

**VILLAGE OF LAKE BLUFF  
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING AD HOC COMMITTEE  
MEETING**

**August 17, 2017**

**APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

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

The Village of Lake Bluff Residential Building Ad Hoc Committee (RBC) met on August 17, 2017 in the Village Hall Board Room (40 E. Center Avenue) at 6:30 p.m. and the following members were present and then departed on the van tour of Lake Bluff.

Present: Brad Andersen  
Jennifer Beeler  
Leslie Bishop  
Deb Fischer  
Cheri Richardson  
George Russell  
Jim Moss, Chair

Absent: Matthew Kerouac  
Scott Streightiff

Also Present: Drew Irvin, Village Administrator (VA)  
Elizabeth Jensen (resident)

**2. Tour of Village**

VA Irvin said RBC Members submitted certain property addresses, neighborhoods and or blocks which they would like to visit on the tour. The tour began on East Blodgett Avenue (200 Block) and the RBC was shown a few homes that were early in the tear down phase of the late 1990s. VA Irvin commented on the architectural features of one home noting there was not a lot of articulation on the elevations and it has a flat roof and not too far off the maximum in terms of bulk.

An RBC Member commented on the different types of houses along this street and asked if the lots were standard size on Blodgett Avenue. Member Russell said the lots are predominately 75 ft. frontages and the houses could be higher which is evident by the copula on one of the homes.

The RBC was shown 405 and 407 East Blodgett Avenue which raised some concern in the community when they were built. The homes have similar architecture and scale but meet the current zoning regulations. Member Russell said people were unhappy because the two similar style homes were built at the same time near one another.

In response to a comment from Member Andersen, VA Irvin said Staff receives complaints regarding bulk from time to time. A discussion regarding the type of homes/variety followed.

The tour continued to view homes on Bluff Road. VA Irvin said some of the lots are dealing with huge buffer yards between the structure and roadway.

Member Fischer said 701 Bluff was a Walter Frasier design which was documented before the home was demolished. Member Fischer said the tear down was a challenge but they managed to build a nice smaller scale home on the property. Member Russell said another challenging aspect was they wanted to use some of the existing foundation but the home was built prior to the current building regulations.

The RBC was shown 709 Birch Road and VA Irvin said there was concern regarding the bulk. An RBC Member said there is a ravine behind the property which makes a larger home possible.

In response to a question from Member Richardson, VA Irvin said the ravine is included in the lot size. He said that a new single family home will be built next door to the home located at 709 Birch Road.

The RBC was shown a ranch style home, and Member Andersen said the home sold as a tear down in 2006.

The RBC was shown lots on East Washington Avenue and Birch Avenue VA Irvin said the lot on the left and immediately to the west are interesting because they are rather shallow lots with a lot of frontage and these features creates a bulky appearance from the street. He said both lots are under the maximum floor area ratio (FAR) and not as tall as the code would allow, but present larger and bulky because of their limited setbacks.

Member Russell noted that the easterly side of the lot on the northwest corner of Birch and East Washington must comply with the front yard setback requirement of the adjacent house on Birch Avenue. This is a very unique lot because it is possibly the widest table land property (250 ft.) on the east side.

The RBC was shown an original pastor cottage style home and VA Irvin noted the east elevation encroaches on the neighboring property. Member Russell said this is not the first time an older home was found to be over the lot line. He said if the home was demolished the developer would have to rebuild according to current zoning regulations. A discussion followed.

The RBC was shown an iconic Lake Bluff home located at 244 East North Avenue that probably would not meet the existing code regarding height.

The RBC was shown 239 East Washington Avenue which was granted zoning relief for the existing encroaching side yard for the second story addition. VA Irvin said this part of town is interesting because there are a lot of “alley loaded” properties along the north side of East Washington Avenue.

The RBC was shown an olive colored house that fronted East Washington Avenue which violated the daylight plane. Member Russell said the structure contributed to the establishment of the daylight plane regulations and noted it is located approximately 5 ft. from the property line.

The RBC was shown new construction homes in the R-4 District along East Center Avenue build at approximately 99.2% of the maximum FAR with further setback requirements. Member Andersen said he understands it should not matter what is next door, but if there are a couple of homes built to the maximum bulk limits it kind of stacks up visually.

The RBC was shown an area with recent new additions and different architectural features. VA

Irvin said the diverse housing stock and different massing creates a pleasing streetscape.

The RBC was shown 219 East Scranton Avenue that was granted a variation relief because the existing shed dormers violate the daylight plane regulations. The structure was built before the daylight plane regulations and the owner requested to repeat the element going further back and convert the two story flat to a single family home.

