



RIVER FOREST ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING AGENDA

A meeting of the River Forest Zoning Board of Appeals will be held on Thursday, October 9, 2025, at 7:30 P.M. in the Community Room of the River Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois.

Anyone interested in this matter is encouraged to share their comments with the Zoning Board of Appeals. If you are unable to attend the public hearing, you may submit written comments to Clifford Radatz, Building Official, by 12:00 p.m. on the day of the hearing. Comments may also be emailed in advance to Clifford Radatz at cradatz@vrf.us.

You may listen to the meeting by clicking here:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_jKIVanT-SHep5GzIU5JPQQ

- I. Call to Order
- II. Approval of the Minutes from the meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals on June 26, 2025
- III. Hearing – Text Amendment Request – Public Hearing Amending Section 10-24 Regarding Tree Preservation, to Establish Requirements for Single Family Properties and to Update Terminology
- IV. Approval of Findings of Fact for the Amendment of Section 10-24 Regarding Tree Preservation
- V. Public Comment
- VI. Adjournment

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

June 26, 2025

A meeting of the River Forest Zoning Board of Appeals was held at 7:30 pm on Thursday, June 26, 2025, 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 7:30 pm. Meeting started by calling roll. Upon a roll call the following persons were:

Present: Chairman Frank Martin, Members Gary Dombrowski, Chris Plywacz, Mary Shoemaker, Ron Lucchesi, and Sheila Price

Absent: Member Corina Davis

Also present at the meeting: Jessica Spencer, Assistant Village Administrator, Cliff Radatz, Secretary, and Anne Skrodzki, Village Attorney.

II. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FROM THE MEETING OF THE ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS ON APRIL 10, 2025

Chairman Martin asked if there were any comments about the minutes from the last meeting, there were none.

A **MOTION** was made by Member Plywacz and seconded by Member Lucchesi to approve the minutes of the April 10, 2025, meeting.

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

Nays: None

Motion passed.

Chairman Martin introduced the application. Secretary Radatz swore in those who wished to testify.

III. PUBLIC HEARING – SPECIAL USE PERMIT – 7355 NORTH AVENUE

Chairman Martin invited the applicant, Diamond in the Ruff of River Forest, LLC, owner Anne Renee Vacherlon, who presented her application. She explained she had recently purchased the space on North Avenue and are interested in moving their dog grooming business from Madison Street.

Chairman Martin asked questions about the reason for moving the business. Ms. Vacherlon stated the building was sold in February/March and advised her the rent would be increasing.

Chairman Martin asked why she should be granted the special use permit. She responded that she has operated in the Village for 30 years and would like to continue her business here. The North Avenue property had been on the market for about 10 years, she stated, and felt this would be a good fit for her business.

Chairman Martin asked if she feels that the documents addressing the Standards as stated is true, Ms. Vacherlon responded yes.

In response to Member Plywacz, Ms. Vacherlon confirmed she does not use harsh chemicals. He asked how long she operated at the Madison Street location; Ms. Vacherlon responded 15 years. She reported that there were minimal things to be changed at the North Avenue property.

Chairman Martin asked about a disturbance at this business in the past year. He asked if her employee was aggressive towards another tenant in the business. Ms. Vacherlon explained the situation at the time.

Chairman Martin asked for public comment from those present, regarding this topic.

Secretary Radatz swore in those additional members who wished to testify.

Donna Fantetti Slepicka addressed the Board, speaking in support of the applicant.

Bart Smith addressed the Board, speaking in support of the applicant.

Robert Polomo addressed the Board, speaking of the disturbance previously mentioned.

Chairman Martin closed the public hearing.

Member Plywacz recused himself from voting because of his business relationship with the Applicant.

Chairman Martin noted that it is admirable of the business to be in the Village for so long and provided such a long list of supportive letters as part of the packet this evening. He noted the irony of having to complete this process in order to move back to where the business started so many years ago. He explained that the 12 standards referenced in the Village Code must be met for this application to be positively recommended to the Village Board. Due to an altercation between the applicant and another tenant of that property, Chairman Martin felt Standard B had not been met.

Chairman Martin further explained that if a Member felt that a specific Standard had not been met, then the Member should explain which Standard was not met.

A MOTION was made by Member Dombrowski and seconded by Member Lucchesi to approve the Special Use Permit for 7355 North Avenue.

