

**The City of Lake Forest
Building Review Board
Proceedings of the October 7, 2025 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Building Review Board was held on Wednesday, October 7, 2025, at 6:30 p.m., at the Municipal Services Building, 800 Field Drive, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Building Review Board members present: Chairman John Looby and Board members Eric Lohmueller, Sarah Lamphere, Justin Stamer, Scott Renken and Chris Collins

Building Review Board members absent: Board member Sally Downey

Staff present: Luis Prado, Assistant Planner and Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

**1. Introduction of Board members and staff, overview of meeting procedures –
Chairman Looby**

Chairman Looby reviewed the role of the Building Review Board and the meeting procedures followed by the Board. He asked the members of the Board and staff to introduce themselves.

2. Consideration of the minutes from the July 10, 2025 and September 3, 2025 Building Review Board meetings.

The minutes of the July 10, 2025 meeting were approved as submitted.

The minutes of the September 3, 2025 meeting were approved as submitted.

3. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a new residence on a vacant lot and the associated hardscape and landscape at 1124 Fairview Avenue.

Property Owners: Lee and Sarah Bagan

Contract Purchasers: Dylan Wu and Margaret Burke

Representative: Jeff Letzter, project manager

Chairman Looby asked the Board members for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest.

Board member Stamer recused himself from participating in the consideration of the petition due to a business relationship. He left the meeting room.

Hearing no further declarations from the Board, Chairman Looby invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Letzter stated that the Board previously approved a new residence for the property which was never constructed. He stated that the property is now under

contract with a new buyer pending approval of new plans. He stated that the property is a vacant lot in an established neighborhood. He stated that the proposed residence is designed to fit into the character of the neighborhood. He stated that the house conforms to the maximum allowable height of 30 feet and noted that because of the lower pre-existing grade on the site, the house could appear lower than other homes along the street. He stated that a cottage style home is proposed with steep gable roofs and the second floor tucked into the roof. He reviewed the site plan. He stated that the two car garage is side loaded and sited to the rear of the property. He noted that the plan is designed to provide privacy in the back yard. He presented a streetscape view of the proposed house noting the width and height of the home in relation to others along the street. He pointed out the masonry fireplace. He stated that the north elevation is all brick, and the garage will be sided consistent with the siding material on the second floor dormers. He reviewed the rear elevation noting the French doors accessing the back yard. He reviewed the roof plan noting that the main roof pitch is 17/12 and the pitch on the shed portion is 2/12. He stated that the shed roof will be metal roof and will have limited visibility from off the site. He acknowledged a letter from the neighbor expressing concern about drainage. He explained that the engineering plans propose catch basins to direct water to the street at the front of the house. He stated that no variances are requested, adding that the square footage of the house is slightly less than other homes in the neighborhood. He stated that the final landscape plan will be coordinated with the drainage and grading plan.

Mr. Prado stated that the house is very close to the maximum height of 30 feet and stated that during construction, an as built survey will be required to verify that the height does not exceed the allowable height and complies with the plans. He stated that overall, the elevations are consistent with the City's Design Guidelines. He suggested consideration of some simplification of the west elevation including the roof forms. He suggested adding a window to the shed dormer to break up the appearance of mass. He stated that the final landscape plan should align with the grading and drainage plan. He stated that a plan clearly detailing the trees to be removed, and the intended replacement trees and inches will be required. He noted that two letters were received and were provided to the Board.

Chairman Looby invited questions from the Board.

Board member Lamphere complimented the overall design and commented that the house will fit nicely into the neighborhood as a modern cottage style with a classic look. She agreed that the house will benefit from some simplification on the west elevation. She agreed that the landscape plan should closely align with the drainage and grading plan.

Board member Collins complimented the house. He commented on how the design of the house limits sunlight into key areas of the home. He noted that the air conditioning units are located near the back door and suggested consideration of other possible locations.

Board member Renken noted that the lot is narrow and the house is sited to the benefit of the neighborhood since the garage will not be visible from the street. He stated that the front elevation is simple and complimented the side elevations. He pointed out that there is a great deal of space under the 2/12 pitched roof which could be a room. He agreed that the dormer would benefit from a window or two, adding that a jog or double gable could make the element appear complicated. He suggested some interior modifications that could improve views into the rear yard.

Board member Lohmueller agreed that the rear dormer needs further study and refinement. He suggested considering aligning the shed dormer with the front entry and expanding the width. He stated that landscape screening is needed along the driveway. He stated support for the petition.

