

**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEETING
JULY 2, 2025
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>

Appointment of Acting Chair

Motion by Member Jansen to appoint Member Weismantle as Acting Chair. Member Shoener seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the motion was approved by a four (4) to zero (0) vote.

Call to order / Roll Call

PRESENT: Members Peter Weismantle (Acting Chair), Matthew Shoener, Kimberly Zeiser, and Seth Jansen

EXCUSED: Chair Masaru Takiguchi, Kimberlee Smith (joined mid-meeting)

ALSO, PRESENT: Rasheda Jackson, Counsel; Mike Bruce, Village Planner; Robert Bernhart, Zoning Administrator

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

Introduction of New Staff

Mr. Bruce introduced Robert Bernhart, the new Zoning Administrator for the Village, and Mr. Bernhart spoke briefly.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Member Shoener to approve the July 2, 2025 Agenda. Member Jansen seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken and the Agenda was approved by a four (4) to zero (0) vote.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Member Jansen commented that the minutes from the June 4, 2025 were not available on the Village website. Approval of minutes was postponed to the subsequent meeting.

Non-Agenda Public Comment – None

New Business / Public Hearings and Findings of Facts

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

Mr. Bruce read the following Description of the Case.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 11-25-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, The Economy Shop, seeking a variance from Article 7-7-15(D) (3) of the Oak Park Sign Code allowing a sign to be painted directly on the building’s north exterior façade located at the premises commonly known as 103 S Grove Avenue, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-07-305-012-0000 (“Subject Property”) in the DT-2 Sub-District of Downtown.

Scott Rogers spoke on behalf of the Economy Shop. Mr. Rogers stated that he is a volunteer at the Economy Shop and that a sign vendor had proposed a painted sign. In a subsequent discussion between Mr. Rogers and Mr. Bruce, Mr. Bruce identified that the Village Sign Code does not allow signs to be painted directly on structures, creating the need to apply for a variation. Mr. Rogers provided additional background information on the Economy Shop’s history and operations.

Member Jansen asked for confirmation that the sign meets all other Village requirements, and that the only aspect requiring a variance is its proposed painting directly on the structure. Mr. Bruce confirmed this.

Member Zeiser asked if the proposed sign was intended to attract more customers. Mr. Rogers stated that that appears to be why a volunteer reached out to the sign vendor. Member Shoener asked Mr. Rogers how the proposed sign would be suitable and compatible with the surrounding area. Mr. Rogers stated that the sign would face the elevated rail tracks rather than the neighborhood and that the shop staff/volunteers felt the sign matched the character of the shop.

Acting Chair Weismantle stated that the painted sign would need to be repainted periodically and asked if there were provisions for maintenance of the sign. Mr. Rogers commented that the Village may have restricted signs painted directly on buildings due to deterioration of other painted signs in the past. Mr. Rogers stated that the shop would maintain the sign and Mr. Bruce stated that required maintenance would be part of the resolution to approve the variance.

Member Shoener commented on the context and compatibility of the proposal, adding that the proposed sign would also be directly across the street from the train embankment, where there are several other painted works of art. Member Zeiser stated that the sign seems compatible. Member Jansen commented that the building is a contributing historic structure but the proposed sign would be painted on the non-contributing addition to the building. Approval of similar requests was discussed.

The public hearing was closed.

Motion by Member Jansen to draft a Resolution approving the variance request. Member Shoener seconded the motion. The Resolution was approved by a four (4) to zero (0) vote.

The Zoning Board of Appeals attorney stated that a condition regarding required maintenance of the sign would be added to the resolution. Member Jansen made a motion to approve the Resolution as amended. Member Zeiser seconded the motion. The Resolution, as amended, was approved by a four (4) to zero (0) vote.

Mr. Bruce reads the following description of the Case.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 12-25-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Andrew R. Vidikan and Lia H. Daniels, seeking a variance from Section 4.3 (Table 4-1: Residential Districts Dimensional Standards) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance

requiring that the maximum building coverage for the lot shall not exceed 1635 square feet (40%) to construct a two-story addition to the existing residence and construct a coach house on the property. The proposed building coverage is 1,845 square feet (43.67%) at the property commonly known as 308 S Kenilworth Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-07-319-003-0000 ("Subject Property"), in the R-5 Two-family Zoning District.

Member Smith joined the meeting at 7:17 PM, while Mr. Bruce was reading the case description.

Denny Burke spoke on behalf of the Applicants. Mr. Burke described the proposed project, which involves a small addition to provide a mud room, renovation, a two-story addition along the rear of the home, and replacing the existing garage. The subject property is the smallest on the street and this appears to be the result of the historic subdivision of a larger parcel, which left the other subdivided lots larger than the subject property. He stated that had the larger parcel been subdivided into equal lots, the variance would not be needed to accommodate the proposed project. Mr. Burke described how the project would not be detrimental to the neighborhood and states that they have received letters of support from the neighbors.

Member Smith asked Mr. Burke to respond to the list of variance criteria. Mr. Burke responds, discussing the lot size nonconformity, challenges with expanding within the existing footprint, and the property history, including its purchase by the current owners in 2018 and the property's configuration remaining largely unchanged since at least the 1950s. Mr. Burke states that the addition will not cause safety issues or be detrimental, and that it is designed to minimize any distraction for the neighbors. He stated that the requested relief is compatible with the general land use of adjacent properties, as the area has a mix of housing types with varying building coverage, and that the nonconforming lot size is the main extenuating circumstance justifying the relief.

Member Smith asked if anyone else in attendance would like to speak for or against the issue and if Mr. Burke is satisfied with his presentation. Mr. Burke mentioned the letters of support from neighbors and stated that he is finished.

Board members begin further discussion of the request, including the minimal practical impacts on adjacent properties, whether a hardship exists, the nature of the hardship, changes to the coverage regulations in recent years, and the timing of the purchase of the property in relation to the current request for relief. Mr. Bruce read the specific language from the Zoning Ordinance regarding variances and highlights that it has changed in recent years. He highlights that the hardship must be unique and inherent in the subject property/land and must not be created by the personal situation of the owner.

Additional discussion regarding potential alternative choices and limitations for expansion occurred. The Board also mentions previous variance requests and lot nonconformities, and comparison of the nonconforming lot with others in the same zoning district that would readily accommodate the proposed expansion is raised. The property owners' knowledge of the lot's nonconformities at the time of purchase, which roughly coincided with changes to relevant zoning regulations, is also discussed.

The public hearing was closed.

Motion by Member Jansen to draft a resolution approving the variance request. Member Shoener seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a four (4) to one (1) vote, with Member Zeiser dissenting.

The Zoning Board of Appeals attorney stated that the letters of support would be added to the resolution. Member Shoener made a motion to approve the resolution as amended. Member Jansen

seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a four (4) to one (1) vote, with Member Zeiser dissenting.

Other / Old Business

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 PM.

Prepared by: Bob Bernhart, Zoning Administrator