

The City of Lake Forest
Plan Commission
Proceedings of the September 10, 2025 Meeting

A meeting of the Lake Forest Plan Commission was held on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Commission members present: Chairman Mark Pasquesi and Commissioners David Hunt, Louis Pickus, Lisa Nehring, Barrett Davie, Jamie Moorhead and Paul Thomas

Commissioners absent: None.

Staff present: Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

1. Introduction of Commissioners and staff and review of meeting procedures.

Chairman Pasquesi introduced the members of the Commission and reviewed the meeting procedures followed by the Commission.

2. Consideration of the minutes from the March 12, 2025 and July 9, 2025.

Consideration of the minutes of the March 12, 2025 meeting was postponed.

Consideration of the minutes of the July 9, 2025 meeting was postponed.

3. Public Hearing and Action: A request for a recommendation in support of approval of a tentative and final plat of subdivision through a Special Use Permit incorporating any related variances. The property is addressed as 1235 Elm Tree Road and 1310 Lake Road. The property is currently considered a single zoning lot and was originally part of a larger estate. The proposed subdivision is requested to allow the single zoning lot to be divided into two parcels held in separate ownerships. Property Owner: Elm Tree Road LLC (Winslow S. Bent Trust and Seth L. Bent Trust) Presented by: Nate Lielasus, architect

Chairman Pasquesi asked the Commission for any conflicts of interest or Ex Parte contacts. Hearing none, he swore in all those planning to testify. He invited a presentation from the petitioner.

Mr. Lielasus presented an aerial view of the property and a survey and reviewed the property boundaries. He noted that the original estate home is today located on a separate property, on the east side of Lake Road, and is in separate ownership. He stated that the subject property is developed with various outbuildings and gardens which were part of the original estate. He noted that although the subject property is comprised of three separate tax lots, it is considered a single zoning lot because of the history of use, the development, and the fact that it is in a single ownership. He

explained that the property is being transferred to separate family members, descendants of the original owners of the estate, and to facilitate the transfer, a subdivision of the property into two zoning parcels is necessary. He reviewed the option for division of the property as previously presented to the Plan Commission. He stated that in response to comments from the Commission, a revised plan is now proposed that retains the garden intact on a single parcel. He explained that the plan as now presented also locates a primary structure, a residential unit, on each property. He stated that the carriage house is located on the east property with garages on the first floor and a residential unit above, and the tennis house and cottage are located on the west property. He stated the tennis house is the most significant building on the property and has been immaculately preserved. He noted that it will be modestly and carefully updated to accommodate family use. He presented images of the structures and garden. He acknowledged that the structures on the property are not in conformance with the current steep setback or square footage requirements. He presented a proposed site plan showing the minor changes intended by the family members who will be taking over ownership of the property. He stated that the City's Historic Preservation Commission reviewed and endorsed the concepts for the site. He stated that there are no plans to further develop the east property at this time. He presented the proposed plat of subdivision and reviewed the proposed property line noting that it follows the garden wall and steps back about five feet from the wall and, as noted, places the carriage house on the east property. He stated that the subdivision plat establishes a landscape buffer along Elm Tree Road, a preservation easement on the garden fountain, and a tree preservation easement in the 50 foot setback along Lake Road on the east property.

Ms. Czerniak confirmed that today, the property is considered a single zoning lot by the Zoning Code. She noted that the concerns raised by the Commission when this petition was first presented appear to be addressed by the subdivision plat as now presented. She stated that the lots are configured to preserve the entire garden, including the fountain and wall, on a single property. She stated that with the carriage house now located on the east lot, the Code requirement for a primary structure to be located on the property is addressed. She stated that as requested by the Commission, the petitioner presented a plan reflecting the modest changes proposed on the property. She stated that as presented, the plat of subdivision complies with the applicable requirements in the Code. She stated that approval of the tentative and final plat through a single process is appropriate since no public improvements are proposed. She stated that a note should be added to the plat acknowledging the non-conforming conditions of the existing historic structures. She stated that the landscape buffer, utility easement and tree preservation easement referenced by the petitioner will all need to be accurately indicated on the plat. She stated that findings in support of the subdivision and associated Special Use Permit are detailed in the staff report.

