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**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF HIGHLAND PARK, ILLINOIS**

**MEETING DATE:** Thursday, March 19, 2026

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

**CALL TO ORDER**

At 7:31 p.m., Chairperson Yablon called the meeting to order. This Commission meeting takes place on-site. Staff was asked to call the roll.

**ROLL CALL**

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Yablon; Commissioners Aronoff, Chase, Weisberg, & Zaransky

Commissioner Absent: Commissioners Harmelech & Treshansky

Councilmember Absent: Center

Student Council Absent: Zoe Heller

Staff declared that a quorum was present.

Guests Present: Bogdan Opanasyuk/Petitioner  
Neil Fortunato, Owner/Green Building Technologies  
Katarina Karac, Land Use & Zoning Attorney/Birchwood Law  
Irwin Melendez/Petitioner

Staff Present: Hoffmann

Others Present: Gale Cerabona, Recorder

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

*Regular Meeting of the Zoning Board of Appeals – February 19, 2026*

Commissioner Chase moved to approve the February 19, 2026, regular meeting minutes as drafted. Commissioner Weisberg seconded the motion.

On a roll call vote

Voting Yea Chairperson Yablon; Commissioners Aronoff, Chase, Weisberg, & Zaransky

Voting Nay: None

Chairperson Yablon declared that the motion passed unanimously. She stated she watched the video of the last meeting.

Chairperson Yablon asked that the third agenda item under New Business be rearranged, as a continuance was requested.

1  
2 **NEW BUSINESS**

3 3. #VAR-2026-00064

4 Property: 3504 Dato Avenue Appellant: John Birazzi  
5 Zoning District: R5 Address: 3504 Dato Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035  
6

7 The petitioner and owner, John Birazzi, 3504 Dato Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035 request by authority of  
8 Section 150.1204(A)(1), of the Highland Park Zoning Code, a variation of provision Section 150.703, to  
9 encroach into the front yard requirement for an addition.  
10

11 Commissioner Zaransky moved to continue this matter to the April 16, 2026, ZBA meeting. Commissioner  
12 Chase seconded the motion.  
13

14 On a roll call vote

15 Voting Yea Chairperson Yablon; Commissioners Aronoff, Chase, Weisberg, & Zaransky

16 Voting Nay: None  
17

18 Chairperson Yablon declared that the motion passed unanimously.  
19

20 Back to.....  
21

22 **BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC**

23 There was no Business from the Public.  
24

25 **OLD BUSINESS**

26 1. #VAR-2026-00058

27 Property: 2021 Old Briar Road Appellant: Bogdan Opanasyuk  
28 Zoning District: R4 Address: 2021 Old Briar Road, Highland Park, IL 60035  
29

30 The petitioner and owner, Bogdan Opanasyuk, 2021 Old Briar Road, Highland Park, IL 60035 requests by  
31 authority of Section 150.1204(A)(1) of the Highland Park Zoning Code, a variation of provision Section  
32 150.703, to encroach into the required side yard setback for a pool and accessory structures.  
33

34 Planner Hoffmann reviewed the proposal:

- 35 ● Project Background
  - 36 ○ pool encroaching into side-yard setback
  - 37 ○ came before the ZBA previously
- 38 ● Site Location
- 39 ● Plat of Survey
- 40 ● Property Photos were displayed
- 41 ● Proposed Work
  - 42 ○ gazebo removed
- 43 ● Elevations were illustrated
  - 44 ○ 6' fence is compliant
- 45 ● Other Comments
  - 46 ○ one public comment
- 47 ● Review

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Some ZBA questions for Staff are.....

- Commissioner Aronoff asked if the pool is closer or farther from the house. Planner Hoffmann stated it is closer.
- Chairperson Yablon asked if the pool equipment is no longer an issue. Planner Hoffmann said that's correct, it's compliant.

Chairperson Yablon swore in Petitioner, Bogdan Opanasyuk, who stated adjustments were made based on the ZBA's comments. It is a corner lot with a 19' setback. The setback is hidden toward the back. The pool won't impede into the foundation of the building. He responded in writing to the standards and read same (hardship was not created by the Applicant, will not impair adjacent properties, 6' fences are found in the neighborhood, materials are compatible, etc.).

