

MEETING MINUTES



Village of Homewood
Planning and Zoning Commission
Thursday, September 24, 2020
7:30 p.m.

Village Hall Board Room
and audio conferencing
2020 Chestnut Road
Homewood, IL 60430

CALL TO ORDER: Chairman Sierzega called the meeting of the Planning and Zoning Commission to order at 7:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Members attended remotely via zoom: Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, Johnson, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega; Present from the Village was Economic and Community Development Director Angela Mesaros and Building Department Secretary Darlene Leonard linked remotely. There were three people in the audience.

NOTE: Due to the Governor's emergency order because of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing recommendations, and the Chairman finding that, pursuant to Public Act 101-0640, an in-person meeting was not prudent, conducted the meeting via video/audio. This meeting was open to the public. All Commissioners and the public were able to hear one another as well as all discussion.

Case No. 20-25 – Administrative Variance from Section 22.95 of the Homewood Municipal Code and Table 8.1 of the Homewood Zoning Ordinance to allow a 6-foot fence in the front yard at 18917 Jodi Terrace:

Chairman Sierzega introduced and swore in the petitioner, Jasmine Manley, who presented the application.

Ms. Manley stated that the fence would be for privacy as she lives along Apollo Park. Ms. Manley stated the yard is open and she has no other neighbors as she is the only house on the corner. The property looks straight into the park and the yard itself is approximately 95 feet from the corner of Jodi and Jonathan. Ms. Manley stated that the fence is for security to prevent public access to her yard.

Chairman Sierzega asked what type of fence. Ms. Manley stated the fence would be a 6 foot wood fence. Chairman Sierzega asked if the new fence would be similar to the existing fence. Ms. Manley stated yes, correct.

Member Alfonso stated that she agrees privacy is needed at the subject location. Member Alfonso stated that the only access is to a small parking lot and that she does not see an obstruction of view. Member Alfonso stated that she does not oppose a 6 foot fence and her only concern is Ms. Manley's view from the driveway and the parking lot.

Member O'Brien stated that Ms. Manley has said that the fence would "create added security," but over the years the Police Department has stated that a 6 foot fence is less secure, because it allows people to get in the yard, but not be seen.

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Member O'Brien stated that if the fence ran along the front of the house to the driveway to the park it would not need a variance. Ms. Manley stated that is correct, but the variance is needed for the side by the park's walk path.

Member O'Brien asked Staff Liaison Mesaros if Ms. Manley was correct. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that if the fence is between the house and sidewalk, the maximum height would be 4 feet.

Member O'Brien stated that looking at the plat, if the fence went along the 25 foot building line then it wouldn't need a variance. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that is correct.

Ms. Manley stated that the 4-foot fence is a security issue and that she begs to differ with the Police Department. Ms. Manly stated that a 4 foot fence makes the property more accessible and allows people to more easily jump the fence.

Member O'Brien stated that he only stated what the Police Department has stated in meetings over the years. Member O'Brien stated that he had no other questions.

Member Cap stated that he has noticed many of the photos of other locations look familiar, because they have been before the commission asking for a variance under similar conditions. Member Cap stated that one case recently, a corner house on 183rd Street had a lot of traffic, and the owner was concerned about security. Member Cap stated, in that case, a taller fence was granted, but not allowed in the front yard on 183rd Street. Member Cap stated that he is not inclined to allow the 6 foot fence on the side up to the walk, but to allow it on the 25 foot setback line.

Chairman Sierzega stated that he had the same thought as Member Cap, and in that case a variance would not be needed.

Member Cap stated that the petitioner would not have much of a yard if they moved the fence back to the 25-foot building line. Member Cap stated that he does not have a problem with a taller fence along the secondary street as long as it does not extend beyond the front of the house on the primary street.

Chairman Sierzega stated that he does not have a problem with it and that Ms. Manley is seeking privacy.

