

**JOINT PLAN COMMISSION & ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS  
REGULAR MEETING**

**May 21, 2025**

**MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order & Roll Call**

Chair Peters called to order the meeting of the Joint Plan Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals (PCZBA) of the Village of Lake Bluff on Wednesday, May 21, 2025 at 7:00 pm.

The following members were present:

Members:     Jill Danly  
                  Deborah Fischer  
                  Elliot Miller  
                  George Russell  
                  Gary Peters (Chair)

Absent:        Aaron Towle

Also Present: Drew Irvin, Village Administrator  
                  Clara Gable, Assistant to the Village Administrator  
                  Courtney Willits, Village Attorney

**2. Non-Agenda Items and Visitors (Public Comment Time)**

There were no public comments. Chair Peters took time to thank Anne Sorenson for being a dedicated member of the PCZBA as she has decided not to return as a Member of the PCZBA.

**3. Consideration of the April 16, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Member Russell stated that he had a proposed revision to the minutes on page three. He stated that the phrasing regarding what Mr. Dobbins said should be reversed. Member Fischer proposed a revision regarding what Mr. Dobbins said as well. AVA Gable stated that she would take a look at the areas of concern. Member Fischer stated she had some grammar and other clarifying revisions.

Chair Peters made a motion and it was seconded by Member Russell and Member Miller to approve the April 16, 2025 regular meeting minutes as amended. The motion passed with a unanimous voice vote.

**4. Continued Public Hearing: Residential Variations (1800 Shore Acres Drive)**

AVA Gable stated the Village received a zoning variation application from contractor Jeff Tondola on behalf of property owner Manny Hegwer requesting to alter an existing non-conforming swimming pool, spa tub, terrace, and deck, which all do not meet the ravine setbacks. The PCZBA held a public hearing on January 15, 2025 and motions were made to continue this matter to subsequent PCZBA meetings in February, March, and April. Since the last public hearing, the

applicant has updated the plans and submitted drone photos. Variations are still required due to the encroachment of the facilities into the ravine and required setbacks. AVA Gable stated that the applicant is at the meeting to present the request. She noted that the PCZBA is a recommending body in the matter.

Jeff Tondola stepped up to the podium and was sworn in by Chair Peters. Mr. Tondola stated this is the second hearing date regarding the application. He stated that he has cleaned up the plan, received advice from a structural engineer, and made the project more compliant. He began describing the project with slides and noted that the proposed plans are less invasive to the ravine and closer to compliance than the existing structures. He emphasized the necessity for replacing the existing pool, preventing further destabilization of the slope and maximizing pool safety.

Chair Peters noted that Mr. Tondola had addressed the standards for variation in his submission, and stated that the PCZBA would adopt and incorporate those by reference. The Chair noted that the cantilever approach made a lot of sense. Member Miller asked for clarity and Mr. Tondola replied that with this approach, they can avoid putting piers on the outside of the deck to support it, and instead hang the whole deck from the wall causing less earth disruption in the ravine. Member Miller affirmed that if the engineers feel this is a feasible project, he doesn't have significant objections to the plan. He added that there were other conditions that may be applied, but that they could be added on when Mr. Tondola comes back. Member Fischer said she was pleased with the improvements to the plan and had no notes. Member Danly agreed regarding the hazards of the current setup and was pleased that engineers have evaluated the section plan, and they will be working alongside Mr. Tondola moving forward. She further expressed satisfaction with the cantilever approach and approval for the proposal. Member Russell stated that he had no objections to the project and was glad that the deck and spa will be less intrusive into the ravine. Chair Peters agreed with the other members and noted that Mr. Tondola has done a good job of incorporating the PCZBA's guidance into the updated proposal. Chair Peters asked if the group was ready to talk about conditions; Member Russell echoed Member Miller's comments that he didn't think other conditions needed to be applied at this time.

