

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF
COMMITTEE-OF-THE-WHOLE
ARCHITECTURAL BOARD OF REVIEW
JOINT MEETING
FEBRUARY 12, 2018**

APPROVED MINUTES OF MEETING

The Village of Lake Bluff Board of Trustees met as a Committee-of-the-Whole (COW) in the Village Hall Board Room (40 East Center Avenue) on Monday, February 12, 2018. Three members of the Architectural Board of Review were also present. Village President O’Hara called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. Village Clerk Joy Markee called the roll.

The following were present:

Village President:	Kathleen O’Hara
Trustees:	Barbara Ankenman Mark Dewart Eric Grenier Paul Lemieux William Meyer Aaron Towle
ABR Members:	Matthew Kerouac Bob Hunter, Chair Carol Russ
Also Present:	Joy Markee, Village Clerk Drew Irvin, Village Administrator Michael Croak, Building Codes Supervisor (ABR Liaison) Ben Schuster, Assistant Village Attorney Glen Cole, Assistant to the Village Administrator

Consideration of the Minutes from the January 27, 2018 Committee-of-the-Whole Meeting

Trustee Dewart moved to approve the January 27, 2018 COW minutes as presented. Trustee Meyer seconded the motion. Trustee Lemieux complemented staff on the minutes. Village Administrator Irvin noted one typographical correction that will be reflected in the approved copy of the minutes. The motion passed on a unanimous voice vote.

A Discussion Regarding Recommendations from the Architectural Board of Review

Village Administrator Irvin introduced this item, noting that these recommendations were drafted by the Architectural Board of Review (“ABR”) over the last two years in response to the “Four Points” discussion of community character in late 2015. Surrounding certain single-family residential tear-downs, architectural review, and zoning limitations.

Building Codes Supervisor Croak provided an overview of the three recommendations the ABR proposes. Chair Bob Hunter explained the residential design standards, including a desire to not duplicate residential designs; to apply standards to all elevations of a building (e.g. “four-sided

construction”); to use construction materials consistently on all facades; and to prohibit low quality materials such as vinyl, aluminum, dryvit, and T1-11.

Trustee Lemieux asked if the fourth standard implies a larger list of unacceptable materials, such as those similar to T1-11. Chair Hunter responded that there are many similar variant products to T1-11. Some look acceptable and some don't, but most installers are inexperienced and fail to use them correctly. He discussed the history of T1-11 in architectural use and concluded by saying that this standard is meant to speak to quality and not to design. Trustee Lemieux asked if the final ordinance would contain a full list. Chair Hunter responded that this was the ABR's full proposal. He explained the proposed process for the Village's building staff to direct a design to the ABR for review, similar to the existing ordinance dealing with excessively similar and dissimilar design submittals.

Trustee Dewart stated that, if the Village had another concern beyond those listed, they would be unable to refer it to the ABR because that concern was not enumerated. Chair Hunter responded that the Village cannot anticipate every possibility, such as someone proposing a house constructed of mirrors. He stated that the ABR's intent was to establish broad standards.

Trustee Meyer asked if it was possible to have high quality vinyl or aluminum siding. Chair Hunter responded that it was possible, but that does not mean a house would be constructed with that level of quality. Trustee Meyer described a hypothetical situation wherein an older homeowner with a circa 1950 ranch would want to add a sunroom and, due to their budget, would choose a high quality aluminum siding or vinyl siding or window. While such a proposal would be perfectly acceptable, consistent with the neighborhood, and impose a lower cost for an elderly homeowner, the ABR's standards as proposed would seem to prohibit that project. Trustee Meyer stated that he is hesitant to be so broad and not precisely defined as to limit some of these options that would be appropriate for use in, for example, the houses of seniors in Lake Bluff. Chair Hunter responded that, were that to occur, the Village uses its discretion to allow those types of projects to proceed all the time.

Trustee Dewart stated that he is very concerned about this proposal. Many of the houses on his street would not conform to these standards, and many of those that had wood are now replaced with vinyl. Many of these homes are ranches with inconsistent elevations that are wood-sided or brick veneer. He presumes that if the house had significant damage, it could not be rebuilt to the previous style. Additions to these ranches would be affected as well. He believes not being able to use vinyl windows is absurd, as they are indistinguishable visually. Chair Hunter responded that vinyl coated or wrapped windows are fine, but that the subject phrase addresses a different, more problematic window type.

Trustee Grenier stated that this proposal is very granular. The Harlan homes would be non-conforming but are considered historic, even though so many of those are identical plans. He has difficulty balancing the competing interests here. He understands that the ABR is trying to elevate the standards for materials and for the Village, but he believes it becomes an untenable proposition at some point. Trustee Meyer expressed his agreement with Trustee Grenier. He does not want to be disrespectful and appreciates the ABR's hard work, but he is legally and practically not thrilled with how ill-defined this proposition appears to be. It would further remove new construction from the Village's existing character and the tools people can use today to build and upgrade houses. Trustee Meyer concluded by saying that Lake Bluff is not Lake Forest.

Trustee Towle stated that he believed the market should control these requirements. As a homeowner, he thinks about resale value when he considers upgrades to his home, and cheap materials hurts resale

value. He is all in favor of promoting high quality construction methods and materials, but he is hesitant to designate what those are.

Trustee Meyer stated that the Board could view this as providing consumer protection and if we are reviewing these and can identify them as bad administratively, maybe that is a positive outcome. Trustee Meyer said something so broad as to assert that no vinyl windows shall be allowed is too far in his view.