Member Alfonso stated that it is not a heavily populated area and she does not have a problem with it.

Member Johnson stated he does not have a problem with it. The applicant is seeking privacy that it is not a heavily populated area.

Member Planera stated that he agrees with both sides, but in this sense, because of the access to and from Apollo Park, we might be generating pedestrian traffic across the yard. If we were to say to keep the fence to the 25 foot building line, we are exposing about 35% of the yard to people walking through the yard, coming to and from the park. Member Planera stated that part of his concern with the fence at the driveway is a personal one, there is a sight line as the site line issue for the applicant backing out of the driveway, and you do not know or will ever see a child walking down the sidewalk.

Member Bransky stated that the fact that there is an existing fence is shaping his view of it. Without an existing fence, he would say to put the fence on the 25 foot building line, but with it he is inclined to say he does not have a problem with it. Because we are replacing an existing fence in kind. Ms. Manley is coming forward and requesting the variance before construction. Member Planera's comment about the sidewalk and kids is definitely a concern. Anything they can do to mitigate, either cut the corner or drop to a 4 foot fence to give a better view at the driveway line.

Chairman Sierzega stated if Ms. Manley would be inclined to do something like that at the corner at the driveway. Ms. Manley stated that she could speak to the fence company.

Chairman Sierzega stated that instead of having a 90° angle on the fence where it meets the driveway, cut across and you will have a little bit of a triangle for better sight lines.

Member Cap stated that along those lines think about the other corner along the parking lot, could create a blind spot for anybody in the parking lot at the park.

Ms. Manley stated that the property across the street has tall trees and asked how that compares to a 6 foot fence. Ms. Manley asked if it is a sight line issue with trees. Chairman Sierzega asked Ms. Manley what kind of trees they are. Ms. Manley stated they are some kind of spruce tree.

Member Bransky asked if they are a hedge. Ms. Manley stated they are not a hedge. They are trees that are maybe 10 feet tall. Member Bransky stated that they can be a site obstruction that has to be managed, even in an alleyway, but there is no 6 foot height ordinance for trees.

Motion was made by Member O'Brien for approval of Case 20-25 to grant an Administrative Variance from Section 22.95 of the Homewood Municipal Code and Table 8.1 of the Homewood Zoning Ordinance to allow a 6-foot fence in the front yard, seconded by Member Bransky.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Johnson, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega.

NAYS: Member Cap

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: None

Case No. 20-24 –Variance from Section 4.3, Table 4.2 of the Homewood Zoning Ordinance to allow a concrete patio at 3227 Knollwood Lane:

Chairman Sierzega introduced and swore in the petitioner, Neil Brown, who presented the application.

Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that she had received one call in opposition with concerns about storm water flooding in the area.

Mr. Brown stated that when he purchased the property that he did not realize the owner had constructed an addition. Mr. Brown stated that currently he has grass in the rear and wants to install a patio for outdoor activities for him and his family and for beautification. Mr. Brown stated that it would be stamped concrete to replace the old concrete adjacent to the addition.

Chairman Sierzega asked about the type of patio materials. Mr. Brown stated concrete stamped to match the color of the house.

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Chairman Sierzega asked Mr. Brown to address issues from the Village Engineer, Max Massi, concerning flooding in the area. Mr. Brown stated that he intends to have a drainage system and is willing to work with the Village and the Village Engineer to make sure it is up to village standards.

Member Bransky asked Mr. Brown to elaborate on what is in mind for the drainage, subject to approval by the Village Engineer. Mr. Brown stated that he is not a concrete layer by trade, but he too has been frustrated with water in the yard. Mr. Brown stated that he is just trying to improve his yard and sit outside with his family during Covid.

Member Johnson stated to Staff Liaison Mesaros that he had seen Max Massi's email and asked if anyone had spoken to him about the issue. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated that she had spoken to Max and the biggest issue is the area, but he is open to working with the applicant, and suggested using pavers.