Member Russell made a motion to recommend the Village Board approve the requested relief. Member Miller asked for clarification that the cleanup conditions would be part of the building permit; Member Russell confirmed that they would be. Member Miller seconded the motion. Chair Peters noted Village Engineer Hansen's favorable report from his recent visit to the site. With a roll call vote, the motion passed.

|         |     |                                               |
|---------|-----|-----------------------------------------------|
| Ayes:   | (5) | Danly, Fischer, Miller, Russell, Chair Peters |
| Nays:   | (0) |                                               |
| Absent: | (1) | Towle                                         |

AVA Gable noted that the recommendation would be presented to the Village Board for a First Reading at the 5/28/25 meeting. Chair Peters asked how deep down the concrete support would go; Mr. Tondola replied that it hasn't been precisely determined, but that some portion of it would go at least as deep as the deep end of the pool.

##### **5. Public Hearing: Zoning Text Amendment (Outdoor Storage in L-1 District)**

AVA Gable outlined the background of a request for zoning text amendments allowing outdoor storage, as well as not wholly enclosed loading and unloading in the L-1 light industry area north of State Route 176 and east of U.S. Route 41. She then invited David Douglas, tenant of 35 North

Skokie Highway, to present the request. After being sworn in by Chair Peters, Mr. Douglas gave more context to the request and noted that he had been using outdoor storage in accordance with his lease until the Village brought the current rule to his attention. He added that all the adjacent properties are commercial and that he was seeking approval from the PCZBA for his request. Member Miller asked what Mr. Douglas would be storing; Mr. Douglas replied that it would be materials for his landscaping masonry business and that there would be no chemicals or pollutants in the outdoor storage. Member Danly stated that she had no questions or concerns; Member Fischer said the same. Member Russell asked if there were any plans to replace the fence on the property. Mr. Douglas replied that there were plans to, and AVA Gable noted that this will ultimately require ABR approval. Member Russell expressed interest in adding the word “opaque” to the guidelines on fencing in the L-1 district, adding that he didn’t believe chain link fencing was consistent with the spirit of the guidelines. He noted ABR’s authority on the matter of fencing, but expressed hope for some long-term changes to broader zoning regulations for the L-1 area. He then stated that he was in favor of what’s currently being proposed.

Member Miller made a motion to recommend approval of the proposed amendments, with added language prohibiting the outdoor storage of hazardous materials, as well as adding the word “opaque” to the fencing guidelines. Member Fischer seconded the motion. The motion passed in a roll call vote.

Ayes: (5) Danly, Fischer, Miller, Russell, Chair Peters  
Nays: (0)  
Absent: (1) Towle

#### **6. Informal Review: 511 Lansdowne Lane Fence**

AVA Gable introduced Jonathan Baksht, who is seeking an informal review of his proposal to install a six-foot fence on his property. Mr. Baksht explained that he would like to put up a six-foot fence along the portion of his side yard that lies along Moffett Rd, where currently only a four-foot fence would be permitted. He shared that many neighbors along Moffett Road have six-foot fences, but that since his home is on Lansdowne Road, he is barred from putting up a six-foot fence on the side. AVA Gable provided a map illustrating the property and fence in question.

Mr. Baksht began discussing the need for a six-foot fence to provide more privacy for his family. AVA Gable clarified the specifics of the diagram for the board. The red and green colors indicating where a six-foot fence could and could not go. AVA Gable specified that the Village Code defines the front yard as the shorter of the two frontages of a property. Member Fischer asked why a six-foot fence would be allowed on certain areas and AVA Gable clarified that the green represents the front yard area of the property. Mr. Baksht noted that he only saw one lot on Moffett that has a four-foot fence and every other one was six-feet.

Member Miller asked if Lansdowne allows fences. Mr. Baksht replied that it does and at the Village Board meeting last week, the Board approved his property having a fence and noted the landscaping work he intends to do on his property. He noted that he inferred at the Village Board meeting that he would be able to put up a six-foot fence, and was informed a day later by AVA Gable that since he is a corner lot, he is restricted to a four-foot fence.

Member Russell stated that Lansdowne was approved 20 years ago and was controversial so a proposal was developed to not allow fences on the perimeter within a certain distance. He then added that now, 20 years later that the Village Board is willing to waive that requirement and, in

some cases, put six-foot fences in the front yard. Member Russell then stated that the applicant is not asking for more than what others on Moffett are doing on the East side of the road. For that reason, Member Russell stated he will be voting in favor of the variance.

