

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING
March 4, 2026
7:00 P.M.

A recording of this meeting is available on the Village of Oak Park Website: <https://www.oak-park.us/your-government/citizen-commissions/commission-tv>

Call to order / Roll Call

PRESENT: Chair Masaru Takiguchi, Members Peter Weismantle, Glenn Brewer, Matthew Shoener, Kimberly Zeiser, Kimberlee Smith and Seth Jansen

ALSO, PRESENT: Rasheda Jackson, Counsel, Bob Bernhart, Zoning Administrator

ABSENT:

QUORUM: The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. and declared that a quorum was present.

Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the March 4, 2026 Agenda. The motion was seconded. A voice vote was taken and the Agenda was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the February 11, 2026 minutes. The motion was seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Non-Agenda Public Comment – None

New Business / Public Hearings and Findings of Facts

CALENDAR NUMBER: 05-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, William Scholtens, seeking a variance from Section 10.1(A)(1) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, in order to allow a seasonal reduction of two parking spaces to accommodate an outdoor dining area, at 401 South Boulevard, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-07-405-008-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.

Zoning Administrator Bernhart summarized the legal notice and project.

The Zoning Board of Appeals attorney swore in those wishing to provide testimony.

William Scholtens, the Applicant and property owner, presented the application. They explain that they purchased the mixed-use property recently and have gone through extensive renovations to the building. There has been interest from the first-floor tenants to have an outdoor dining area and the property currently has eight parking spaces to the rear of the building. They are proposing using their two parking spaces that are not used by specific tenants for outdoor dining during the summer months (May through September), and they would be reverted into parking spaces during the remainder of the year. They state that Ridgeland is a busy street with limited sidewalk space, so it is not suitable for outdoor dining, and that using their private property behind the building would make the most sense. Because the property does not currently meet the minimum requirement for off-street parking, even a seasonal reduction would require variance approval.

There is substantial on-street parking in the area and the area is well-served by public transit. The site is in close proximity to residential areas. The Applicant goes through their responses to the variance approval standards. The age of the building and its historic configuration present a hardship, given the limited space available for the proposed outdoor dining area. Member Smith asks about foot traffic and how customers arrive to the property, and the Applicant explains that there is a tremendous amount of foot traffic.

The public hearing was closed and the ZBA deliberated. Member Smith states that they are in support and that this is appropriate in this location, as well as more important than additional parking. Member Jansen also notes that the spaces generally seem to be use by tenants rather than customers. Member Weismantle concurs.

Member Smith made a motion to approve the variance request and Member Weismantle seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Member Smith made a motion to approve the resolution. Member Shoener seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 06-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals ("ZBA") will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Sikander Keshwani, seeking a variance from Section 7-7-15(D)(1)(b) of the Oak Park Sign Code, in order to allow a second wall sign on the south wall of the building, at 6820 Roosevelt Road, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-18-329-032-0000 ("Subject Property"), in the Roosevelt Road Form-Based District.

Walter Wysocki from Strictly Neon, a sign company, spoke on behalf of the Applicant. They explain that they wish to install a second wall sign at the Dunkin location on the west wall of the building. Zoning Administrator Bernhart notes that this does not match the submitted application and drawings, which were intended for the south wall of the building, and the published legal notice reflects the original proposed south wall location. Because the applicant wished to install the additional sign on the west wall, a continuance was requested and approved by a unanimous vote.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 07-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicants, Andrew Lang and Maribeth Smerz, seeking a variance from Section 9.3(A)(5)(c) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, in order to reduce the rear yard accessory structure setback from 4 feet to 1.93 feet, at 226 North Taylor Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-08-116-003-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the R-2 Single-Family Residential Zoning District.

Andrew Lang, property owner/applicant, described the application. They have an unstable garage and need to replace it. The new garage would be in roughly the same location as the existing one, but there are two existing magnolia trees directly behind it that would be affected if the required four-foot setback requirement were met. The Applicant went through their responses to approval standards, explaining that the trees would need to be removed entirely to meet the setback requirement, which is a hardship, and the trees were likely planted prior to the adoption of the current Zoning Ordinance.

