

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

January 11, 2024

A meeting of the River Forest Zoning Board of Appeals was held at 7:30 pm on Thursday, January 11, 2024, in the Community Room of the River Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Martin called the meeting to order at 7:30pm. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon roll call the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Martin, Members Dombrowski, Plywacz, Shoemaker, Davis, Lucchesi, Price (arrived at 7:32pm)

Absent: None

Also present at the meeting: John Houseal, Village Planner; Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator; Matt Walsh, Village Administrator; Anne Skrodzki, Village Attorney; and Clifford Radatz, Secretary.

**II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS ON DECEMBER 14, 2023**

A **MOTION** was made by Member Plywacz and seconded by Member Shoemaker to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2023 meeting.

Ayes: Chairman Martin, Members Dombrowski, Shoemaker, Plywacz, Price, Lucchesi, Davis

Nays: None

Motion passed.

**III. APPROVAL OF FINDINGS OF FACT FOR THE TEXT AMENDMENT REQUEST – REGARDING LAND USE CHART – CHILD DAYCARE CENTERS – SPECIAL USE IN THE C3 ZONING DISTRICT**

A **MOTION** was made by Member Lucchesi seconded by Member Plywacz to approve findings of facts,

Ayes: Chairman Martin, Members Dombrowski, Shoemaker, Plywacz, Price, Lucchesi, Davis

Nays: None

Motion passed.

#### **IV. TEXT AMENDMENT REQUEST – PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING COMMERCIAL DISTRICT ZONING REGULATIONS**

Chairman Martin provided the rules of the meeting for those in the audience.

Secretary Radatz swore in those who wished to testify.

Chairman Martin invited the applicant to the podium to present the application.

John Houseal presented the draft Zoning Amendments. He clarified the applicant to this request is the Village and explained the background and research that support the draft to begin the discussion.

Chairman Martin asked if these changes should be considered as one text amendment or multiple? Mr. Houseal stated that while each change could be considered separately, his recommendation would be to consider all the changes in one text amendment. Attorney Skrodzki agreed.

Village Administrator Walsh provided some history on the topic to the committee, updating this committee on the Economic Development Committee's conversation at their last meeting. He explained the Economic Development Committee was generally in support of the changes as proposed, however they have concerns about increasing the height from 50 feet to 65 feet in C3 and ORIC districts.

Comments from the public:

1. Debbie Borman

- a. Ms. Borman stated that the text amendments fail to comply both with Illinois law and with the River Forest Comprehensive Plan in the following ways:  
Illinois law requires municipalities to adopt and enforce zoning regulations to promote "the public health, safety, comfort, morals, and welfare." Factors considered in promoting these goals include:
  - (1) the existing uses and zoning of nearby property;
  - (2) the extent to which property values are diminished by the zoning;
  - (3) the relative gain to the public as compared to the hardship imposed upon individual property owners;
  - (4) the suitability of the subject property for the zoned purposes; and
  - (5) the length of time the property has been vacant as zoned considered in the context of land development in the area in the vicinity of the subject property.
- b. She reported that there were 22 residents who attended the Madison Street public meeting. She feels the images presented didn't reflect the shadows that might be cast by buildings. She disputed the comparisons to Oak Park and Forest Park along Madison St and reported that Madison West Apartments of Forest Park is a 36-unit building, with 2 bedrooms/2 bathrooms.
- c. She stated she represents over 50 neighbors in her area. She reports that those residents are concerned regarding the proposal put forth by the Economic Development Committee. She feels it seeks to change the density of C2 district.

She notes the other businesses in the area are single-story buildings. She is concerned about the potential for increased parking and traffic in the area. She feels that the proposed studio apartments are intended to meet affordable housing requirements.

2. Daniel Lauber – 7215 Oak

- a. Mr. Lauber qualified his comments by explaining that he is a former ZBA member and a Zoning Attorney for over 3 decades.
- b. He asks the committee to thoughtfully and carefully consider the amendments before them. He agrees that there needs to be a massive overhaul.
- c. He is specifically concerned about the parking adjustments. He feels that the parking requirements should be set on the type of structure and number of bedrooms to be built in that space. He recommends rejecting the 1.5 parking spaces.
- d. He is pleased about the reduction in lot area per unit from 2,800 to 1,000 sf. He calls the current standard exclusionary zoning and feels the lot size should be reduced.
- e. Regarding maximum heights, he suggests a compromise: understanding the heights we currently have are too low, there is a thoughtful way to address this issue. Providing a handout to the committee members, he suggests that the Village use a “building step-back” structure, which he defined as when the building is tallest on the street side and then steps down in height to be no more than 1 or 2 stories tall adjacent to the single family residences.

3. Trudy Ross

- a. There are so many empty spaces in the Village, so she questions why a developer would be interested in coming here.
- b. She is concerned that additional residential developments would negatively impact the schools and emergency services.

4. Luanne Peterson

- a. She feels that most people live in River Forest because they like the residential appearance.
- b. She is concerned about the parking space proposal discussed tonight.
- c. She is concerned about the height proposals and isn't sure that it is necessary to go to 65 feet in her neighborhood (corner of Lake and Lathrop).
- d. She believes that the density calculations are related to rentals; she feels that there is a shortage of middle-income housing.

