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**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING
PLAN AND DESIGN COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS**

MEETING DATE: Tuesday, January 6, 2026

MEETING LOCATION: Council Chambers, City Hall, 1707 St. Johns Avenue, Highland Park, IL

CALL TO ORDER

At 7 p.m., Chairperson Kerch called the meeting to order. Staff was asked to call the roll.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Kerch; Commissioners Henry, Ihnchak, Mantis, Moore (present at 7:06 pm), & Nanus

Commissioners Absent: Commissioner Fettner

Councilmember Present: Ross

Student Council Absent: Fallas

Staff declared that a quorum was present.

Guests Present: Cal Bernstein, Attorney/Samuels & Bernstein

Staff Present: Fontane, Burhop, & Hoffmann

Others Present: Marcus Martinez, Corporation Counsel/Elrod Friedman LLP
Gale Cerabona/Recorder

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Meeting of the Plan and Design Commission – December 16, 2025

Commissioner Ihnchak moved to approve the December 16, 2025, PDC regular meeting minutes.

Commissioner Mantis seconded the motion.

On a voice vote

Voting Yea Chairperson Kerch; Commissioners Henry, Ihnchak, Mantis, & Nanus

Voting Nay: None

Chairperson Kerch declared that the motion passed unanimously.

SCHEDULED BUSINESS

Councilmember Ross disclosed that she lives across the street from this project and knows neighbors. She believes she will be impartial and fair.

1 1. Public Hearing #PUD-2025-00081 for a Special Use Permit in the Nature of a Planned Development with
2 Modifications from City Code; and a Plat of Re-Subdivision with Variances from City Code (147 Central Ave.)

3 Planner Hoffmann reviewed the proposal:

- 4 • Recommendation
- 5 • Project Summary (local landmarked property)

6
7 Commissioner Moore arrived at 7:06 p.m.

- 8
- 9 • Aerial View
- 10 • Planned Development (triggered due to lot size)

11
12 Senior Planner Burhop said a finding is that the property is locally landmarked; will go to Historic
13 Preservation Commission/HPC on January 8, 2026. Director Fontane compared that this is similar to
14 when comments come from the Housing Commission/HC for inclusionary housing.

- 15
- 16 • Public Benefits (none required)
 - 17 ○ a \$2,500 donation is being made for historic-preservation purposes
- 18 • Proposal (proposing 2 lots)
- 19 • Design standards were reviewed
 - 20 ○ 3 variations requested; path is being removed
 - 21 ○ 2 variations remaining – lot shape and frontage
- 22 • Review (through-lots are prohibited)
- 23 • Tree Survey (existing driveway for Lot 2, new driveway for Lot 1)
- 24 • City Comments
 - 25 ○ Forestry – 1-3 trees could be removed
 - 26 ○ Engineering – if Lot 2 is developed, there is sensitivity for the Steep Slope Zone/SSZ
- 27 • Agency Comments (regarding wetlands)
- 28 • Public Comments
 - 29 ○ 2 were distributed to the PDC
- 30 • Recommendation

31
32 Director Fontane advised this stretch of Central Avenue’s tree line isn’t typical. He noted, to avoid the right-
33 of-way, a common driveway could be considered.

34
35 Chairperson Kerch swore in Mr. Cal Bernstein, Attorney with Samuels & Bernstein, who noted the tree
36 contemplated being removed is new and 2” tall. He shared a tree-preservation plan would ensue to ensure
37 survival of other trees. Having 2 driveways makes it easier, more safe, preserves the character, etc. The
38 property has been marketed for an extended amount of time with an \$80,000 tax bill. To help increase
39 interest in the property, they are seeking to divide it into 2 lots. Mr. Bernstein explained lakefront density
40 and the overlay zone was created over 20 years ago (preserves ravines, lakes, etc.); is in concert with the
41 City’s Master Plan and the Lakefront’s Strategic Plan. Each lot is over \$90,000 square feet (above the
42 minimum). One lot is 62’, and the other is more than 180’. This zone was meant for oversized lots. Variations
43 were described. The topography shows 1 lot having more than 6 sides. The lot is oversized; over 3 acres.
44 There are no Heritage trees intended to be removed. The owner has the right to remove trees. The ravine
45 protects the buffer. A Public Benefit is being provided and isn’t required.

46
47 Some PDC comments are:

- 1 • Commissioner Nanus asked if, regarding L and regular-shaped lots, it was considered to be split
2 down the middle. Mr. Bernstein said, due to the ravine, this is the best option. He noted, at one
3 time, 3 lots were considered.
- 4 • Commissioner Mantis asked, and Mr. Bernstein said the lot is over the 40,000 required square
5 footage.
- 6 • Commissioner Moore:
 - 7 ○ said nothing could be built on the SSZ.
 - 8 ○ said, regarding the concerned neighbor, others could do the same thing. She asked if there
9 are other lots that are as large. Senior Planner Burhop said the largest is the Park District on
10 the east. He illustrated the map, and stated properties on the west or across the street
11 could not be subdivided. Those on the lake may be over 80,000 square feet.
 - 12 ○ mentioned the neighbor's letter. Senior Planner Burhop agreed there would be 2 lots.
13 Director Fontane advised this property is substantially larger.
- 14 • Commissioner Ihnchak asked what zoning regulations allow if a lot is developed to go up. Senior
15 Planner Burhop said this meets or exceeds City requirements. Planner Hoffmann concurred. It was
16 noted this exhibit and the Plat have some differences.

