

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING
February 11, 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, and Seth Jansen

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

ABSENT: Kimberlee Smith

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 February 11, 2026 Agenda. The motion was seconded. A voice vote was taken and the Agenda was approved by a six (6) to zero (0) vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve the December 3, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded. A voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved by a six (6) to zero (0) vote.

Non-Agenda Public Comment – None

New Business / Public Hearings and Findings of Facts

CALENDAR NUMBER: 02-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Sergiy Zamula, seeking a variance from Sections 9.3(B)(1) and 9.3(B)(8)(a) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, in order to allow an interior accessory dwelling unit in a two-family structure and waive the owner-occupancy requirement, at 300 Home Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-07-317-024-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the R-5 Two-Family Residential Zoning District.

Zoning Administrator Bernhart summarized the legal notice and project.

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

John Schiess, spoke on behalf of the Applicant. They explain that the basement dwelling unit is the subject of the application, as they wish to designate it as an interior Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) to resolve noncompliance with the Zoning Ordinance. They state that renovations to the basement unit were reviewed and permitted in recent years, but the unit was existing at the time. The applicant/property owner purchased the property with the understanding that the unit was a three-flat, unaware that the third unit is not permitted in the R-5 Two Family Zoning District.

Chair Takiguchi asks if the owner occupies the building, and Schiess explains that they do not, nor was their intent ever to occupy the building. Schiess clarified that there are two components to the variance request: one to waive the owner-occupancy requirements for ADUs, and the other to allow the unit to remain as an interior ADU within a building that is not a single-family home.

Schiess began presenting slides. They provide basic information about the property itself, the predominant zoning districts in the area, and the neighborhood development pattern. They show photos of nearby buildings, focusing on the mix of residential uses and variety of residential densities, including multi-family, two-family, and single-family structures. Schiess showed the floor plans for the building that were part of the recent renovation project in 2022.

Chair Takiguchi asked Schiess to address the variance approval standards. Schiess passed out a printed pro-forma and tax documents for ZBA review. Schiess explained that the hardship is related to negative cash flow that would result from changing the use of the property to a two-flat. The owner's financing of the property is already in place and their tax obligations would remain the same with a two-flat or two-flat plus basement ADU. Schiess addresses the next standard by explaining that the structure itself presents as a three-flat and the noncompliance issue was never caught or brought to the owner's attention, including by Village staff when the renovation work was proposed and permitted in 2022. The permit was reviewed and approved. Zoning Administrator Bernhart explained that the 2022 permit application described the building as an "existing three-unit building", and thorough research into the property history would have had to occur to identify the issue. Schiess states that the owner relied on staff review and guidance through permitting and proceeded accordingly.

Chair Takiguchi summarizes the request to allow the ADU and how it relates to the owner's original purchase and understanding of the property's use. Schiess states that if the issue of a nonconforming three-flat had been raised prior to the purchase of the property, it would have been addressed and discussed at that time. Member Jansen asks for confirmation that the two variance requests would functionally legalize the third unit and use of the property; Zoning Administrator Bernhart confirms this, explains that this is effectively an after-the-fact correction, and notes that otherwise the property is compliant with other Village regulations. The Zoning Administrator's impression is that while at some points the unit may have been used for family or as part of a "duplex-down" configuration, they believe it has functioned similarly to a three-flat for some time. Schiess notes that there is also some potential alignment between this request and the policy discussions surrounding "middle housing" in the Village.

Chair Takiguchi opened the item for ZBA discussion and closed the public comment period.

Member Zeiser stated they had no issues with the request. Member Brewer stated that they were having trouble with the owner-occupancy component, and Member Zeiser asked for clarity on this. Zoning Administrator Bernhart clarified that the Applicant was seeking relief from that requirement. Takiguchi summarizes that the hardship is based on the owner's reasonable belief that the building was a three-flat. Member Brewer states that a balancing factor for them is the owner did not create this hardship. Member Shoener notes that they have no issues with the request given that it has been functioning and paying taxes as a three-flat for years, and Member Weismantle notes that from an architect's perspective, the building presents as a three-flat. Chair Takiguchi states that the applicant has provided substantial evidence demonstrating a hardship that is not of their own making and that the request is compatible with the surroundings.

Member Shoener made a motion to approve the first variance request and Member Weismantle seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a six (6) to zero (0) vote.

Member Shoener made a motion to approve the second variance request. Member Jansen seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a six (6) to zero (0) vote.

Member Jansen made a motion to approve the resolution. Member Weismantle seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a six (6) to zero (0) vote.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 03-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals ("ZBA") will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by Jennie Hull on behalf of Beyond Hunger seeking a special use permit for a warehouse and distribution facility (a food pantry) at 6209 North Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-05-102-032-0000 ("Subject Property"), in the NA North Avenue Zoning District.

