

**The City of Lake Forest
Building Review Board
Proceedings of the February 4, 2026 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Building Review Board was held on Wednesday, February 4, 2026, at 6:30 p.m., at the City of Lake Forest Municipal Services Facility, 800 Field Drive, Lake Forest, Illinois.

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

Staff present: Luis Prado, Assistant Planner, Susan Thomas, Assistant Director of Community Development, 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 of the January 7, 2026 Building Review Board meeting.

Consideration of the minutes of the January 7, 2026 meeting was postponed.

3. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a new house with an attached garage and the associated hardscape and landscape proposed on a vacant property at 710 Buena Road.

Property Owner: Mahesh and Tinu Agarwal

Representative: Jeff Letzter, President of Aspect Design, Inc.

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. Letzter stated that a new residence is proposed on a vacant lot in an established neighborhood. He stated that the properties on either side are developed with homes. He stated that the Homeowners' Association reviewed and approved the plans. He presented the site plan noting the setbacks required by the plat of subdivision adding that no variances are requested. He presented a conceptual streetscape image. He stated that the grade change on the property is taken into account in calculating the overall height of the house. He stated that because of the height and square footage limitations, the second floor is brought down by using dormers. He reviewed the exterior materials including brick and board and batten

and tongue and groove cedar siding and stated that the brick will be painted white and the cedar will be stained white. He reviewed the elevations pointing out that the garage doors do not face the street. He noted the screen porch on the rear elevation. He stated that consistent with the Cottage architectural style, steep pitched roofs are visible on the front elevation stepping down to a shed roof element on the garage. He stated that the main mass of the second floor is placed over the main portion of the house. He stated that a roof plan, sections, and floor plans are included in the Board's packet. He noted staff comments about the consistency of window size and placement and noted that windows in the kitchen are restricted due to cabinetry. He stated that a flat roof dormer is located on the rear of the house to provide natural light into the second floor. He stated that preliminary drainage and grading plans direct water around the house, to the street, away from the neighboring properties. He stated that work is underway on a landscape plan noting that due to the heavy buckthorn on the site, it is difficult to walk the site. He presented samples of exterior materials adding that the variety of materials is intended to provide texture.

Ms. Thomas stated the property is the last vacant lot in the Ponds Subdivision. She stated that as described by the petitioner's representative, the house is designed in the Cottage style with steep pitched roof elements, a hierarchy of massing, and a covered front entrance. She noted that the side elevations do not reflect the same level of detail as the front and rear elevations or consistency in the size and placement of the windows. She noted that the roof forms are strong on the front elevation but more complicated on the rear elevation. She asked for Board input on roof forms on the rear elevation. She stated that the proposed exterior materials are consistent with prior Board approvals. She stated that with the exception of two Poplar trees, the other trees on the property are lower quality species. She stated that the landscape plan should include screening for the outdoor mechanical equipment. She stated that a letter was received from the neighbor to the north and was provided to the Board. She added that the neighbor to the rear of the property contacted staff and requested landscape screening along the rear property line.

Chairman Looby invited questions from the Board.

Board member Stamer complimented the house. He acknowledged the neighbor's concern about drainage and stated that the engineering plans will be reviewed by the City Engineer. He asked whether the front of the garage is on the same plane as the garage to the north. He observed that if the garage is pulled forward, the large mass of board and batten will need to be broken up with windows or vegetation to soften the appearance. He asked for clarification on aspects of the roof.

Board member Downey noted that the square footage of the house is very close to the maximum allowed and said that construction should be monitored to ensure compliance with the approved plans and square footage as stated. She stated that painted brick, white in particular, is a maintenance issue because it quickly appears dirty. She noted that the rake detail does not appear consistent with the Cottage

architectural style adding that the rake should be simplified and should not attract attention. She noted discrepancies between the windows. She stated that the expansive solid wall on the side elevation should be broken up with windows.

