

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
MEETING OF DECEMBER 20, 2017**

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Zoning Board of Appeals was held at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 20, 2017 in the Community Room of the River Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Upon roll call, the following persons were:

Present: Gerry Dombrowski, Tagger O'Brien, Michael Ruehle, Chairman Frank Martin.

Absent: David Berni, Charles Lucchese, Robert Swindal

Also Present: Lisa Scheiner, Assistant Village Administrator, Clifford Radatz, Secretary

Secretary Radatz administered the oath.

II. VARIATION REQUEST – 1431 MONROE AVENUE.

Mark Tomassini, owner of 1431 Monroe Avenue, introduced the project. He stated the variations were being requested so that the house could be improved while minimizing the increase in the footprint of the building since there is flooding problem in the rear yard. Many of the nearby homes have been previously improved by expanding into the rear yard, and by adding berms in the rear yards, which has resulted in pooling water in the rear yards.

Mr. Tomassini indicated that the features of the proposed construction include a deep basement, sump pumps, and a back-up generator. He stated that he has discussed the proposed plans with his neighbors and he thinks that the neighbors believe that his project will improve the value of their properties also.

Mr. Tomassini indicated that the height of the roof line will remain the same so that there will be no effect on the neighbors' light and air.

Mr. Tomassini noted that the height of the building above the existing garage will increase. While he acknowledged that the garage does not comply with the current standard for the side yard setback, he posits that his house pre-dates the construction of the other houses in the area, and predates the Zoning ordinance. He continued that the project adds space by going up rather than out by adding second floor space above the garage. Additionally, they are utilizing the roof line to create an attic space. He acknowledged that the added space in the attic is main reason why the project exceeds the requirement for Floor Area Ratio.

Mr. Tomassini noted that he and his family have been residents of River Forest for 13 years and that they intend to remain here for the foreseeable future. He thinks the proposed additions will improve the area. He notes that other houses on the block have had substantial improvements.

Board Member Ruehle commented that the excess Floor Area was due primarily to the improved attic space. Kimberly Smith, architect for the project, acknowledged that by maintaining the pitch and height of the roof, along with the style of the house, the attic becomes very tall, resulting in the added floor space. Mr. Ruehle calculated that the requested variance for floor area was for an increase of 21% over the allowable, and without the Attic space, the FAR would only be 8% over the allowable. Ms. Smith commented that to change the pitch of the roof on the rear of the house would look odd. A discussion about the diverse aims of zoning and architecture ensued. Mr. Ruehle suggested that desired roof pitch could be started lower on the wall, resulting in less floor area in the Attic.

Mr. Ruehle addressed the non-conforming setback at the wall of the existing garage. He noted that the increase in the height creates a visual barrier, almost like a row house. Mr. Ruehle noted that by the ordinance, the increase in height is not permitted for an existing non-conforming wall which is to be retained, but the existing garage is shown to be demolished and a two story addition is to be added in its place. He noted that taken together, he finds the requests for variations for setback and FAR to be problematic.

Mr. Ruehle and Ms. Smith discussed alternatives for changing the shape of the addition for the purpose of reducing the excess FAR and debated the merits of those changes.

Mr. Tomassini noted that the changes needed to bring the project into compliance with zoning would require relocating the garage into the rear yard, which is likely to increase the height of the grades and add impervious surface, exacerbating the problems with flooding in the rear yard. He noted that other options are limited.

Chairman Martin made reference to a chain of emails which were included in the packet, noting that the e-mails were about 4 years old. He asked the applicant if the conditions cited in the e-mails still existed. Mr. Tomassini stated that they did, if not being worse. Chairman Martin stated that he was having trouble correlating the request for a variance for FAR with the flooding condition in the rear yard. Chairman Martin restated that the Zoning Board must find that a unique hardship exists on the property in order to justify a recommendation to the Village Board to approve the requested Variations.

Chairman Martin asked Secretary Radatz if there were any provisions in the Zoning ordinance for an FAR greater than 0.40 in the single family residential district. Secretary Radatz responded that the R1 and R2 districts are limited to an FAR of 0.40.

Mr. Tomassini stated that the hardship is the location of the garage. Relocating the garage, as permitted by Zoning, to the rear yard increases the flooding in the rear yard which negatively impacts the neighbors.

Board Member O'Brien asked what the height of the building and addition are. Mr. Tomassini stated that it is 34 feet, as noted on the drawings. Architect Smith noted that the slope of the new roof continues the slope of the existing roof, resulting in a ridge that is 3 feet higher than the existing. Further she noted that the new roof is setback far from the street, starting 51 feet behind the front of the house.

Mr. Ruehle noted a conflict of goals. The design of the addition seeks to take advantage of the existing non-conforming setback and the style of the building, resulting in an excess of floor area.

Chairman Martin closed the public portion of the meeting.

Board Member Dombrowski stated that found that the submitted plan was a reasonable plan, that it considers the needs of the neighbors. He also found that the height and the look of the proposed addition were important.

Board Member O'Brien indicated that she was struggling with the size, and was having difficulty with the additions onto a "grand-fathered" setback situation.

Mr. Dombrowski made a motion to approve the variation requested for 1431 Monroe Avenue. The motion to approve the variations failed for the lack of a second. Chairman Martin noted that the recommendation of the Zoning Board of Appeals was that the variations requested for 1431 Monroe Avenue should not be approved based on the failure of the motion.

III. ADJOURNMENT

It was moved and seconded to adjourn.

Ayes: Dombrowski; Ruehle; O'Brien; Chairman Martin.
Nays: None.
Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted:

Clifford Radatz, Secretary

Franklin Martin, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals

Date: _____