

Dr Caitlin S Filips

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To the Members of City Council:

In 2018, I purchased the property on the corner of Bagley and Lindberg Road. The land and old house had been vacant and unkept for many years. The city had been hoping for a small business to purchase the property that would not disturb the residential area that borders the land. My Optometry business was a perfect fit with low traffic and regular business hours. Over the course of 2018 and early 2019, the old house was torn down and a new, attractive commercial building with a landscaped yard was constructed. In March 2019, my business moved into the building and this prominent corner of Berea completed its makeover!

I am grateful the city council voted in 2018 to give the property a 10-year tax abatement. In the agreement, I was required to hire 2 new employees in the first 5 years. Unfortunately, a year after I moved into the new building, the world changed forever due to Covid. During the height of the epidemic, the times were too uncertain to hire new employees with the stay-at-home orders and the fluctuations in the economy. The needs of my business also changed due to social distancing. For example, we started shipping all our patients' contact lens orders directly to their houses to decrease traffic in the office. This is a convenience our patients have come to appreciate and expect. Since we no longer receive those shipments to the office, it has eliminated the need for a staff member to sort the contact lens orders, notify patients that their order has arrived, and dispense the orders to the patients.

In addition, hiring employees in the post Covid world has been very challenging. Before Covid, I would post a job and in 24 hours I'd have 20+ resumes. In 2023 and 2024, I have had a job posted on various platforms throughout both years, and I only received 9 resumes. None of them were for licensed opticians, which is the position I'm hiring for.

The needs of my business have changed in the five years since my tax abatement was approved. There is not enough office work to support two additional employees, and it has been challenging enough to find one qualified employee. I would appreciate your consideration in amending the original agreement to hiring one employee by the end of 2025.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration!

Sincerely,

Caitlin S. Filips