Chairman Looby asked that careful consideration be given to ensuring that there is sufficient space to maneuver into and out of the garage. He invited responses to the Board's questions and comments from the petitioner.

Mr. Letzter discussed the west elevation, noting that lowering the fascia at the bathroom window may improve the appearance. He commented on the shed dormer noting the relationship to the gables. He stated that the proposed window is intended to bring in some natural light from the south. He agreed to explore relocating the air conditioning unit to the north, along the driveway. He acknowledged the concept of shifting the primary bedroom to allow the window to be enlarged. He stated that landscaping is planned between the driveway and the property line and agreed to confirm that the driveway is configured to accommodate access into and out of the garage noting that the expanse of pavement is almost 26 feet with five feet of green space beyond.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Looby invited public comment.

Ms. Buckowich, 1141 Fairview Avenue, stated that she lives across the street from the subject property. She stated that she sent an email that was distributed to the Board. She stated that the house appears too large for the neighborhood and questioned how the allowable square footage is calculated. She asked to see the landscape plan noting that an Oak tree will be removed to allow the house to be constructed.

Ms. Skalka, 1110 Fairview Avenue, stated that she lives to the north of the vacant lot. She asked that the property line be clearly staked and stated that she believes that some of the land outside of her fence is part of her property. She commented on the long driveway, adding that she will see parked cars. She stated concern about drainage.

Nancy Bowen, 1142 Fairview Avenue, expressed concern about drainage. Chairman Looby invited a response to public testimony from City staff.

Mr. Prado explained that the City's calculation method takes into account the volume or mass of the house, not just the livable square footage. He stated that there is an allowance for garage square footage. He acknowledged that the square footage numbers do not necessarily align with those used by the County on tax bills. He stated that the same formula is applied to every property based on the land area.

Chairman Looby stated that the landscape plan needs to be enhanced and in addition to providing the minimum landscaping required for new construction, it should provide for replacement tree inches and sufficient plantings along the driveway to provide screening for the neighboring home. He noted that there is a significant healthy Oak tree on the neighboring property that will need to be protected with pre and post construction treatments and fencing. He asked the petitioner to speak to the drainage concerns.

Mr. Letzter stated that the drainage and grading plans propose inlets to pick up the water in the low spots and direct it out to the street, away from neighboring properties. He stated that the grading and drainage will control stormwater on the site which is currently uncontrolled. He stated that construction is expected to take between nine and twelve months.

Hearing no further questions or comments from the Board, Chairman Looby invited a motion.

Board member Renken made a motion to recommend approval of the petition for a new house with an attached garage on a vacant lot at 1124 Fairview Avenue along with the associated hardscape and conceptual landscape plan. He stated that the motion is based on the findings detailed in the staff report which are adopted as part of the motion and noted that the Board's deliberations are incorporated as additional findings. He stated that the motion includes the following conditions of approval.

1. The property lines must be clearly staked on site prior to the start of any site work.
2. A pre and post construction treatment plan must be developed and will be subject to City approval for any trees on adjacent properties that, in the determination of the City's Certified Arborist, may be impacted by construction.
3. Prior to the submittal of plans for permit:
 - a. Refine the west elevation to simplify the roof forms.
 - b. Consider the addition of a window on the shed dormer.
 - c. Relocate the air conditioning unit away from the door.
 - d. Specify that the standing seam roof panels are no wider than 12 inches.
 - e. Specify the brick veneer as at least four inches thick.
4. All modifications to the plans, including those detailed above and any others made in response to Board direction or as the result of final design development

shall be clearly called out on the plans submitted for permit. Staff is directed to review any changes, in consultation with the Chairman as appropriate, to determine whether the modifications are in conformance with the Board's direction and approval prior to the issuance of any permits.

5. Prior to the issuance of a building permit:

Tree Removal and Landscaping

- a. A tree plan shall be submitted and will be subject to review and approval by the City's Certified Arborist. The plan shall identify trees proposed for removal and trees identified for protection and preservation.
- b. A plan shall be submitted identifying the location of tree protection fencing to be installed prior to the start of construction and describing pre and post construction treatments proposed to increase the chances of long term survival of the trees intended for preservation which are located close to construction activity both on the property and on neighboring properties.
- c. Prior to the issuance of a building permit, a detailed landscape plan shall be submitted and will be subject to review and approval by the City's Certified Arborist. The plan shall, at a minimum, meet the landscaping standards for new residences detailed in the Code and, in addition, provide all required replacement tree inches to account for trees removed using good forestry practices. The landscape plan must include the quantity, species, and size at the time of planting for all new landscaping. The plan shall provide for landscaping between the driveway and the property line to screen views of cars from the neighboring property. If all required replacement inches cannot be accommodated on the site, a fee in lieu of on site planting may be accepted at the City's discretion to support parkway plantings in the surrounding areas.

