

**VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST
DEVELOPMENT REVIEW BOARD MEETING MINUTES
July 9th, 2026**

A meeting of the Village of River Forest Development Review Board was held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, July 9th, 2026, in the Trinity High School Gymnasium (7574 Division Street, Door 8).

I. Call to order

Chairman Crosby called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Upon roll call, the following people were:

Present: Chairman David Crosby, Members Mike Gibbs, Maryanne Fishman, Ron Lucchesi, Elias Yanaki, Mary Shoemaker, and Corina Davis

Absent: None

Also Present: Village Administrator Matt Walsh, Assistant Village Administrator Jessica Spencer, Director of Public Works and Engineer Jack Bielak, Fire Chief Tom Gaertner, Police Chief Jim Greenwood, Deputy Police Chief Mike Swierczynski and Village Attorneys Anne Skrodzki and Carmen P. Forte Jr. Representing the applicant were Viktor Jakovljevic, Chuck Westphal, Tom Moore, David Nick, Bill Kokalias, Bobby Marti, and Michael Werthmann (KLOA.)

Chairman Crosby asked new member Mike Gibbs to introduce himself to the Commission, and he did.

II. Minutes of February 19th, 2026

A **MOTION** was made by Member Shoemaker and **SECONDED** by Member Fishman to approve the minutes of the February 19th, 2026, meeting with the recommended amendments by Member Shoemaker.

Ayes: Chairman Crosby, Members Gibbs, Lucchesi, Yanaki, Fishman, Davis, and Shoemaker

Nays: None

The motion passed.

III. Public Hearing Regarding Application #26-0009, An Application for Planned Development to Construct a Mixed-Use Development at 7620 Madison Street, 11 Ashland Avenue, and 10 Lathrop Avenue

a. Discussion, Deliberation, and Recommendations for Application #26-0009

Chairman Crosby outlined the role of the Development Review Board and the matters before the Commission for consideration regarding the application.

Attorney Anne Skrodzki asked all individuals wishing to provide testimony before the Development Review Board to raise their hands to be sworn in. All individuals intending to testify were sworn in.

Village Administrator Matt Walsh provided an introduction to the proposed development and presented background information on the process that led the application to the Development Review Board for consideration.

Viktor Jakovljevic introduced himself, presented the application, highlighted the changes made since the last meeting, and answered questions from members of the board.

Village Administrator Matt Walsh provided an overview of the staff analysis of the proposal, including reports and comments from the Public Works, Fire, and Police Departments, as well as other zoning-related matters. He also presented the zoning analysis prepared by Houseal Lavigne and the economic analysis completed by Ryan Group LLC.

Member Lucchesi asked for additional details regarding the ground-floor retail space, including its total square footage.

Mr. Jakovljevic stated that the development team is working with the Village and local businesses to identify potential tenants. He explained that they are open to a variety of retail and service uses but are generally not pursuing restaurants due to the infrastructure requirements they typically require. He added that the retail space could be divided into multiple tenant spaces depending on the needs of future occupants. The total ground-floor retail space is approximately 3,200 square feet.

Chairman Crosby noted that a delegation of public commenters, represented by Debbie Borman, would present first.

- Ms. Borman provided public comment in opposition to the proposed development. She stated that she considers herself to be pro-development, not anti-development, but expressed concerns about both the proposed project itself and the process by which the proposal came before the Commission. Specifically, she stated that she believed the process was rushed and lacked sufficient transparency.
- Phyllis Rubin highlighted numerous concerns regarding the proposed project and compared it to the development challenges experienced at Lake and Lathrop. She asked the Commissioners to conduct an honest assessment of the application and critiqued the proposal by referencing portions of the Zoning Code that she believed demonstrated the project should not be approved, while also raising additional concerns regarding the project and review process.
- Patty Henek provided public comment in opposition to the proposed project. She stated that she supports appropriate development within the Village but believes this application does not meet that standard. She raised numerous concerns regarding the project and application, particularly its consistency with the Village's Comprehensive Plan.
- Angie Grover provided public comment and raised concerns regarding the traffic and density impacts the proposed project could have on her neighborhood. She expressed concerns with the traffic report provided by the applicant, noting that her concerns focused on traffic operations within the surrounding community and not solely on Madison Street.