Ayes: Members Dombrowski, Shoemaker, Price, and Lucchesi

Nays: Chairman Martin

Abstain: Plywacz

By a vote of 4-1, the motion passed.

IV. APPROVAL OF FINDINGS OF FACT FOR THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT FOR 7355 NORTH AVENUE

Chairman Martin asked the Board to move onto voting for the Findings of Fact. He noted that there were many letters of support provided by the applicant from their customers, each one uniquely written.

A **MOTION** was made by Member Dombrowski and seconded by Member Lucchesi to approve the Findings of Fact for the Special Use Permit for 7355 North Avenue pending conformance to the considerations set forth in this Hearing and review by the Village Attorney and the Chairman.

Ayes: Members Dombrowski, Shoemaker, Price, and Lucchesi

Nays: Chairman Martin

Abstain: Member Plywacz

By a vote of 4-1, the motion passed.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was none.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

A **MOTION** was made by Member Dombrowski to dismiss the meeting, seconded by Member Lucchesi to adjourn. A unanimous voice vote passed the motion.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:58 p.m.

Submitted:

Clifford E. Radatz, Secretary

Date: _____

Frank Martin, Chairman
Zoning Board of Appeals



MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 20, 2025

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals

FROM: Clifford E. Radatz *CR*
Building Official

SUBJECT: Case Number 2026-0008
Text Amendment to Update Section 10-24 Regarding Tree Preservation

The Sustainability Commission has devoted significant time to exploring tree preservation, beginning with recommendations from the Village's Climate Action Plans and community interest in urban forestry. Between October 2024 and February 2025, the Commission reviewed regional examples, sought input from certified arborists, and discussed feasible requirements for single-family properties. They recommended protecting mature Oaks and Elms over 20 inches in diameter, with a one-to-one tree replacement requirement if removal does not meet conditions of approval. In March 2025, the Commission unanimously supported pursuing text amendments, which the Village Board also unanimously endorsed in June 2025.

Legal Notice has been provided for the meeting date on September 24, 2025, by publication in the local newspaper.

The following packet includes a memo and the proposed text amendment, red-lined, for your consideration.

If the Zoning Board is in support of the proposed amendments, the following motion should be made:

Motion to recommend approval of the proposed text amendments to Chapter 10-24 of the Zoning Ordinance to the Village Board.

Documents Attached:

- Legal Notice
- Memo of Introduction from Staff
- Red-Lined Ordinance highlighting proposed changes



Village of River Forest
Public Works and Engineering

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

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 9, 2025
To: Zoning Board of Appeals
From: Seth Jansen, Assistant to the Director of Public Works
Subj: Tree Preservation Zoning Ordinance

As part of the two Climate Action Plans completed by UIC for the Village of River Forest, several recommendations were made regarding village forestry. In one of the plans, a recommendation was made to amend the Village tree cutting ordinance to promote community protection of the Village's tree canopy. The other report recommended updating ordinances to grow the tree canopy through tree planning requirements, establishing tree cutting fees, requiring tree planting to replace trees that are cut down, and create a Heritage Tree designation in the landscaping ordinance to further protect old growth trees on private properties.

In the recent community survey conducted by the Sustainability Commission, residents were asked to indicate interest in topics they wished to learn more about. The category of Green Spaces & Urban Forestry garnered very high levels of interest, with nearly 60% of respondents indicating interest in the topic.

At the October 2024 meeting of the Sustainability Commission, the Commission reviewed and discussed the initial recommendations made in the Climate plan as well as examples of the types of requirements other communities in the Chicago region have adopted as part of their tree preservation and heritage tree ordinances. Generally, these require a permit before a tree can be removed from a property. If a healthy tree is removed, the resident is required to replace it with the planting of new trees or by paying a fee in lieu of replacement. The number of new trees and the amount of the fee are determined by the species of the tree along with the size of the tree based on diameter at breast height.

Currently, the Village does not have any authority over private property trees. No permit is required for the removal of trees on single-family residential property; however, the removal must be completed by a forester licensed with the Village. Existing language in the Village Zoning Code establishes landscaping requirements for multi-family residential buildings, commercial establishments, institutions and government buildings, where the building footprint covers five thousand square feet or more of land area. This section of the Village Code includes an extensive tree preservation and replacement ordinance for applicable properties.

