

1966 Benson Avenue St. Paul, Minnesota 55116 (651) 690-2401

APPEAL OF STORAGE HEIGHT VARIANCE

Date of Hearing – February 20, 2013

I. <u>History</u>

Amidon Graphics ("Amidon") is a family-owned business located at 1966 Benson Avenue in St. Paul. Amidon is engaged in the commercial printing business and its core product offerings include:

- Order Form Envelopes
- Insert Cards
- Free Standing Inserts
- Placemats
- Direct Mailings
- Photo Envelopes

Amidon has been in business for more than 60 years and has been in its current location at 1966 Benson Avenue in St. Paul for 37 years. During this time, Amidon has grown from 10 employees to 84 employees today, with plans for further expansion discussed in greater detail below.

Amidon's facilities are approximately 71,000 square feet, which includes 45,000 square feet of production space and 19,000 square feet of storage space. The property is fully developed, with no space for additional construction. The property is not connected to City water, but is supplied by a well. As a result, the facilities are un-sprinklered. Based on prior discussions with the City, due to the distance from the nearest water main with sufficient flow and the fact that the soil is bedrock, it not logistically feasible or economical to connect to City water at this time.

Amidon has stored paper in 16 foot stacks for as long as anyone can remember. While Amidon was aware of the 12 foot storage height maximum, it believed a variance had been issued allowing it to stack up to 16 feet. To support this fact, fire inspections have made no reference to this issue since 1999. It was not until the previous inspector retired that this issue resurfaced.

II. <u>Paper Storage</u>

As a commercial printing company, the success of Amidon's business is directly linked to the price of paper, which is a commodity subject to significant fluctuations in cost. To hedge against fluctuations in the price of paper, Amidon purchases paper in bulk quantities when prices are most favorable. Most orders are in quantities of 5-10 truckloads and it is rare for an order to be smaller than 1 truckload due to higher pricing and additional freight costs. Further complicating this issue is the sheer quantity of different paper types, weights and sizes utilized by Amidon. Amidon currently stocks more than 200 varieties of paper, in varying quantities, with a total inventory of between 1.75 and 2.5 million pounds of paper (currently 1,975,000 pounds). Roll sizes range from 13 to 26.5 inches in width with weight varying between 600 and 2,200 pounds per roll.

Currently, paper is stored in a single warehouse, with rolls stacked 16 feet high (ceiling height in the warehouse is approximately 20 feet). The warehouse has room for approximately 260 stacks of paper. Based on a 17" roll size, the resulting storage capacity of the warehouse is as follows:

Storage Height	# of Rolls/Stack	Total Weight
12 feet	8 rolls	1,872,000
14 feet	9 rolls	2,106,000
16 feet	11 rolls	2,574,000

With a 14 foot maximum, storage space (based on weight) would be reduced by approximately 20%. With a 12 foot maximum, the reduction would be approximately 30%.

Currently, at the northwest corner of its facility and adjacent to the current paper storage warehouse, there is 6,150 square feet of space used for flex-storage and an additional 2,500 square feet of space that was previously used as a day-care. Amidon has immediate plans to acquire additional equipment and convert this space into additional manufacturing space, which would increase production capacity by 10% and result in at least 3-5 new full-time jobs. However, these plans will be in jeopardy if Amidon is forced to reduce storage heights from the current height of 16 feet.

Enforcement of the 12 foot maximum, as well as the 14 foot maximum proposed by the LHO, would immediately and negatively impact Amidon's ability to compete within its industry. Among other things, it would force Amidon abandon its expansion plans and convert the flex-storage space into additional paper storage, rather than manufacturing space. Effectively, Amidon will have outgrown its facilities and may be forced to explore relocation if further expansion is desired.

III. Inspection and Hearing

Amidon's most recent fire inspection for renewal of its Certificate of Occupancy occurred on November 29, 2012. The inspection identified 4 issues, including paper storage exceeding the 12 foot maximum. Amidon filed an appeal of this issue and a hearing was held on December 18, 2012, which was laid over until January 15, 2013. At the hearing, the LHO recommended a 2 foot variance, permitting storage up to 14 feet.

The LHO's recommendation was based, in part, on events surrounding Amidon's construction of the existing paper warehouse space in 1997. Among other items, the LHO relied on a letter from Paul Amidon dated July 23, 1997, which the LHO interpreted as a request for deferral of enforcement of the 12 foot maximum storage height pending completion of construction in October of that year. The LHO also referenced subsequent inspections in 1998 and 1999 which identified storage height issues.