- Annette Madden provided public comment and raised concerns regarding the proposed project and its overall fit within the neighborhood. She highlighted that a building constructed by the same developer across the street has ground-floor retail spaces that have remained vacant and questioned whether the applicant still owns that property. She also noted her involvement in years of conversations regarding potential development in the neighborhood and stated that, in her opinion, the proposed development does not align with the character of the neighborhood or the preferences expressed by residents.
- Ms. Borman spoke again on behalf of Tom Lamb and raised concerns regarding the 19 Standards for Review applicable to the project. She specifically highlighted concerns related to Standard E, Property Values, and referenced the proximity of the proposed building to homes.
- Constance Geocaris provided public comment highlighting the quality of the neighborhood, including its yards and trees, and expressed concerns that the proposed development could alter those characteristics. She shared photos depicting a mock-up of the view while walking along Ashland Avenue if the development were constructed, including an example showing how the building could appear with additional stepbacks. She also provided images from a shadow study and raised concerns about the possible shadows.
- Mary Rose Smith provided public comment in opposition to the proposed project, raising concerns regarding potential impacts on local schools, increased density, impacts to the parks system, traffic, and limited parking availability.
- Margie Cekander provided public comment in opposition to the proposed project and raised multiple concerns regarding the application, including the following: the project's size, density, and overall fit within the community. She also expressed concerns regarding the economic aspects of the project and questioned how the Commission could make a decision without additional economic details. She requested that the Village provide further economic information prior to a vote being taken.
- Ms. Borman spoke on behalf of Ed Pogue and raised concerns regarding the proposed addition of garages and the potential wall they would create, which she stated would obstruct views along Madison Street. She expressed concerns about potential safety issues resulting from the wall and highlighted parking concerns, including issues she stated already exist within the neighborhood.
- Lucia Giudice highlighted many comments from residents and what she felt as an inadequate response from the Village to those questions. She raised many questions surrounding the selection of this process and asked that the Village share more information.
- Patty Henek spoke on behalf of Holly Utter and read a letter from Ms. Utter critiquing engineering aspects of the traffic study and the application.
- Dan Lauber provided public comment regarding the application and raised a number of concerns regarding the proposed development, including the following: the lack of expert witness testimony presented on behalf of the developer, the level of transparency surrounding the project given the Village's ownership of the property, the absence of proposed rental rate

information, and the lack of affordable housing included in the development. Mr. Lauber stated that, in his opinion, the application did not satisfy the required review criteria.

Chairman Crosby opened the public comment portion of the hearing to individuals outside of the Borman group. He reminded those in attendance that all written comments submitted electronically had been provided to and reviewed by the Commission and asked speakers to limit their comments to approximately five minutes.

- Teresa Peavy and Derek Peavy provided public comment in opposition to the proposed project, noting that she lives in the home directly adjacent to the proposed development. She stated that, in her opinion, the project is too dense and is not the type of development the neighborhood needs. She raised concerns regarding the project's compatibility with the character of the neighborhood, the anticipated tax revenue generated by the development, the building's height, the proposed garages, the limited separation between the development and her property line, and the findings of the traffic study. They also described several ways in which they believe the development would directly impact their property.
- Bruce Faland provided public comment, noting that he has attended many meetings regarding the proposed project. He encouraged the Development Review Board members to thoroughly question the developer and carefully evaluate the application. He also urged the Board to consider the issues experienced with the Lake and Lathrop development and stated that the developer should demonstrate how this proposal differs from that project.
- Tanju Sofu provided public comment regarding the proposed development and raised concerns about its compatibility with the neighborhood, including its size, density, traffic impacts, and parking. He encouraged the Village to pursue developments that better reflect the historic character of the community and urged the Commission to carefully consider the project's potential impacts on local schools and other community resources.
- Dan LeBarge provided public comment in opposition to the proposed project, echoing many of the concerns raised by previous speakers. He urged the Development Review Board to recommend denial of the application and to send a clear message that similar projects should not be brought forward in the future.
- Kelly Abcarian provided public comment in opposition to the proposed development, raising concerns regarding the assumptions made by the applicant related to projected rents and project costs. She also expressed concerns about the number of exceptions being requested from the Village. Ms. Abcarian stated that, while she supports development, she does not believe this project is an appropriate fit for the community and that it is not worth the number of requests and exceptions being sought. She further highlighted several of the requested exceptions and stated that she believed they were inadequate.
- Bill Heineke questioned the findings of the traffic study.
- Joanne O'Hara expressed concerns about the exceptions requested for the project, the potential impact on the quality of life of nearby residents, and parking.