Following discussion at the October 2024 Sustainability Commission meeting, the input from the Commission was to start by identifying a few specific species of trees and seeking to protect fully mature trees of these species as a first step. Input from Village staff who are Certified Arborists

resulted in the recommendations that Oaks and Elms over 20 inches in Diameter at Breast Height be preserved. This includes all species of Oak and all species of Elm except for invasive Siberian Elms. The 20-inch diameter was established because 20 inches is considered the beginning of maturity for Elms, with 30 inches being very mature or historic. Oak trees have varying growth rates based on species, with most reaching maturity between 15 inches and 25 inches in diameter.

The Sustainability Commission further discussed and provided input on the topic at the December 2024, and February 2025 meetings. Following discussion at the February meeting of the Sustainability Commission, the Commission requested input from Village arborists regarding the exchange rate for removal of trees from single family residential properties which did not meet the conditions for approval of removal, citing concerns that residents would be unlikely to meet the existing replacement requirements that apply to larger institutional properties. Staff concluded that an exchange rate of one tree planted for each removed meets the minimum requirements established as part of the Arbor Day Foundation's Tree City USA standards. Staff also determined that the Morton Arboretum Northern Illinois Tree Species List provides a comprehensive list of replacement species which will allow for a greater variety of species than those suited for parkway and larger institutional properties. This will minimize the impact on residents while continuing to protect the Village tree canopy.

At their March 2025 meeting, the Sustainability Commission unanimously voted to recommend that the Village Board of Trustees proceed with a text amendment related to tree preservation. The Village Board of Trustees voted unanimously to proceed with the text amendment at the June 9, 2025, meeting.

As drafted, this ordinance will be limited in scope to single family residential properties seeking to remove an Oak or Elm tree greater than 20 inches in diameter. This includes all species of Oak and all species of Elm except for invasive Siberian Elms. Removal of such a tree would require one replacement tree to be planted. This replacement tree would only be required if the Conditions Of Approval in the existing Tree Preservation Ordinance are not met. These Conditions Of Approval state that a tree must meet at least one of the following conditions: safety hazard, diseased or weakened tree, necessity of good forestry practices such as the number of healthy trees a parcel will support, necessity of removal for location of a proposed structure without causing unreasonable hardship, or necessity of removal in order to provide an essential grade change. This proposal is less stringent than what other communities have with regards to tree preservation and heritage tree ordinances; most communities require replacement to be equal in cumulative inches of Diameter at Breast Height. The attached draft ordinance instead serves as a first step toward tree preservation regulations.

Further changes to the zoning code were technical in nature to reflect the common practice of utilizing Diameter at Breast Height, which is defined as four and a half feet above the ground, rather than the previous standard of one foot above the ground.

Staff may request additional information from permit applicants to determine if this policy would apply.

Recommendation: Motion to recommend approval of the proposed text amendments to Chapter 24 of the Zoning Ordinance to the Village Board of Trustees.

Attachments: Draft Text Amendment



**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS
RIVER FOREST, ILLINOIS**

Public Notice is hereby given that a public hearing will be held by the Zoning Board of Appeals of the Village of River Forest, Cook County, Illinois, on Thursday, October 9, 2025 at 7:30 p.m. in the First Floor Community Room of the River Forest Village Hall, 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, Illinois, to consider amendment(s) to the Village's Zoning Ordinance which include, but may not be limited to, the following:

1. A Text Amendment to Section 10-24-3 (Applicability) of the Zoning Ordinance regarding the applicability of other sections; and
2. A Text Amendment to Section 10-24-3 (Off Street Parking) of the Zoning Ordinance to establish tree preservation requirements for single family properties and to update terminology.

The petitioner for the Text Amendments is the Village President and Board of Trustees. This public hearing is being held pursuant to direction given by the Village Board of Trustees for the Zoning Board of Appeals to consider these amendments. For additional information visit www.vrf.us.

All interested persons will be given the opportunity to be heard at the public hearing. **For public comments to be considered by the Zoning Board of Appeals and Village Board of Trustees in their decision, they must be included as part of the public hearing record.** If you cannot attend the public hearing but would like to provide input on this matter to the Zoning Board of Appeals you may submit your comments in writing, to Clifford Radatz, Building Official, no later than 12:00 Noon on the date of the public hearing at cradatz@vrf.us or by mailing them to 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, IL 60305.

