

**The City of Lake Forest**  
**Zoning Board of Appeals**  
**Proceedings of the September 29, 2025 Meeting**

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Zoning Board of Appeals was held on Monday, September 29, 2025 at 6:30 p.m., in Lake Forest, Illinois.

Zoning Board of Appeals members present: Chairman Ari Bass and Board members Jan Gibson, Fred Brewer and Jeffrey Giannelli.

Zoning Board of Appeals members absent: Mike Adams (Two vacant positions.)

Staff present: Michelle Friedrich, Planning Technician and Luis Prado, Assistant Planner

**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 of the August 25, 2025 meeting.**

The minutes of the August 25, 2025 meeting were approved as presented.

**3. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of variances for an open front porch within the corner side yard setback and a driveway wider than permitted within the front yard setback at 831 Rosemary Road.**

**Property Owners: Robert and Jackie Perna**

**Representative: Doug Reynolds, 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 those intending to speak at the meeting.

Mr. Reynolds stated that the property is rectangular and is located at the southeast corner of Sheridan and Rosemary Roads. He pointed out that the property follows the curve of Sheridan Road. He stated that considerable thought was given to the siting of the house noting that in the end, the decision was made to front the house on Sheridan Road and to locate the curb cut on Rosemary Road, close to where the existing curb cut is located. He stated that the proposed siting keeps the house, driveway, and garage as far away from the intersection as possible. He stated that the owners' desire for a first floor primary bedroom drove the design of the home. He stated that the proposed open front porch encroaches into the corner side yard

setback along Sheridan Road six feet due to the curving frontage on Sheridan Road. He presented conceptual renderings of the proposed house.

And Mr. Reynolds stated that a three car garage is proposed facing Rosemary Road and is accessed by a driveway that exceeds the permitted 16 foot width in some areas to provide adequate room to maneuver into and out of the garage and provide limited space for guest parking. He stated that the garage is sited to minimize views from the streetscape. He noted the driveway, at the maximum width, within the front yard setback is 46 feet. He stated that there are a four foot masonry wall and landscaping to screen the parking area off the driveway.

Mr. Prado noted that because the property is a corner lot, there are 50 foot setbacks from the north, south and west property lines limiting the buildable area. He stated that the property was created through a subdivision which was approved prior to the adoption of the current zoning regulations. He noted that the proposed encroachment of the open front porch into the 50 foot setback is minimal and pointed out that existing landscaping around the perimeter of the property will provide screening from streetscape views. He stated that a second variance is requested to allow the driveway to be wider than 16' within the front yard setback. He stated that the driveway is configured to allow vehicles to turn around to exit the site rather than back out on to Rosemary Road given the proximity to the corner. He stated that a condition requiring the front porch to remain open is recommended.

Chairman Bass invited questions from the Board.

In response to a question from Board member Giannelli, Mr. Prado stated that the property was created by a subdivision in 1958.

In response to a question from Board member Gibson, Mr. Prado acknowledged that the site was not staked by the petitioner. He stated that he did not know which variances, if any, were requested for the previous homes proposed on the site. He confirmed that as proposed, the driveway does not comply with the Code.

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

Board member Brewer stated that given the site constraints, he is supportive of the variances.

Board member Giannelli agreed with Board member Brewer and stated that the porch fits well with other homes along Sheridan Road. He stated support for the variances.

Chairman Bass commented that open front porches are desired and noted that the Board has supported variances for open porches in the past.

In response to questions from Board member Gibson, Mr. Reynolds stated the petitioners considered various site plans and footprints for the home. He stated that the goal was to present a design that minimizes the number and extent of variances requested while achieving the petitioners' goals for a new residence. He stated that the three dormers above the three openings on the porch balance the vertical elements. He acknowledged that the porch could be smaller to avoid the need for a variance but stated that in his opinion, the design would be less appealing. He stated that a porch should be at least seven feet wide to be useable. He stated that the proposed driveway differs slightly from the pre-existing driveway configuration to pull it out of the required 20 foot side yard setback from the east property line.

In response to questions from Board member Giannelli, Mr. Reynolds commented that rotating the house, to pull the porch out of the 50 foot setback would result in the house facing the corner and moving closer to the corner.

