

The City of Lake Forest
Building Review Board
Proceedings of August 2, 2018 Meeting

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Building Review Board was held on Thursday, August 2, 2018 at 6:30 p.m., at the City's Municipal Services Facility, 800 Field Drive, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Building Review Board members present: Chairman Ted Notz and Board members Chris Bires, Jim Diamond, Ross Friedman, Fred Moyer and Richard Walther

Building Review Board members absent: Robert Reda

Staff present: Jen Baehr, Assistant Planner and Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

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

Chairman Notz 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 July 5, 2018 meeting of the Building Review Board.

The minutes of the July 5, 2018 meeting were approved with two corrections as requested by Chairman Notz and Board member Richard Walther

3. Consideration of a request for approval of a new residence and detached garage at 480 Ryan Place. Approval of the demolition of an existing shop building is also requested.

Owner: MNE Development LLC, Luka Popovich

Representative: Dragan Djonovic, project manager

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

Mr. Popovich, owner of the subject property, introduced himself and general contractor, Chad Zurich. He added that Dragan Djonovic, the project manager, was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Zurich stated that a new house with four bedrooms, three and half baths, and a two car detached garage are proposed on a vacant lot. Mr. Popovich stated that he believes the proposal will improve the overall appearance of the neighborhood noting that the lot now is semi-developed with a shed in the back. He added that some of the concerns that the Lake Forest Preservation

Foundation had with the proposal stem from the second gable roof on the front elevation and the window pattern. He stated that these elements can be corrected as construction plans are developed in order to comply with the City's design guidelines. He stated that the proposal is a work in progress adding that they are working to meet the City's standards but at the same time, improve the overall appearance of the neighborhood and benefit the City as well.

Chairman Notz invited staff comments.

Ms. Czerniak explained that the subject property is a buildable lot, in an established neighborhood. She noted that the lot is irregular in shape, and narrows towards the back. She explained that the rear part of the property is part of an area that had a number of shop buildings decades ago, and a few of those buildings remain, one being on this property. She stated that approval of the demolition of the shop building is part of this petition. She added that the demolition request appears to meet the criteria and noted that findings in support of the demolition request are detailed in the staff report. She noted that staff met with the petitioner a number of times and acknowledged that the plans were refined somewhat in response to the discussions. She explained that staff encouraged the petitioner to identify an architectural style and move toward that style from a massing, roof form, detail and material standpoint, while being consistent with the neighborhood. She explained that inconsistencies with the selected Four Square style remain in the plans as presented. She stated that staff understands that the petitioner's intent is for the proposed new residence to be consistent with the allowable square footage however, as presented, the plans are currently over the maximum building square footage allowed for this size lot. She explained that the exposure of the basement is above 3.5 feet, requiring it to be counted towards the building square footage.

In response to questions from Board member Friedman, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that there are a number of inconsistencies in the plans presented for review.

Chairman Notz invited further staff comments.

Ms. Czerniak stated that two letters were received, one from the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation, and the other from the neighbor to the east of the subject property. She explained that the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation noted that the plans as presented are not consistent with key design elements of the Four Square architectural style and provided several recommendations. She stated that approximately four trees will need to be removed to accommodate the new construction, one within the footprint of the proposed house, and others to the west of the house, near the bike path. She explained that as required by City Code, an inch for inch replacement will be required for the trees removed. She added that if there is not enough space on the property for the replacement trees to be planted, plantings may be directed to the parkway in the surrounding neighborhood. She stated that from a design perspective, although the petitioner has identified the architectural style as Four Square, the details and materials do

not yet seem to align with that style. She explained that there are some design elements that appear to be more consistent with a Farm House style. She noted that the secondary gable, located on the second floor of the front elevation, appears to be a projecting element when viewed from the front, but from the side elevations, it is not shown as a projecting element. She asked for Board input on the scale of the front porch columns adding that a Four Square style home often has a hipped roof. She stated that whether the design moves in a Four Square direction, or maybe evolves into a different architectural style, the petitioner should provide detailed plans that are consistent with the chosen style. She noted that since earlier versions of the plans were presented to staff, the petitioner has refined the placement of windows creating a more regular pattern on the east elevation. She noted that the west elevation has large expanses of wall without windows but given the location of the house, adjacent to the bike path and railroad tracks, and the limited visibility from the streetscape, the lack of windows may be appropriate.

Ms. Czerniak stated that there is some uncertainty about the exterior materials being proposed. She explained that both brick and cultured stone are specified on the plans for the porch piers and chimney. She noted that the property proposed for development is located in a neighborhood of simple homes, simple forms and simple detailing adding that traditional, modest materials are used on the exterior of the homes. She stated that the use of true brick, as opposed to cultured stone, may be more appropriate for the porch piers and chimney.

