

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

**October 14, 2020**

**7:00 P.M**

**Virtual Meeting & Village Hall Board Room  
40 E. Center Ave.**

**APPROVED MINUTES**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Kraus called to order a virtual meeting of the Historic Preservation Committee (HPC) of the Village of Lake Bluff on Wednesday, October 14, 2020, at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present:

Present: Steve Kraus, Chair  
Janie Jerch  
Paul Bergmann  
Lois Nicol

Absent: Randolph Liebelt  
Cheri Richardson, Vice Chair

Also Present: Benjamin Schuster, Village Attorney  
Glen Cole, Assistant to the Village Administrator (AVA)  
Allie Caskey, Undergraduate Intern

**2. Consideration of August 12, 2020 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Member Bergmann moved to adopt the August 12, 2020 HPC Regular Meeting Minutes.

Member Jerch seconded the motion. The motion passed the following roll call vote:

Ayes: (4) Nicol, Bergmann, Jerch, and Chair Kraus

Nays: (0)

Absent: (2) Liebelt, Richardson

**3. Non-Agenda Items and Visitors**

Chair Kraus stated that the Chairperson and Members of the HPC allocate fifteen (15) minutes at this time for those individuals who would like the opportunity to address the HPC on any matter within its area of responsibility that is not listed on the agenda.

There were no requests to address the HPC.

#### **4. Review Proposed Revisions to Historic Preservation Ordinance**

AVA Cole presented the proposed revisions to the Historic Preservation Ordinance. He said that the current Ordinance is made up of four main features:

1. Demolition review: All buildings greater than 50 years old are reviewed before demolition and may be subject to a delay by HPC of up to 120 days.
2. Landmark designation: the Village can nominate landmarks, making the properties eligible for state and local incentives.
3. Advisory review: changes to landmarks may be delayed for a maximum of 65 days; demolitions of landmarks may be delayed for a maximum of 150 days.
4. Certification of landmarks: property owners can choose to certify their landmarked property, making it subject to a stricter review process where the Village can deny permits. (None have voluntarily certified.)

Chair Kraus discussed the new framework for preservation, *Choosing Lake Bluff*, to encourage stewardship of the homes in the Village. The plan proposes a branding focused on historical importance, preservation, and rehabilitation that attracts buyers. The plan also proposes an interactive, online database to increase the knowledge of Lake Bluff by providing historical context and information to the homes in the Village.

The goals of the new Preservation Ordinance are to implement *Choosing Lake Bluff* and to support a bias towards stewardship and conservation by giving the Village more time to review historic structures and by allowing for the creation of historic districts. It also makes administrative responsibilities more clear.

Chair Kraus continued to describe key concepts to understand the proposed changes. First, the ordinance is concerned with the exterior of the landmark from the view of the street, or from the streetscape, not the interior appearance. Next, the language will focus on discrete features (“buildings”) rather than abstract concepts (“sites”) for clarity. Finally, changes to the review process include non-transferable approvals, administrative approval of minor changes, a property owner must participate in all stages of the landmarking process, and that “mutually agreed conditions” to changes can end early.

The proposed changes are as follows:

1. Demolition review: structures older than fifty years are subject to a demolition review; the criteria is now 50% of a structures’ exterior walls rather than its floor area would subject a demolition to review; and a demolition review may be subject to a maximum delay of 180 days.

2. Landmark designation: a landmark is any structure or building that has historic, social, architectural significance to Lake Bluff. After 2025, the museum cannot nominate a landmark, only a property owner can nominate during a pending demolition; if a property is listed on the national registry, it is presumed to qualified; if a property is demolished, it will lose its designation.
3. Advisory Review: changes to landmarks may be delayed for a maximum of 95 days; demolitions of landmarks may be delayed for a maximum of 365 days; the applicant must participate throughout the entire process.
4. Certification of landmarks: this is an entirely voluntary act made by a landmarked property owner. Certification offers higher protections than designation, granting the Village the ability to refuse permits if necessary. There are no key changes to this clause.
5. Creation of historic districts: a historic district is a landmark protection made over contiguous or thematic areas. In the case that 50% +1 of property owners in a proposed district vote no, the distinction will only be honorary. Structures within a district can be contributing or non-contributing, each offering different provisions.

The committee invited members of the community to comment via Zoom, phone, email, or at Village Hall.

Margarette Minor asked if the outreach done by the Committee included a random sample of owners within a possible historic district. Chair Kraus responded that there aren't possible districts in mind so owners were not contacted. The Committee hopes that interested property owners reach out to the Village on their own.

Ms. Minor questioned the reasoning behind the extension of the demolition delay to 365 days. Chair Kraus answered that a 365 delay is common across North Shore communities. The change is competitive. It also allows both the Village and residents more time to consider the proposal. He clarified that both public and private buildings can be designated as landmarks.

