

The City of Lake Forest
Building Review Board
Proceedings of September 4, 2019 Meeting

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Building Review Board was held on Wednesday, September 4, 2019 at 6:30 p.m., at the Municipal Services Building, 800 Field Drive, Lake Forest, Illinois.

Building Review Board members present: Chairman Jim Diamond and Board members, Joanne Bluhm, John Looby, Fred Moyer, James Sykora and Richard Walther

Building Review Board members absent: Chris Bires

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

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

Chairman Diamond 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 August 8, 2019 meeting of the Building Review Board.

The approval of the minutes of the August 8, 2019 meeting were postponed.

3. Recognition of past Board member Ross Friedman.

Chairman Diamond recognized past Board member Ross Friedman for his service to the community as a member of the Board. He reviewed highlights of the petitions that came before the Board during his tenure. He presented him with a plaque of appreciation.

4. Consideration of a request for approval of demolition of the existing attached garage on the north side (front) of the residence, a replacement attached garage, minor exterior alterations to the residence and modifications to the existing driveway at 375 Illinois Road.

Property Owners: Christopher & Rachel Whidden

Representative: Mike Malloy, architect

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

Mr. Malloy introduced the project on behalf of the property owners. He stated that the

project involves the demolition of the existing one-car attached garage on the front of the home and the construction of a new two-car attached garage with living space above in generally the same footprint. He added that minor alterations to the exterior materials on the east elevation of the residence and modifications to the existing driveway are also proposed. He noted that the existing garage encroaches into the side yard setback on the west side of the property. He stated that the proposed garage will be located within the buildable area on the lot and does not require a variance from the setback requirements. He explained that the existing garage is not consistent with the style of the home and has limited functionality. He stated that the proposed garage will have a gable roof with broad overhangs to match the roof on the existing residence. He explained that the roof overhang on the west elevation of the proposed garage is only proposed at the north corner to avoid encroaching into the side yard setback. He added that the garage cannot be shifted further east to allow for the overhang to extend the entire length of the garage due to the required zoning setback. He added that the fenestration and architectural detailing on the proposed garage will match the existing residence. He stated that the wood panel between the second floor windows on the east elevation of the home will be replaced with horizontal siding to match the detailing on the garage addition. He noted that the existing driveway is shared with the neighbor to the east. He explained that the property owners and the neighbors are currently working to develop a plan to establish two separate driveways however, the details have not yet been fully developed. He stated that the brick retaining wall on the northeast corner of the existing garage will be removed and replaced with a new boulder retaining wall and a few plantings will be added to the front of the garage.

Ms. Baehr stated that the existing garage appears out of character with the existing home, and because of its position, the garage is difficult to use. She stated that the proposed replacement garage is more compatible with the scale and style of the existing house. She called out that the overhangs on the west side of the proposed garage differ in sizes and noted the large expanse of solid wall on the west elevation of the garage. She asked for Board input on those elements. She recommended that taller plantings be incorporated on the north side of the garage to soften the appearance of the larger mass on the front of the house. She noted that the overall project will enhance the appearance of the home and noted that the staff report presents findings in support of the petition.

Board member Sykora agreed that taller plantings should be incorporated at the front of the north elevation to soften the appearance of the larger garage. He added that overall, in his opinion, the project is an improvement to the property.

Board member Looby expressed support for the project.

In response to questions from Board member Moyer, Mr. Malloy stated that the space above the garage is a playroom. He confirmed that the ceiling height in the playroom is lower than a more traditional space.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Mr. Malloy stated that the color of

the siding on the new garage has not yet been selected. He stated that the detailing of the eaves on the proposed garage will match the eaves on the house. He said that the design team will explore lowering the grade in order to provide additional head room in the garage. He explained that the retaining wall in the northeast corner of the garage will help soften the grade change on the site.

Board member Walther suggested that the final color palette be presented to staff for review and approval. He suggested that evergreen plantings be added to the front of the house to provide year-round screening.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that to allow the overhang on the west side of the garage to encroach into the side yard setback, a zoning variance would be required. She explained that a hardship must be demonstrated for a zoning variance and will require an additional step in the process and will add costs. She suggested that the decision of whether to request a zoning variance to allow for the eaves to be a consistent depth around the house and garage be left to the petitioner.

Board member Bluhm expressed support for the petition. She recommended that plantings be added to the west side of the garage.

In response to questions from Board member Bluhm, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that the square footage of the new garage is in compliance with the Code.

In response to questions from Chairman Diamond, Mrs. Whidden explained that the intent is to modify the shared driveway using a landscape bed, with the goal of breaking up the expanse of pavement and creating two separate driveways.

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

Board member Walther made a motion to recommend approval of the demolition of the attached garage, the replacement attached garage, minor exterior alterations to the residence and modifications to the existing driveway as reflected on the plans presented based on the findings in the staff report, the information presented by the petitioner and incorporating the Board's deliberations as additional findings. He stated that the motion is subject to the following conditions of approval.