In response to questions from Chairman Notz, Ms. Czerniak provided more detail on the letter received from the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation and the neighboring property owner. She stated that the Preservation Foundation noted that the neighborhood is primarily composed of working class homes. She added that the Foundation referenced the City's Residential Design Guidelines and pointed out that once an architectural style is chosen, the design of the residence should be consistent with that chosen style. She stated that the Foundation offered specific recommendations for consideration in order to achieve a design that more closely reflects the Four Square style. She noted that the recommendations include: eliminating the second gable on the front of the house, using a hipped roof instead of a gable, providing deep roof overhangs, and adding a hipped dormer to the front elevation. She noted that the Foundation also recommended using true wood, instead of the proposed synthetic siding. She noted that synthetic siding has been approved by the Board in the past, on a limited basis, in this neighborhood. She stated that the Foundation also recommended that the front door be reconsidered noting that a double-wide front door is not often seen with the Four Square architectural style. She noted that the Foundation also recommended that consideration be given to breaking up side elevations with windows, refining the trim size on windows, and using windows with muntins. In response to the neighboring property owner's letter, she confirmed that the lot is buildable although to date, has not been developed with a house. She noted that the neighbor commented that the lot is not regularly maintained and she confirmed that on occasion, the City contractor

has maintained the property because the grass was taller than eight inches. She stated that currently, the owner is maintaining the property. She stated that whether or not the house being built will be occupied by the current property owner is not a matter of consideration for the Board. She confirmed that in response to a concern raised by the neighbor, a plan for construction staging, access and parking will be required prior to the issuance of a building permit. She confirmed that a drainage and grading plan will be required and reviewed to assure no negative impacts to the neighboring property. She noted that the plan proposes a storm sewer along the east side of the lot adding that the City Engineer will review the plans before a permit is issued.

In response to a question from Chairman Notz, Mr. Popovich stated that they are willing to work with the City and are open to suggestions and will do what is necessary to get the project underway.

Chairman Notz invited questions from the Board.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Ms. Czerniak clarified that the exposure of the basement would need to be lowered only slightly to avoid inclusion of the basement in the square footage calculation.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Mr. Zurich stated that the columns are proposed at 10" square.

Chairman Notz commented that the columns appear to be different sizes on the various elevations. He stated that the details overall should be clarified and suggested that consideration be given to the proper proportions for the columns based on the overall design.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Mr. Popovich confirmed that a gutter is proposed on the front porch roof.

In response to questions from Board member Walther Mr. Zurich stated that no columns are proposed on the rear elevation and acknowledged the inconsistency in the drawings.

Chairman Notz stated that the rear elevation needs to be corrected in order to reflect what is intended.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Mr. Popovich reviewed the proposed garage and stated that a person door is proposed on the east elevation and a window is proposed on the south elevation. He stated that the circular window could be removed.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Mr. Zurich stated that only a single door is proposed adding that the double door was only a suggestion. He asked for Board input on the double door.

Mr. Popovich added that the double door was proposed with the intention of adding a patio in the rear yard, similar to what would be seen in a more urban setting.

In response to questions from Board member Bires, the petitioner confirmed that he is open to looking at different roof styles that may be more appropriate for the elected architectural style. He agreed that brick instead of stone could also be considered along with enhancements such as shutters and divided lite windows. Board member Bires noted that it is important for the details to be reflected in the plans submitted for the Board's review.

In response to questions from Board member Moyer, Mr. Zurich stated his intent to use a thickened slab for the garage as opposed to a foundation and footing. Ms. Czerniak stated staff will review the code requirements with the petitioner.

In response to questions from Board member Moyer, Mr. Zurich stated that the rendering is a conceptual image intended to offer an image of the stone as an option. He passed around samples of the proposed materials.

Board member Moyer, referring to the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation memorandum, stated that the Foundation made excellent observations and offered informed suggestions. He encouraged the petitioner to consider the Foundation's recommendations.

Board member Friedman stated that he has specific questions regarding the soffit, porch, and railing materials, as well as concerns about the details, or lack thereof, of the project, overall inconsistencies and discrepancies. He recommended that the architect review the Lake Forest Building Codes, the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation notes, the staff report and the Board's comments and revise, refine and detail the plans accordingly. He added that the Board is not opposed to what the petitioner is proposing noting that it would be nice to have a house on the long-standing vacant site. He noted however that the new house must fit the character of the neighborhood. He stated that because the architect is not present, the Board cannot ask legitimate questions and receive succinct answers. He explained that the Board needs to understand the details of what is proposed. He states that in his opinion, without the architect present, it is unproductive to ask specific questions. He asked that the architect and project team be present at a future meeting after focusing on refinements to the project.

Board member Diamond agreed with the comments of Board member Friedman and the other Board members.