Chairman Bass commented that the house as sited addresses Sheridan Road and observed that if the house is rotated the house would lose that relationship.

Board member Brewer stated support for the porch as proposed and the variance. He stated that as proposed, the porch is featured from the streetscape instead of the garage which is a benefit. He stated that the porch helps to visually balance the house.

Board member Gibson agreed that a porch can benefit the appearance of a house. She stated concern about granting two variances for new construction. She stated that variances for older homes which predate the current Code are more common and warranted. She stated that Sheridan Road is an important street, and care should be taken in considering new construction along the road. She stated that the desire for a front porch is not a hardship. She questioned whether the porch may impact the neighborhood. She stated support for the variance for the driveway given that the prior driveway was located in approximately the same location and for safety reasons particularly for vehicles leaving the site.

In response to questions from Board member Gibson, Mr. Reynolds pointed out that there is not a sidewalk on the east side of Sheridan Road so the porch appears further away from Sheridan Road than it would if there was a sidewalk. He noted that existing and proposed landscaping will soften views of the house and the porch from the streetscape. He reiterated that the lot is constrained by 50' setbacks on three sides.

Board member Giannelli acknowledged Board member Gibson's points but stated that in this case, the two variances appear to strike a reasonable balance on the site.

Chairman Bass agreed with Board member Giannelli.

Board member Gibson acknowledged the challenges of the site noting that it is smaller than the minimum size currently required in the applicable zoning district. She questioned whether both of the requested variances are justified or whether a single variance for the driveway is more appropriate. She stated appreciation for the proposed enhanced landscaping along Sheridan Road.

Board member Brewer stated the shape of the lot itself, and the setbacks cause hardship. He commented that the petitioners appear to have carefully considered how to work with the property in a positive way.

Chairman Bass noted that in part, the driveway variance is necessitated by the corner lot and the proximity of the driveway to the corner.

In response to a question from Board member Giannelli, Mr. Prado confirmed that driveways are required to be setback from intersections.

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

Board member Brewer made a motion to recommend approval of variances to allow the open front porch to encroach into the 50' corner side yard setback no more than 6' 7" and the width of the driveway to be no greater than 46' 3" within the front yard setback both as reflected on the site plan. He stated that the motion is based on the findings detailed in the staff report which are adopted as part of the motion. He stated that the Board's comments are incorporated as additional findings. He stated that the motion includes a condition requiring the front porch to remain open.

The motion was seconded by Board member Giannelli and approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

**4. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of a variance to allow expansion of a driveway in the front yard setback at 491 Buena Road.  
Property Owners: Christopher and Marianne Delhey**

Ms. Friedrich noted that the property owners had an unavoidable conflict and are not in attendance. She reviewed the site plan and stated that the existing driveway is non-conforming at 21 feet in width, within the front yard setback, exceeding the current 16' wide limitation. She stated that the driveway complied with the Code at the time of the original construction. She stated that the house is sited very close to the front yard setback line limiting opportunities for expansion of the driveway in

compliance with the current Code provisions. She stated that an expansion of 10 feet is proposed along a portion of the driveway to allow a care to be parked out of the way of cars pulling into and backing out of the garage. She stated that a low wall is proposed on the east side of the expansion area and will connect with the existing wall. She stated that arborvitae are proposed along the north side of the expanded area to screen a parked car from the property to the north and to some extent, with the parkway tree, from views from the northwest. She pointed out that a car is parked in the driveway now, unscreened from views from off of the site. She stated that the Ponds Homeowners' Association approved the project and letters from two neighbors were submitted in support of the petition. She noted that the City's Certified Arborist recommends the installation of tree protection fencing at the dripline of the parkway tree prior to construction.

In response to questions from Board member Gibson, Ms. Friedrich stated that if desired by the Board, a condition requiring landscaping around the expansion area could be recommended.

Chairman Bass commented that it is more typical to see the widest part of the driveway at the garage rather than a mid-driveway bump out. He noted that he observed only one other mid-driveway bump out in the area. He acknowledged that a tree would be lost if the driveway is expanded at the garage. He expressed concern that approving this driveway configuration could open the door for other similar requests. He stated that it is common in the Ponds Subdivision for driveways to extend straight from the street to garage since the lots are not very deep.