5. Heidi Yule – 21 Franklin

- a. She is familiar with the Madison West apartments due to its proximity to her home. She is concerned about the height, density, and parking as previously mentioned.
- b. She notes that residents are double-parking in the alley between Ashland and Franklin, north of Madison.

6. Margie Cekander

- a. She does not support the amendments as presented this evening.

- b. She feels that changes to the zoning code should be thoughtful and widely dispersed to the residents of the Village.

Commissioner Davis asked why this was voted upon by the EDC last night. Administrator Walsh clarified that the committee discussed the inclusion of the C3 and ORIC. She inquired about the decision of the EDC, he confirmed that the 5 members present were in agreement on the previously mentioned concerns.

7. Kelly Keran – 1226 William

- a. She believes the density recommendations should be studied carefully before decisions are made.
- b. She does agree that the code could be reviewed, specifically that data is needed to properly understand the scope of an issue and what changes may be appropriate.
- c. She stated that, if traffic is already an issue in parts of this community, she doesn't understand how decisions can be made with regards to parking density without further consideration.
- d. She also expressed concerns regarding the publication of the meeting and suggested utilizing social media to spread the news.

John Houseal spoke to address some of the public comments.

He pointed out that these changes are not an “end-around” for affordable housing. The Village Board directed staff and the planner to explore these changes. He said the parking recommendation is simply suggested but would be based on the actual use where it is applied. He said that he can provide shadow studies if directed by the Board and has previously considered the step-back structure near Madison St.

Regarding the impact on schools, he pointed out how focused his team is on considering data. He noted that when zoning applications come forward, the developers are required to complete vehicle studies, shadow studies, and impacts on the community during that process. He reminded the committee that the zoning code is not allowed to differentiate between rental or owner-occupied units, so inclusion of that type of calculation cannot be considered until an application is made.

Regarding the housing densities, Mr. Houseal stated there were no calculations for 50+ studio apartment buildings in his proposal.

Commissioner Plywacz asked Mr. Houseal if there are some scenarios that may be provided for discussion of residential unit apartments. He said that he would like to carefully review a variety of scenarios. He also wants to see what the infrastructure looks like on North Ave and when compared to Madison, specifically electrical and water main. Mr. Houseal said he had previously provided several scenarios to staff and would be happy to provide them again for consideration.

Mr. Houseal pointed out that there is limited space for commercial development in the Village, while also balancing the characteristics of the residential developments. In reference to the notice provided for this topic, Mr. Houseal pointed out that the Village has discussed this proposal at

previous (the Economic Development Committee) meetings in order to increase transparency, prior to this evening's public hearing.

Chairman Martin requests that Mr. Houseal conduct a shadow study along Madison Street. He clarifies what happens before the Development Review Board. He is concerned that if the standards for height are increased to 65 feet, then the next developer may come in and ask for additional height beyond the new limit. He mentioned that if these changes are adopted but the PD process isn't updated, it may drastically change what happens in future developments.

Mr. Houseal stated that he did what he was directed to do, these are not his personal recommendations.

Chairman Martin asked how the Board would like to proceed, as the meeting would adjourn at 10:00pm and it was currently 9:43pm.

Commissioner Davis feels that there is additional conversation needed.

Commissioner Shoemaker asks that various scenarios be proposed and also requests a shadow study conducted.

Commissioner Davis says that she feels that the south-side residents feel they are carrying the burden of affordable housing. Mr. Houseal stated that the density of the housing is proposed to be spread all throughout the Village in the commercial districts, because that was the scope assigned to his firm. He feels that reviewing all of the residential districts would help to realize the vision of the whole Village.

Administrator Walsh added that there was discussion about a comprehensive review of the entire zoning code, including residential districts, however the priority for the Village is updating the commercial district regulations at this time.

Chairman Martin wants to leave the public hearing portion of the meeting open to accept additional comments at the next regularly scheduled meeting, on February 8<sup>th</sup>.

**A MOTION** was made by Member Dombrowski and seconded by Member Lucchesi to continue the public hearing to the next scheduled meeting of February 8, 2024.

Ayes: Chairman Martin, Members Dombrowski, Shoemaker, Price, Davis, Lucchesi, Plywacz

Nays: None

Motion passed.

## **V. NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2024.

## **VI. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## VII. ADJOURNMENT

A Motion was made by Member Plywacz to dismiss the meeting, seconded by Davis to adjourn.

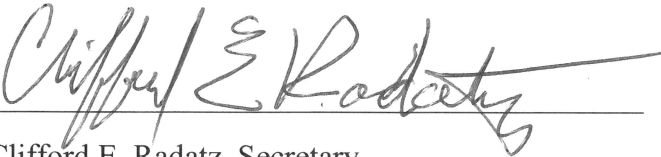
Ayes: Chairman Martin, Members Dombrowski, Plywacz, Shoemaker, Davis, Lucchesi,  
Price

Nays:

Motion Passed.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:50 p.m.

Submitted:



Clifford E. Radatz, Secretary



Date: 2/8/2024

Frank Martin, Chairman  
Zoning Board of Appeals