

**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**  
**May 1, 2019 AT 7:00 P.M.**  
**COUNCIL CHAMBERS-RM. 201**

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 and Roll Call

PRESENT: Chair Michael Quinn and Members Steve Rusczyk, Mark Hansen, Jim Lencioni, Don DeBruin and Deborah McQueen

ABSENT: Member David Brumirski

ALSO PRESENT: Rasheda Jackson, Counsel; Mike Bruce, Zoning Administrator

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

**Public Comment**

None

**Introduction and Procedure Outline**

Chair Quinn explains the procedure for the evening, indicating that we have three public hearing scheduled tonight.

**Public Hearings**

**Cal. No. 05-19-Z: 27 Washington Blvd., Saint Catherine St. Lucy School**

The Applicant Robert Dunn, on behalf of Saint Catherine St. Lucy School, seeks a variation from section 9.4 (Table 9-1: Permitted Encroachments Into Required Setbacks) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, which section details the accessory structures that are permitted to encroach into the required front yard setback, to permit construction of playground equipment featuring an approximately 10'-6" setback along Humphrey Avenue within the required 15 foot front yard setback at the premises commonly known as 27 Washington Blvd., Oak Park, Illinois.

Sharon Leamy, Principal of St. Catherine-St. Lucy School, says that we have been awarded a generous grant to create a play space for our youngest students. Our current playground space is L-shaped where the longer rectangle runs along Humphrey and the shorter end borders Washington.

The contractor, Clauss Brothers, determined that the best and most practical location for the new structure is at the south end of the playground along Humphrey. The fenced-in area has been used as the playground for decades. There is no other space around the school that can be used for this purpose. Without the variance, we will not be able to have a playground structure for our children.

Because of the set-up of our school lot, created when the school was first built, this variance is necessary says Principal Leamy. No one with any current proprietary interest caused this situation. Since the property is in essence "land-locked," there are no other alternatives.

The playground will remain fenced-in. There will be no decrease in air or light, no increased congestion, and no fire threat. The use of the area remains the same says Principal Leamy. The surface of the current playground, particularly at the south end, is in poor condition. There are a

number of cracks, and a large hole near the back fence. The new floor for the playground structure will greatly improve the current surface. We believe there is no downside to granting this variance. Our students have the opportunity to have playground equipment, just like the other schools in Oak Park.

Chair Quinn closed the hearing. The members deliberated.

Member McQueen moved to approve the application. Member Lencioni seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote.

The ZBA Attorney presented a draft Resolution approving the variance. Member Hansen moved to approve the Resolution. Member Lencioni seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote.

**Cal. No. 06-19-Z: 6033 North Avenue, Noah Properties, LLC**

The Applicant Noah Properties, LLC seeks a special use permit from Section 8.3 (Table 8-1: Use Matrix) of the Zoning Ordinance of the Village of Oak Park, which section requires a special use permit for townhouses located in the NA North Avenue District, to construct ten (10) three-story townhomes at the premises commonly known as 6033 North Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois.

Nick Ftikas spoke on behalf of the Applicant. He says the proposed Special Use will permit two (2) five-unit residential townhouse buildings to be constructed on the subject property. The proposed residential development will replace an asphalt parking lot. Each of the ten (10) townhouse units will be supported by two (2) off-street parking spaces. The proposed residential development is intended to compliment and complete an otherwise residential block.

The proposal is compatible with the general land use of adjacent properties and other property within the immediate vicinity. Mr. Ftikas says the proposal is residential similar to the properties immediately south of the subject lot. He says that many of the improvements along W. North Ave. are predominately multi-unit and residential in nature. The proposal will therefore be compatible with the general land use of adjacent properties and other property within the immediate vicinity.

Eric Davis on behalf of North Avenue Business Association spoke in favor of the proposal. Viktor Schrader on behalf of Oak Park Economic Development Corporation spoke in favor of the proposal.

Chair Quinn closed the hearing. The members deliberated.

Member Lencioni moved to approve the application. Member Hansen seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote.

The ZBA Attorney presented an amended draft Recommendation adding letters of support from Eric Davis and Viktor Schrader. Member McQueen moved to approve the amended Recommendation. Member Hansen seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote.

**Cal. No. 07-19-Z: 509 N. Oak Park Avenue, The Language and Music School**

The Applicant The Language and Music School seeks a variance from Section 10.4 (A) (Table 10.2: Off-Street Parking Requirements), which section requires one parking space per each proposed classrooms for an educational facility, to permit the use of The Language and Music School, an educational facility, featuring nine (9) class rooms, leaving a need for two (2) parking spaces at the premises commonly known as 509 N. Oak Park Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois.

Debra McQueen recused herself for this application. Chair Quinn indicates that his daughter attended the music school in the past but indicates that he can remain objective regarding the application.

Maria Fermi and Brando Crawford spoke on behalf of The Language and Music School. Ms. Fermi says that The Language and Music School was established in 1994 and is being re-imagined in 2019 for our 25th anniversary. The school was founded and directed by Maria Fermi and now it is co-directed by her son, Brando Crawford who joined the team in 2014 and has operated the school since December 2017. Since December 2017, the school has nearly doubled in clientele and continues to expand at the same rate.

Mr. Crawford argues that the school should be exempt from being required to host nine parking spaces on site, but only required to host seven parking spaces. He says this will encourage our patrons to walk or bike to our location and will preserve the natural beauty of the property without installing too much unattractive gravel or pavement.

Mr. Crawford says that characteristic that has made it difficult to sell this property is due to the large size of the house. The grand floorplan does not lend itself to modern family living; the kitchen is isolated from the rest of the house, the halls are extremely wide, and the first floor rooms are extremely large and lack space on an intimate scale. When walking through the building, it feels like a public institution already says Mr. Crawford. He says that the 40,000 sf lot has not helped it to sell, either. What would be a wonderful amenity for a school is not desired by the typical homeowner in this semi-urban neighborhood. By granting this parking variance to reduce the parking requirement from nine to seven the new owner would not need to remove mature trees and disrupt the existing landscaping on the lot.

Ann Straw submitted a letter in opposition to the proposal. Her primary concern is with respect to increased traffic in our neighborhood related to people attending the language and music school. She also indicates that given the current configuration of the gated entrance to the home at 509 N. Oak Park Avenue, it is unclear where these cars will drop off and pick up students or where they will park if they are staying for lessons. A discussion regarding the number of students and the drop off and pick plan ensued.

Chair Quinn closed the hearing. The members deliberated.

Member DeBruin moved to approve the application. Member Hansen seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote. Member McQueen recused herself.

The ZBA Attorney presented a Resolution approving the variance. Member DeBruin moved to approve the Resolution. Member Hansen seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a 5-0 vote. Member McQueen recused herself.

Member Ruszczuk moved to approve the draft minutes from April 3, 2019. The motion was seconded by Member Hansen. The motion was approved by a 6-0 vote.

The meeting was adjourned.