Amidon maintains that it has stored paper in 16 foot stacks for as long as anyone can remember, including in the current warehouse since the time of its construction in 1997. In fact, the walls and support posts in the warehouse are marked to identify the 16 foot storage height.

Amidon was under the belief that a variance had been granted to allow this practice. The fact that this issue was not identified for 13 years (since 1999) supports Amidon's position.

IV. <u>Request for Variance</u>

While Amidon acknowledges the City's legitimate safety concerns, it believes the risk of fire is minimal, regardless of storage height. Because of the densely-packed nature of rolled paper, the rolls are not easily ignitable (a fact the inspector admits). While rolled paper can be difficult to extinguish in the event of a fire, Amidon maintains this risk would not be mitigated by limiting storage height below the current level of 16 feet.

Based on the foregoing information, Amidon respectfully requests the City formally grant a 4 foot variance from the 12 foot storage height maximum, thereby allowing stacking of paper rolls up to 16 feet high.

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Exhibit B	Fire Inspection Correction Notice – December 6, 2012
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Exhibit F	Photographs of Amidon Paper Storage
Exhibit G	Photographs of Competitor's Paper Storage w/ 18' Stacks

EXHIBIT A

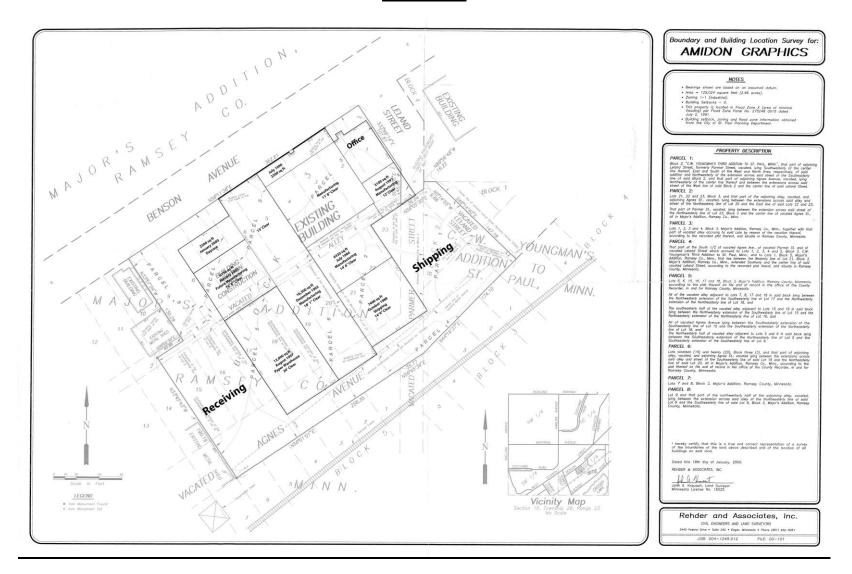


EXHIBIT B

DEPARTMENT OF SAFETY AND INSPECTIONS Fire Inspection Division Ricardo X. Cervantes, Director

CITY OF SAINT PAUL Christopher B. Coleman, Mayor 375 Jackson Street, Suite 220 Saint Paul, Minnesota 55101-1806 Telephone: 651-266-8989 Facsimile: 651-266-8951 Web: <u>www.stpaul.gov/dsi</u>

December 6, 2012

PAUL AMIDON AMIDON GRAPHICS 1966 BENSON AVE SAINT PAUL MN 55116

FIRE INSPECTION CORRECTION NOTICE

RE: 1966 BENSON AVE Ref. #14776

Dear Property Representative:

Your building was inspected on November 29, 2012 for the renewal of your Fire Certificate of Occupancy. Approval for occupancy will be granted upon compliance with the following deficiency list. The items on the list must be corrected prior to the re-inspection date. A re-inspection will be made on January 3, 2013 at 1:00 pm.

Failure to comply may result in a criminal citation or the revocation of the Fire Certificate of Occupancy. The Saint Paul Legislative Code requires that no building shall be occupied without a Fire Certificate of Occupancy. The code also provides for the assessment of additional reinspection fees.

YOU WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR NOTIFYING TENANTS IF ANY OF THE FOLLOWING LIST OF DEFICIENCIES ARE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY.