Chairperson Yablon asked:

- why the pool can't be closer to the house. Mr. Opanasyuk said this is a new house that is still settling. It could cave in, so structural damage could occur. A 4' variance is requested. This is not in the front yard; is truly a backyard. There are no utilities. Nuisance trees were eliminated.
- and Mr. Opanasyuk stated he purchased the house.

Chairperson Yablon asked if anyone in the audience wishes to speak on this matter. The following came forward:

- Mark Siegel said he lives to the north. He appreciates the gazebo being removed. They could live with the 4' variance. They prefer to have nothing vertical. The items being screened should be behind the fence. Planner Hoffmann spoke to the yard-consideration ordinance.

Mr. Siegel would like his requests to be in the approval. Planner Hoffmann said Conditions could be made. Mr. Siegel said he doesn't believe the Petitioner has ill intent. It was stated the items requested are in the draft order.

Some ZBA comments are.....

- Commissioner Zaransky said the concern was bulk which has been mitigated. The neighbor seems to be okay with the pool distance. It's a good plan. He would support this.
- Commissioner Chase said she watched the video of the previous meeting. Concerns seem to be at rest. The hardship comes from the siting and corner lot.
- Commissioner Aronoff believes the Applicant did a good job.
- Commissioner Weisberg said he would like language drafted to appease the neighbor. This is the only place to put the pool. He is leaning toward approving this.
- Chairperson Yablon appreciates the open dialogue with neighbors and the revisions. The hardship is where the house is. Standards have been met. She is in favor.

Mr. Opanasyuk said the screening is a cover for the equipment.

Commissioner Chase moved to approve the variance as drafted. Commissioner Zaransky seconded the motion.

On a roll call vote  
Voting Yea                      Chairperson Yablon; Commissioners Aronoff, Chase, Weisberg, & Zaransky

1 Voting Nay: None

2  
3 Chairperson Yablon declared that the motion passed unanimously.

4  
5 **NEW BUSINESS**

6 1. #VAR-2026-00061

7 Property: 1139 Ridgewood Road Appellant: Keith Fisher

8 Zoning District: R5 Address: 1139 Ridgewood Road, Highland Park, IL 60035

9  
10 The petitioner, Neil Fortunato on behalf of the owner Keith Fisher, 1139 Ridgewood Road, Highland Park, IL  
11 60035 request by authority of Section 150.1204(A)(1) of the Highland Park Zoning Code, a variation of  
12 provision Section 150.711, to encroach into the Established Building Setback/EBS.

13  
14 Planner Hoffmann reviewed the proposal:

- 15 • Project Background
  - 16 ○ R5 zoning district
  - 17 ○ existing home was built in 1930; a new single-family home is slated
- 18 • Site Location
- 19 • Aerial View was shown
- 20 • Plat of Survey
- 21 • Property Photos were displayed
  - 22 ○ Heritage trees
- 23 • Proposed Work
- 24 • Tree Plan
- 25 • Elevations
  - 26 ○ Front
    - 27 ■ one-story garage
    - 28 ■ two-story new home
  - 29 ○ Rear
- 30 • Other Comments
  - 31 ○ Forestry is in support of protecting trees
- 32 • Review

33  
34 Commissioner Aronoff noted the garage doors don't face the street. Planner Hoffmann concurred.

35  
36 Chairperson Yablon swore in Neil Fortunato, Owner with Green Building Technologies, who stated the  
37 interest is to save the trees in the back. The encroachment is minimal. The current house is 90-years old.

38  
39 Some ZBA comments are.....

- 40 • Commissioner Aronoff asked if all the trees are being saved. Mr. Fortunato said the trees in the back  
41 of the house would be saved.
- 42 • Commissioner Chase asked, and Mr. Fortunato said a rig will push pipes through the soil which will  
43 minimize tree risk.
- 44 • Chairperson Yablon asked about adding this Condition. Planner Hoffmann said a Tree Protection  
45 Plan will be issued. Mr. Fortunato said this is a requirement.

1 Chairperson Yablon asked if anyone in the audience wishes to speak on this matter. The following came  
2 forward:

- 3 • Steve Hunter said their concern is a multi-family home going in. It won't affect his property, so he is  
4 in favor.