For further information or for a copy of the proposed text amendments, please contact Village Administrator Matt Walsh at (708) 714-3563 or at mwalsh@vrf.us or visit www.vrf.us.

Sincerely,
Clifford Radatz
Secretary, Zoning Board of Appeals

10-24-3: APPLICABILITY:

The requirements of this chapter shall apply to multi-family residential buildings, commercial establishments, institutions and government buildings, where the building footprint covers five thousand square feet or more of land area. Only those provisions of this chapter related to subsection 10-24-4B, "Parkway Landscaping", and Section 10-24-5, "Tree Preservation", of this chapter shall apply to single-family residential properties.

Planned development applications which have been approved before April 18, 2002, are hereby exempt from the requirements of this chapter. (Ord. 3009, 1-27-2003)

10-24-5: TREE PRESERVATION:

It is the purpose and intent of this section to establish regulations limiting the removal and ensuring the replacement of trees from single family, multi-family residential, commercial, institutional and governmental property within the village and, in doing so, safeguard the ecological and aesthetic environment of the community. These regulations are further intended to serve to dissuade the unnecessary clearing and disturbing of land so as to preserve, insofar as practical, the existing natural trees, and preserve existing landscaping buffers to minimize the impact of adjoining differing land uses, enhance and protect the integrity of roadway corridors, and reduce the surface heat and negative visual impact of vehicular use areas.

A. Tree Removal:

1. Approval Required: No tree having a trunk size of six inches or greater in Diameter at Breast Height, diameter as measured four feet six inches twelve inches above the established ground levels, shall be removed from any multi-family residential, commercial, institutional and governmental property requiring building permit approval as set forth in this code, or which is the subject of a petition for a zoning variation or subdivision in the village, without written approval from the zoning administrator or his or her authorized designee. For single family residential properties, no Oak tree or Elm tree, except for a Siberian Elm, having a trunk size of 20 inches or greater in Diameter at Breast height above the established ground levels, shall be removed without written approval from the zoning administrator or his or her authorized designee; such trees meeting the conditions for approval established in 10-24-5 (A)(2) shall not be subject to the replacement requirements of 10-24-5 (A)(3). In cases where only a zoning variation is sought, only those trees that are to be removed as a result of the construction that requires the variation shall be subject to these regulations. Undesirable species of trees such as those described in section 10-24-10 of this chapter shall be exempt from these regulations. A written statement indicating the reasons for removal of trees and a general description of the trees to be removed shall accompany the application for tree removal.

2. Conditions Of Approval: The zoning administrator or his or her authorized designee shall approve all requests for tree removal if one or more of the following conditions is present:

a. Safety Hazard To Pedestrians Or Vehicular Traffic: Necessity to remove trees that pose a safety hazard to pedestrian or vehicular traffic or threaten to cause a disruption of public safety.

b. Safety Hazard To Buildings: Necessity to remove trees which pose a safety hazard to a building.

c. Diseased Or Weakened Trees: Necessity to remove diseased trees or trees weakened by age, storm, fire or other injury.

d. Observe Good Forestry Practice: Necessity to observe good forestry practice, i.e., the number of healthy trees a given parcel of land will support.

e. Location Of Proposed Structure: Necessity to remove trees in order to locate proposed structure(s) without causing unreasonable economic hardship.

f. Grade Changes: Necessity to remove trees in order to provide for essential grade changes.

3. Replacement Trees: Any trees that have been identified for removal must be replaced in accordance with the following criteria:

a. Replacement trees shall either:

(1) Equal or exceed the same size caliper as the tree removed; or

(2) Consist of smaller trees, not less than three inches in caliper, which add up to the caliper of the original tree.

b. All replacement trees shall be selected from the village's recommended species list (see section 10-24-10 of this chapter).

c. Replacement trees shall be documented on the final landscape plan.

d. Replacement trees may be used for required perimeter yard landscaping and screening on the subject property.

B. Protection Of Existing Trees During Construction:

1. Tree Survey: A tree survey shall be submitted at the time of an application for building permit approval indicating the location, size and species (both scientific and common) of all trees located on the parcel with a trunk size of six inches or greater, as measured four feet six ~~twelve~~ inches above the established ground level.