Drainage and Grading

- d. Detailed drainage and grading plans must be submitted. The plans must show grades extending at least 50 feet beyond the subject property in all directions. Grading and filling are limited to the minimum necessary to meet accepted engineering standards and practices. The property must continue to accept water that is tributary to the site and runoff from new construction must be addressed to avoid increasing stormwater runoff on to neighboring properties.

Exterior Lighting

- e. Details of exterior lighting shall be submitted with the plans submitted for permit. Cut sheets for all light fixtures shall be provided and all fixtures, except those illuminated by natural gas at low light levels, shall direct light down and the source of the light shall be fully shielded from view. All exterior lights shall

be set on automatic timers to go off no later than 11 p.m. except for security motion detector lights.

Construction Parking, Staging, and Tree Protection

f. A plan for contractor parking and equipment and material staging shall be submitted for review and will be subject to approval by the City's Certified Arborist, City Engineer and Director of Community Development.

6. Submit as-built drawings during the construction process to ensure that the maximum permitted building height of 30 feet is not exceeded as measured from the lowest pre-existing adjacent grade to the tallest peak of the roof.

The motion was seconded by Board member Lamphere and approved by a vote of 5 to 0. (Board member Stamer recused himself from consideration of the petition.)

4. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a new residence on a vacant lot and the associated hardscape and landscape at 1206 Estate Lane.

Property Owner and Representative: Matan Aharoni

Chairman Looby asked the Board members for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Aharoni presented photos of the surrounding homes and streetscape noting that it is heavily wooded. He presented an air photo and pointed out the irregular shape of the property and noted the location of the Conservation Easement along the front of the property. He presented the plat of survey and noted the location of the access and utility easement through the Conservation Easement and explained that the driveway and utilities must be located within the easement. He pointed out a cluster of trees proposed for removal located near the footprint of the house. He reviewed the front elevation noting that the residence is designed in a transitional style similar to other homes in the area. He reviewed the exterior materials noting that stone and stucco are proposed for the siding, and a charcoal colored synthetic roof product is proposed. He presented a color palette for the stucco and trim. He stated that the stone will be four inches thick. He stated that the front door will be stained wood, and the sunroom will be sided with wood panels. He commented on the articulation of the front elevation noting that bays were added in response to early comments from City staff. He noted that the elevation on the site drops significantly at the rear of the home and stated that a deck and stairs are planned to step down to the ground. He reviewed the proposed floor plan. He stated that in response to the staff comments, he will re-work the roof where the garage and house meet and work to break up the north elevation. He presented a conceptual landscape plan.

Mr. Prado reviewed the site plan and confirmed the location of the 75 foot wide Conservation Easement along Estate Lane and noted the location of the designated area through the Conservation Easement, for the driveway and utilities. He noted that the driveway as proposed is very close to the north property line, allowing little

space for screening and drainage along the perimeter of the property. He stated that the elevations do not yet fully align with the City's Design Guidelines. He suggested simplification of the east and north elevations including refinements to the east elevation to address the height and massing. He stated that refinement of the relationship of solids to voids on the south elevation would help to strengthen the elevation. He stated several exterior materials are proposed noting that the Design Guidelines recommend using no more than two different exterior materials. He stated that the landscape plan will need to be further detailed reflecting the drainage plan, trees proposed for removal, landscaping along the north property line to screen the driveway and garage, and plantings to restore the Conservation Easement. age and driveway.

Chairman Looby commented that overall, the Board will need additional and more detailed information before acting on the petition. He invited questions and comments from the Board.

Board member Stamer stated that in order to understand the proposed elevations, the adjacent grades need to be reflected. He questioned how much of the foundation will be exposed in various areas. He noted that it appears that wood is proposed on one elevation of the sunroom and stucco is proposed on the other and encouraged more consistency. He stated that the shed dormer above the side entrance door appears very narrow and suggested making it larger and considering a gable instead of a shed. He pointed out that no other shed dormers are proposed on the second floor. He pointed out a discrepancy between the floor plan and the elevations relating to the placement of the casement windows in the sunroom. He stated that in his opinion, the casement window will look better centered. He commented on the large mass of stucco and the two over two windows noting that the two over two pattern is not used elsewhere on the house. He suggested two by three windows for consistency. He acknowledged that the windows may not be able to be aligned but encouraged some adjustment. He noted the extensive amount of stucco on the rear elevation. He asked for further clarification on the windows in the garage and the material proposed for the chimney.