5  
6 More ZBA comments are:

- 7 • Commissioner Weisberg said the standards have clearly been met. He approves this.
- 8 • Commissioner Aronoff said he thinks it's great to save the trees. The hardship is the tree.
- 9 • Commissioner Chase said the hardship is the tree.
- 10 • Chairperson Yablon concurred.

11  
12 Commissioner Chase moved to approve the variance as drafted. Commissioner Weisberg seconded the  
13 motion.

14  
15 On a roll call vote

16 Voting Yea Chairperson Yablon; Commissioners Aronoff, Chase, Weisberg, & Zaransky

17 Voting Nay: None

18  
19 Chairperson Yablon declared that the motion passed unanimously.

20  
21 2. #VAR-2026-00062

22 Property: 879 Burton Avenue

Appellant: Irwin Melendez

23 Zoning District: R6/SLOZ

Address: 879 Burton Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035

24  
25 The petitioner and owner, Irwin Melendez, 879 Burton Avenue, Highland Park, IL 60035 request by authority  
26 of Section 150.1204(A)(1) and 150.1204(A)(5), of the Highland Park Zoning Code, a variation of provision  
27 Section 150.703 and 150.707(D)(1), to encroach into the side yard requirement and exceed the allowed rear  
28 yard coverage for a garage addition.

29  
30 Planner Hoffmann reviewed the proposal:

- 31 • Project Background
  - 32 ○ garage additions
  - 33 ○ R6 zoning district
  - 34 ○ built in 1930
  - 35 ○ 3 variation requests
- 36 • Site Location
- 37 • Plat of Survey
- 38 • Property Photos were displayed
  - 39 ○ structure was built without a permit in 2025
- 40 • Proposed Work
  - 41 ○ 50% coverage is allowed; 89% is requested
  - 42 ○ the shed is not compliant
- 43 • Other Comments
  - 44 ○ public comments were received (in support and opposed)
- 45 • Review

46  
47 Some ZBA comments for Staff are.....

- 1 • Commissioner Aronoff asked what happens if it is not approved. Planner Hoffmann said it would
- 2 have to be demolished and come into conformance.
- 3 • Commissioner Weisberg asked about coverage. Planner Hoffmann explained same.
- 4 • Commissioner Zaransky asked what the coverage was before this addition. Planner Hoffmann
- 5 doesn't have this information.
- 6 • Commissioner Weisberg said the current garage is 17'. Planner Hoffmann advised the current garage
- 7 is 17.5' and compliant.
- 8 • Commissioner Zaransky asked if the Applicant got notices in August and stopped the work. Planner
- 9 Hoffmann said yes.

10  
11 Chairperson Yablon asked if anyone in the audience wishes to speak on this matter. There was no one.

12  
13 Chairperson Yablon swore in Katarina Karac, Land Use & Zoning Attorney/Birchwood Law, who gave a  
14 presentation:

- 15 • small overlay zone
- 16 • lots vary; this is a small lot
- 17 • existing conditions were shown (visible from public right-of-way)
- 18 • existing garage is not compliant
- 19 • garage height is below 18'
- 20 • there was an internal misunderstanding
- 21 • site plans were shown
- 22 • standards were explained (family has been living there for 20 years, storage is lacking, reasonable
- 23 return cannot occur, garage presently doesn't comply, variations relate to lot size and width, lot has
- 24 physical constraints, abuts a railroad track, adjacent neighbors are in favor, hardship is not created
- 25 by the owner).

26  
27 Ms. Karac shared the process in which this happened and how to rectify. She stated the owner did not  
28 authorize the work. A family member was under the impression a permit was submitted. There isn't  
29 adequate storage for 5 inhabitants. The owners have a family-contractor business. They never received a  
30 stop-work order in their career. This change will improve the site. The home is not a business location.

31  
32 Planner Hoffmann noted public comments were distributed.

33  
34 More ZBA comments are.....