DEFICIENCY LIST

- Exterior -Entry Doors MSFC 2703.5 Provide NFPA 704 hazard identification HM-1. Blue = 2 Red = 4 Yellow = 0 White = leave blank Size = 6 inch min. See handout on DSI website at: www.stpaul.gov/dsi > Fire Certificate of Occupancy > Hazard Identification Placard Information (for HM-1).-Provide updated hazard placards posted at exterior entry doors to the building.
- 2. Near Stevens/ Prep M100s Mezzanine MSFC 1011.2 Remove the materials that cause an exit obstruction. Maintain a clear and unobstructed exitway. *Maintain clear aisle through the mezzanine area.*

An Equal Opportunity Employer

- 3. Near Stevens/ Prcp MSFC 1010.5 Provide and maintain an approved emergency lighting system. *Repair non-working emergency light*.
- Paper Storage and Box Storage Warehouse Areas MSFC 2302.1 Reduce and maintain storage height to 12 feet or less or provide approved high-piled storage protection to code under permit.

Saint Paul Legislative Code authorizes this inspection and collection of inspection fees. For forms, fee schedule, inspection handouts, or information on some of the violations contained in this report, please visit our web page at: http://www.stpaul.gov/cofo

You have the right to appeal these orders to the Legislative Hearing Officer. Applications for appeals may be obtained at the Office of the City Clerk, 310 City Hall, City/County Courthouse, 15 W Kellogg Blvd, Saint Paul MN 55102 Phone: (651-266-8688) and must be filed within 10 days of the date of this order.

If you have any questions, email me at: mitchell.imbertson@ci.stpaul.mn.us or call me at 651-266-8986 between 7:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. Please help to make Saint Paul a safer place in which to live and work.

Sincerely,

Mitchell Imbertson Fire Inspection

Reference Number 14776

EXHIBIT C



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd. Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

Marcia Moermond, Legislative Hearing Officer Mai Vang, Hearing Coordinator Jean Birkholz, Hearing Secretary Mary Erickson, Hearing Secretary legislativehearings@ci.stpaul.mn.us 651-266-8560

Tuesday, December 18, 2012	9:00 AM	Room 330 City Hall & Court House

9:00 a.m. Hearings

Special Tax Assessments

1 <u>RLH TA 13-17</u> Ratifying the Appealed Special Tax Assessment for Real Estate Project No. CRT1303, Assessment No. 138202 at 1235 ALBEMARLE STREET.

Sponsors: Brendmoen

Reduce the assessment from \$278.00 to \$128.00.

Lonnie Labruca, obo David Flavin, appeared.

Sean Westenhofer: -Cost is \$128.00, service charge is \$150 for a total of \$278.00, single-family, Fire Certificate of Occupancy -Orders done on May 24, 2012 -Invoice billing is July 12, 2012 and August 13, 2012 -Order and Billing sent to responsible party/property owner Deise Capital LLC, c/o Al Conrad, 103 Wildwood Beach Rd, Mahtomedi MN 55115

Ms. Moermond: -got a couple of inspections here, actually just a regular Fire C of O

Leanna Shaff: -Ihey had a water shut off -revoked C of O -went to Category 2 -Ihen water was back on, inspection passed -long time for inspection so this is the correct C of O fee which is now \$170 -went to old responsible party

Ms. Labruca: -is there a central phone number? My staff has called the City. Property manager, Al Conard, suddenly stopped one day and it was transferred to me -got other 45 properties to deal with and told City to transfer to us but there were some that didn't get to us

Joel Essling: -questioned what is the phone of the current property manager

City of Saint Paul

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Legislative Hearings

Minutes - Final

- since the alley is asphalt, the parking lot needs to be asphalt; they need to secure a permit from the zoning desk

- this property will be out of the Certificate of Occupancy Program

- these items will be referred to a Code Enforcement inspector for further inspections

- the work plan will be due Jan 2, 2013
- City Council Public Hearing Jan 16, 2013

Referred to the City Council due back on 1/16/2013

1:30 p.m. Hearings

RLH FCO

12-652

Fire Certificates of Occupancy

30

BENSON AVENUE. Sponsors: Thune

Laid over for inspector to provide past file information.

RE: 1966 Benson Ave (general retail and service -B-Commercial)

Appeal of Matt Connelly to a Fire Inspection Correction Notice at 1966

Mike Amidon, owner, and Matt Connelly appeared.