Member Cap asked if there would be an increase in retention in the area and if the water drains off onto another property. Mr. Brown stated that no the water does not drain onto another property and that the entire yard will not be concreted. Mr. Brown stated that he just wants to replace the existing concrete that is already there.

Mr. Brown stated that he is in favor of reducing the size and that he wants to enjoy the back yard, but is willing to make adjustments.

Member Cap stated that he spoke to Max Massi about potential options. One possibility is to use porous or pervious concrete that would allow rain to drain into the ground. Another alternative which I think Max actually favored is to create some sort of storm water storage underground in the backyard. In some subdivisions and commercial areas have ponds, and dry basins for runoff where rain is intended to temporarily pond. These days underground structures that provides volume for the storage e. For example, at the Amtrak/Metra station, underneath the asphalt are a series of chambers that fit together and provide storage. Member Cap stated that Max is looking for a solution like this, or an oversized pipe, or a structure to collect runoff from the yard or the concrete surface and safely converted to storm sewer. Max did talk about some sort of system that could be directed/connected directly to the storm sewer.

Mr. Brown stated that a contractor had suggested something similar. Mr. Brown stated that he can make an adjustment to pervious concrete if he can afford it in order to keep water from his yard and the neighbor's yard. Mr. Brown stated that he is not sure how costly it would be.

Member Cap stated that a system that uses corrugated plastic pipe can be easily installed and relatively inexpensive. It might be a good, and affordable solution. Mr. Brown stated if it is affordable, he would do it.

Member Planera stated that member Cap came up with good options and one other would be a drainage swale or a rain garden, as long as the yard does not slope toward the house. Member Planera stated that if the yard can drain to the back, maybe an opportunity to dig a swale, a depression in the ground that can hold water with drainage tiles installed to extend it to a storm sewer.

Member Planera stated that even as the house sits now, it exceeds the amount of coverage allowed. In pictures it appears that the previous owner enclosed a concrete porch. Member Planera stated that he would be in favor of an approved solution with the Village in some fashion.

Member Bransky stated that maybe the applicant can put the project on hold, do research and talk to Max, review some options and then make a decision. Member Bransky stated that at this point, it is a big unknown, and I am not sure what we are voting on.

Member Johnson stated that was his point. Member Johnson stated that he recommends tabling the petition to give Mr. Brown an opportunity to meet with whoever he needs to come up with a solution and then come back.

Member O'Brien stated that a number of things bothered him about the petition and he spoke to Staff Liaison Mesaros. Member O'Brien stated that the house had a building permit and was built in 1985 and asked if the property was built and exceeded the ordinance. Member O'Brien stated that he assumed the sun room was added on at later point. No indication that there was a permit for an addition. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated she could not find anything.

Member O'Brien asked if the house was in violation when it was built. Member O'Brien asked if the property drains onto the neighbors, to what extent does it drain and why have they not said anything previously.

Member O'Brien stated that the lot is 9,985 square feet, 40% of that is 3,994 square feet. The current house, driveway, sidewalk is 4,259 square feet, roughly 400 square feet more than the ordinance allows. Member O'Brien stated that he lives on an angle east in back of Mr. Brown and asked if Mr. Brown knows if the sunroom was an add-on or if it was built with the house. Mr. Brown stated that the previous owner told him it was added on.

Member O'Brien stated that his initial concern was that the village allowed the building of the sun room that exceeded the ordinance. Member O'Brien stated that he is unsure how that could have occurred. Member O'Brien stated that his property is old farmland and the grade is not flat. And the previous owner to his house, sold a portion of his land off. And sold it to an individual who constructed the house next to his. And constructed it must higher. It then went to a lawsuit. During the lawsuit a French drain was discussed but it was not constructed. The result from the lawsuit was a swale which was constructed.

Member O'Brien stated that the petition could be postponed to another meeting and we have to rely on Max to work with Mr. Brown to come up with a solution – perhaps a swale or French drain or maybe his topography is different.