1. The following shall be addressed in the plans submitted for permit:
 - a. The plans submitted for permit shall be generally consistent with the plans presented at the meeting which reflect revisions in response to comments in the staff report.
 - b. Details shall be provided on the proposed color palette and exterior materials and shall be subject to staff review.

2. Any modifications made to the plans that were presented to the Board, either in response to Board direction or as the result of final design development, shall be clearly called out on the plans and a copy of the plans presented at the Board meeting shall be attached for comparison purposes. 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. Cut sheets of all light fixtures shall be provided and all fixtures shall direct light downward and the source of the light shall be fully shielded from view by the fixture or by sight obscuring glass.
4. A plan showing the existing landscaping on the site shall be submitted along with the plans submitted for building permit. In addition, any additional landscaping or trees proposed for plantings shall be reflected on the plan including some taller plantings to soften the appearance of the additional mass and height of the garage at the front of the house. Plantings shall also be reflected on the west side of the new garage. Plantings on the north and west side of the house shall include some year round screening.
5. A plan for construction parking and materials' staging shall be submitted for review and will be subject to approval by the City's Certified Arborist, City Engineer and Director of Community Development. Given the curving nature of the street and the location of Gorton Community Center across the street, no on street parking of construction vehicles is permitted. Permits may be obtained to park in the commuter lots nearby.

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

5. Preliminary consideration of a request for approval of a new residence on a vacant lot and the associated tree removal plan, conceptual landscape plan, and overall site plan.

Property Owners: Tim & Heather Richmond

Representative: John Richert, architect

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

Mr. Richert introduced the project on behalf of the property owners. He explained that the project involves bluff restoration and construction of a new residence. He reviewed the proposed elevations and floorplans of the new home. He stated that the home is designed in the Shingle Style. He added that the proposed architectural style is compatible with the styles found throughout the neighborhood. He explained that the massing of the home is comprised of a larger two-story mass at the center and one story masses on the north and south ends. He noted the staff recommendation that muntins be used consistently on the windows for consistency with the traditional

Shingle Style. He explained that windows with limited muntins are proposed to take advantage of the views of the Lake. He stated that a circular drive and motor court are proposed at the front of the residence to provide parking for guests. He acknowledged that in the area where the motor court and driveway connect, the width of the drive exceeds the maximum allowed within the front yard setback. He stated that the design team intends to study the site plan in order to comply with the Code requirements. He stated that the amount of impervious surface on the site totals 20% of the lot. He added that using some permeable materials could be explored. He stated that the trees proposed for removal mostly include Ash trees and trees that are in poor condition. He noted that there is the opportunity to potentially save additional trees with some modification of the site plan. He explained that the lot is mostly flat and in order to create proper drainage, re-grading of the site is proposed to direct water toward the street. He stated that some filling is proposed in the footprint of the house and at the rear of the site. He commented on the building scale calculation methodology used by the City noting that he used the proposed top of the bluff and the existing ordinary high water line to determine the land area. He stated that after the bluff work is completed, the lot area will be greater than it is today.

Ms. Baehr stated the petition is before the Board for direction and input on the overall design of the residence, the site plan, proposed tree removal and landscape plan. She explained that extensive bluff restoration is planned for the property and permits for that work, from the Army Corps of Engineers and the State Department of Natural Resources are pending. She noted that ordinarily, bluff restoration of this scale would be well underway before construction of a new residence on the property. She noted however, to accommodate the petitioner's timeline, the plans for the residence are being presented to the Board at this time for early input. She explained that based on the information received from the petitioner, the intent is for the proposed residence to meet all building scale and height requirements, however, because the bluff work will change the land configuration, staff cannot yet verify the square footage of table land and non-table land to confirm the allowable size of the new residence. She stated that as the bluff work progresses, as-built plans will be required to verify the amount of table land and non-table land. She stated that the proposed site plan shows a large amount of impervious surface on the site and recommended that consideration be given to reducing the amount of hardscape and using permeable materials. She explained that with the proposed bluff restoration and the extensive impervious surface proposed on the site, many trees will be lost and impacted. She stated that some of the trees slated for removal are healthy and significant species. She added that efforts should be made to preserve some undisturbed areas on the site to allow a few of the mature, healthy trees to be preserved. She noted that for viable trees that are removed, other than ash trees, inch for inch replacement will be required and in some cases, double inch for inch replacement will be required, for heritage trees. She stated that for any inches that cannot be accommodated on the site using good forestry practices, a payment in lieu of on-site plantings will be required. She stated that staff has received two letters from neighbors that express concern about construction vehicle parking and construction hours. She added that a detailed plan showing how construction parking will be accommodated will be

required. She added that because the bluff restoration work and construction of the house will likely overlap it is especially important to have a detailed staging and parking plan to minimize the impact to surrounding neighbors.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Ms. Baehr stated that the maximum height of the house as measured from the lowest point of adjacent existing grade is 38 feet. She added that the maximum allowable height for a lot of this size is 40 feet.

Board member Walther stated that the source of light in the cupola should be shielded. He observed that it appears that many of the large trees on the site are in poor condition.

In response to questions from Board member Moyer, Mr. Richert explained that a series of dormers are proposed on the garage. He added that an attic is located above the garage. He stated that the small porches on the rear are not intended for recreational use but are intended as covered entries.