Board member Lohmueller pointed out the potential for longer term issues with painted brick and suggested that instead, a brick of the desired color should be used. He commented on the shed off the garage and suggested refining that area. He stated that windows should be added to the garage. He commented that the small extension above the front door will be an important detail noting that as presented, it appears chunky with a single large cedar panel which is probably not feasible.

Board member Lamphere complimented the home noting that the Cottage architectural style is popular. She noted a discrepancy between the elevation provided to the Board and the image in the MLS listing for the property noting that the MLS image shows windows on the rear elevation of the garage. She suggested adding windows on the right elevation and adding landscaping along the right side of the house.

Board member Collins complimented the house. He questioned why the garage is located on the south side of the house limiting the natural light into the home. He stated that painting causes bricks to deteriorate and suggested stain rather than paint.

Board member Renken complimented the house and stated that a few refinements could further elevate the overall design. He noted the steep gables on the front elevation and pointed out that on the left side, the steep gable carries through to the rear of the home. He noted that the long hip roof form on the right side of the house does not offer the same strong aesthetic as the gable on the left side. He stated that carrying the gable through to the rear will improve the back elevation. He commented that on the rear elevation, the bay could be a low pitch and nestle between the two gables. He stated that the long wall of the garage should be sided in brick to match the rest of the house and asked that windows be added to break up the wall mass. He stated that the upper, triangular area of the wall could be wood, rather than brick. He stated that the sidelights at the front door appear skinny and suggested increasing the width to 16 inches. He stated that the bay on the second floor needs to be panelized and suggested making the windows in the bay larger. He suggested allowing the columns to stand free of the house with the base of the columns resting on the stoop. He suggested making the doors nine feet wide. He questioned why the house is sited as proposed rather than flipped noting that if the house was flipped, it would present fewer windows to the neighbor concerned about privacy.

Chairman Looby complimented the house. He agreed with the comments offered by other Board members pertaining to the garage and the screening of the outdoor mechanical equipment. He commented on the challenges with painted brick and suggested selecting a brick that is the desired color or considering stain instead of

paint. He stated that in his opinion, painted brick will not blend in with the other homes in the neighborhood. He stated that wider garage doors will improve the functionality of the garage. He invited the petitioner to respond to the Board's questions and comments.

Mr. Letzter stated that work on the drainage and grading plans is underway. He stated that the initial concept is to direct water around the house and out to the street. He stated that the siting of the house takes into account existing grades on the property. He acknowledged that due to working with the topography of the site, the house is not able to take full advantage of the southern natural light. He agreed to add brick to the garage to tie it in with the house and to consider adding windows as suggested by the Board members. He stated that the ability to enlarge the garage to widen the doors by increasing the forward projection may be limited by the Homeowners' Association. He confirmed that the buyers of the lot want a three car garage. He acknowledged maintenance issues with painted brick but noted that the buyers requested painted brick for aesthetic reasons, not due to budget. He agreed to talk with the buyers about other options. He stated that the front bay will be panelized and detailed. He agreed to soften the rake on the gable ends. He confirmed that the outdoor mechanical equipment will be screened. He agreed to consider modifications to the roof as suggested by Board member Renken. He stated that the sidelights as proposed are 14 inches wide and the front door is eight feet tall.

Chairman Looby invited public comment. Hearing none, he invited final questions and comments from the Board.

In response to a question from Board member Downey, Mr. Letzter confirmed that he read the letter from the neighboring property owner. He stated that he understands the concern about screening the new home given that the property has been undeveloped lot for a long time. He stated that landscape screening is planned on the property.

Chairman Looby suggested that the refinements requested by the Board could be reviewed at the staff level and if determined to meet the intent of the Board's comments, no further Board review would be required. Hearing no further questions or comments from the Board, Chairman Looby invited a motion.

Board member Stamer made a motion to recommend approval of a new residence with an attached garage on a vacant parcel at 710 Buena Road along with the associated hardscape. He stated that the motion is based on the findings detailed in the staff report which are adopted as part of the motion and stated that the Board's deliberations are incorporated as additional findings. He stated that the recommendation includes the following conditions of approval.