Chair Peters asked what the lengths of the fences are and Mr. Baksht replied that he only got approval for the fence last week, and is currently in the process of having someone design the fence, so he is unsure of the length.

AVA Gable clarified that everyone else in the Lansdowne subdivision to the east of the property in question are E-1 zoning.

Mr. Baksht began to provide background stating that to get the Village's approval, he received a signed authorization from every home on Lansdowne Lane and discussed with every homeowner on Lansdowne. He stated he has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in landscaping. He added that he is trying to beautify the land in the area. He also noted that he feels as though the six-foot fence is in line with what everyone else in the neighborhood has and that he does not intend to put a front fence on his property.

Chair Peters stated that the six-foot fence is reasonable. Member Miller asked if there is a way for Mr. Baksht to bypass coming back to the Board. AVA Gable stated that the applicant will have to go through the Public Hearing process and that she will reach out with more information after the meeting. AVA Gable clarified that this is an informal review to see what the PCZBA felt. The formal process will take place at the Village Board meeting.

Mr. Baksht ended by stating that this process has been frustrating for him as a homeowner with the number of meetings that he has had to attend to work on getting a fence approved.

## **7. Informational Review: 206 E. Prospect Avenue Garage**

AVA Gable introduced property owner Graham Hallen who is seeking informal review to replace his detached garage.

Graham Hallen stepped up to the podium and began to introduce his proposal. Mr. Hallen stated that his home has a detached garage that he would like to have a useable garage. The opening of the garage is currently six and a half feet and his cars cannot fit in the garage. He noted that the entrance to the garage faces east so he is unable to maneuver his cars to fit them in the garage. Mr. Hallen noted that he would like to redo the foundation of the garage but there is not a reasonable way to do that without pulling the entire structure down. He noted that he is close to the limit for the amount of space a structure is allowed to take up on a property, so he is asking for a minor variance to take the old garage down, and build a new one that faces south. He stated the new garage would be in the northeast corner and he would be reducing his permeable surface by moving the garage's location. He noted that he wanted to get an informal review before he moves along with the process to see if the changes are even possible before putting down expenses for a formal review.

Chair Peters asked about the dimensions of the new garage. Mr. Halen responded that the overall dimension is 26 x 35 which leaves 15 or 16 feet on the west side of the garage left. He noted that it would be a two-car garage with two individual doors and that there would be set back a small 8 x 12 workshop on the side. He noted the variance of square footage that he is asking for are 11% increase. He added that the Village Engineer, Jeff Hansen came out and said that he saw no issue

with drainage as long as the gutters did not go towards the east neighbor.

Member Russell asked to clarify the dimensions stating that asking for an 11% increase is nearly as large as any of the detached garages on small lots in the Village that have been built in the past 20 years. Member Russell noted that he is concerned with the concept of granting that type of variation. Member Russell added that he is concerned about how the Board would justify giving a variation to just one person with that size lot if other community members are not also allowed. Member Russell asked the size of just the garage portion of the structure. Mr. Hallen responded that the garage is 25 x 25. Member Russell noted that that is a large variance for a garage and that is without the additional workshop. Member Russell noted that there is a 17-foot height limit and that according to the application, Mr. Hallen does not want to comply with the five-foot setback rules. Member Russell noted that the survey that Mr. Hallen submitted stated that the garage is two and a half feet off the property line.

Member Russell asked for clarification about how many feet of variance the application is asking for. Mr. Hallen responded that if the garage comes five feet off the east line, there will be no space for him to back out and he would hit his home. Member Russell disagreed with Mr. Hallen, stating that there are several dozen new homes built over the last decade built on 50 x 125-foot lots, stating that it is not convenient but doable.

Member Russell noted that the Board should consider a text amendment to allow detached garages to go within 2.5 feet of the rear and side yard property lines on smaller lots. Member Russell stated that you should be able to maintain the side of the garage on your own property. He noted that he would recommend having just one large garage door instead of two to allow for more room for the cars to maneuver out of the garage without the center post.

Mr. Hallen responded by noting that a major focus was that he wanted the garage to look nice if seen from the street. Member Russell stated at this time, he is not seeing the “hardship” on Mr. Hallen’s lot that differs from other lots of the same size, that would thus warrant approval of the variations and reiterated how significant of a change the 11% increase would be.