The RBC was shown 210 East Center Avenue that might be labeled the poster for historic preservation. VA Irvin said the house to the east of it was a recent tear down and the rear of the property is at the max in terms of lot coverage.

Member Russell said 50 ft. lots normally has 10 ft. driveways and create a lot of impervious surface which contribute to stormwater for various areas. The impervious surface regulations and detached garage bonus which was developed to keep garage doors off the street was developed about the same time.

Member Andersen said this area near 339 East Center Avenue is interesting because the Village agreed to allow the two lots to be sold to the neighboring property owner. VA Irvin said the fenced area of the lots actually extends to East Prospect Avenue and reviewed the conditions of the agreement. A discussion followed.

The RBC was shown a single family home that was torn down to create two as-of-right lots in the 400 block of East Center Avenue. VA Irvin said there was no zoning relief required and both of the homes were built to the maximum FAR. He said a lot of the older trees on East Center Avenue were saved and the Village plans to plant additional trees to create more buffer along the parkway. He reviewed the articulating dormers and porch areas in comparison to the structured homes built during the peak tear down period.

The RBC was shown 403 East Center Avenue whose owners sought zoning relief to make use of the third story but would exceed the bulk limitations. The PCZBA struggled with the request because it would increase bulk on the southern elevation, but nowhere else.

The RBC was shown 550 East Center Avenue that was granted a variation for a garage which has not been built to date.

The RBC was shown 512 Sunrise Avenue. VA Irvin said this is another unusual lot because it is a smaller lot that does not meet code and now per the zoning code it is permanently attached to this home and no longer a buildable lot. He noted the main house has an unusual roofline and the home to the south does not meet the current code, but could be labeled a Lake Bluff iconic structure.

Member Andersen said there was controversy regarding the tear down of this landmarked cottage home (512 Sunrise Avenue) but he did not think anyone will lose any sleep over the property which is now being used for additional open space.

Member Richardson expressed her disagreement with Member Andersen. She advised that she and Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) Chair Nelson toured various areas of Lake Bluff and they both agreed there are some homes that should be demolished, remodeled or rebuilt. Also, the differences that have occurred in the streetscape overtime has been great.

The RBC was shown 617 Sunrise Avenue. VA Irvin said the porch was an addition to the home. The usable area of the porch is really deep and this is one of the issues being addressed by the ABR because the Zoning Code provides a bonus for porches but they tend to be more aesthetic instead of a functional area.

Member Andersen asked if that was the intent of the bonus to make it visually attractive. VA Irvin said the idea was to incentivize that type of architecture. A discussion regarding the porch bonus followed.

The RBC toured East Prospect Avenue a street with massive right-of-ways and homes that are setback further from the street. VA Irvin provided information regarding a workshop for 419 East Prospect Avenue.

Member Andersen commented on 500 Moffett Road which caused concern because it was initially built on a 75 ft. lot and contributed to the bulk ordinance.

The RBC was shown several cottage homes on smaller heritage lots along East Prospect Avenue. Member Richardson advised she used to live in one of the homes and noted how a change to the neighboring house affected the daylight plane.

Member Richardson said there was a question raised at the last meeting, should there be regulations in place that would allow someone to tear down a house like this and rebuild on these non-conforming lots. Member Richardson said she anticipated the HPC submitting information to the Village Board regarding heritage lots and homes that could be rebuilt according to the existing footprint. A discussion followed.

Member Andersen said rows of homes like these really add to the diversity, character and charm of east Lake Bluff and because we have these minimum lot sizes of 7,500 sq. ft. we are not getting anything new and small built. There are a lot of people that desire new smaller construction homes in Lake Bluff. He would like to discuss if there are places in Lake Bluff zoned for the construction of smaller house, this is a market segment not addressed by the Village's housing stock.

VA Irvin said Member Russell had a good comment regarding unintended consequences regarding tear downs. Member Russell said he is in favor of the concept to allow people to build on the existing footprint with the same volume on Heritage Lots but cautioned that code changes met incent tear downs of these cottages.

The RBC was shown a house with a blue roof located at 130 East Prospect Avenue which caused controversy when it was built. Member Andersen said the house might appear less bulky if it had a natural colored roof.

The RBC was shown Lansdowne Subdivision with a lot of new construction homes. VA Irvin commented on the most recent subdivision which consist of 7 lots and is in the final build out process. The homes have interesting architecture and, given the lost size, are not bumping up against the maximum FAR.

The RBC toured East Sheridan Road and VA Irvin showed 405 East Sheridan Avenue that was recently featured in The Wall Street Journal.