- 35 • Chairperson Yablon said this is difficult to understand when it's a contractor's home.
- 36 • Commissioner Zaransky asked if a permit was submitted prior to August 25<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Karac said no.
- 37 • Commissioner Weisberg asked if a 17' garage really stands out. Ms. Karac shared it will be the same
- 38 as the existing garage; will blend in with the house.
- 39 • Commissioner Zaransky asked what is upstairs. Petitioner, Irwin Melendez, stated there is extra
- 40 storage.
- 41 • Chairperson Yablon asked:
  - 42 ○ and Ms. Karac said the addition is 13' wide and 27' deep. Items (ladders, bicycles, lawn
  - 43 equipment, etc.) will be enclosed rather than outside. Planner Hoffmann noted the size is
  - 44 32.6' by 26.2'.
  - 45 ○ about rear-yard coverage. Ms. Karac said original numbers are unknown but may be within
  - 46 50%; was not compliant before. Planner Hoffmann advised the original garage was non-

1 conforming. Ms. Karac said the driveway may be non-conforming. She doesn't believe lot  
2 coverage was compliant initially. Planner Hoffmann said the addition is 37' over.

- 3 • Commissioner Zaransky asked why a second floor was added. Mr. Melendez said it is still planned.  
4 This is being handled first.
- 5 • Chairperson Yablon asked, and Mr. Melendez stated the opposing neighbors won't answer the door.  
6 She said this is complicated. It's a big project on a small property. This is a rough position for this  
7 family and the ZBA. Ms. Karac said Mr. Melendez would be willing to remove the existing shed  
8 behind the garage as well as the sidewalk to get to it. He noted it was there since the house was  
9 purchased.

10  
11 It was stated any type of work with these constraints couldn't be done. The only place for an  
12 addition is in the rear-yard area. This is a small space. Items need to be covered.

- 13  
14 • Commissioner Chase said it's concerning it was erected without a permit. It's a large ask to have a  
15 large structure on the lot. She appreciates the need for space and the small house. Commissioner  
16 Chase is concerned about the allowable rear coverage.
- 17 • Commissioner Zaransky said 90% of lot coverage is excessive. The code protects bulk. It's a big ask.  
18 It's meaningful that the neighbors are in support. Storm water could spill onto the neighbor. It  
19 doesn't fit with the neighborhood. Ms. Karac advised a French drain would be installed. Perhaps this  
20 could be reworked to a 70% lot coverage. Mr. Melendez said the garage already covers 54% of  
21 coverage.
- 22 • Commissioner Weisberg isn't convinced it wouldn't alter the character of the neighborhood. He  
23 would like to see a better plan and more information. It is not being held against the owner that this  
24 was already built.
- 25 • Commissioner Aronoff noted it's a lot of coverage. The garage could be expanded but not to its  
26 current size.
- 27 • Chairperson Yablon said it's a very large ask; proportionately larger. The standards haven't been  
28 met. She could not approve it.
- 29 • Commissioner Zaransky asked that the neighbors in favor share their comments with Staff.
- 30 • Chairperson Yablon added the standards should be referenced and met.

31  
32 Commissioner Weisberg moved to continue this matter to the May 7, 2026, ZBA meeting. Commissioner  
33 Aronoff seconded the motion.

34  
35 On a roll call vote

36 Voting Yea Chairperson Yablon; Commissioners Aronoff, Chase, Weisberg, & Zaransky

37 Voting Nay: None

38  
39 Chairperson Yablon declared that the motion passed unanimously. Planner Hoffmann stated the  
40 Applicant doesn't have to re-notice the neighbors.

#### 41 42 **STAFF REPORT**

43 There is no Staff Report.

#### 44 45 **MISCELLANEOUS**

46 There are no Miscellaneous items.

1 **ADJOURNMENT**  
2 Commissioner Chase moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:43 p.m. Commissioner Weisberg seconded the  
3 motion.

4  
5 On a voice vote  
6 Voting Yea Chairperson Yablon; Commissioners Aronoff, Chase, Weisberg, & Zaransky  
7 Voting Nay: None

8  
9 Chairperson Yablon declared that the motion passed unanimously.

10  
11 Respectfully Submitted,

12  
13  
14 Gale Cerabona  
15 Recorder

16  
17 **MINUTES OF FEBRUARY 19, 2026, WERE APPROVED WITHOUT CORRECTIONS.**