1. Prior to applying for a building permit, modify the plans to address the following direction from the Board.

Residence

- a. Avoid painting the brick. Select a brick of the desired color or use stain.
- b. Add detail to the extension above the front dormer, reflect this element as panelized.
- c. Reconsider the roof forms and the opportunity to carry the steep gable on the right side through to the rear as is done on the left side of the house.
- d. Consider lowering the pitch on the bay on the rear elevation between the two steep gables.
- e. Refine the rake and eaves to be consistent with the cottage style.
- f. Break up areas of solid wall with regularly placed windows of consistent sizes and proportions.
- g. Review the proportions of the sidelights in relation to the front door, avoid sidelights that appear skinny.
- h. At the front entrance, refine the columns to stand free of the house with the base resting on the stoop.

Garage

- a. Carry brick around to the long wall to match the house, if desired, retain wood at the top of the gable.
 - b. Break up the solid wall with the addition of windows.
 - c. Explore the opportunity to widen the overhead doors to nine feet.
 - d. Adjust garage doors for modern vehicles, consider 9 foot doors
2. 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.
 3. Prior to the issuance of a building permit:

Tree Protection/Removal and Landscape Plans

- a. Submit a complete and accurate tree survey and tree removal plan. Trees in the parkway in front of the property should be reflected on the tree survey. Clearly indicate the trees proposed for removal and the relationship of the trees to areas that will be impacted by construction.
- b. Submit a tree protection fencing plan and, if required by the City Arborist, a pre and post construction tree treatment plan.
- c. Prepare a final landscape plan that fully meets Code requirements for new residences and in addition, reflects all required replacement tree inches as required by the City's Certified Arborist including parkway trees as applicable, provides enhanced screening along the side and rear property lines, and screening of the outdoor mechanical equipment.

Drainage and Grading

Submit detailed drainage and grading plans. Grading or filling is 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

Submit details of all exterior lighting on the structures and landscape lighting. 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

Submit a plan for contractor parking and equipment and materials' staging. The plan will be subject to approval by the City's Certified Arborist, City Engineer and Director of Community Development. The adjacent and nearby streets must remain clean and passable throughout construction. Driveways may not be blocked.

4. Submit as-built drawings during the construction process to verify that the building height conforms to the approved plans as measured from the lowest adjacent grade to the tallest peak of the roof.

The motion was seconded by Board member Downey and approved by a vote of 7 to 0.

4. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a new home and the associated hardscape and landscape plans at 300 Majestic Oak Court.

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. Lawson presented overall comments pertaining to agenda items 4, 5, and 6. He stated that the plans were revised to address all of the Board and staff comments. He stated that overlapping gables were removed, the roof lines were lowered, windows were added, and the board and batten siding was removed. He presented the elevations as previously proposed for 300 Majestic Oak Court and the elevations as now proposed.

Mr. Prado stated that the expectation when the subdivision was approved was that the 26 lots on the north portion of the subdivision would be versions of a small number of model home designs and the seven lots in the south portion of the subdivision

would be sold to buyers and developed with custom homes designed by a variety of architects. He stated that the intention was that the custom homes would be designed to fit the character of the wooded area. He stated that after purchasing four of the parcels, the petitioner presented early design concepts for the homes to the Board in November 2025 and received initial comments and direction from the Board. He stated that in January 2026, plans for a new residence at 290 Majestic Oak Court were presented to the Board and approved subject to conditions. He said that plans for a new resident at 320 Majestic Oak Court were also presented to the Board in January and the Board continued consideration of the petition and encouraged the petitioner to develop an alternate design to more closely fit the character of the area. He stated that the design as now presented reflects a more simplified residence with an enhanced level of detail on all elevations in comparison to the earlier design. He stated that there is greater consistency in the placement of windows and improved proportions between solid walls and openings. He commented that the home overall does not present a clear hierarchy of massing as described in the City's Design Guidelines. He stated that staff met with the petitioner several times and provided examples of other homes approved by the Board. He asked for Board input on the plans as now presented.