In response to questions from Commissioner Thomas, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that future changes or development of the property may be subject to review by Boards and Commissions depending on the proposed scope of work. She stated that it would not be appropriate for the City to prohibit further development of the east lot outright.

In response to questions from Commissioner Barrett, Mr. Lielasus confirmed that the brick wall at the end of the garden will need tuckpointing in the future. He stated that the five foot area on the back side of the wall provides sufficient space for that work

In response to questions from Commissioner Pickus, Ms. Czerniak stated that once the plat of subdivision is recorded, the County will assign two new tax lot numbers to replace the three existing tax lot numbers.

In response to questions from Commission Moorhead, Ms. Czerniak reviewed that the building scale provisions in the Code limit the allowable square footage of buildings based on the size of the property. She stated that the existing conditions on the site are nonconforming to the current Code requirements and noted that the structures were constructed long before the limitations on square footage were established. She noted that during its review, the Historic Preservation Commission acknowledged that the uniqueness of the tennis house structure and the extension of the structure down into the ravine which adds to the square footage, was never contemplated by the current regulations and meets the criteria for a variance due to the historic significance of the structure.

In response to questions from Commissioner Moorhead, Mr. Lielasus confirmed that the property deed does not restrict subdivision of the property. He stated that except for natural gas which extends from Lake Road, the structures on what is proposed as the west parcel come off of Elm Tree Road.

Ms. Czerniak stated that cross easements for utilities will be required on the plat of subdivision as appropriate.

In response to questions from Commissioner Nehring, Mr. Lielasus stated that the property is well drained because of the adjacent ravine. He confirmed that each building has a separate meter for utilities. He stated that the proposed driveway off of Elm Tree Road generally follows the footprint of the original driveway. He stated that the 50 foot tree preservation easement aligns with the front yard setback along Lake Road. He stated that several heritage trees are located within that area. He stated that if the preservation area along Lake Road is enlarged, it could push a future house, if one is ever proposed, into the garden.

In response to questions from Commissioner Hunt, Ms. Czerniak stated that representatives from the tax assessor's office review development activity and subdivisions of property periodically and adjust assessed values accordingly. She stated that any future development activity proposed for the property will be required to be reviewed through the standard City processes and if necessary, variances would need to be requested and are not guaranteed. She stated that there is no apparent risk to the City as a result of the subdivision of the property.

In response to questions from Commissioner Nehring, Ms. Czerniak stated that a future pool on the site may or may not require review and approval by the Historic Preservation Commission or the Zoning Board of Appeals depending on the scope of the project.

Hearing no further questions from the Commissioner, Chairman Pasquesi commended the petitioner for responding to the concerns that were raised by the Commission at the previous meeting. He thanked the family for being such great stewards of the property and commented that the subdivision allows the family to continue to invest in and care for the property.

Commissioner Nehring agreed with Chairman Pasquesi's comments. She stated that the configuration of the proposed lots is logical and respects the existing structures and the garden. She thanked the family for being good stewards of the property.

Hearing no further comments from the Commission, Chairman Pasquesi invited a motion.

Commissioner Davie made a motion to recommend tentative and final approval of the Elm Tree Road two lot subdivision through a Special Use Permit as required by the HROSP Overlay District based on the findings in the staff report and subject to the following conditions of approval.

Prior to the recording of the plat of subdivision.

1. A note shall be added to the plat of subdivision acknowledging the existing conditions, structures, and garden on the site and existing nonconformities with respect to square footage and the steep slope setback. The note shall state that any future improvements on the site must comply with the Code requirements in effect at that time or will be subject to review and approval through the established public processes.
2. The final plat of the subdivision shall reflect the preservation easements as indicated by the petitioner and shall meet all applicable requirements to the satisfaction of the City Engineer and Director of Community Development.
3. All applicable fees must be paid prior to recording the plat of subdivision.
4. Any future improvements or variance requests will be subject to review and approval by the appropriate Board, Commission, and City Council.
5. Provide a cross utility easement on the plat of subdivision.

The motion was seconded by Commissioner Pickus and approved by the Commission 7 to 0.

4. Additional public comment on non-agenda items

There was no public comment on non-agenda items.

5. Additional information from staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine Czerniak
Director of Community Development