2. Integration Of Existing Trees Into Site And Landscape Plans: Subject to the determination of the zoning administrator, every reasonable effort shall be made to retain existing trees on the aforementioned trees survey through the integration of those trees

surveyed into the site and landscape plan for the proposed development. Removal of trees designed for preservation shall only be allowed by amendment to the approved landscape plan.

3. Tree Preservation Plan: A tree preservation plan shall be submitted at the time of an application for site plan and architectural approval indicating, at a minimum, the location of those trees to be preserved and the methods which are to be used to preserve such trees. The tree preservation plan shall specify the following preservation techniques:

a. Grading, Construction Equipment And Materials: All grading and construction equipment and materials shall be forbidden from encroaching upon the tree's drip line.

b. Materials Detrimental To Trees: Crushed limestone or any other materials that may be detrimental to trees shall not be dumped within the drip line of any trees nor shall be located at any higher location where drainage toward the tree(s) could conceivably affect the health of said tree(s).

c. Storage Of Vehicles: No materials or vehicles shall be stored, driven or parked within the drip line of any trees.

d. Installation Of Snow Fencing: Snow fencing, or an alternative temporary barrier, with the written approval of the zoning administrator or his or her authorized designee, shall be installed at the periphery of the tree's drip line to protect trees from root compaction by the storage of materials or vehicles.

e. Pruning: Identification of any trees which have to be saved, but which could be negatively affected during the construction process. All such trees shall be pruned by a qualified arborist to compensate for root loss during construction.

f. Preservation Methodology: The methods that are to be used to preserve those trees shall be clearly specified. If, in the opinion of the zoning administrator, or his or her authorized designee the necessary precautions, as specified in the tree preservation plan for the development, were not undertaken before or during construction to ensure the preservation of those trees, the site development permit for the parcel shall not be issued, or if previously issued, may be revoked until such time as compliance with the precautions is achieved.

g. Consultant: The village shall, at its discretion, have the right to retain a professional tree consultant/forester to review the preservation plans and to submit a written report to the zoning administrator. All expenses incurred by the village shall be reimbursed by the developer.

h. Village Right To Inspection: The village shall have the right to inspect the subject property at any time during the construction process, in order to verify that the developer and contractor have protected trees in accordance with the approved tree preservation plan.

4. Removal Of Trees Designated For Preservation: If it is determined by the village that a tree designated for preservation is destroyed or razed during the construction process by

a deliberate action in violation of the approved tree preservation plan, such tree shall be replaced with new trees in accordance with the following exchange rate. Village staff may, with just cause, waive the following exchange rate due to accidental damage to protected trees:

a. Exchange Rate for multi-family residential, commercial, institutional and governmental property:

Existing Trees (In Caliper Inches)	Number Of Replacement Trees
36+	1" for each 1" of tree removal
30-35	11
26-29	10
20-25	9
13-19	8
6-12	7

b. Exchange Rate for single family property: The removal of any tree designated for preservation on a single-family residential property, as outlined in subsection 10-24-5(A)(1), shall require a replacement tree be planted. The replacement tree shall meet the minimum size requirement established in subsection 10-24-5(D) and shall be a tree species identified as well-suited for a residential planting site, based on the Morton Arboretum Northern Illinois Tree Species List. A payment in lieu of replacement may be made as outlined established in subsection 10-24-5(E).

C. Trunk Size: Trunk size means Diameter at Breast Height, the diameter as measured at four feet six inches ~~twelve inches~~ above the established ground. For the above, in the event of a fraction of an inch, if the fraction is less than one-half inch, it may be disregarded. If the fraction is one-half or greater, it shall be counted as one inch.

D. Minimum Size Of Replacement Trees: All replacement trees shall be a minimum trunk size of three inches in diameter, as measured four feet six inches above the established ground.

E. Payment In Lieu Of Replacement Trees: If it is determined by the village that an insufficient area exists which would support any or all of the replacement trees, the property owner shall contribute one hundred percent of the dollar value (as determined by the most recent valuations of the international society of arboriculture) of the replacement trees to the village. Said funds shall be used for the sole purpose of planting trees at locations determined by the village. (Ord. 2960, 4-8-2002)