

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

**March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on March 27<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 6:58 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Franek, Commissioners Saeger, Krusinski, Graham-White, Forehand, and Raino-Ogden

Absent: Commissioner Muhr

Also Present: Management Analyst/Deputy Clerk Luke Masella

## **II. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **III. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES – February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Raino-Ogden and SECONDED by Commissioner Graham-White to approve the meeting minutes for the February 20<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden pointed out that his name was misspelled in the meeting minutes.

Chairman Franek noted a discrepancy in Section 4 of the minutes and requested that it be corrected. He also identified several technical errors in the memo presented to the Commission that evening.

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

NAYS: None

Motion Passes.

## **IV. DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL MODIFICATIONS TO THE CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS PROCESS**

Chairman Franek provided background information on his research related to the agenda item. He noted that there were three key questions the Commission should consider that evening: should the Commission extend the demolition delay deadline; should applicants be required to appear before the Commission prior to submitting a building permit application; and in what ways, if any, does the

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Commission wish to modify the Certificate of Appropriateness process to potentially shorten its duration.

Chairman Franek asked what the Commission members felt they need before them to review an application for certificate of appropriateness.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden expressed that the application should include elements of the schematic design, such as existing and proposed floor plans, exterior elevations, and photographs. Commissioner Forehand agreed.

Chairman Franek noted that the Commission could consider how the Village of Oak Park handles their Certificate of Appropriateness process.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden shared personal anecdotes about his experiences with other commissions handling applications similar to the Village's Certificate of Appropriateness. He noted that, in many cases, applicants appear before those commissions even before submitting a building permit application.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden noted being in support of somehow strengthening the Village's preservation code.

Chairman Franek suggested that the Commission consider adjusting the trigger of the 30-day delay in order to better align a hypothetical preliminary COA approval with the materials submitted for the building permit.

Commissioner Forehand expressed support for the idea, appreciating that it allows the Commission to provide feedback before the applicant submits their building permit application.

Chairman Franek suggested that, moving forward, the architectural subcommittee could be utilized to review COA applications — including demolition requests, which it is currently explicitly prohibited from reviewing.

Commissioner Forehand inquired whether a meeting with the Commission would be required prior to submitting the building permit in the future. Chairman Franek stated yes.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden suggested that the delay could be adjusted to be triggered when a building permit is submitted that significantly differs from the schematics presented at the preliminary meeting.

Deputy Clerk Masella read aloud a section of the Village code regarding the review timeline and outlined the architectural subcommittee's current authority to review proposed applications, with the exception of those involving demolition.

Chairman Franek explained how quorums work for commission meetings considering virtual meetings.

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Chairman Franek suggested that the Architectural Subcommittee be permitted to conduct the initial completeness review for COA applications and asked the Commission for their input. Commissioner Raino-Ogden stated he would be ok with that suggestion.

Chairman Franek then noted that the timer would then start once the architectural subcommittee has deemed the application complete.

Deputy Clerk Masella provided background on how he handles COA applications currently and read aloud what the existing ordinance requires for submittals.

Commissioner Raino-Ogden recommended that applicants provide a site plan or plat of survey, photographs of the existing exterior as visible from public view, and plans or sketches showing both existing structures and proposed alterations. Commissioner Forehand agreed.

Chairman Franek emphasized the importance of the Architectural Subcommittee exercising caution during application reviews to remain mindful of the 30-day timeline.

Commissioner Forehand stated that a 7-day review period for the Architectural Subcommittee to evaluate preliminary submissions is sufficient.

The Commission and Deputy Clerk Masella walked through a sample application using the changes suggested at the meeting.

Chairman Franek explained the background of how parts of the existing Village code were developed and shared some of the Village Board's original intentions.

Chairman Franek shifted the discussion to the distinction between demolishing primary and secondary structures. He then outlined a framework that the subcommittee could use when reviewing garage demolitions.

The Commission discussed alterations to significant secondary structures on properties in the Village.

The Commission discussed the definition of the 20% visible facade trigger, with Chairman Franek providing background on how that figure was determined. Deputy Clerk Masella requested that the Commission revisit and clarify the definition of the 20%.

Deputy Clerk Masella shared some ideas from staff on how to engage homeowners before they submit their building permit applications.

Chairman Franek asked the Commission if they would like to extend the demolition delay.

Members of the Commission noted being in support of extending the demolition delay.

Chairman Franek noted that while the Village Board had previously been cautious about implementing a demolition delay, they may now be more receptive to it given the proposed changes discussed this evening, which aim to address concerns raised by applicants and homeowners about the process.

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The Commission discussed past examples of demolitions of significant properties.

Commissioner Saeger suggested that the Village code should require an independent engineer to verify structural instability when an applicant claims a home is unsound as the basis for demolition.

Deputy Clerk Masella provided a roadmap for the upcoming meeting.

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

None.

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

The Commission agreed to hold the Historic Preservation Awards on a biannual basis.

**VII. OTHER BUSINESS**

Commissioner Saeger requested that the Village investigate acquiring new historic district signs.

**VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

A MOTION was made by Commissioner Raino-Ogden and SECONDED by Commissioner Saeger to adjourn the March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025, meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

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

NAYS: None.

Motion Passes and the meeting ended at 8:21 PM.



Luke Masella  
Deputy Clerk/Management Analyst

Approved:

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David Franek, Chairman  
Historic Preservation Commission

04-27-25

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Date