17
18 Senior Planner Burhop stated, if approved, Staff recommends the final building envelope be
19 attached to the Ordinance regarding building on the envelope. Planner Hoffmann and Senior
20 Planner Burhop said the floor-area-ratio/FAR is 15,000 square feet.

- 21
22 • Commissioner Moore asked if the new house could be constrained to have 125' in the front yard;
23 cannot be built closer than the house that's already there. Senior Planner Burhop said the PDC can
24 do that.

25
26 Planner Hoffmann noted this exceeds the Established Building Setback/EBS.

- 27
28 • Chairperson Kerch said, regarding public comment, the whole site and landscaping would be
29 landmarked. Mr. Bernstein said the original nomination in 1985 is all located on the western
30 portion. Director Fontane reminded the HPC will provide comments. Mr. Bernstein noted the HPC is
31 not a recommending body.

32
33 Councilmember Ross:

- 34 • stated this property was listed for \$5 million but didn't sell. She asked what the offers were and why
35 this would be more sellable if divided. The landmarking element could be removed later. Mr.
36 Bernstein responded saying he doesn't have offer-price information. He noted the lot is more
37 attainable with subdivision. The taxes would be less; increase is 8%; will be easier to market.
- 38 • said there is a 1-acre property with \$70,000 in taxes. Mr. Bernstein informed he knows nothing
39 about the structure across the street. He noted it's how the land is assessed. Regarding removing a
40 landmark, it can only be removed if the landmarking doesn't exist. The reason they wish to remove
41 landmarking from Lot 2 is due to the fact that all of the landmarking attributes are on Lot 1.

42
43 Corporation Counsel Martinez said, to remove landmarking, this would be presented to the HPC
44 then to City Council.

45
46 Chairperson Kerch asked if anyone in the audience wished to speak. The following came forward and was
47 sworn in:

- Charles Gonzalez advised he filed a public complaint and lives across the street. Regarding Heritage tree lines and the natural/environmental setting, he understands now no Heritage trees would be removed. Senior Planner Burhop said the City Forester reviewed this in detail and made comments. Burhop read Chapter 94 of City Code definition for Heritage Tree.

More PDC comments are.....

- Commissioner Moore:
 - said, regarding Charles Gonzalez’ note, the City Forester and Code dictate tree replacement, etc. Time is available for notice of the next February 17, 2026, PDC meeting. Planner Hoffmann confirmed the Applicant posted the public notice on time.
 - would like to hear from the HPC. She has no problem with the variations.
- Commissioner Mantis believes Findings of Fact could be drafted. Mr. Bernstein shared this has been a unique process and consideration by Staff; Applicant filed in October, 2025. He noted they would like Findings of Fact to be drafted to help speed up the process. Director Fontane said this is a complicated project due to the historic aspect. He noted Findings of Fact can be modified, and HPC information would be provided at the February 17, 2026, PDC meeting.

Commissioner Moore moved to direct Staff to draft Findings of Fact recommending approval. Commissioner Mantis seconded the motion.

Commissioner Moore amended that this motion also include continuing this matter to the February 17, 2026, PDC meeting. Commissioner Mantis accepted the amendment.

On a voice vote

Voting Yea	Chairperson Kerch; Commissioners Henry, Ihnchak, Mantis, Moore, & Nanus
Voting Nay:	None

Director Fontane declared that the motion passed unanimously, there would be no notice, and the next meeting would take place at City Hall in Highland Park, at 7 p.m.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Information Item: Administrative Design Review Update

There were no updates.

2. Next Regular Meeting – January 20, 2026

The next regular meeting will be January 20, 2026, in City Hall at 7 p.m.

3. Case Briefing

There was no Case Briefing.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no Business from the Public.

Councilmember Ross said she tried to recruit a sub for the last PDC meeting. She thanked previous Chairperson Moore on her large efforts and welcomed new Chairperson Kerch.

Chairperson Kerch congratulated and thanked former Chairperson Moore.

1 Director Fontane thanked former Chairperson Moore and welcomed Vice Chair Nanus.

2

3 Councilmember Ross also welcomed Vice Chair Nanus.

4

5 **ADJOURNMENT**

6 Commissioner Henry moved to adjourn at 8:01 p.m. Commissioner Moore seconded the motion.

7

8 On a voice vote

9 Voting Yea Chairperson Kerch; Commissioners Henry, Ihnchak, Mantis, Moore, & Nanus

10 Voting Nay: None

11

12 Chairperson Kerch declared that the motion passed unanimously.

13

14 Respectfully Submitted,

15

16

17 Gale Cerabona

18 Recorder

19

20 **MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING ON DECEMBER 16, 2025, WERE APPROVED WITHOUT CORRECTIONS.**