Board member Lohmueller stated that the fundamental issue is the lack of information about the grade change on the property and how it affects the siting of the house and the appearance of the elevations. He stated that the grade change is not insignificant and appears to be about 11 feet across the property. He stated that the site has potential, and the front elevation is strong, but noted that the other elevations need further work and refinement. He stated that detail is needed on how the stone will meet the stucco. He stated that the chimney appears narrow and appears to be hanging off the side of the house. He stated that the grade change needs to be integrated with the house.

Board member Lamphere agreed that too many exterior materials are proposed. She suggested taking inspiration from the Lasker Estate buildings in the area with simple details and limited exterior materials. She stated that the property presents an

opportunity to build a significant house and a good addition to the neighborhood.

Board member Collins agreed with the comments of the other Commissioners. He noted that the kitchen and breakfast room are proposed on the dark side of the house and suggested reconsideration of the layout to take advantage of more natural light in those areas.

Board member Renken suggested adjusting the house about 20 degrees counterclockwise. He noted that there is a lack of detail on the elevations but acknowledged that is because the final siting of the house has not yet been determined. He stated that the proposed decks and steps need to be reflected accurately on the elevations based on the adjacent grades. He complimented the front elevation. He suggested using fewer materials on the exterior of the home perhaps eliminating wood and using only stone and stucco. He noted for instance, that the gable element on the rear elevation could be entirely stucco. He stated that additional windows are needed to create a better balance with the amount of solid wall. He suggested replacing the small, squatty windows with larger windows. He stated that the stone should be carried around the house and at least carried on to the sunroom and screen porch. He pointed out that the garage doors as reflected in the drawings do not align with the inspirational images provided. He suggested adding windows to the back of the garage. He agreed that the chimney is too skinny. He questioned the use of the stained headers but acknowledged that they may be workable. He suggested simplifying the right elevation and noted that there are inconsistencies in the materials provided. He stated that more detailed information is needed.

Chairman Looby agreed with the comments offered by the other Board members. He emphasized that the elevations need to reflect the grade change. He stated that shifting the house may be helpful in addressing the grade change. He stated that further study is needed to ensure that the garage is functional and that there is space to plant vegetation to screen the garage and driveway from the neighbor. He invited a response to Board questions and comments from the petitioner

Mr. Aharoni thanked the Board for the comments noting that the comments confirmed some of his thoughts about the plans presented. He agreed to eliminate the wood siding and panels from the exterior. He stated that the grading plan is in progress which will allow the siting of the house to be finalized. He agreed to review the elevations in response to the comments and make sure that they accurately depict what is proposed.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Looby invited public comment.

Ray Lazzara, 1620 Trillium Lane, stated that all of the other houses in the subdivision are brick and stone, not stucco, and all of the homes have cedar roofs. He expressed concern that on the south elevation, the proposed sunroom aligns with his screen

porch. He suggested siting the house further to the east to avoid the houses being directly aligned. He expressed concern about the location of the air conditioner. He stated appreciation that the Conservation Easement will be replanted as originally intended before a previous owner clear cut the area. He noted that the pond is fed by a natural stream in the area.

Ms. DeSenis, 1880 Knollwood Road, pointed out that only three trees are proposed for removal for this house and many more are proposed for removal for the new house next to her property.

Jeff Manierre, 1255 Estate Lane, asked how long the construction would take and expressed concern about construction traffic noting that Estate Lane is a narrow, curving road.

In response to public testimony, Chairman Looby stated that a plan for contractor parking, construction access, and material and equipment staging plan will be required and will be subject to review and approval by the City prior to the issuance of permits. He stated that trees intended for preservation on and around the site will need to be protected with fencing and treated if determined to be necessary by the City's Certified Arborist. Hearing no further questions or comments from the Board, he invited a motion.

Board member Lohmueller made a motion to continue consideration of the petition for a new house at 1206 Estate Lane with direction to the petitioner to refine and further detail the plans in response to the comments offered by the Board and in the staff report. He noted that reflecting the grade change on the property and accurately showing the full elevations is essential.

The motion was seconded by Board member Lamphere and approved by the Board by a 6 to 0 vote.

4. Opportunity for the public to address the Building Review Board on non-agenda items.

No additional public testimony was presented to the Board.

5. Additional information from staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine J. Czerniak
Director of Community Development