



VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
MEETING OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION
COMMISSION

Thursday, March 27th, 2025 – 7:00 PM
Village Hall – 400 Park Avenue – River Forest, IL 60305
First Floor Community Room

AGENDA

Public comments sent in advance of [the meeting](#) are shared with the Commission. You may submit your written public comments via email in advance of the meeting to: lmasella@vrf.us. This meeting will take place **in the First Floor Community Room** at Village Hall.

You may listen to the meeting via Zoom conference call as follows: **Zoom Conference Call: Dial-in number: 312-626-6799 with meeting ID: 854 5693 2628. Zoom Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85456932628>**

The agenda is as follows:

- I. Call to Order
- II. Public Comment
- III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 20th, 2025
- IV. Discussion of Potential Modifications to the Certificate of Appropriateness Process
- V. Discussion of Additional Ways to Protect Significant Properties
- VI. Discussion Regarding Promotion of River Forest Architecture and History
- VII. Other Business
- VIII. Adjournment

ADA Compliance: Any individual with a disability requesting a reasonable accommodation in order to participate in a public meeting should contact the Village at least 24 hours in advance of the scheduled meeting in person at Village Hall by telephone at 708.366.8500 or by email: mwalsh@vrf.us. Every effort will be made to allow for meeting participation.

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

February 20th, 2025

A meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission was held on February 20th, 2025, in the 1st 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 26th, 2024

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

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

NAYS: None

Motion Passes.

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 and the staff have had 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 Rain-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 Rain-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.

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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 Rain-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 Rain-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.

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

Commissioner Rain-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 20th, 2025, meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission.

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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

Date



Village of River Forest
Village Administrator's Office

400 Park Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305
Tel: 708-366-8500

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 27th, 2025

To: David Franek, Historic Preservation Commission Chair
Historic Preservation Commissioners

From: Luke Masella, Deputy Village Clerk/Management Analyst

Subj: Review and Clarification of Certificate of Appropriateness Processes

Introduction: When a building permit is submitted for a significant property, staff are notified of the submission. They then review the submitted documents to determine whether the proposed work requires a review by the Historic Preservation Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness.

A COA is defined as: "A certificate issued by the Commission authorizing plans for the alteration, renovation, or remodeling of the street facade, the demolition of a property, or otherwise certifying compliance with the requirements of this Chapter."

The review process is split between two Commission meetings: the first meeting confirms application completeness, and the second evaluates the application's merits. As regular meetings occur once a month, the process typically takes two months. Additional requirements, including public hearings and notices, apply when demolition of a structure on a significant property is requested.

Background: At the last Commission meeting on February 20th, 2025, the Commission discussed an agenda item titled, "Discussion of Certificates of Appropriateness in Connection with the Proposed Demolitions of Accessory Structures on Significant Properties." During this meeting, Chairman Franek outlined discussions he and staff had requesting that the Village Attorney outline potential changes to the process for demolishing secondary structures on significant properties.

The Commission discussed the criteria for determining whether accessory structures, such as garages, should be considered historic. The timing and requirements of the Certificate of

Appropriateness (COA) process were also reviewed, with a focus on finding a way to provide more meaningful feedback to applicants while streamlining the process. The potential extension of the demolition delay time and how to address modern garages with historical significance were considered as well.

The Commission agreed that accessory structures should be treated separately in the demolition process and identified the Architectural Review Subcommittee as a potential avenue for streamlining reviews. Additionally, the Commission decided to review the entire COA process to find ways to ensure applicants receive more feedback before submitting their building permits. The Commission will consider updating the ordinance to reflect these changes.

Issue: Since December 2022, the Commission has reviewed 11 COA applications. Applicants have expressed concerns about the long timeline for reviewing and deciding on applications. Residents have also raised issues related to demolitions of accessory structures, particularly concerning sign postings, neighborhood notices, and extended decision timelines.

Additionally, applicants and the Commission have noted that by the time they present their cases to the Commission, their building permits have already been submitted, making it difficult to incorporate the Commission's feedback.

Action: The commission requested that at their next meeting, staff outline the process to amend the ordinance to provide that:

1. A new pre-building permit COA application be created to allow the Commission's feedback to be incorporated before the applicant officially submits their building permit application.
2. Grant the Architectural Subcommittee the authority to review COA applications for proposed alterations (including demolitions) of accessory structures on significant properties, to determine whether the application should be conditionally approved or if it requires review by the full Historic Preservation Commission.