Chairman Sierzega asked if Mr. Brown would be inclined to temporarily table the petition to talk to Max and get a solution that is within budget and solve the drainage issue.

Mr. Brown asked how often the Commission meets. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated the next meeting is October 8.

Member Planera asked if the concrete on the sidewalk side or the driveway side of the property could be altered to be an open system. Mr. Brown stated that the sidewalk and driveway are in good shape.

Motion was made by Member Johnson to table Case 20-24 Variance from Section 4.3, table 4.2 of the Homewood Zoning Ordinance to allow a concrete patio at 3227 Knollwood Lane, to continue to the next meeting on Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 7:30 pm; seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, Johnson, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega.

NAYS: None.

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: None

Case No. 20-23 – Site Plan Review, Special Use Permit, and Plat of Subdivision for an enclosed parking structure at Halsted Street and 175th Street:

Chairman Sierzega asked all participants to introduce themselves, David Shaw-Attorney (Horwitch Goldstone and Shaw), Vern Lohman-Architect (Solomon Caldwell Buenz), Matt Schumacher-Civil Engineer (Cage Engineering), Robert Sit-Landscape Architect (Site Design), Xavier Millan-Traffic Engineer (KLOA) and Patrick Daly – developer and swore them all in.

Mr. Shaw stated that the parking structure is an integral part of the casino complex with the bulk of the site being in East Hazel Crest. They have been working for months with staff from both Homewood and East Hazel Crest. Mr. Shaw stated that the parking structure and lot is exclusively for employees and visitors to the casino to prevent parking in the neighborhood. Mr. Shaw stated that Vern Loman would speak to the architecture and Matt Schumacher would speak to the traffic and layout.

Mr. Loman stated the parking structure would be 3 ½ stores, 3 stories would be above grade and 725 parking spaces with additional parking on the surface. There would be 250 spaces on each level of the parking structure. The parking structure would have no exits/entrances on the west side of the building with the north, east, and south side open air. The west side would be completely enclosed.

Mr. Loman stated the structure will consist of three colors of precast concrete and all facades will be the same.

Chairman Sierzega asked if the east side will be open air. Mr. Loman stated the west side will be enclosed with the East, North, and South sides being open air.

Matt Schumacher stated that there were multiple discussions with the Village staff about the site plan and the plan is to use all existing access points.

Mr. Schumacher stated a right in/right out onto Halsted is existing and would be two full access points on Halsted and on 175th Street. The drive location on 175th Street would be relocated 50 feet to the west to line up with the Walmart entrance. The entrance to the parking structure would be on the east side in an effort to reduce traffic on 175th Street.

Mr. Schumacher stated that the taxes alone generated for the first year are expected to be \$4.5 Million and will be divided between East Hazel Crest and Homewood, and that does not include sales tax, food tax, hotel tax, etc.

Javier Milan stated that the traffic study on the proposed development considered Halsted Street as a high capacity roadway. Mr. Milan stated that the plan addresses the offset intersection on 175th Street and the application was submitted to the State in July, but they has not heard back yet.

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Member Bransky stated regarding the Portillo's entrance, vehicles turn across traffic, and asked what would happen to that entrance with the realignment at Walmart – turn lanes or a light proposed. Member Bransky stated that a lot of near misses now and he expects them to increase with the increase in traffic.

Mr. Milan stated that most of the casino traffic would use Halsted Street, but the entrance on 175th Street would be monitored to see if a traffic signal is warranted. Mr. Milan stated that if the light is warranted it would be 515-525 feet from the existing light at 175th/Halsted. Mr. Milan stated that the light would be connected to the light at Halsted and it might attract Portillo's customers to use that intersection.

Member Bransky stated that the left turn west onto 175th Street may have to be stopped.

Mr. Schumacher stated that they are adding a connection from the parking lot to the signal at 174th Street.