- Susan Singer spoke in opposition to the proposed development, expressing concerns about the shadow study, traffic impacts, the accuracy of the school impact study, and the scope of the allowances requested by the developer, which she believed were excessive.
- Robert Graham spoke in support of the proposed development and encouraged the Commission to consider the project's potential benefits to the Village as a whole, rather than focusing solely on the surrounding neighborhood.
- Jim Lynch spoke in support of the proposed development, noting that the property has remained vacant for approximately 10 years and stating that he believes the proposal represents the highest and best use of the site. He commented that economic conditions surrounding development have changed and that a project of this size is necessary to make redevelopment feasible. He also encouraged the Village to continue pursuing additional apartment and condominium developments in the community.
- David Peyer expressed concerns about the extent of the variances requested by the applicant and stated that, while he appreciated certain aspects of the proposal, he believed the overall size of the project was excessive.
- Mike Grant spoke in support of the proposed project and encouraged residents to consider the proposal from a broader perspective. He noted that Madison Street is a commercial corridor and already experiences significant activity and emphasized that the proposal is primarily residential rather than a commercial use. He encouraged the Commission to approve the application.
- Jeff Brinker spoke in opposition to the proposed development, expressing concerns about the extent of the exceptions requested for the project. He also noted that his property could be negatively impacted by shadows from the proposed building.
- Mary Anne Zeh spoke in support of the proposed project while suggesting that certain modifications could be made to address concerns raised by nearby residents and help mitigate potential impacts of the development. She also expressed concerns regarding stormwater management.

Chairman Crosby asked if there were any additional members of the public wishing to provide comment. Hearing none, he closed the Public Comment portion of the hearing, and the Commission began its deliberations.

Chairman Crosby requested a 5-minute recess.

A MOTION was made by Member Shoemaker and Seconded by Member Gibbs for a 5-minute recess. The motion passed by a voice vote.

The Board returned from its recess at 10:02 pm.

Member Lucchesi asked whether, given the uncertainty surrounding retail demand, the applicant had considered converting the proposed retail space into additional parking.

Mr. Westphal stated that the applicant believes the proposed retail space is viable and will be successful.

Member Lucchesi asked whether the applicant's experience with the building across the street on Madison Street supported that level of confidence.

Mr. Jakovljevic clarified that he served as the builder for that property, not the owner. He added that the retail space is fully occupied and expressed confidence that the proposed development would also be able to attract retail tenants.

Chairman Crosby asked what type of stone would be used on the corner of the building.

Mr. Jakovljevic explained the proposed materials, noting that the corner feature could be constructed using either limestone or cast stone. He also discussed stone technology the applicant is exploring to improve durability and reduce deterioration over time.

Chairman Crosby noted discrepancies between the renderings and the plans regarding the use of stone and brick, stating that he would prefer to see the larger stone panels described by Mr. Jakovljevic incorporated into the building.

The applicant's architect responded by explaining the discrepancies between the renderings and the plans.

Member Shoemaker asked whether the adjacent sidewalk would be single- or double-width.

Mr. Jakovljevic stated that the existing sidewalk would remain.

Village Administrator Walsh noted that the concrete apron in that area makes the sidewalk slightly wider than a typical sidewalk.

Chairman Crosby asked Village Administrator Walsh to explain the proposed brick wall along the northern property line and how it came to be included in the plans.