The requested procedures are outlined below. Additionally, staff contacted the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission staff liaison to inquire about their COA process. Based on their response(attached), the Commission should consider the areas where Oak Park allows for a more expedited review.

Attachments:

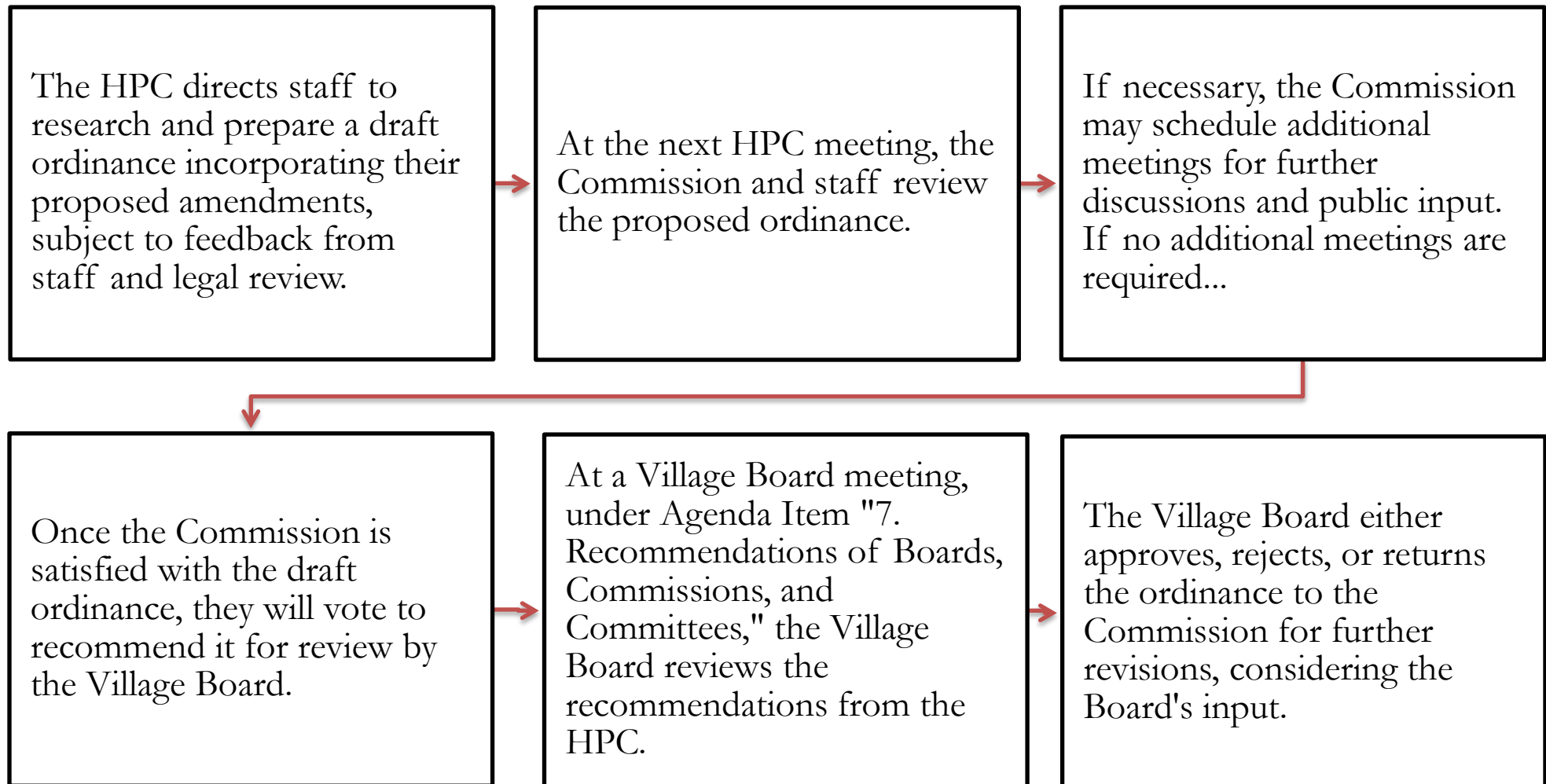
- 03-13-25 Requests from the Chairman
- Flow charts of procedures
- Response from the Village of Oak Park about COA processes

Requests from the Chairman

Please outline the step-by-step procedures required to amend the Ordinance to provide that:

- I. A conditional/preliminary Certificate of Appropriateness(COA) be obtained from the HPC (or the period of delay has expired) prior to filing a Building Permit application which must be substantially the same (to be defined) as the conditional/preliminary COA (thus reversing the current requirement that a Building Permit must be obtained prior to filing a COA application.)
- II. The architectural review subcommittee shall be authorized to review COA applications regarding proposed alterations (including demolition) to accessory structures on Significant Properties to determine (using the “Four Step Analysis”) whether such COA application should be conditionally granted or whether such application should be reviewed by a quorum of the HPC as such accessory structure is deemed “significant”

Procedural Flow Charts: Amending the Village Code



Oak Park Responses

How is the OP Commission's review triggered?