Fire Inspector A. J. Neis:

- Fire Inspection Correction Notice dated Dec 6, 2012 for an inspection that was conducted Nov 29, 2012 by Inspector Mitchell Imbertson

- appealed today: #4: reduce and maintain storage height to 12 feet or less or install sprinklers

- stored here is very large rolled printing paper

- they are looking for a 4-foot variance to increase their stacking ability to 16 feet

Mr. Connelly:

- this is a commercial printing company, Amazon Graphics
- they buy paper when it's on sale and then store it

- the warehouse is about 20 feet high; if they have to bring storage down to 12 feet, they will only be using about 35% of their warehouse space

- these paper rolls are very, very densely packed; more densely than the tree from which they came; they are difficult to ignite

- being able to increase stacking from 12 feet to 16 feet increases their storage

capacity by about 25%, which is a big thing for them

- he remembers that at one time, they were allowed to store their paper at 16 feet; there are red lines painted on the walls indicating the 16 foot limit

- there is no racking in this warehouse

 paper is a commodity; it's a competitive market; we purchase it when it's on sale and store it; it's an advantage they would like to keep

Mr. Amidon:

- they can't sprinkler because they have well water; they've checked it out in the past - it's all bedrock down there, too

Mr. Neis:

- will pull the paper files to see if there's a previous variance - no photos

City of Saint Paul

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egislative Hearings.	Minutes - Final	December 18, 2012
	Ms. Moermond: - looking for height requirements and dimensions of rolls	
	Mr. Connelly: - the paper rolls are about 40 inches in diameter and anywhen inches tall - 1000 lbs - 1500 lbs per roll - very tightly wound	e between 17 - 25
	Ms. Moermond: - if there is a previous variance, we have no question here at a - because the nature of the storage, she's inclined to recomme - she would like to see some photographs and a little more an - will lay this over for 1 month to LH Jan 15, 2013	end they get a variance
	Laid over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 1/15/2013	3
81 <u>RLH FCO</u> 12-654	Appeal of Philip O'Brien to a Reinspection Fire Certificate Deficiencies at 669 CASE AVENUE.	e of Occupancy With
	<u>Sponsors:</u> Bostrom	
	Deny the appeal and grant an extension to July 1, 2013 for Ite	ms 1-4.
	RE: 669 Case Ave (duplex)	
	Philip O'Brien, GPRE Properties, Responsible Party, appeared	d.
	Fire Inspector A. J. Neis: - Fire Certificate of Occupancy Inspection Correction Notice do written by Fire Inspector Ben Ellis - appealed today are some the exterior code violations - still haven't received the fuel burning report on the first unit a affidavit - the inspector tried numerous times to gain compliance	
	 Mr. O'Brien: is appealing items 1, 2 and 3 for an extension on the exterior concrete work) items 5, 6, 7 will be completed by re-inspection Dec 28, 2012 Orsat Test - he has invoice an inducing fan needs to be replaced; will be done by Dec 28, #4 - has photos; it's always been used as a parking area; timit clearly (there's a dead alley and a hill) bought house in Feb 2012, a bank foreclosure when finances allow for it, he would like to put a garage there the parking as is until then 	2 3 bers are there to define
	Ms. Moermond: - will recommend granting an extension to Jul 1, 2013 for item (asphalt or pavers; must pull a permit and go through site plan	
	Referred to the City Council due back on 1/16/2013	
2 <u>RLH FCO</u> 12-651	Appeal of Andrew Songle to a Fire Certificate of Occupar Notice at 1936 CARROLL AVENUE.	ncy Correction

EXHIBIT D

2		City of Saint Paul	15 West Kellogg Blvd. Saint Paul, MN 55102
1433		Minutes - Final	
14	Collectory of States	Legislative Hearings	
		Marcia Moermond, Legislative Hearing Officer Mai Vang, Hearing Coordinator Jean Birkholz, Hearing Secretary Mary Erickson, Hearing Secretary legislativehearings@ci.stpaul.mn.us 651-266-8560	
Tuesda	ay, January 15, 2013	9:00 AM	Room 330 City Hall & Court House
	9:00 a.m. Hea	rings	
	Remove/Repair	Orders	
1	RLH RR 11-96	Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of t FULLER AVENUE within fifteen (15) days after the F Council Public Hearing. (Public hearing continued fr	ebruary 1, 2012 City
		Sponsors: Carter III	
		Remove or repair the building by December 31, 2013.	
		RE: 869 Fuller Ave (duplex)	
		No one appeared.	
		Ms. Moermond: - the county is going to be rehabilitating this structure - work is estimated to begin in last spring 2013 - will recommend the City Council grant an extension thro complete the rehabilitation or removal	ugh Dec 31, 2013 to
		Referred to the City Council due back on 2/6/2013	
2	<u>RLH RR</u> <u>12-31</u>	Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of t THIRD STREET EAST within fifteen (15) days. (To t 2013 Legislative Hearing and May 1, 2013 City Cour	be laid over to April 23,
		<u>Sponsors:</u> Lantry	
		To be referred back to LH on April 23, 2013 and CC on M	ay 1, 2013.
		RE: 702 Third St E (duplex)	
		Charles D. DeLisi, owner, and Brad Griffith, Edina Realty,	appeared.
		Mr. DeLisi: - has spoken with Jim, Twin City Roofing yesterday; he sa	aid the roofing is about 90%
City of S	aint Paul	Page 1	······································

