

# **VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Community Room of the River Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue.

## **I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Franek, Commissioners Saeger, Graham-White, Muhr (Virtual), Forehand, and Raino-Ogden

Absent: Commissioner Krusinski

Also Present: Management Analyst/Deputy Clerk Luke Masella

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Saeger and SECONDED by Commissioner Graham-White to allow Muhr to attend the meeting virtually.

AYES: Chairman Franek, Commissioners Saeger, Graham-White, Muhr, Forehand, and Raino-Ogden

NAYS: None

Motion Passes.

## **II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Saeger and SECONDED by Commissioner Forehand to approve the meeting minutes for the September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2024 meeting.

AYES: Chairman Franek, Commissioners Saeger, Graham-White, Muhr, Forehand, and Raino-Ogden

NAYS: None

Motion Passes.

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes  
February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

**IV. DISCUSSION OF CERTIFICATES OF APPROPRIATENESS IN CONNECTION WITH THE PROPOSED DEMOLITIONS OF ACCESSORY STRUCTURES ON SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES**

Chairman Franek provided background on this agenda item, noting that he directed staff to have initial discussions with the Village Attorney to identify the steps needed to modify the process for demolishing secondary structures on significant properties.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden noted that if a garage on a significant property was built at the same time and in the same style, it should be considered historic.

Chairman Franek agreed and suggested additional factors that could determine whether a garage is considered historic. He also highlighted the timing of the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) process and how it affects applicants' ability to incorporate the Commission's feedback.

Chairman Franek emphasized that homeowners, architects, and contractors should be aware of the potential of being subject to review of the Commission.

Trustee Forehand noted that a theoretical prebuilding permit COA could elongate the process.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden highlighted his role in the Commissions Window Subcommittee and suggested the Committee could be utilized as well to help shorten any processes.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden inquired whether applicants have a building permit on file with the Village when they present their case to the Commission.

Deputy Clerk Masella stated that is correct.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden stated that he believes this approach is incorrect and that applicants should present it to the Commission before submitting their building permits in order to incorporate the Commission's feedback into their building permit submission.

Commissioner Saeger expressed support for changing the COA process to enable more meaningful feedback from the Commission to applicants and to help streamline the overall process.

Deputy Clerk Masella pointed out that COAs involving demolitions also require additional steps, such as mailings and signage.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden expressed support for the requirements for demolitions and shared his experience with other Commissions that handle the COA process before the building permit is submitted.

Commissioner Forehand stated that he is not aware of many other Commissions that require applicants to have a building permit before presenting their case to the Commission.

Chairman Franek noted that the Commission will need to revise the Ordinance in order to make any changes to the process.

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes  
February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chairman Franek asked if there are any signage requirements in respect to alterations.

Deputy Clerk Masella stated he will research that.

Commissioner Saeger noted any changes need to be as objective as possible.

Chairman Franek noted being in support of having an explicit process in writing.

Deputy Clerk Masella stated that there are no signage requirements for non-demolition COAs.

Chairman Franek mentioned that he needs further clarification from the Village Attorney before taking any additional substantive steps.

Deputy Clerk Masella noted that the discussion has expanded beyond just COAs related to garages, suggesting that another meeting may be needed to address the entire COA process.

Chairman Franek asked the Commissioners if they have any thoughts on the demolition process. He noted being in support of keeping the current codes regarding demolitions.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden asked if the Village's current demolition delay time is 6 months.

Chairman Franek stated that is correct.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden noted being in support of extending that timeframe.

Commissioner Forehand noted being in support of the existing system regarding demolitions.

Chairman Franek noted there is a longer delay in the code for properties zoned as public uses.

Commissioner Saeger asked if the commission will have to identify all secondary structures that could potentially be significant.

Chairman Franek presented a potential framework for analysis that the Commission could choose to adopt in determining the significance of garages.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden inquired how modern garages, designed with historical architectural significance in mind, would be addressed under this framework.

Chairman Franek explained that the building permit aspect of his proposed framework could address the concerns raised by Commissioner Raino-Ogden. He then outlined how the feedback from the Commissioners could be incorporated into an ordinance amendment, along with the anticipated timeline for the process.

Deputy Clerk Masella noted that at that point, the agenda title should include the COA process as a whole, not just garages.

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes  
February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Chairman Franek asked for a commissioner to list out some the proposed changes that the Commission has discussed so far.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden expressed his preference for eliminating the requirement that applicants have a permit before presenting it to the Commission. He suggested that the Village encourage early participation from the client or architect present with the Commission.

Commissioner Forehand noted that a requirement could be made that an applicant must come before the Commission before submitting a building permit.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden noted being in support of that.

Chairman Franek and the Commission agreed that accessory structures should be treated differently when it comes to demolition.

**V. DISCUSSION REGARDING PROMOTION OF RIVER FOREST ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORY**

Commissioner Saeger suggested a recap of the meeting be created.

**VI. DISCUSSION OF ADDITIONAL WAYS TO PROTECT SIGNIFICANT PROPERTIES**

Commissioner Saeger shared a story from a recent Oak Park River Forest Kiwanis Club meeting, where she gave a presentation about the Commission and River Forest's Historic Homes. She proposed that the Commissioners consider distributing the Historic Homes brochures at any events they attend.

Chairman Franek inquired whether the current version of the brochure has been updated to correctly reflect the names of the architects.

Deputy Clerk Masella confirmed that it has been updated.

Commissioner Forehand suggested that the Village consider presenting plaques to significant properties once they reach 100 years old.

Chairman Franek pointed out that plaques from the Oak Park River Forest Historical Society come with a cost.

**VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

Deputy Clerk Masella mentioned that Commissioner Saeger had requested an update on the status of the searchable database. He explained that the database is currently down due to IT issues.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Raino-Ogden and SECONDED by Commissioner Forehand to adjourn the February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

Historic Preservation Commission Meeting Minutes  
February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025

AYES: Chairman Franek, Commissioners Saeger, Graham-White, Muhr, Forehand, and Raino-Ogden

NAYS: None.

Motion Passes and the meeting ended at 7:45 PM.



Luke Masella  
Deputy Clerk/Management Analyst

Approved:

\_\_\_\_\_  
David Franek, Chairman  
Historic Preservation Commission

09/03/25  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