Village Administrator Walsh explained that the wall was added in response to concerns raised by nearby residents about parking adjacent to their homes. He also noted that extending the wall to match the length of the existing wooden fence was based on feedback received from residents.

Member Lucchesi asked what traffic control measures the Village had explored.

Village Administrator Walsh stated that several potential options have been discussed, including cul-de-sacing Ashland Avenue, installing access gates in the alleys to help restrict traffic flow, implementing turn restrictions, and converting certain streets to one-way traffic. He noted that the Village is not currently pursuing these measures but acknowledged concerns about potential traffic impacts from Madison Street backups. He added that these options could be reevaluated after the project is built.

Member Shoemaker asked how the Village would address potential street parking impacts on Ashland Avenue and Lathrop Avenue if the project were approved.

Village Administrator Walsh stated that overnight parking would not be permitted, consistent with existing Village policy. He added that the Village could explore strengthening other parking restrictions if issues arise.

Member Gibbs asked whether any potential traffic restriction amendments could be recommended by the Development Review Board or if they would need to be considered by the board.

Attorney Skrodzki clarified that the application before the Commission does not address parking regulations for the surrounding area.

Chairman Crosby asked the traffic study consultant to confirm the findings presented in the report.

The representative from KLOA provided an explanation of the methodology used and the findings presented in the traffic study, highlighting the extensive nature of the analysis conducted. He also provided insight into various aspects of the project and surrounding area that he believed may not generate as much additional traffic as some anticipate.

Chairman Crosby asked Village Administrator Walsh to provide an overview of the Village's traffic study.

Village Administrator Walsh explained that the Village provided the parameters for the study to KLOA and later engaged Thomas Engineering to perform a peer review of KLOA's analysis. He noted that Thomas Engineering generally concurred with the findings presented by KLOA.

Michael Werthmann of KLOA noted that Thomas Engineering has previously completed work for the Village in this area and is familiar with this portion of the community. He also commented on the thoroughness of Thomas Engineering's peer review of the traffic study.

Member Fishman asked if ADA compliance was addressed in the proposal.

Village Administrator Walsh noted that ADA compliance is typically addressed during the building permit process but stated that, to his knowledge, the proposed building would be compliant.

Bill Kokalias, the applicant's architect, stated that the entire building would comply with federal and state ADA requirements. He noted that all units would be accessible.

Member Gibbs, who is an elevator inspector by trade, commented on the strong ADA considerations included in the applicant's proposal.

Member Fishman asked how the proposed building height compares to the height of other buildings in River Forest.

Village Administrator Walsh provided an overview of the heights of various buildings throughout the community.

Mr. Kokalias explained that the listed height measurement is taken from the middle of the building and is generally not visible from the street.

Mr. Jakovljevic clarified that the height measurement includes the top of the elevator mechanical shaft located in the center of the building. He noted that the portion of the building primarily contributing to the shadow impact is approximately 72 feet in height.

Member Gibbs asked for clarification on how the addition of the garages was included.

Mr. Jakovljevic noted that the proposed garages were included in response to resident concerns regarding safety, privacy, and light pollution affecting nearby homes. He added that minor modifications could be made to the garage design to address resident concerns.

Member Shoemaker asked for clarification on the possible changes surrounding the garages.

Mr. Kokalias provided an explanation of the potential changes to the garage design.

Village Administrator Walsh highlighted some of the preferences expressed by the neighbor directly north of the proposed garages.

Member Gibbs asked for confirmation that the alley is oversized to improve traffic flow.

Mr. Jakovljevic confirmed this and provided an explanation of how and why the alley was widened.

Member Gibbs asked whether the surface parking spaces near the westernmost home could be shifted back to provide an additional buffer.

Mr. Jakovljevic stated that the spaces could be moved back and that additional landscaping could be installed.

Member Gibbs clarified that he was suggesting the applicant consider additional landscape buffering in that area.

Mr. Jakovljevic stated that this would not be an issue and expressed interest in working with neighboring homeowners to help mitigate concerns.

Member Davis asked the applicant to address concerns raised by residents regarding stormwater impacts.