In response to a question from Board member Diamond, Mr. Popovich stated that a landscape plan will be prepared and submitted.

Chairman Notz commented on a discrepancy on the rear elevation pertaining to the patio and stairs. He noted that the elevations are not consistent around the house adding that in order to eliminate inconsistencies, the architect should review and verify that each plan and elevation are consistent so it is clear what is being proposed. He stated that the second gable, on the upper part of the front elevation, adds complexity to what should be a relatively simple design. He suggested that consideration be given to removing the second gable on the front elevation, refining the size and shape of the porch columns, and removing the columns on the rear elevation. He added that consideration should be given to configuring the front door as a single door, as opposed to a double door.

Board member Friedman suggested considering adding sidelights to the front door.

Chairman Notz commented that the column pedestals as reflected on the elevation appear to overwhelm the column that sits on top, but noted that in the rendering, the landscaping helps to soften the transition between the pedestal and column. He suggested that when thinking through the landscape plan, plantings be considered to deemphasize the column base. He suggested consideration of a narrower garage door.

Board member Friedman suggested that consideration be given to adding another foot or two to the width of the garage to allow enough space to open car doors.

In response to questions from the petitioner, Chairman Notz stated that consistency on all elevations is important. He noted for instance that the columns appear to be inconsistent from one elevation to the next and suggested that consideration be given to appropriate architectural detail.

In response to comments from the Board, Mr. Zurich stated that his understanding was that options and ideas should be presented to the Board. He stated that the drawings are not intended to be final plans. He stated that the changes requested by the Board will be made.

Ms. Czerniak clarified that it is not the Board's role to design the house. She stated that the City's Design Guidelines are intended to provide direction.

Board member Friedman stated that the Board reviews the petitioner's design to make certain the project conforms to the City's Design Guidelines. He added that the architect and project team should bring a detailed and accurate set of plans to the Board for review and feedback.

Board member Walther explained that the petitioner should make decisions about the overall design and be prepared to defend the design decisions before the Board.

Mr. Zurich noted that many properties in the neighborhood have stone elements and square columns.

Chairman Notz explained that the Board is not debating whether a square or round column should be used but noted that the plans presented must be consistent and detailed. He stated that the Board reviews the plans as it is proposed to be built. He explained that the Board's purview is to make sure a detail like the width of the column makes sense with the overall design. He reiterated that the petitioner and architect should present a well thought out, properly balanced and detailed design and be prepared to explain and defend the design rationale before the Board.

Board member Friedman stated that consistent and accurate drawings should be presented so the Board and petitioner can have a legitimate discussion and understand what is being presented. He suggested that the garage could be widened if it is brought closer to the house, where the lot widens. He asked the petitioner to think about details, and to think about the difference between city construction and suburban construction and the different circumstances and criteria.

Board member Diamond stated that the architect should know what needs to be presented.

Mr. Popovich stated his understanding that the plans should reflect internal consistency and the chosen architectural style.

Chairman Notz summarized that the Board is supportive of the demolition of the existing shop building. He added that the Board is also supportive of the petitioner moving forward with plans for a new house on the lot. He encouraged the petitioner to think through the details and come back before the Board with a well thought out proposal taking into account the Board's and staff comments and suggestions to date. Board member Walther stated that when the petition is presented for Board action, conditions should note that construction parking is not allowed on the street in this area due to the railroad tracks, bike path and limited sightlines. He noted that the proposed house is located on the building line on the east side, but the chimney is not drawn and would encroach into the setback.

Ms. Czerniak confirmed that neither the chimney, nor the eaves of the house are permitted to encroach into the side yard setbacks. In response to questions from Chairman Notz, Ms. Czerniak stated that staff will prepare a summary of the comments offered by the Board and share it with the petitioner. She stated that staff would be happy to meet with the petitioner and the project architect again adding that in order for the meeting to be productive, the petitioner should make revisions to the plans to address the Board's comments.

Chairman Notz advised the petitioner that staff will be the petitioner's best advocate adding that they understand what will be approved by the Board. He encouraged the petitioner to listen to staff adding that advice will make the process easier.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Notz invited public comments hearing none, he invited a motion from the Board.

Board member Friedman made a motion to continue the petition to allow the petitioner to refine the plans in response to the comments offered by the Board and staff and to prepare accurate, well thought out and detailed plans. He encouraged the petitioner to also consider the recommendations made by the Lake Forest Preservation Foundation. He noted that the Board is supportive of the demolition of the shop building.

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

In response to questions from Board member Moyer Ms. Czerniak stated that normally, the Board takes action on a demolition request and new structure at the same time. She stated that in order to minimize the duration of construction activity on the site, staff recommends that action on both aspects of the project occur at the same time.

OTHER ITEMS

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

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

7. Additional information from staff.

No additional information was presented by staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jen Baehr
Assistant Planner