

The City of Lake Forest
Zoning Board of Appeals
Proceedings of the November 28, 2022 Meeting

A regular meeting of the Lake Forest Zoning Board of Appeals was held on Monday, November 28, 2022 at 6:30 p.m., in Lake Forest, Illinois.

Zoning Board of Appeals members present: Chairman Lisa Nehring and Board members Pete Clemens, James Moorhead, Ari Bass, Laurie Rose, Henry Kleeman and Arthur Miller

Zoning Board of Appeals members absent: None

Staff present: Michelle Friedrich, Planning Technician and Catherine Czerniak, Director of Community Development

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

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

2. Consideration of the minutes from the September 19, 2022 meeting.

The minutes of the September 19, 2022 meeting were approved as presented.

3. Consideration of a request for a recommendation in support of variances from the front and side yard setback to allow a second story addition and an open front porch at 853 Oakwood Avenue.

Property Owner: Oakwood Family Management, LLC (Tom Swarthout, David Swarthout, Cynthia Luetje and James Swarthout)

Representative: Michael Breseman, architect

Chairman Nehring introduced the agenda item and asked for any Ex Parte contacts or conflicts of interest. Hearing no conflicts of interest from the Board, she swore in all those intending to speak on the petition and invited a presentation.

Mr. Swarthout stated that he grew up at 819 Summit Avenue where his parents still reside adding that other family members still live in the area. He stated that he has witnessed continual upgrades to the neighborhood and stated that this project continues that tradition by upgrading a vacant home. He stated that the house was built in 1959 and is a split level. He noted split levels are difficult to renovate.

Mr. Breseman reviewed the history of the property noting that the lot was created in 1907. He stated that no significant updates have been made to the house since it was built in 1959. He stated that the owners propose to rehabilitate the home to include an open floor plan on the first floor. He stated that a partial second floor addition is proposed to add a master suite at the front of the home. He stated that an open, front porch is also proposed to soften the transition from the house to the streetscape. He stated that due to the siting of the house originally, variances are required for the open front porch, the partial second story addition, and to allow replacement of an air conditioning unit at the rear of the house. He noted that the existing house does not comply with the front yard and side yard setbacks to the north. He stated that the proposed open front porch is 18 feet from the front property line and the second story addition is proposed at 4' 10" from the side, north property. He stated that the proposed addition is design to be compatible with other homes in the neighborhood. He reviewed that six of the home along the street have front porches set at comparable distances from the street. He noted that other homes are nonconforming with current setbacks and referred to a setback study he prepared noting the nonconformities of homes along Oakwood Avenue. He pointed out that the house in this petition and the proposed porch are at grade level while many of the other homes are a few feet above grade. He stated that the proposed front porch is a functional depth to allow comfortable seating. He stated that there will be foundation plantings in front of the porch. He reviewed the proposed floor plans and noted that new windows and a centered front door are proposed.

Ms. Friedrich stated that the property was created in 1907 and the developed in 1959 with the home that is presently on the property. She stated that the property does not meet the current lot width or minimum lot size requirements for the R-1 district because it predates the current Code. She stated that the existing house, at the furthest extent of the eave and gutters, is 4' 10" from the north property line and 25 feet from the front property line. She noted that the proposed second floor addition will maintain the existing setback from the side property line and the front porch will be located 18 feet from the front property line. She stated that the existing air conditioning unit is within the side yard setback, about seven feet from the north property line, near the rear of the home. She stated that a variance is requested to allow the unit to be replaced in the same location. She noted that the driveway on the property to the north provides greater separation distance between the home and the neighboring home. She acknowledged that the petitioner provided a summary of setbacks along the street. She stated the Building Review Board is scheduled to review the design aspects of the project.

In response to questions from Board member Rose, Mr. Breseman stated that the residence, with the proposed addition, will be lower than most of the homes on the street and will be comparable to 835 Oakwood Avenue.

In response to questions from Board member Clemens, Mr. Swarthout stated they there are not apparent drainage issues on the property.

In response to questions from Chairman Nehring, Mr. Swarthout stated the replacement air condition unit will be larger than the existing unit but will be in the same location.

In response to questions from Chairman Nehring, Mr. Breseman stated that discharge from the gutters will be handled as directed by the City.

Hearing no further questions from the Board, Chairman Nehring invited public testimony. Hearing none, she invited final questions or comments from the Board.

Board member Miller commented that in his opinion, the proposed renovation will not disrupt the neighborhood. He stated that the project as proposed does a good job of preserving the character of the home adding that the open front porch will allow the home to fit better into the neighborhood.

Board member Moorhead stated that the petition appears to satisfy the applicable criteria and acknowledged the driveway on the property to the north which serves as a buffer between the homes. He noted that the open front porch minimizes the appearance of massing and scale from the streetscape.

Chairman Nehring agreed with the comments of the other Board members and complimented the project stating that it fits the neighborhood well. She invited a motion.

Board member Moorhead made a motion to recommend approval of variances to allow a partial second story addition no closer than 4'10" to the north property line, the addition of an open front porch no closer than 18 feet to the front property line, and a new air conditioner unit no closer than seven feet to the north property line. He stated that the recommendation is based on the findings as detailed in the staff report adding that the Board's deliberations are incorporated as additional findings.

The motion was seconded by Board member Bass and approved by a vote of 7 to 0.

8. Public testimony on non-agenda items.

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

9. Additional information from staff.

Ms. Friedrich noted that the Zoning Board of Appeals' meeting calendar for 2023 was included in the Board's packet. She clarified that the February meeting is on the 27th.

Board member Rose made a motion to approve the 2023 calendar.

Board member Bass seconded the motion, and it was approved by a vote of 7 to 0.

Ms. Friedrich noted the next meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 23, 2023.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michelle E. Friedrich
Planning Technician