

The City of Lake Forest
Zoning Board of Appeals
Proceedings of the November 25, 2024 Meeting

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Zoning Board of Appeals was held on Monday, November 25, 2024 at 6:30 p.m., in Lake Forest, Illinois.

Zoning Board of Appeals members present: Chairman Ari Bass and Board members Laurie Rose, Art Miller, James Moorhead, Henry Kleeman and Mike Adams (one vacant position)

Zoning Board of Appeals members absent: None

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

1. Introduction of Board members and staff, overview of meeting procedures - Chairman Bass

Chairman Bass reviewed the meeting procedures and asked the members of the Board to introduce themselves.

2. Consideration of the minutes from the October 28, 2024 meeting.

The minutes of the October 28, 2024 meeting were approved as presented.

**3. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of variances from the front and side yard setbacks for an open front porch at 827 Oakwood Avenue.
Property Owners: Donald and Donna Williams
Representative: Randy Prueitt, contractor**

Chairman Bass asked for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner and swore in all intending to speak on the petition.

Mr. Williams stated that he and his wife have lived in Lake Forest for 28 years and recently bought the house on Oakwood Avenue to be close to the Central Business District. He stated that they are investing in the house and would like to add an open front porch that will look like it has always been part of the house. He explained that variances are needed because the house was built prior to the current zoning setback requirements. He acknowledged that the porch could be reduced in size but noted that they would like the porch to be large enough to be usable. He reviewed the property survey noting that the house itself encroaches into the current setbacks. He reviewed the plan noting that as proposed, front porch pushes into the 40 foot

setback 25'- 6" and stops just short of the north wall of the house. He stated that the porch will be open, not enclosed. He stated that the porch is a simple structure consistent with the architecture of the house. He requested the Board's support for front and side yard variances to allow the addition of an open front porch to the home.

Mr. Prado stated that the staff report includes findings in support of the requested variances from the front and north side yard setbacks to allow the addition of an open front porch to the home. He confirmed that the existing house, like many in the neighborhood, does not comply with the current zoning setbacks. He stated that the property as originally subdivided, does not meet the minimum lot size or lot width required by the Code today. He commented that along this stretch of Oakwood Avenue, it is not uncommon for open front porches to encroach into the front yard setback. He stated that the staff report recommends approval of variances to allow a new front porch to encroach no closer than 25 feet to the front property line and no closer than three feet to the north property line.

Chairman Bass invited questions from the Board.

In response to a question from Board member Miller, Mr. Williams stated that he does not believe the addition of an appropriately designed open front porch will negatively impact the standing of the house within the National Register Historic District.

In response to a question from Board member Rose, Mr. Williams confirmed the intention to keep the porch open and stated no objection to the condition requiring that the porch remain open.

Board member Adams observed that the porch will not extend much further than the front porch on the neighboring home. He stated support for the variances as requested.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Bass invited public comment. Hearing none, he invited final questions and comments from the Board.

Board member Kleeman stated support for the variances as requested.

Board member Rose stated support for the variances as requested noting that the addition of a front porch is consistent with other homes in the neighborhood and will improve the functionality of the home.

Board member Miller provided historical information on the home and neighborhood. He stated that Charles S. Frost designed the house. He noted that in some cases, tax incentives are available from the State for appropriate alterations to significant historic homes but cautioned that changes to the front façade may be disqualifying. He

stated that the addition of the porch as proposed appears to meet the family's needed.

Board Moorhead stated support for the variances noting that the applicable criteria appear to be satisfied. He noted that as proposed, the porch does not extend beyond the porch on the neighboring home.

Hearing no further comments from the Board, Chairman Bass stated support for the variances adding that open front porches are common in the neighborhood and commented that investment in older homes should be encouraged. He invited a motion.

Board member Adams made a motion to recommend approval of variances to allow an open front porch to encroach no closer than 25 feet to the front property line and no closer than three feet to the north property line consistent with the site plan submitted to the Board. He stated that the recommendation is based on the findings as detailed in the staff report and incorporates the Board's deliberations as additional findings. He stated that the recommendation includes the following condition.

- The front porch shall remain open in nature and not be enclosed with walls or glass.