Legis	lative Hearings	Minutes - Final January 15,	, 20
		- explanation: His wife had fallen in the house and broke her wrist and he was taking care of her	
		 he also discharged the on-site manager who was unqualified (didn't even shovel the sidewalk, etc.); so, he called the city and complained about every little detail that needed to be repaired 	
		Fire Inspector A. J. Neis: - Revocation of Fire Certificate of Occupancy and Order to Vacate - it's a large 13-Unit apartment building - Mar 2012 - their office received a complaint that there were interior and garage violations on the property - an inspection was made Mar 6, 2012 by Inspector Mitch Imbertson, who issued Orders to correct several code violations; he attempted to made several re-checks	
		through Sep 2012 with no compliance on the Orders - Inspector Imbertson next consulted with Mr. Neis, who recommended doing an early C of O inspection, which he started in Sep 2012 - still, there has been no progress with compliance	
		Mr. Sitzmann: - he has had no problem with this building for 67 years; he holds the bar up high - he has been remiss because he was caring for his elderly wife of 66 years as well as procrastinating - he needs a little more time; he's a responsible person; he's not a slacker	
		- the inspector is very conscientious - requesting additional time - he will resolve every detail on the Order by Feb 7, 2013	
		Ms. Moermond: - the items that are left are pretty straight forward and they do need to be taken care	
		of - the new deadline will be Feb 22, 2013 to come into compliance, and Mr. Sitzmann won't need to have that placard posted	
		Referred to the City Council due back on 2/6/2013	
	1:30 p.m. He	earings	
	Fire Certificat	es of Occupancy	
16	RLH FCO 12-652	Appeal of Matt Connelly to a Fire Inspection Correction Notice at 1966 BENSON AVENUE.	
		<u>Sponsors:</u> Thune	
		Grant the storage height variance of 2 feet. Therefore, the paper rolls may be stored to a height of 14 feet moving foward. The existing storage of paper rolls at 16 feet must be reduced to 14 feet by March 1, 2013.	
		RE: 1966 Benson Ave (general retail and services - B - commercial)	
		Matthew T. Connelly and Michael Amidon, Amidon Graphics, owner, appeared.	
		Fire Inspector Leanna Shaff: - this is a continued there was a question as to how high they can pile the storage of large paper rolls	
			_

	Minutes - Final Ja	anuary 15, 2013
	 - read an email from Inspector Neis: before you make a final decision, you required further information. Based on Inspector Mitch Imbertson's research, they expart the warehouse to accommodate for this exact issue. Since they could not add sprinklers because the water supply in that area will not support the required sy for high piled storage, the only option was to increase the warehouse space. We mentioned in the appeal the densely packed rolled paper storage is not easily ignitable; if it does, it will take an enormous amount of water to extinguish. I form mention the additional concern that there is most likely not enough water pressuit the area for fire fighters to use, as the old saying goes, "big fire; big water." Mitch writes earlier: during a number of inspections and re-inspections during '98 and '99, deficiencies were noted for storage exceeding 12 feet high; these C were checked-off on but there weren't any note to record that suggest that any appeals were filed. Also included in the condition folder is a letter from Paul Arr Amidon Graphics, dated 7-23-97; this letter states that they are unable to compute limits for the height of paper storage because they were out of space in the building; he requested an extension until 10-20-97, when a new building would completed to expand to; there was no mention of any attempt to obtain a varian permit increase in height; more recent inspections-don't see any other occasion where they are cited for exceeding 12 feet and didn't see any reference to varia or appeals Mr. Amidon: they have always stacked to 16 feet; when they added on the warehouse, durit the plan review, they were given the 16-foot limit (Ms. Shaff: there is nothing in file that indicates that] on every inspection they have had, the stacks have been over 12 feet Ms. Moermond: is looking at the photos that she asked for from Mr. Connelly will split the difference and recommend the limit be set	nded stem /hille I got to ure in 1997, Orders nidon, ly with be ce for s nces
17 <u>RLH FCO</u> <u>12-651</u>	Appeal of Andrew Songle to a Fire Certificate of Occupancy Correction Notice at 1936 CARROLL AVENUE.	
	Notice at 1936 CARROLL AVENUE.	
	Notice at 1936 CARROLL AVENUE. <u>Sponsors:</u> Stark	
	Notice at 1936 CARROLL AVENUE. <u>Sponsors:</u> Stark RE: 1936 Carroll Ave (duplex)	of O
	Notice at 1936 CARROLL AVENUE. <u>Sponsors:</u> Stark RE: 1936 Carroll Ave (duplex) Andrew Songle, owner, appeared. Ms. Moermond: - the question for these next properties is whether or not a Fire Certificate of Occupancy existed (should or shouldn't you have been interpreted to have a C of	