Mr. Jakovljevic provided an overview of the proposed stormwater management system for the project.

Director of Public Works and Engineer Jack Bielak provided additional information on the proposed stormwater improvements and highlighted the required Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) stormwater review.

Chairman Crosby asked where the stormwater would ultimately be directed, either toward Madison Street or Ashland Avenue.

Director Bielak stated that the final direction is still under discussion.

Member Gibbs asked for confirmation that the proposed alley would be a green alley, similar to other alleys throughout the Village.

Director Bielak confirmed that it would.

Member Gibbs asked whether the permeable paver system would allow water to be absorbed into the soil below rather than being directed to MWRD.

Director Bielak explained that the system absorbs as much water as possible, with any excess overflow directed to MWRD.

Mr. Jakovljevic provided an explanation of how permeable paver alleys function.

Chairman Crosby asked the Village Attorney whether the Commission should consider the application process as part of its review criteria.

Attorney Skrodzki stated that the process is not one of the review standards for a variation. She added that any questions regarding the process or compliance with the Open Meetings Act had been addressed and that she had personally reviewed the matter.

Chairman Crosby asked if the members had any additional comments or questions.

Member Lucchesi reiterated his suggestion that the applicant consider removing the proposed retail space and converting it into additional parking.

Village Administrator Walsh stated that, because Madison Street is a commercial corridor, there is an interest in maintaining commercial space on the ground level of the development.

Member Lucchesi stated that he felt the balance between parking and retail space should prioritize additional parking, noting that residents have expressed concerns regarding parking availability and suggesting that additional spaces would help address those concerns.

Member Shoemaker asked how many additional parking spaces could be created if the proposed retail space were removed.

Mr. Kokalias stated that no additional parking spaces could be created due to the layout of the parking access and building design.

Member Gibbs asked whether the janitor's closet could be relocated.

Mr. Kokalias stated that relocating the water meter or sprinkler room could potentially create one additional parking space; however, he noted that the area is otherwise very limited for modifications.

Mr. Jakovljevic provided further explanation regarding the challenges associated with adding additional parking.

Member Gibbs reiterated his question regarding the area near the janitor's closet.

Mr. Jakovljevic provided a few potential considerations that could allow for a limited increase in parking spaces.

Chairman Crosby asked John Houseal to comment on the possibility of removing the commercial space to create additional parking.

Mr. Houseal provided an explanation of the benefits of maintaining commercial space in that location, particularly the advantages of the proposed commercial layout.

Chairman Crosby asked if there were any additional questions. Hearing none, he outlined the possible options available to the Commission moving forward regarding the vote.

A MOTION was made by Member Gibbs and **SECONDED** by Member Shoemaker to recommend approval of the application with the condition that the outdoor parking spaces along the northwest edge of the property be moved as far as feasibly possible to provide residents with the greatest possible buffer while maintaining adequate traffic flow.

Ayes: Chairman Crosby, Members Gibbs, Lucchesi, Yanaki, Fishman, Davis, and Shoemaker
Nays: None

The motion passed.

Assistant Village Administrator Spencer and Attorney Skrodzki provided an overview of the next steps the Board could take regarding approval of the Findings of Fact.

IV. Approval of the Findings of Fact for Application #26-0009

A MOTION was made by Member Davis and **SECONDED** by Member Gibbs to approve the findings of fact.

Ayes: Chairman Crosby, Members Gibbs, Lucchesi, Yanaki, Fishman, Davis, and Shoemaker
Nays: None

The motion passed.

V. Public Comment

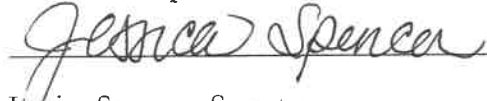
Chairman Crosby asked if there were any public comments on matters unrelated to the hearing. Hearing none, the Public Comment portion was closed.

VI. Adjournment

A MOTION was made by Member Davis and **SECONDED** by Member Lucchesi to adjourn the meeting of the Development Review Board at 10:54 pm.

By a voice vote, motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jessica Spencer", is written over a horizontal line.

Jessica Spencer, Secretary