Any permit submitted for a property in a historic district has a Historic Review component. There are also times that I receive Historic Reviews for properties that are not in a historic district. The first step for me would be to determine if a property is in a historic district, or it is a landmark, and if it is a contributing resource (built within the period of significance) or non-contributing resource. For non-contributing resources Historic Review is not required. For contributing resources depending on the proposed scope of work one of the following actions will be taken for administrative approval:

1. Approved as interior work only
2. Approved as not visible from the street
3. Approved as no change in material
4. Approved as restoration
5. Approved as having limited effect on the historic, architectural or aesthetic character

If the scope of work includes demolition of historic material and will be visible from the street, a Certificate of Appropriateness is required from the HPC. Demolition of historic garages fall in this category. If there will be new construction which is not attached to the historic structure, or exterior alteration which will be in the non-historic part of the structure, will impact the historic house, and will be visible from the street, it will require an Advisory Review which consists of recommendations only, and it is one review session. Constructing a new garage falls in this category. For Landmarks any type of exterior work regardless of being visible from the street requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. People also opt for a discussion (preliminary review) with the HPC or ARC (Architectural Review Committee) before applying for a COA to receive feedback and improve their proposals. Having two regular meetings (HPC and ARC) each month helps to expedite the review process. However, COAs are only approved by the HPC.

I usually receive most of COAs and Advisory Reviews from the permit applications. But there are number of people who reach out for a preliminary review before submitting a permit. There is no restriction in the order of the review process, and however it works best for people's timeline. This will provide more flexibility and will expedite the permit review process.

How does the Commission handle garage demolitions?