The motion was seconded by Board member Kleeman and approved by a vote of 6 to 0.

4. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of variances from the front yard and lot in depth setbacks for a garage addition and variances from the front yard and steep slope setbacks for a screen porch addition at 600 N. Mayflower Road.

Property Owner: JE Ventures, LLC (Judy Nygard, 100%)

Representative: Nick Marmitt, architect

Chairman Bass asked for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing none, he invited a presentation from the petitioner and swore in all intending to speak on the petition.

Ms. Nygard stated that her and her husband have been Lake Forest residents for some time and recently purchased the house at 600 N. Mayflower Road. She stated that the house is dated and requires updates. She added that to make the house functional for their family, some modest additions are proposed which require zoning setback variances. She stated that the design aspects of the petition and a five percent overage in the building square footage were recently approved by the Historic Preservation Commission subject to approval of the required zoning variances.

She stated that the property was created, and the home built well before current zoning regulations. She stated that the house was likely designed by architect Boyd Hill. She pointed out that the house is accessed from a shared driveway. She reviewed a site plan noting that the existing shed near Mayflower Road, within the front yard setback, will be removed. She noted that the fence along Mayflower Road was in disrepair and was recently restored and stated the intention to enhance the landscaping on the property. She noted the location of the proposed addition to the garage and the new screen porch. She presented existing images of the garage and a conceptual rendering with the expanded garage. She stated that because the screen porch is within the steep slope setback, the City Engineer requested information to confirm the stability of the ravine. She presented an image of the area where the screen porch is proposed. She stated that the screen porch will encroach into the steep slope setback 11'6". She presented images of the existing roof forms and conceptual drawings of the house with the proposed additions and alterations. She stated that the additions are designed to follow the architectural style and detail of the home. She stated that in her opinion, the proposed changes will have a positive impact for the family and the neighborhood.

Ms. Vollmers confirmed that the Historic Preservation Commission approved a variance from the allowable square footage subject to approval of the required zoning setback variances. She reviewed the variances requested for the garage addition noting that as proposed, the garage will be located 22'11" from the front property line and 22'6" from the north property line instead of 50 feet as required by the Code. She stated that the screen porch will be located 40'11" from the front property line instead of 50 feet and 11'6" from the ravine edge instead of 20 feet. She commented that removal of the nonconforming shed is a positive for the property. She noted that it appears that the home was originally sited to maximize views to the ravine and as a result, is located partially in the current zoning setbacks. She stated that based on preliminary information, the City Engineer is supportive of the steep slope variance subject to review and approval of detailed plans. She stated that options for expanding the footprint of the house within the allowable building area are limited.

Chairman Bass invited questions from the Board.

In response to questions from Board member Adams, Ms. Vollmers explained that enclosing the screen porch with walls or glass would add weight to the structure within the steep slope setback so a condition requiring that the screen porch remain "screened" is recommended.

In response to questions from Board member Adams, Ms. Nygard confirmed that as proposed, the air conditioning units will encroach into the front yard setback.

In response to questions from Board member Rose, Ms. Vollmers stated that as proposed, the proposed future swimming pool does not appear to be within the steep

slope setback. She stated that the screen porch will not have a basement and will be designed with a minimal foundation to the extent allowed by the Code.

In response to questions from Board member Rose, Ms. Nygard stated that she believes the neighbors on the shared road are supportive of the project.

In response to a question from Board member Kleeman, Ms. Nygaard confirmed that restoration of the fence along Mayflower Road is complete.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Bass invited public comment. Hearing none, he invited final questions and comments from the Board.

Board member Miller complimented the project noting that the proposed additions and alterations appear to maintain the low profile of the house.

Board member Kleeman stated support for the variances.

Board member Moorhead stated support for the variances noting that the applicable criteria appear to be satisfied. He stated that in his opinion, the proposed additions and alterations will be an enhancement to the property.

Board member Rose stated support for the variances.

Hearing no further comments from the Board, Chairman Bass invited a motion.