Board member Brewer stated that parking areas along driveways encourage vehicles to be parked outside of the garage. He stated that in this case, the expansion area is not near neighboring homes. He stated that the end result, with landscaping, may be more appealing than other driveways in the area. He noted that the Homeowners' Association and the neighbor support the proposed driveway expansion. He stated in this petition the expansion area is not as close to the property line as a variance previously endorsed by the Board.

Board member Gibson agreed with the comments of the other Board members. She noted that there are multiple parked cars in driveways throughout the community. She stated that when visiting the site, she found backing out of the driveway to be difficult due to a car parked on the street. She stated that the pine tree at the corner of the garage would be lost if the driveway expansion was shifted toward the garage. She also acknowledged that Homeowners' Association support. Board member Brewer stated that the request will not make Lake Forest less attractive.

Chairman Bass stated that the Board is charged with reviewing the petition against the standards for a variance. He stated that in his opinion, this is a unique request in this neighborhood.

Board member Giannelli stated that the proposed expansion does not appear to flow as well as other driveway expansions presented to the Board.

Board member Brewer questioned if this request would be looked at differently if there was a third garage stall. He noted a prior driveway variance that, in his opinion, was not as well planned as this.

Chairman Bass noted in the prior petition the neighboring house was about 60 feet away from the shared property line further than in this case.

In response to questions from Chairman Bass, Ms. Friedrich stated that the property owner considered removing the pine tree near the garage but decided to preserve the tree to help soften the overall view of the home. She stated that the expansion as proposed avoids the need to address the grade change that occurs in the area closer to the garage. She stated that the petitioner cited the same frustration in backing out of the driveway as experienced by Board member Gibson and wishes to avoid adding to the number of cars parked on the street. She noted that Buena Road in this area is narrow and curving. She stated that the unique character of the street and challenges presented by cars parked on the street could be incorporated into the findings to distinguish this request from others.

In response to questions from Board member Gibson, Ms. Friedrich confirmed that the petitioner provided photos of other similarly expanded driveways in the neighborhood and noted that the Board has in the past supported similar variance requests for properties in the surrounding area.

In response to questions from Chairman Bass, Ms. Friedrich commented that many of the driveway expansions occurred up near the garage doors, but not all of them. She noted that the lots in The Ponds Subdivision are smaller than the minimum lot size required in the R-4 District, but the R-4 setbacks are applied.

In response to a question from Board member Gibson, Ms. Friedrich confirmed that the maximum driveway width within the front yard setback is 16 feet based on the current Code.

In response to a question from Board member Gibson, Mr. Prado offered that the construction of this house at the setback line contributes to the challenge faced by the petitioner. He noted the neighboring house which is setback further on the lot. Board member Gibson commented that in her opinion, the design presented is not the best.

Board member Brewer commented that the challenges of the lot make it difficult to achieve the best design. He stated support for the variance again noting the Homeowners' Association's support.

Board member Gibson and Chairman Bass questioned whether a hardship has been demonstrated.

Board member Gibson commented that overall, in her opinion, the change proposed will not alter the character of the neighborhood.

In response to questions from Chairman Bass, Ms. Friedrich confirmed that the petitioner intends to protect the parkway tree and add landscaping near the expanded portion of the driveway. She confirmed that the zoning provisions that apply to the property today were not all in existence at the time the house was constructed. She offered that if desired, the Board could require the edge of the expansion area to be curved, reducing the angular configuration. She stated that the driveway should not be expanded any closer to the tree than presented in the plan.

Board member Gibson stated support for the addition of low landscaping around the expansion area.

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

Board member Brewer made a motion to recommend approval of a variance to allow the width of the driveway to be no greater than 31' at the widest point as reflected on the site plan. He stated that the motion is based on the findings detailed in the staff report which are adopted as part of the motion. He stated that the Board's comments are incorporated as additional findings. He stated that the motion includes the following conditions.

1. Tree protection fencing shall be installed at the dripline of the tree.
2. Curve of the street facing side of the expansion area.

The motion was seconded by Board member Gibson and approved by a vote of 4 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.**

Ms. Friedrich noted that the next meeting is scheduled for October 27, 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:32 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle Friedrich  
Planning Technician