Board member Moyer expressed concern about the scale of the front entry in comparison to other elements of the house. He stated that the windows on the stair element reflect a modern appearance while the rest of the house is more traditional in character. He suggested further study of the front elevation.

Board member Looby stated that a grading plan with the significant trees reflected would be helpful. He noted that based on the available information, it appears that some of the trees identified for preservation may be impacted by the proposed grading.

Mr. Byron stated that additional trees can be preserved by reworking the site plan. He added that of the approximately 400 inches proposed for removal, many are Ash trees. He stated that the plan identified the trees that the design team feels can be preserved.

Board member Looby agreed with comments made by Board member Moyer regarding the front elevation.

Board member Bluhm stated that the proposed muntin pattern makes sense for the purpose of taking advantage of views to the Lake. She noted that the dormer on the front elevation seems out of place and inconsistent with the overall design.

In response to questions from Board member Looby, Mr. Richert stated that the cedar shingles will be stained on all four sides.

Board member Sykora agreed with comments made by Board member Moyer. Chairman Diamond stated that the front entry appears weak compared to the other elements of the house. He expressed concern about the uncertainty of the lot area as

it relates to the building scale calculation.

In response to questions from Chairman Diamond, Ms. Czerniak stated that once permits from the outside agencies are issued, it will give the City some certainty that the bluff restoration project is moving forward. She explained that the City's methodology for calculating square footage is intended to reflect the volume of the house, not just living space or floor area. She added that although the building scale methodology is not a scientific calculation, it is an established methodology that is consistently applied to every project. She noted that in response to questions from Mr. Richert, several staff members have reviewed and verified the building scale calculation for this project. She added that if the bluff work and construction of the house move forward concurrently, the petitioner will need to be cautious to not exceed the allowable square footage given the uncertainty about what the final land area square footage will be.

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

In response to questions from Board member Bluhm, Mr. Richert agreed that the construction vehicle parking and staging will need to be worked out in order to be sensitive to the neighbors.

In response to questions from Board member Walther, Ms. Czerniak confirmed that limitations on construction parking at a site have been utilized in the past.

Board member Moyer stated that the curb cut located on the cul-de-sac appears awkward and potentially hazardous. He suggested that the second curb cut may not be necessary.

Board member Walther pointed out that many of the neighbors only have one curb cut.

In response to questions from Board member Looby, Mr. Richert stated that the approvals from the Army Corps of Engineer and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources are currently in the public comment phase and approval is pending.

In response to questions from the Board, Ms. Czerniak stated that once the permits from Army Corps of Engineer and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources are in hand, the City Engineer will issue the required permits to allow the bluff work to proceed. She stated that as-built drawings will be required as the bluff work progresses. She explained that some changes may occur in the field and could result in changes to the amount of table land or non-table land. She explained that as the construction process moves forward, the square footage of the lot area and the building scale calculation will need to be reviewed further.

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

Board member Walther made a motion to continue the petition with the following direction to the petitioner.

1. The project shall not exceed the allowable square footage based on the established methodology. Although not customary, the Board will allow approval of the project to proceed with only proposed square footages for table land and non-table land subject to the acceptance by the City Engineer of the proposed square footages. Some cushion factor shall be provided given the lack of certainty around the final numbers until an as-built survey is completed at the end of the bluff restoration project.
2. No building permits shall be issued for the house until the necessary permits from the Army Corps of Engineer and the State of Illinois Department of Natural Resources are issued and submitted to the City.
3. Fully dimensioned plans shall be submitted to allow City staff to calculate the square footage of the proposed residence. The plans shall clearly indicate the extent of exposure of the lower level so that a clear determination can be made as to whether any portion of the lower level is counted toward the allowable square footage based on the established calculation methodology.
4. The following comments and questions should be addressed in the refined submittal:
 - a. Provide detail on the cupola, if lighting is proposed, demonstrate that the source of the light will be fully shielded and off site impacts mitigated. Any lighting proposed must conform to the dark sky policy of the City and lighting shall be set on a timer to turn off no later than 11 p.m.
 - b. Reconsider the size of the porches, as proposed, they do not appear large enough to be functional for seating.
 - c. Reconsider the front elevation massing, the entry element appears out of scale and awkward in relation to the overall front elevation.
 - d. Reconsider the window above the front entry, the architectural style and detailing appear inconsistent with the overall architectural style of the house.
 - e. Reconsider the dormer on the front elevation.
 - f. Review the second curb cut and driveway configuration. Conform to the applicable zoning requirements.
 - g. Clearly identify the various species of trees to allow discounting of replacement inches for ash trees and trees in poor condition.
 - h. Review the trees identified for preservation in relation to the grading plan. Currently, re-grading appears to be occurring very close to trees identified for preservation. Ribbon trees on the site that are intended for preservation.
 - i. Begin to develop a plan for construction parking and staging.

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

OTHER ITEMS

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

There was no additional public testimony presented to the Board.

5. Additional information from staff.

No additional information was presented from staff.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer Baehr
Assistant Planner