Member Jansen asked if the garage size would be the same as the existing and Dave Krecek from Blue Sky Builders explained it would be larger. The Applicant showed photos of the garage, trees, and rear yard. They also showed the alley to demonstrate there is ample space in the alley to maneuver. The public hearing was closed and the ZBA deliberated. Members Brewer and Zeiser stated that they would like to preserve the trees, and Member Smith noted that there are also no garages on the other side of the alley, as the alley abuts the hospital parking lot. Member Brewer noted that the setback of the existing garage is legal nonconforming and to meet the current requirements would be a hardship.

Member Weismantle made a motion to approve the variance request and Member Zeiser seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Member Weismantle made a motion to approve the resolution. Member Brewer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 08-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Greg Sorg (Sorg Speed, Inc.), seeking a special use permit for a specialty food service facility (a coffee roastery), pursuant to Section 8.3 (Table 8-1: Use Matrix) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance at the property located at 7 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-08-127-015-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 09-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Greg Sorg (Sorg Speed, Inc.), seeking a special use permit for a drive-through component of a proposed coffee roastery/shop, pursuant to Section 8.3 (Table 8-1: Use Matrix) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance at the property located at 7 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-08-127-015-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.

Brian Hammersley, architect, and Greg Sorg, property owner, presented both special use applications together. Hammersley explained that the proposed programming would include a coffee roastery, coffee shop, dining area, and restrooms, with an internal drive-through that would be operational only between 7 am and 11 am each day. No outdoor dining would be provided at the location. They presented the drawings and plans showing the site and proposed improvements.

The building is configured with existing drive-throughs, as the property was previously used for a car wash and auto repair shop. The enclosed/interior spaces for the roastery and coffee shop would be along the west side of the building, with the drive-through and escape lane on the east side. There is an existing curb cut, which would need to be modified to restore access to both lanes.

Hammersley went through the special use approval standards for the coffee roastery (the specialty food service request). The proposed use would be compatible with adjacent uses such as the recreation center to the west and the brewery/taproom to the east, as well as nearby residential areas. They are hoping to create a space that is both commercial and community-oriented.

Hammersley moved on to the special use request for the drive-through. The drive-through would be intended to serve both local residents and commuters traveling back and forth from the city. This component is a nod to the prior uses of the building and would be open limited hours during the mornings. When the drive-through is not operating, part of the space it occupies could be repurposed for additional seating. Drivers would enter from North Boulevard to the south, a one-way street. Hammersley explains that the bypass lane is required for a drive-through use, and they intend to locate it closer to the interior spaces because it would remain cleaner than the more heavily-used primary drive-through lane, and thus would be more suitable for other uses when the drive-through is not operating. They would utilize a “runner” system to deliver products to customers in the drive-through.

Hammersley went through the special use approval standards for the drive-through. They acknowledge the potential for pedestrian impacts with the opening of a drive-through, but would install warning systems to promote safety. The drive-through would not be open at all hours. They feel the use would be aligned with the Comprehensive Plan and would be compatible with the neighborhood. All drive-through requirements such as stacking spaces are proposed to be met.

Member Smith asked about the pedestrian alert systems, safety, and whether traffic numbers have been assessed. They have some concerns about the drive-through. Greg Sorg, property owner, explained that the property has been used for automotive purposes that brought vehicles through the building for many years, even when the recreation center next door was operating. They do not believe the volume of drive-through traffic would exceed previous throughput for the prior uses. It is not set up for high volume, and they estimate perhaps six to eight vehicles per hour going through the drive-through. During the years that it was a car wash, they never had issues with vehicles stacking into North Boulevard. Sorg also states that representatives from the recreation center, with whom they share a wall, have stated that they support the proposal, but they have not received a letter of support from them.