City of Saint Paul

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EXHIBIT E

AMIDON GRAPHICS

July 23, 1997

Mr. Mike Urmann Fire Inspector City of St. Paul Dept. of Fire & Safety Services 100 East Eleventh St. St. Paul, MN 55101

> Re: Certificate of Occupancy 1966 Benson Avenue

Dear Mr. Urmann:

This letter sets out Amidon Graphics' intentions regarding compliance with various fire code provisions raised by you during fire inspection of the above premises. Specifically, you were concerned about the method of paper storage in the existing building, including height of stacks, aisles between stacks and space between stacks and structual members.

As discussed, Amidon intends to raze the "pole barn" on the southwest corner of the premises so that a new structure can be built. The new building will be used for paper storage. Most of the paper which is currently stored in the existing structure will be moved into the new building upon completion of construction.

We recently submitted site plans for the new building to the City of St. Paul and received preliminary approval. The modified site plan as well as a building plan will be submitted to the City in the near future. The scheduled completion date for the building is October 20, 1997.

It is impossible for Amidon to comply with the Fire Department's requirements for paper storage prior to October 20, 1997 because it has no other location for paper storage. Therefore, we request an extension until October 20, 1997 to comply with the paper storage requirements.

Sincerely,

1 An

Paul Amidon President

EEB/hs

Paul S. Amidon & Associates, Inc. • Amidon Publications 1966 Benson Avenue, St. Paul, Minnesota 55116, (612) 690-2401 Since 1951

EXHIBIT F





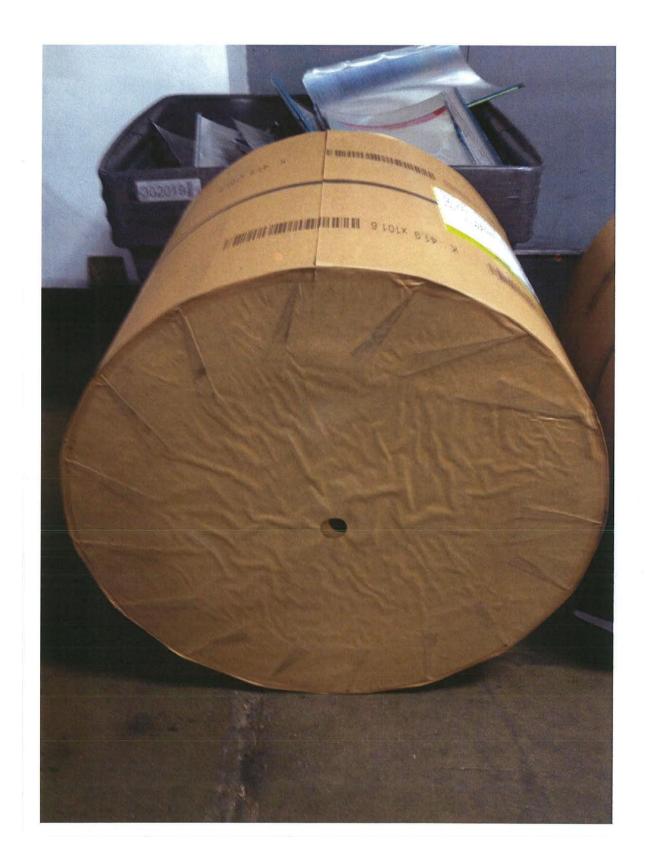




EXHIBIT G