Trustee Lemieux asked if this would apply to new construction or if it would apply to renovations as well. Chair Hunter responded that it was intended for new construction. Building Codes Supervisor Croak stated that it would also apply to additions, but not to remodels.

Trustee Grenier asked if the intent of this ordinance was to establish a threshold and mechanism for referring a design to the ABR. Chair Hunter responded affirmatively. Member Kerouac responded that their goal was to create a framework and give the administration tools to stop a bad developer. He does not want, nor does he intend, to be the architect of other people's projects or to prescribe their design. The ABR only desires to describe the quality of home they want to see and be proud of in Lake Bluff without resulting to Lake Forest's scope of review. He described his experience with architectural reviews in Lake Forest as a professional architect. He said that the alternative was allowing someone to build whatever they want, and that the Village should strike a balance between telling someone what they can do and trying to encourage them to think about the community a bit differently before building twenty identical houses.

Trustee Meyer suggested that the Board should separate out the problems they see here. He believes that the Village could write an ordinance triggered by a person seeking a permit for more than one property, such that an investor doing something for retail purchase would bear the burden. Chair Hunter stated that this process was designed for a developer but that it was difficult to segregate developers from individuals as they proceeded through their study.

Trustee Dewart suggested that the Board should not prohibit materials. If the ABR's intent is that applicants work with the administration for problematic proposals such as vinyl siding, they should do that prohibiting it discourages that process.

Trustee Ankenman stated that this proposal increases the administration's role in construction and grows the size of the Village government and, inevitably, the property tax burden. As the only Sanctuary resident on the Board, she states that her development violates every single rule proposed by the ABR. She believes that the message is that anyone new should be way greater and better than what is already here, and she believes that message is inappropriate. She believes the market will punish poor decisions. There are few empty lots and little prospective construction, and the proposal seems to be making a lot of unnecessary work. She stated that preserving lower cost housing options is necessary for many members of the Lake Bluff community, and everyone can't own a million dollar house. She specifically feels this sends the message to the Sanctuary that they are not worthy and that the Village wishes they were better. She is strongly opposed to what is being presented.

Trustee Towle asked if the Sanctuary's HOA prescribes what alterations can occur. Trustee Ankenman responded in the affirmative, and said that these regulations may even be contrary to the standards proposed by the ABR. Building Codes Supervisor stated that the proposal only affects additions and new houses.

Trustee Meyer proposed another hypothetical regarding a limestone sunroom on an existing structure to illustrate his concerns. Trustee Lemieux said that he did not have an issue with the proposal, that it had good objectives, and that it can be changed in the future. Chair Hunter discussed the history of the proposal. Member Kerouac stated that this is the ABR's attempt to maintain the level of architectural integrity in the Village as best they can, and that they are not trying to insult anyone. He stated that his own house violates some of these principles, and that the ABR wants to be welcoming and not contribute to stagnant development.

Trustee Ankenman stated that this would certainly add to the backlog that the Building department already experiences. Trustee Grenier asked Building Codes Supervisor Croak how much work the proposal would add. Building Codes Supervisor Croak responded that he is unsure how much time each application would take, but a typical year has six or fewer new houses constructed. He believes that perhaps 1-in-10 new houses would require this review.

President O'Hara stated that the Board should continue to discuss the other proposals by the ABR. Trustee Lemieux stated that the Board should refer this to the Residential Building Ad Hoc Committee ("RBC"). Chair Hunter responded that two members of the ABR already sit on the RBC.

Building Codes Supervisor Croak and Member Russ explained the proposed changes to the sign code, which would generally allow things the ABR habitually grants applicants by variation. They also reviewed the proposed changes to site plan review, which would make the code more consistent. Today, most site plan reviews in residential zones are compelled by a patchwork of special use permits. The Board supported both proposals.

President O'Hara stated that ten minutes remain in the scheduled meeting time. She suggested that this proposal be referred back to the ABR for further study and dialogue. Chair Hunter asked to finish explaining the other proposed standards, as the Board's discussion ensued after the fourth item of the list of nine proposed. He proceeded to explain the remaining items including requiring exterior chimneys to be of masonry construction; requiring porches to have a minimum usable depth of six feet; window material requirements; corner lots emphasizing both street elevations; and encouraging the simplicity of parts and architectural style.

Trustee Dewart stated that he prefers encouraging good design rather than prohibiting bad design. Trustee Ankenman compared this idea to the zoning code's preferential treatment of porches. Chair Hunter responded that the porch bonus is a zoning matter and not within the purview of the ABR.

Village Clerk Markee asked if this was inspired by a particular situation. Chair Hunter responded that this was a reaction to an event that occurred about three years ago. Member Russ responded to various points raised during the meeting, including the applicability of the standards to the Sanctuary subdivision and some of the language decisions the ABR made. Trustee Grenier stated that the ABR was creating hurdles, not walls. Chair Hunter stated that some proposed construction should be stopped. Member Russ discussed how this may influence structure demolition. Trustee Towle stated that none of these requirements would prevent an applicant from reaching a solution with the ABR, they would only trigger the requirement that an applicant consult with the ABR. Building Codes Supervisor Croak agreed, saying that the Board can take practical difficulties into account when hearing these cases.

President O'Hara stated that the scheduled meeting time had concluded. She asked where the Board would like to refer this item. Chair Hunter stated that the ABR had invested two years into this product,

and he desires this process reach a conclusion. After a brief discussion, the consensus of the COW was to refer the proposal to the RBC for further study.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and passed on a unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:03 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

R. Drew Irvin
Village Administrator