Member Fischer offered support for the idea of a text amendment and warned of a slippery slope with approving drastic variations for garages. She asked how far the garage extends off Mr. Hallen’s property; Member Russell clarified that the application says one foot but the survey says two and a half feet. Member Fischer further stressed the importance of alerting the neighbor to the east of any changes, and stated her concern that the project is just getting a bit too big. She added that she liked the look of the proposal, but that it is important to keep the relevant rules consistent.

Member Danly asked Mr. Hallen for more information on the hardships with the current setup. Mr. Hallen shared that he has two cars and seven bikes that need to be stored in the garage, and that large trees on his lot make the driveway narrower.

Chair Peters inquired where Mr. Hallen’s neighbor to the east has their garage; Mr. Hallen replied that it is set back in the northeast corner. He stressed that he has talked to every adjacent neighbor about the project, and all were supportive. Chair Peters shared his concern about the importance of FAR in the Village, and sympathized with Mr. Hallen’s dilemma, but suggested hanging bikes as one idea to help minimize the necessary footprint. Member Danly expressed her hopes that Mr. Hallen can make his garage work better, and recommended designer doors to help beautify the project. Member Russell suggested that he could potentially support a 24’ x 26’ garage and shared concerns about the amount of space for a car to turn in the driveway under the current proposal. He

noted that a necessary step in the process is a formal notice to all neighbors within 250 feet, and is unsure how the neighbors would feel about the details of the proposal under formal consideration.

Chair Peters asked if the square footage of the home was about 2,500, which Mr. Hallen said it roughly is. AVA Gable shared that according to the Village files, the principal structure at 206 E. Prospect Ave has a FAR of approximately 2,468 square feet.

## **8. Workshop: Comprehensive Plan Action Items**

AVA Gable noted that at the previous meeting, the PCZBA had discussed the important next steps of prioritizing action items from the “Implementation” section of the draft Comprehensive Plan. She reported that since then, Village staff have created a “top priority” list of action items in accordance with the Plan’s goals, which the PCZBA can prioritize in order of importance and relation to relevant goals, along with any ways these goals can be accomplished.

Looking at the “top priority” list, Member Fischer asked for any updates on the item “Recruit a developer to the 611 North Walnut and 33 East North.” AVA Gable shared that the RFP for re-use or redevelopment of those Village-owned properties is out, that responses are due by the end of the month, and that Comprehensive Plan principles will be a guide for approval.

Member Fischer followed up with a question about costs around the action item, “Undertake a zoning assessment with a special focus on R-5 regulations to ensure the zoning code is transparent, current, and advances community values. AVA Gable said that costs could vary, depending on how the Village wants to approach it, which could be a decision for the Village Board.

Member Danly identified a great deal of overlap between PCZBA and ABR on many of the priority items and suggested having a joint session to discuss. AVA Gable agreed and said that a joint workshop could certainly be an option. Member Miller suggested identifying which items might apply vs. which items might be more strictly PCZBA matters.

Member Russell voiced enthusiastic support for the “Undertake a zoning assessment with a special focus on R-5 regulations...” item and suggested it should be the group’s number one priority. Member Miller said he believed that there would be less opposition to multifamily housing in the R-5 zoned district than most other places in the Village. With a general consensus among members of this issue’s importance, AVA Gable marked this item as the number one priority. Member Russell added that he would be in favor of changing the zoning in the industrial L-1 area to allow the construction of multifamily housing.

Member Russell then asked to discuss the item, “Identify and evaluate regulatory barriers to ADU construction in appropriate locations.” Chair Peters shared his concern about this item and the risks he sees with it, particularly in smaller lots in the Village. Member Fischer noted the demand she has seen for homeowners wanting to construct ADUs and said she wants to explore this further. Member Miller suggested that there might be fewer objections to this item if it was targeted at long-term family residence, not rentals. AVA Gable noted that the current regulations do require that the occupants of the principal and accessory dwelling unit constitute a single family, and that the Village has not received any qualifying proposals; most of the people interested in ADUs so far have been interested in having the option of creating a rental unit. Chair Peters asked about FAR for ADUs under current regulations; AVA Gable noted the size requirements and the requirements that ADUs meet principal structure setbacks, both of which would limit construction. Chair Peters suggested that a minimum lot size might make sense, but that he is still concerned about the risks with this item,