Chairman Looby invited questions from the Board.

Board member Lamphere commented that the 320 Majestic Oak Court does not reference the historic home in any way. She asked for an explanation on why a transitional architectural style is proposed given the uniqueness of the subdivision and the nearby historic house. She stated that there is an opportunity to do something special on the lots to relate to the historic home and the farm themed outbuildings, the stable and the coach house. She acknowledged that the original developer is no longer involved but stated that it is important to abide by the original intent for the subdivision. She stated that there should be some consistency throughout the subdivision. She questioned what is driving the current design.

Board member Lohmueller stated that staff is available to guide the petitioner through the process and encouraged the petitioner to heed the advice of staff. He stated that it is frustrating for all parties to not be able to move the project forward. He stated that in his opinion, the plans need further study and refinement. He encouraged the petitioner to listen carefully to the Board's comments and respond to the input offered. He stated that each house should be designed consistent with a distinct architectural style. He stated that the house proposed for the southernmost parcel is the most promising but noted that the other two homes as presented do not respond to the City's Design Guidelines. He commented that the roof material should be selected to respond to the architectural style of the home.

Board member Downey encouraged the petitioner to look at the potential for the lots with fresh eyes. She asked for addresses of other homes the developer has built to allow the Board to better understand the intended quality and character of the proposed homes. She stated that the Board is charged with ensuring the best

possible homes for the unique site. She stated that details matter and encouraged consideration of thoughtfully designed custom homes.

Board member Stamer noted that he was not at the meeting when the Board recommended approval of the house presented by the petitioner for the 290 Majestic Oak Court property subject to conditions. He observed that the house proposed for the 320 Majestic Oak property appears to be very similar to that house. He asked whether the same exterior materials are proposed for each of the four homes planned by the petitioners. He stressed that each home should be distinct.

Board member Collins agreed with the comments offered by the other Board members.

Board member Renken stated that the house proposed for 320 Majestic Oak Court is, in his opinion, mediocre, with some good qualities and some areas where refinement is needed. He asked why the pitch of the roof is as proposed. He stated that the pitch is very shallow and suggested that a steeper pitch would improve the overall appearance. He asked for the reasoning behind the architectural style proposed.

Chairman Looby invited the petitioner to respond to the Board's questions and comments.

Mr. Lawson stated that the plans respond to every direction and comment offered by the Board and staff. He stated that the packets of other homes provided by staff do not relate to other homes in the subdivision. He stated that the Homeowners' Association supports the plans as previously presented. He stated that as requested, the overlapping gables were eliminated. He stated that staff provided him with a book about architectural styles that was not helpful. He stated the intent to follow a transitional, old farmhouse, simple style. He stated that not all of the homes will have the same exterior materials. He agreed to send addresses of other homes he has built.

Chairman Looby invited public testimony. Hearing none, he invited further questions and final comments from the Board.

Board member Stamer emphasized that the proposed new homes are very close to an important historic home. He stated that the new homes should reference or pay deference to the historic home in some way. He pointed out that the Board approves 95 percent of the new homes presented in one meeting.

Board member Downey stated that the historic house is a focal point in this portion of the subdivision.

Board member Lamphere encouraged collaboration between the developer and the architect to achieve a vision consistent with the overall subdivision. She noted the uniqueness of the subdivision. She stated that it is important that new homes are

compatible with the overall character of the immediate area, the historic home and the farm buildings.

Board member Lohmueller encouraged the architect to be present at the Board meetings and in meetings with staff.

Chairman Looby agreed that the architect needs to be present so that he can revise the plans to respond to the comments offered by the Board. He questioned whether the architect is receiving and understanding the comments. He stated that there appears to be a lack of communication with the architect.

Board member Downey observed that the house presented to the Board appears to be identical to a house designed by the same architect for a very different site on Ridge Road.

Hearing no further questions or comments from the Board, Chairman Looby invited specific comments on the 340 Majestic Oak Court petition.

5. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a new home and the associated hardscape and landscape plans at 320 Majestic Oak Court.

Property Owners: 270-290 Majestic Court LLC (Marcin Kopacz 50% and John Lawson 50%)

Representative: John Lawson, Owner and Representative

Chairman Looby noted that the comments on the preceding petition apply to this agenda item. He asked the Board for any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts, hearing none, he invited comments from the Board on Agenda Item 6.

6. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a new home and the associated hardscape and landscape plans at 340 Majestic Oak Court.

Property Owners: 270-290 Majestic Court LLC (Marcin Kopacz 50% and John Lawson 50%)

Representative: John Lawson, Owner and Representative

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. Lawson reiterated that the design of the proposed residence was modified to address all of the previous comments offered by the Board.

Chairman Looby invited questions and comments from the Board.

Board member Downey stated that more attention to the details is needed including detailing of the pillars and slimming down the rake.

Board member Lohmueller stated that the design proposed for this property is the most workable of all of the homes presented. He stated that the plan has improved

since the last meeting. He stated that the porch should be the main focus of the front elevation, adding that more refinement and detailing is needed to understand for instance how the columns integrate with the porch. He commented that the front door appears to be too far to the right and commented on the proximity of the front door to the French doors to the right. He noted that the two large garage doors are perpendicular to each other.

Board member Renken stated that generally the design of the residence is moving in the right direction. He commented on the front entry and suggested sloping the roof up to just below the second floor windows. He suggested refining the small gable to the right of the front entrance and suggested that a sloping roof over the entry could die into the small gable. He stated that vertical muntins should be added to the windows to avoid the French Provincial appearance of the windows with only horizontal muntins. He stated that on the left elevation, the window should be centered on the gable above.

Board member Lamphere suggested adding more windows to the left elevation. She stated that additional landscaping is needed.

In response to a question from Board member Renken, Mr. Lawson stated that one of the garage doors is 18 feet wide and the other is 16 feet wide.

Board member Stamer stressed the importance of having the architect present in discussions with staff and present at the Board meetings. He pointed out areas where the overall design would benefit from the addition of windows on the side elevations.

Chairman Looby the petitioner to respond to the Board's questions and comments.

Board members Lamphere and Downey asked that further consideration be given to the exterior color palettes to ensure variety.

Chairman Looby invited public comment, hearing none, he invited a motion to continue consideration of all three Majestic Oak Court petitions.

Board member Renken made a motion to continue all three Majestic Oak Court petitions, agenda items 4, 5, and 6, with direction to the petitioners to share the Board and staff comments with the architect and to revise the plans in response to the comments and direction offered. He stated that consideration should be given to, but not limited to, the overall comments and the comments and direction offered on the 340 Majestic Oak Court home as noted below.

Overall Comments

- Engage the architect actively in conversations with City staff and ensure that the architect attends the Board meetings.
- Provide variety in architectural styles, exterior materials, and color palettes among the homes.

- Demonstrate consistency with the selected architectural style on all components of each residence.
- Eliminate overlapping gables.
- Avoid flat and minimal roof pitches.
- Provide a hierarchy of massing.
- Provide human scale to elements of the residences.
- Enhance and further detail the landscape plan. Ensure proposed plantings align with good forestry practices.

340 Majestic Oak Court

- Pay attention to detailing including but not limited to detailing and integrating the columns into the porch, refining the front entrance, and slimming down the rake.
- Consider sloping the roof above the front entry to just below the second floor windows and consider integrating it into a refined gable to the right of the front entrance.
- Reconsider the placement of the front door on the elevation and with respect to the French doors.
- Add vertical muntins to the windows.
- Center the window on the left elevation on the gable above and add windows to the elevation.
- Ensure the functionality of the two perpendicular garage doors and the garage apron.

The motion was seconded by Board member Stamer and approved by the Board in a 7 to 0 vote.

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

No additional public testimony was presented to the Board.

9. Additional information from staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine J. Czerniak
Director of Community Development