Board member Moorhead made a motion to recommend approval of variances to allow an addition to the garage located no closer than 22'11" to the front property line and no closer than 22'6" to the north property line, air conditioning units to encroach two to three feet into the front yard setback beyond the existing wall of the house, and a new screen porch no closer than 40'11" to the front property line and encroaching no more than 11'6" into the steep slope setback. He stated that the recommendation is supported by the findings detailed in the staff report and incorporates the Board's deliberations as additional findings. He stated that the recommendation included the following conditions of approval.

1. The final plans for the screen porch shall be subject to review and approval by the City Engineer.
2. The screen porch must remain open, that is, not enclosed, to avoid adding weight within the Steep Slope Setback.
3. Light mitigation measures should be taken recognizing the proposed location of large skylights in addition to windows within the Steep Slope setback. The skylights and additional windows proposed on the south

facing elevation will direct light toward the ravine, a natural, dark sky area.

The motion was seconded by Board member Rose and approved by a vote of 6 to 0.

**5. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a rear yard variance for a rear addition at 1320 Elm Tree Road.
Property Owner: Chicago Title Land Trust (#9002345942)
Representative: Scott Streightiff, architect**

Chairman Bass asked for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest.

Board member Adams stated that he exchanged pleasantries with the petitioner while at the site but did not discuss the petition.

Hearing no further declarations from the Board members, Chairman Bass invited a presentation from the petitioner and swore in all intending to speak on the petition.

Mr. Streightiff stated that a replacement rear and side addition is proposed. He stated that a variance is requested to allow a small portion of the rear wall of the addition and the adjacent outdoor fireplace to encroach a limited distance into the rear yard setback. He stated that the design aspects and a variance from the allowable building square footage were approved by the Historic Preservation Commission subject to approval of the rear yard variance. He noted that the lot size does not conform to the minimum lot size required in the R-4 zoning district. He stated that the lot was created, and the house built prior to the current zoning regulations. He stated that the residence is sound and contributes architecturally to the Historic District. He reviewed that in 2001, an addition was constructed at the northwest corner of the house. He stated that the 2001 addition will be removed and replaced with a larger addition. He presented photos of the home and property noting the dense perimeter landscaping. He stated that the addition is intended to provide key elements lacking in the home that are desired by the new owners including a larger kitchen, family room, wider stairway, a functional laundry room, and higher ceilings in some areas. He stated that the addition is designed to minimize changes in appearance to the front of the home. He stated that the addition is designed in the context of the original home, exterior materials, and detailing. He reviewed the criteria for a variance noting that the area of encroachment is minor, not visible from the street, and well screened by existing vegetation. He stated that the proposed design allows both the indoor and outdoor fireplaces to share a single flue. He noted that if the outdoor fireplace was detached from the house, it would be permitted outright by the Code.

Ms. Vollmers confirmed that only a small portion of the proposed addition encroaches into the rear yard setback. She stated that the encroachment does not exceed three and a half feet adding that a total of just over 22 square feet of the addition is located

in the setback. She stated that the lot was created through the Original Plat of Lake Forest which predates current zoning requirements. She stated that the house and the proposed addition, except for the rear wall and outdoor fireplace, comply with the required zoning setbacks. She stated that the staff report provides findings in support of the requested variance. She confirmed that a stand-alone outdoor fireplace is permitted by the Code. She stated that the proposed encroachment will not negatively impact neighboring properties.

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

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Bass invited public comment. Hearing none, he invited final questions and comments from the Board.

Board member Adams stated support for the variances. He stated that the area of encroachment is well screened. He noted that support from the neighboring property owners.

Board member Miller stated that the proposed improvements will make the residence viable for many decades.

Chairman Bass stated support for the variances noting that using the same flue for both fireplaces makes sense. Hearing no further comments from the Board, he invited a motion.

Board member Moorhead made a motion to recommend approval of a variance from the rear yard setback to allow an encroachment of the rear wall and outdoor fireplace not to exceed 3'6". He noted that the total square footage within the setback area will not exceed 23 square feet. He stated that the recommendation is based on the findings as detailed in the staff report and incorporates the Board's deliberations as additional findings.

The motion was seconded by Board member Adams and approved by a vote of 6 to 0.

7. Public testimony on non-agenda items.

No public testimony was presented to the Board on non-agenda items.

8. Additional information from staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Catherine J. Czerniak
Director of Community Development