Member Planera asked if there is intent for exit control on 175th Street. Mr. Schumacher stated that now there is one lane in and left/right lanes. The proposal is to have one lane in, a left turn lane, and a right turn/across lane.

Chairman Sierzega stated with the traffic generated by Panera and Chick-fil-a can be a long wait to get onto 175th Street. Mr. Milan stated that right now there is no connectivity and accessibility onto Halsted Street to go north, but with this will be an improvement.

Member Bransky asked about the parking island by the parking garage and clear space by Panera on the site plan. Mr. Schumacher stated that is existing parking.

Member Bransky stated that that is not the quickest to use the lights and people tend to “use the back door way in” and asked if there will be directional lanes between the parking islands. Mr. Milan stated that directional signs can be provided to give the best/easiest way to navigate. Mr. Milan stated that typically it will be two-way aisles.

Member Johnson asked if about widening 175th Street at Halsted. Mr. Milan stated that Halsted Street is a high capacity intersection with dual left lanes going out and dual lanes going in.

Member Cap stated that the traffic report the 175th Street entrance is service level “E” which is as bad as it gets. Mr. Milan stated that Member Cap is correct and that based on projections a signal would probably be warranted.

Member Cap asked who would pay for the traffic signal and its connection to the one at Halsted. Mr. Shaw stated that the assumption is that it would be the developers' cost. If the traffic signal is warranted the developer would pay for it. If it is not warranted the signal would not be connected to the traffic signal at Halsted and the cost would be on the Village. Patrick Daly clarified this matter by stating that the petitioner would be responsible for installation of this traffic signal regardless.

Member Cap asked where the storm water would drain. Mr. Schumacher stated that right now the slope of the land is from the southeast to the northwest and they have no plan to change that. There would be some modifications to the detention basin when it is moved, but not the drainage of it.

Member Cap stated that right now the drainage appears to go to a storm sewer at 174th, a culvert under the tollway, and the ditch South to 175th collects from Panera and Chick-fil-a to the west, but he is unaware of the outlet for it. Mr. Schumacher stated that the outlet has not been identified, but it would be routed to the north.

Member Cap asked what would happen with the runoff in the event of a 100 year storm; what provisions were investigated and determined. Mr. Schumacher stated in that situation water would go to the north and west through overland and follow the natural drainage.

Member Cap asked about the storm sewer on 175th and where it goes. Mr. Schumacher stated that they will not be touching the storm sewer.

Member Cap asked if the outlet or capacity had been investigated. Mr. Schumacher stated that everything goes to the north and they are not changing the outlet of the basin, just moving it from one side of the access point to the other. Mr. Schumacher stated that East Hazel Crest is downstream, or north.

Member Cap asked what the height of the hotel would be. Mr. Daly stated that the height of the hotel is 250 feet. Member Cap stated that a structure that high would include a significant fire load/flow as well as height.

Member Cap stated that Homewood is better positioned to supply the water, and asked if the agreement addresses who would be supplying the water to the site. Mr. Schumacher stated that yes that is correct. The best service would be from Homewood. Currently there are two 8" water mains from the Homewood side that are looped around the facility for the fire system. All the water would be from Homewood.

Member Cap asked if there are plans to remove or expand the 8" line, and per Max, there is a 10" or 12" line at the site. Mr. Schumacher stated there is an 8" on the loop and a 10" on 175th Street.

Member Cap asked what the dimensions of the parking structure are and what the dimensions to the top of the elevator shaft because there is a height limit in zoning. Mr. Shaw stated that the height of the parking structure is 38' and the code has exemptions for elevators.

Member Planera asked if they are expecting the parking lot to handle the overflow in excessive events of rain. Mr. Schumacher stated that no storage on the lots at any time, but they are considering permeable pavers in the parking lot. The east side of the ground by the parking structure will have permeable pavers.