Member Zeiser asked about the drive-through hours and Sorg explained that their analysis indicated they would not have high demand after 11 am. Member Brewer asked about the idea of installing “right-turn only” signs inside the building to prevent vehicles from turning left onto Lake Street. The Applicant stated that they agree with this idea.

The public hearing was closed and the ZBA deliberated. Chair Takiguchi notes that the primary subject of discussion is the change of use of the building, and there is a hardship given the prior uses of the building and existing configuration. Member Zeiser stated that they support the adaptive reuse of the building. Member Jansen asked staff about comments from the Fire department, and Zoning Administrator Bernhart clarified that occupancy changes and life safety improvements would be addressed during permitting. Jansen also asked about comments from Parking & Mobility Services staff. Bernhart stated that there were no staff concerns regarding the on-street parking to the rear of the building, and that most comments from staff related to safety and alert systems to protect the public.

Member Smith asked if the overhead doors would be open at all times, and Sorg replied that this may depend on the weather. Hammersley added that carbon monoxide and related issues would be addressed with MEP review.

Member Jansen made a motion to recommend approval of the specialty food service special use and Member Brewer seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Member Weismantle made a motion to recommend approval of the drive-through special use and Member Zeiser seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Attorney Jackson read the draft conditions for the findings of fact, which were the installation of pedestrian safety systems including mirrors, warning signs, lights, and sound-emitting devices; any curb cuts must meet Village and ADA standards and not conflict with any utilities or street trees; and no outdoor dining at the subject property. Conditions were added, which were the drive-through only operating between 7 am and 11 am and a right-turn only sign. Member Jansen suggested also adding a condition that the curb cut be built to only allow right turns by utilizing a traffic control device such as a “pork chop” island, and detectable warning pads (AKA truncated domes) at the curb cuts.

Member Brewer made a motion to approve the amended findings of fact with those conditions, and Member Weismantle seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 10-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Kit Shah, seeking a variance from Section 4.3, Table 4-1: Residential Districts Dimensional Standards of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, in order to reduce the rear yard setback from 14.484 feet to 11 inches for an attached garage located at 817 Carpenter Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-18-132-027-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the R-3-35 Single-Family Residential Zoning District.

Tracey Brewer of Compass Architecture spoke on behalf of the Applicant and presented the case, which now features a slightly larger proposed setback (1 foot 3 inches rather than the original 11 inches). They propose a one-story addition to the rear of the existing house, which would include an attached one-car garage. The lot depth is very shallow and the lot is substandard as to the minimum lot size, making improvements such as this proposal difficult without seeking relief from requirements. They go through the variance approval standards, explaining that the lot dimensions impose a hardship on the owner that they did not create. The proposal would otherwise comply with requirements such as impervious coverage.

Member Zeiser asked about relocating the garage versus expanding the structure to the rear as proposed. Tracey Brewer explained that the existing garage is not a standard size and expanding the garage is not an option without attaching it to the house, given the lot configuration and size. Chair Takiguchi asked if the existing driveway would be removed and Brewer confirmed it would be, which would also improve the impervious coverage conditions to become compliant with current regulations.

The next-door neighbor, Patricia Styck, spoke about the application, asking questions about the limited yard areas and turning into the new garage from the alley. They also asked about the new garage location and the ZBA and applicant team clarified that the request is regarding the setback from the alley. The neighbor was assured the new garage would not be encroaching into their property or going closer to their property than the existing structure.

The public hearing was closed and the ZBA deliberated. Member Smith noted that there is not much that can be done for a project such as this with such a small lot, and they do not object to the application given the circumstances. Member Shoener stated that they agree and there is an additional benefit with the curb cut and front access being removed and access from the alley being added.

Member Smith made a motion to approve the variance request and Member Zeiser seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Member Smith made a motion to approve the variance request and Member Zeiser seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a seven (7) to zero (0) vote.

Other/Old Business (none)

Chair Takiguchi noted that they would not be available for the next ZBA meeting, and that an acting chair would need to be elected to cover their duties.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, which was approved by a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 8:16 pm.