including impacts to neighbors, increased density, and parking issues. AVA Gable clarified that ADU size requirements vary by zoning district. Member Russell noted that plenty of lots in the Village are large enough due to zoning regulations to enable construction, but that there hasn't been as much interest in ADUs on those large lots. Member Fischer identified other barriers to ADU construction, particularly financing, and reiterated her interest in looking more into this matter. Member Russell agreed that the issue was worth revisiting. Chair Peters again expressed concerns about how neighbors would perceive ADUs, particularly in smaller lots. Member Fischer agreed that she could be open to restricting ADU construction in certain zoning districts, and emphasized the importance of clarity in the code regarding this issue. AVA Gable noted that there are multiple ways to approach ADUs, and distinguished between detached and attached ADUs. Chair Peters asked which neighboring communities have passed similar ordinances; AVA Gable identified Northbrook, Wilmette, Oak Park, Evanston, Woodstock, Antioch, and Chicago. Member Fischer noted that Lake Forest has also explored the issue with particular restrictions but is not sure where they stand right now. Member Russell suggested that the lack of eligible lots didn't seem to be the issue, and that it was possible that there simply isn't demand for a large amount of ADUs. Member Fischer expressed interest in learning more about how Northbrook has approached the issue, since its suburban character might represent a particularly useful model.

Member Miller suggested a discussion of adding the item, "Explore redevelopment and/or building addition options with CBD property owners of priority properties" to the list of highest-priority items. Chair Peters said he believed this should be one of the top priorities. Member Russell agreed, and noted that it might be worth revisiting the Block Two regulations to help stimulate redevelopment, particularly in light of the upcoming changes to Block Three. Member Danly noted the difficulty of adding a second story to many of the one-story rentals adjacent to the CBD under current regulations, and reiterated support for revisiting barriers to multifamily construction in the R-5 district.

AVA Gable mentioned two other topics that were not listed in the "top priority" list but could still be worthy of discussion: the heritage tree regulations and updating the subdivision ordinance.

## **9. Staff Report**

AVA Gable reported that the Comprehensive Land Use Plan will be going before the Village Board for second reading approval on Wednesday, May 28<sup>th</sup>. She also noted that there will be one more opportunity for community engagement with Teska Associates and that Village staff is working on determining the best setting for that. She noted that there are not yet any public hearing items on the agenda for the June PCZBA meeting, but that incorporating the Village's updated animal regulations into the zoning ordinance may be discussed then.

Member Russell asked for any updates on the bank property development; AVA Gable said it's still moving forward as far as she knows but doesn't have the latest updates. Member Russell also asked for updates on the 570 Evanston Ave proposal; AVA Gable responded that the second reading approval for the development concept plan is coming on May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Member Fischer inquired why Mr. Baksht (511 Lansdowne, Item 6) appeared at the Village Board before the PCZBA; VA Willits clarified that it had to do with a restrictive covenant on the subdivision plat, so in order to remove that language, it had to go before the Village Board first. AVA Gable added that at the time he first appeared before the Village Board, he did not have final plans for the fence and was just needing to remove the language first. Member Miller asked if the PCZBA's purview would be over just the height of the fence or the type of fence as well; VA Willits confirmed that it would be just the height. Member Russell asked if any Lansdowne neighbors had called to

object to the plan; AVA Gable said none had yet, but that letters were delivered to residents the day after the meeting. Chair Peters asked if Lansdowne is fully built out; AVA Gable replied that it is. A brief discussion about next steps for 511 Lansdowne followed.

Member Miller asked to revisit the discussion of the potential text amendment Member Russell had suggested during discussion of Item 7, and asked if that should be put on the agenda for a future meeting. AVA Gable said that typically Village staff would wait for the application to come, and encourage the applicant to apply for that text amendment, and consider both applications at the same time. Member Fischer suggested that the informal review process was generally working, and AVA Gable agreed.

#### **10. Commissioner's Report**

There were no reports.

#### **11. Adjournment**

Member Miller made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Member Fischer seconded the motion. With a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

R. Drew Irvin  
Village Administrator