Brad Andersen inquired, via Zoom, why the fifty year threshold is being retained for demolition review. Chair Kraus explained the fifty year threshold is based on the National Register limit, and is therefore a national standard.

Susie McMurray asked about the process to remove a landmark designation. AVA Cole clarified that a lawful demolition of the landmark would remove its designation. The clause for withdrawal includes the original landmarked features no longer being present, the original designation being made in error, or if there was a procedural error during the original designation.

Ms. McMurray asked about a seller knowing a future buyer will come in and demolish a likely historic property. Chair Kraus acknowledged this may present a problem, but it depends on

whether or not it is landmarked. To date, prospective buyers have factored in the demolition when considering the buying process. The condition of the home is always considered as part of evaluating if a demolition delay should occur.

Ms. McMurray asked about a situation in which the Village seeks to landmark a home but the owner does not want to. Kraus answered that both the old and new ordinance allow the Village to landmark without an owner's consent, although that situation is not desired. AVA Cole clarified that a landmark distinction would only require an additional permit for major exterior renovations and that the distinction comes with a discount.

Jean Royster expressed concern that as a realtor, buyers are concerned about restrictions that come with preservation. Member Bergmann clarified that a plaque Ms. Royster expressed concern over is an honorary distinction and does not make the property subject to development restrictions. Member Jerch added that several studies show that landmark distinctions increase property value and that the proposed changes are less restrictive than other North Shore communities.

Margarette Minor inquired about the process of historical district nominating: Would the public be able to comment on a proposed district and if a household in a proposed district can opt out? AVA Cole explained that there are several points through a district designation process that would allow for public comment including public hearings and public notices. Owners within a district are asked to indicate whether they are in support of a district or not. This voting requirement is the National Register's standard.

Jake Lentzky inquired about the 50% +1 vote "no" to a district designation provision, and how opting out of a designation makes more sense than an opting-in provision. Member Bergmann explained that this provision is the same as the National Register's.

Brett Warning reiterated Mr. Lentzky's concerns about the historical district voting provision. He also sought clarification on who can submit an application for a landmarked district. AVA Cole responded that, according to the updated regulations, Commissioners, the Village Board of Trustees, or an owner of a property within a proposed district are able to make a nomination.

Deborah Fischer expressed concerns about the lack of information regarding the changes and suggested a larger community conversation including local realtors. Ms. Fischer also commented on the 50-year threshold that would soon end up subjecting more homes to additional processes. Member Kraus clarified that a 50-year designation limit triggers a demolition review is not intrusive, it is just a hearing. In addition, all of the delays that come from 50-year or older homes are maximums not minimums.

Katie Davis, a historic home owner, inquired about the number of single family residences the Village intends to nominate. Chair Kraus responded that a prediction is difficult to make, but at least a handful, probably not even 25 homes.

Ms. Davis asked about the implications of a historic district designation on an old or new home. Chair Kraus clarified that a property within a district can be labeled either contributing or non-contributing, and that the age of a home is not considered. Ms. Davis added concerns about the limits preservation restrictions place on young families, referring to the Village's ability to subject a home to preservation restrictions through the nomination process that does not require an owner's consent. Chair Kraus explained that the proposed ordinance enables changes to be made in the context of history, and is not meant to be punitive.

Member Jerch added that changes to the exterior of the house is the only part subject to restrictions. All interior changes are at the owners' discretion. The proposed regulations are less restrictive than they are now.

Ms. Davis asked for review on how a resident can express additional comments or concerns before the ordinance is passed. AVA Cole responded that written comments via email, the Village website, or written mail will be reviewed and added to the record before a decision is made. Member Kraus elaborated on the several additional opportunities for public comment that will be made as the process of amending the preservation ordinance continues.

Member Nicol added that education with realtors is important and the Committee can provide realtors information about property values and preservation restrictions. Member Nicol asked if the Village Board would delay a demolition for 365 days for a landmark. Member Kraus responded that the maximum is a 365 day delay and that the Board may or may not take the full extension.

As there was no further discussion among the Commissioners, Member Jerch moved to recommend that the Village Board consider the proposed changes to the Preservation Ordinance be accepted. Member Bergmann seconded the motion. The motion passed the following roll call vote:

Ayes: (4) Nicol, Bergmann, Jerch, and Chair Kraus  
Nays: (0)  
Absent: (2) Liebelt, Richardson

### **5. Commissioner and Subcommittee Reports**

Member Kraus inquired about the progress of Lake Bluff Online. AVA Cole responded that it is in the final stages before being published.

**6. Staff Report**

There was no staff report.

**7. Adjournment**

There being no further business to consider, Member Nicol motioned to adjourn. Member Bergmann seconded the motion. Upon a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 p.m.