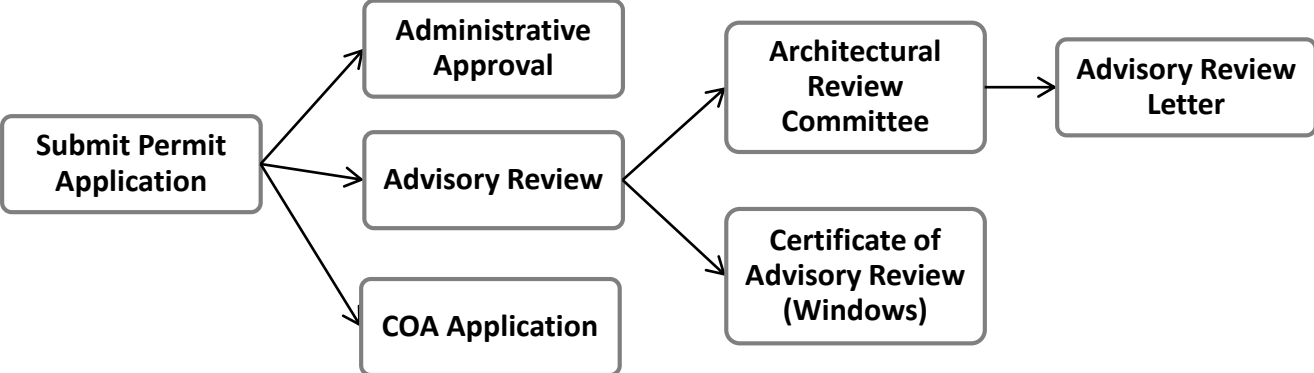
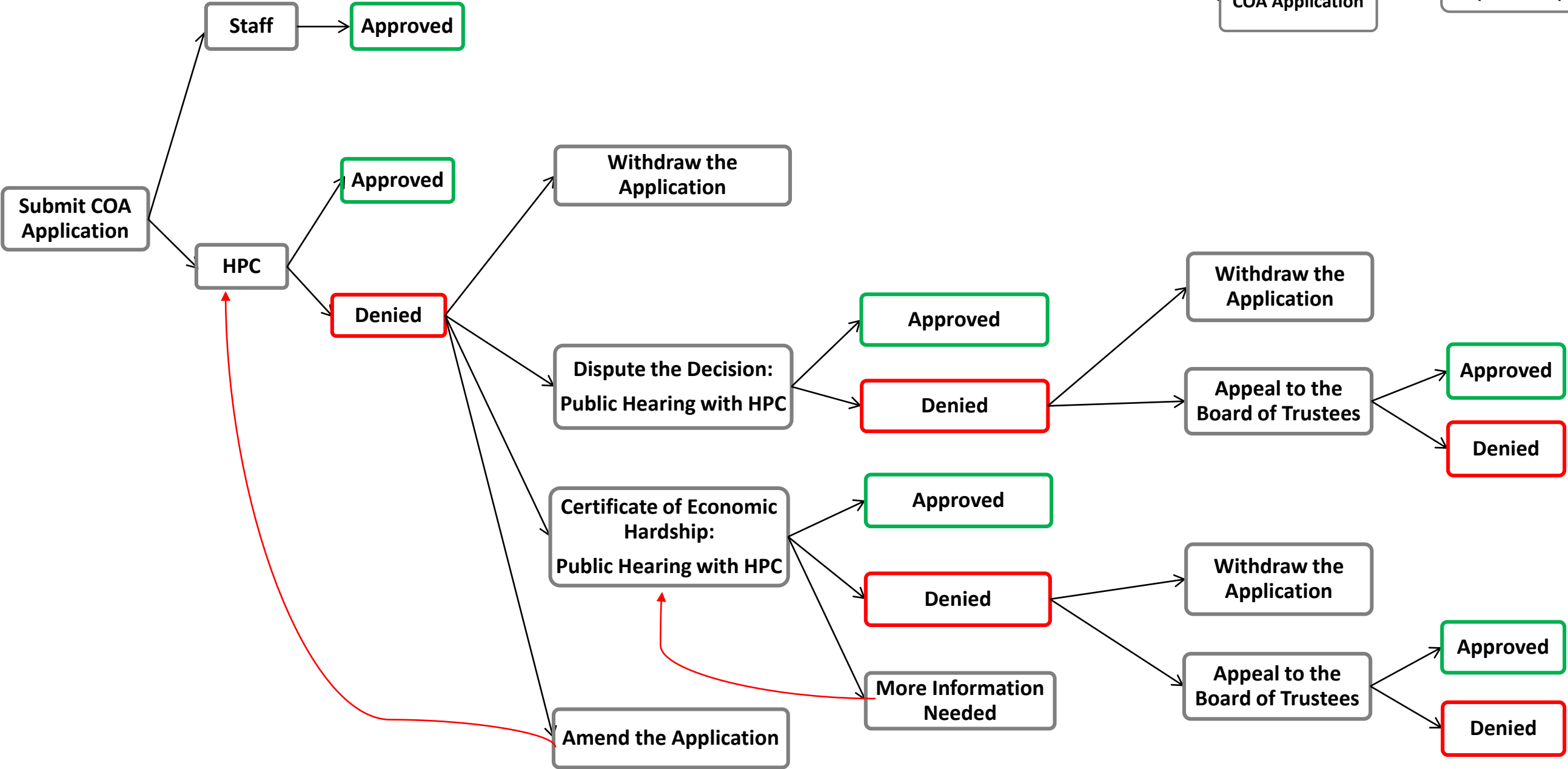
As I mentioned in the previous question, demolition of historic garages requires a COA. New garages that are visible from the street require an Advisory Review (one meeting). Sometimes COAs for historic garages can take up to two HPC meetings for approval depending on how complete the COA application is. But it is not very common. We have a list of documents for the historic garage COA application:

- Certificate of Appropriateness form
- Explanation of why the garage must be demolished.
 - If the garage is too deteriorated to repair, provide evidence in the form of photographs and a written description. Labeled photos showing issues, e.g. a photo with a level to show leaning walls, are helpful.
 - Strongly recommended: A letter from a structural engineer or similar professional stating that repair is infeasible and why is strongly recommended. This should be a 3rd party, e.g. not the architect of the proposed new garage.
- Photos of the existing garage (photos should show full garage, including views from alley and/or street for context)
- Cost estimates of repairing the existing historic garage vs. constructing a new garage

Lastly, could you outline the steps in your process for COAs, even if it's just four general bullet points?

I attached a flow chart in this email that explains the process.

Oak Park Certificate of Appropriateness Procedure:



Notes:
COA: Certificate of Appropriateness
HPC: Historic Preservation Commission