks to prevent – as reflected in Sections I-A (2), I-I (1), I-I (5)(l)(ii) and I-I (6)(j) – whereas the proposed shielded halo lighting is calibrated to minimize glare, uplight and light trespass. Because directed lighting is more impactful, not less, on taller façades, it is not a feasible alternative for achieving the benefit without producing the very detriments the By-Law itself disfavors.

(iv) The practical difficulty is not self-created. The difficulty arises from the interaction between the directed-light-only prescription of fn. 5 and the inherent height, scale and extreme setback of the existing building – a structure constructed in 2002, long predating this application. The Applicant did not create these conditions; it is working with an existing three-story building and doing the best it can to comply with the By-Law's stated purpose under Section I-A (2), including the interest in preventing light pollution and adverse effects reflected in Sections I-I (1), I-I (5)(l)(ii) and I-I (6)(j). Because directed lighting is more impactful, not less, on a building of this height, the Applicant's proposed steady white halo lighting is the measure that mitigates the practical difficulty and best advances the By-Law's purposes, rather than any condition of the Applicant's own making.

For the foregoing reasons, to the extent a Variance is deemed necessary, a strict enforcement of Section V-B (3), fn. 5 would result in a practical difficulty, the benefits of the requested relief outweigh any detriment to the public health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood, and the discretionary factors under G.L. c. 40A, §10 favor the Applicant. Rockland Trust respectfully requests that the Board grant the Variance, together with such additional relief as the Board deems appropriate.