Zoning Administrator Bernhart summarized the legal notice and project.

Member Shoener stated that they work at the architectural firm involved in this proposal, and would be recusing themselves from discussion and voting.

Jennie Hull, the CEO of Beyond Hunger and Applicant, spoke about the organization and request. They explained that they are a hunger relief organization with substantial history and reach in the area. They have outgrown their current space and are hoping to make the location on North Avenue their new headquarters. The building would have a large amount of warehouse space, but also a community market, a staging area, drive-through for food pickup a cooking classroom, social services space for benefits access, and administrative office space.

Joe Junius, architect with Aria Group, introduced themselves and stated that they prepared the documents for the special use submittal. They began explaining the details of the proposal and how they align with the special use approval standards. They state that the use would serve the community's critical needs, the building was once a grocery store and most recently a gym, and the site plan shows the directional flow and access configuration for drive-through pickup events, which would prevent traffic buildup along North Avenue. Directional signage would be used during those scheduled events.

They state that the building is part of the North Avenue business corridor and, prompted by Chair Takiguchi, agree that while the market component would function similarly to a grocery store, that is not the majority of the space and there are other components as well, such as the offices. Member Jansen asked if cars would queue within the alley during drive-through events. Junius clarified that the proposal is more of a pickup operation with pre-made boxes, and Jennie Hull stated that their intent with the site plan and flow is to prevent cars from parking on North Avenue, not to have vehicles parking in the alley to the south. Visitors would just be directed through the alley to spread vehicles out as they enter the site. They state that they would not host the market and drive-through/pickup events at the same time, which should distribute the visits to the site, and with the new market, hopefully more people would come to the market instead of using the pickup event option.

Chair Takiguchi noted that there are no letters or testimony in opposition to the request, and Zoning Administrator Bernhart confirmed. Member Jansen voiced their primary concern being the two northmost properties along the alley not having garage access during events. Hull responded that they did not intend for vehicles to stop in the alley and they would be moving through it. They would have volunteers directing traffic to ensure visitors continue moving rather than stopping in the alley and blocking access. Member Brewer asked about the directional signage being temporary for event times only, and whether the mezzanine is existing. Junius replied that they would go through permitting to expand the office/mezzanine areas, and Hull explained that there are 24 staff, but not all of them would be on the site at the same time most days.

Judith Alexander from the North Avenue district, and a resident of the neighborhood, spoke about the project. They state that social media discussion resulted in positive engagement and support for the proposal. They voiced support for having the frequently vacant site occupied in a stable manner. They mention that many people speed northward on Harvey and with additional traffic, and that the Village should be aware of the potential issues there, though it does not have to do with Beyond Hunger specifically, and be prepared to address it with traffic calming measures. Zoning Administrator Bernhart noted that Public Works would be a part of discussions regarding this and it is something staff will keep in mind.

Alexander also stated that they are requesting additional time for public notice requirements, as there have been delays with postal delivery and some letters arrived to neighbors within 300 feet only one week before the meeting. They state that 30 days of notice prior to the meeting would be better for certain cases than two weeks. Chair Takiguchi asked if Alexander and the business district are opposing the request, and Alexander clarified that they are speaking in support of the request.

Chair Takiguchi moved to ZBA discussion of the item and closed the public comment period. Member Jansen noted that they were envisioning a long queue of vehicles and they live near a drive-through that causes access issues, so they would not want a similar situation to arise. They state that with additional explanation, that did not seem to be the case, but they hope the organization will work with the neighbors to the south to ensure they maintain access and are aware of event timing. Member Weismantle noted that it is a more appropriate location than their current location and that it would be a great benefit to the community. Member Zeiser concurred and added that increased visibility would be beneficial.

Member Weismantle made a motion to approve. Member Brewer seconded the motion. The

motion was approved by a five (5) to zero (0) vote, with Member Shoener abstaining.

A motion to approve the findings of fact, with the addition of Judith Alexander's testimony in support of the request and the condition that the Applicant work with staff to establish a parking restriction plan for the adjacent street, was made by Member Brewer. Member Weismantle seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a five (5) to zero (0) vote, with Member Shoener abstaining.

Other/Old Business (none)

Member Brewer briefly discussed the ongoing "Shape Oak Park"/missing middle housing initiative, including upcoming workshop events. The project will involve a comprehensive analysis the areas of Oak Park that could have additional density and how that would work. The ZBA discussed aspects of the initiative.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting, which was approved by a voice vote. The meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.