The RBC was shown the home at 39 Sunset Place built by a national builder which is currently doing infill lots around the North Shore. VA Irvin said these are the developers that did the Colonel Sexton Subdivision on East Center Avenue. VA Irvin said the new construction indicates that people are investing in the community which raises the EAV.

Member Andersen said there are homes in this area built on 100 ft. wide lots and asked what would be the harm in having two 75 ft. wide lots in this particular zoning district and would allow for two more modest build homes in the area.

The RBC was shown an area with large open spaces along the east side of Sheridan Road. Member Russell said this is land that the Blair Family owned and donated to the Lake Bluff Park District. The lots north of downtown were donated to the Village. A discussion regarding property rights/restrictions followed.

The toured continued to the west side of Lake Bluff. VA Irvin said Blodgett Avenue has an emergency track crossing which the public safety has access to in the event that the viaduct floods.

Member Andersen commented on one of the tear downs noting it was probably one of the newly constructed homes in this neighborhood with a side yard and curved sidewalk.

The RBC was shown tear downs for this area. VA Irvin commented on the lot with the ranch house in the 600 block of Pine Court that could be torn down and as-of-right create two buildable lots without zoning relief.

An RBC Member asked if the house on Mountain and Sunrise Avenue was one of the first to come under the current regulations. Member Russell stated the height and FAR regulations were established in the 1990s.

The RBC toured the multi-family zoning district (R-5 District). VA Irvin said the R-5 District is predominately clustered around the train station. There were conversations to determine if the R-5 District promotes multi-family and if multi-family housing should be spread out through the Village. Currently, there are some subdivision and communities that have sprinkled multi-family housing into single-family areas. VA Irvin said currently Block One is the only area zoned for three story development as-of-right within the Central Business District (CBD).

Member Andersen commented on a home for sale in the R-5 District and asked if the Village really wants to promote R-5 zoning for this area. He commented on a 50 ft. lot and said what has happened in the R-5 District is the zoning regulations are designed for single-family homes. They use the single-family zoning overlay in a multi-family district. The same restrictions apply for multi-family districts as they do for R-4 Districts. He commented on the current code restrictions regarding size, setback, parking, etc. and expressed his opinion to promote multi-family you have to say this is the space allocated for multi-family and be less restrictive.

In response to a comment from Member Andersen, VA Irvin said the building with the six units was approved pursuant to a special use permit in the 1980s and was originally zoned CBD and rezoned R-5 District. Member Andersen said there are six units on a 100 ft. wide lot and if you can get three units on a 50 ft. wide that would make economic sense and provide the type of housing that is currently not available in town.

Member Bishop asked if the existing three story building on Sheridan Road could be extended to the end of the block. VA Irvin said the existing building had a setback of 0 feet but that current zoning requires a setback of 15 ft. off Sheridan Road. The tool that could be used for properties that are adjacent to the CBD is the PMD tool which has a height restriction of 30 ft. He said the three story building with the dry cleaners on the first floor and apartments on the upper level was recently sold.

VA Irvin said the property owners for these multi-family units on East North Avenue and business building at the end of East Scranton Avenue have undergone the ABR process and have begun improvements to their property. VA Irvin said when Block One was reconstructed, the west side of the Bank had a setback from the property line of 15 ft. and that is the setback goal for the northern end of Block One should it ever be redeveloped. He said the area further north is slated to remain green belt. The Village's Comprehensive Plan views the green belt as continuing all the way out of town, to include the eventual razing of older structures and homes.

Following a request from Member Andersen, the RBC toured East Washington Avenue between Oak and East Sheridan Road. Member Andersen said this area is a concern for him because this is such an ideal location for nice multi-family homes and noted some of the existing conditions are an embarrassment to the area.

In response to a comment, Member Russell said second story additions to the existing 1-story buildings would probably violate the bulk regulations for this area.

VA Irvin provided information on the existing pink house located at 701 Park Place, the properties on Ravine Avenue and Carriage Way.

Member Russell said, in his opinion, there are no severe problems and people are still able to build in town.

Member Andersen expressed his agreement with Member Russell that Lake Bluff looks good and his opinion that about 98% of Lake Bluff is awesome.

VA Irvin said there are a lot of areas in the United States where there are shopping center that have increased their vitality and utility by having residential space placed above. The group discussed if Carriage Way was such a place and questioned if it could support mixed use residential.

Member Andersen said there are not a lot of people living in downtown Lake Forest and he thinks the area would feel more vital if they still had residential walkable components like Lake Bluff.

### **3. Adjournment**

The tour concluded at Lake Bluff Village Hall at 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

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R. Drew Irvin  
Village Administrator