Chairman Sierzega asked how buses would be managed and where the parking would be for them. Mr. Milan stated that he has no information on bus parking. They have not worked on parking for buses, but only ran turns to show that buses can maneuver. Chairman Sierzega stated that some accommodation must be made for buses.

Member Bransky asked what the routing for service traffic would be. Mr. Schumacher stated that access would be from 175th Street and run behind the parking structure to the rear of the facility to the loading docks. And that typically semi-trucks, not vans would make deliveries.

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Member Cap asked about trucks or employees in the western part of 174th Street. Mr. Schumacher stated that no traffic would be encouraged to go through the residential areas –gated access with a Knox box for emergency access only.

Ms. Laura Alexander, 913 Garden Lane, was sworn in for public comment. Ms. Alexander stated she moved in 4 months ago. Ms. Alexander asked what was going to be done about noise from the trucks. Mr. Schumacher stated that there would be landscaping. Mr. Sit stated that a barrier of evergreen trees, a land berm, and a fence would screen and maximize the distance from the buildings.

Ms. Alexander stated that it was a good job with the design and the Commissioners had covered most of her questions. Ms. Alexander stated that she is concerned about her property values, heights of the structures, and ingress and egress of the property. Ms. Alexander stated that she needs some concessions for herself and her property.

Chairman Sierzega asked about water retention on the landscaped areas. Mr. Schumacher stated that the landscaped areas are on the high side of the property.

Member O'Brien asked what the considerations are for snow, storage and piling. Mr. Schumacher stated that the snow would be pushed to the perimeter, onto the wide islands and pushed to the north end. Mr. Schumacher stated that there would be quicker thaw in areas with the paver system because the ground promotes warmth.

Chairman Sierzega asked if anyone knows if the State has acted on the applications or if the applicant knows when they would. Mr. Shaw stated the statute says the license is to be issued by October 28, but the next meeting is scheduled for November. He believes an extension would be requested due to Covid.

Chairman Sierzega asked how long construction would take. Mr. Shaw stated it is an 18-month construction and then the hotel construction would start after the casino opens. Mr. Shaw stated it would be 12-18 additional months for the hotel.

Motion was made by Member Bransky for Site Plan approval of the parking structure at the west side of Halsted Street (Illinois Route 1) between the Halsted Street Exchange on Interstate I-80/294 and 175th Street; seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, Johnson, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega.

NAYS: None.

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion was made by Member Bransky for the Special Use Permit for approval of the parking structure at the west side of Halsted Street (Illinois Route 1) between the Halsted Street Exchange on Interstate I-80/294 and 175th Street; seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, Johnson, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega

NAYS: None.

ABSENTIONS: None.

Absent: None

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Motion was made by Member Bransky for the approval of the Plat of Subdivision for an enclosed parking structure at the west side of Halsted Street (Illinois Route 1) between the Halsted Street Exchange on Interstate I-80/294 and 175th Street, seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, Johnson, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega

NAYS: None.

ABSENTIONS: None.

Absent: None

Case No. 20-26 – Special Use Permit to allow a Learning Center at 18675-18677 Dixie Highway:

Motion was made by Member Johnson for continuance of Case 20-26 Special Use Permit to allow a learning center at 18675-18677 Dixie Highway to the meeting on Thursday, October 8, 2020 at 7:30pm; seconded by Member O'Brien.

AYES: Members Alfonso, Bransky, Cap, Johnson, O'Brien, Planera, and Chairman Sierzega.

NAYS: None.

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Sierzega asked what is scheduled for the next meeting. Staff Liaison Mesaros stated it is another full agenda. Love Events will be first on the Agenda followed by Mr. Brown on Knollwood, assuming he has a plan.

Member Johnson asked about a set time for the meeting to end.

OLD BUSINESS: None.

ADJOURNMENT: Member Alfonso moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:52 p.m., seconded by Member O'Brien. Motion passed by voice vote.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela M. Mesaros
Staff Liaison