

**Winnetka Design Review Board/Sign Board of Appeals Meeting Minutes  
July 21, 2022**

**Members Present:**

Kirk Albinson, Chairman  
Maggie Meiners  
Katie Moor  
Heather Niehoff

**Members Absent:**

Michael Klaskin  
Paul Konstant  
Michael Ritter

**Village Staff:**

David Schoon, Director of Community Development  
Ann Klaassen, Senior Planner  
Christopher Marx, Associate Planner

**Call to Order & Roll Call:**

Chairman Albinson called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

**Public Comment.**

No comments were made at this time.

**New Applications:**

a. **Case No. 22-15-DR: 990 Green Bay Road - Hazel James Home: Sign permit to allow installation of a window sign on the vacant storefront of the property located at 990 Green Bay Road.**

Mr. Marx identified the property's location which was formerly occupied by Artistica Italian Gallery and surrounding businesses. He stated the applicant is a home goods business establishment and referred to temporary signage to be removed. Mr. Marx then described the wording, font, color, size and window location for the proposed sign which would be sign code compliant. He then asked if there were any questions and noted the applicant is not present due to public health concerns.

Ms. Moor asked if the request represented an example where the application could receive Village staff approval based on the proposed changes to the sign code. Mr. Marx responded there are several criteria used to assess whether the request would qualify for Village staff approval such as sign code compliance, letter height and overall size in terms of the window size, etc. He noted the request is not for die cut letters which is not compliant for example. Ms. Meiners stated the proposed design guidelines should specify that if the background is clear and it is one piece, that would be fine. The Board Members discussed the proposed sign's placement on the outside of the window. Chairman Albinson questioned it may be an issue of cost in terms of die cut lettering as opposed to the use of clear vinyl with applied lettering. Mr. Schoon stated the proposed guidelines state administrative approval is allowed for interior sign application.

Chairman Albinson then asked for a motion for approval with the recommendation that the applicant consider applying the sign to the interior of the window due to wear and tear concerns as well as the use of die cut as opposed to clear film. Ms. Meiners moved to approve the request as stated by Chairman Albinson. Ms. Moor seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 4 to 0:

AYES: Albinson, Meiners, Moor, Niehoff

NAYS: None

1           b.     **Case No. 22-16-DR: Sign Code & Design Guideline Amendments. Consider a**  
2 **recommendation to the Village Council regarding amendments to the window sign requirements and**  
3 **design guidelines.**

4 Mr. Schoon stated following the Board's discussion with regard to window signs and administrative  
5 approval, he informed the Board that the Village Attorney reviewed the draft. He then referred to a  
6 Supreme Court case decision from 2015 relating to regulating signage content which has left some areas  
7 of sign regulation up for future interpretation. Mr. Schoon referred to the risk with the Village having  
8 regulation for signage based on its content. He then referred to the changes made to the window sign  
9 code language and variation standards as a result of the Board's last discussion. Mr. Schoon stated if there  
10 were no questions from the Board, he stated the Board may consider making a motion to recommend the  
11 Village Council adopt the proposed changes. Chairman Albinson questioned where in the process  
12 recordkeeping, documenting and actions that have been made administratively be provided to the Board.  
13 Mr. Schoon responded the Board can be provided with that information. Ms. Meiners asked if the die cut  
14 wording is included in the document. Mr. Schoon noted it is included on page 2 and the Board Members  
15 discussed the language and agreed it is fine.

16  
17 Chairman Albinson then asked for a motion. Ms. Moor moved to recommend approval of the  
18 amendments to the window sign regulations and design guidelines. Ms. Meiners seconded the motion. A  
19 vote was taken and the motion unanimously passed, 4 to 0:

20 AYES: Albinson, Meiners, Moor, Niehoff

21 NAYS: None

22  
23 **Workshop Sessions:**

24           a.     **Discussion of Awnings and Awning Sign Code Requirements and Design Guidelines**

25 Mr. Schoon stated they took all of the awning and awning sign requirements and structured it in a  
26 document similar to those relating to window signs for discussion in terms of administrative approval and  
27 applications which would require Board approval. He then referred to issues relating to awning sizes,  
28 shapes, pitches, etc. and the current design guidelines for awnings having similar size, location and shape  
29 on a building. Mr. Schoon stated that the process could be set up that if administrative approval is denied,  
30 the applicant can appeal to the Board. He then suggested awning replacement can be administratively  
31 approved as long as the request is consistent with what is there. Mr. Schoon asked for the Board's  
32 comments relating to past applications and referred to awnings at the Laundry Mall building, Bunny &  
33 Babe, among others as examples. Ms. Meiners stated her concern related to how the awnings looked as  
34 part of the larger picture and those which should come before the Board for review. Chairman Albinson  
35 referred to concerns regarding administrative approval being made for awnings.

36  
37 Mr. Schoon asked the Board if they were comfortable with Village staff approval of replacement awnings  
38 which are consistent with existing awnings on the building and to determine what the design guidelines  
39 should be for Board approval. He referred to the ambiguity in terms of defining what is considered  
40 consistent shape, size, etc. and they would like for administrative approval design guidelines to be as black  
41 and white as possible. Chairman Albinson stated if the design guidelines are updated, for an older awning  
42 requesting administrative approval, it may result in an unsightly awning. Ms. Niehoff questioned the  
43 timeline with regard to a request for awning approval. Chairman Albinson added for branding, signage  
44 and identity in the window, an awning would not be critical for that application. He indicated there  
45 appeared to be indecision in terms of awning administrative approval and for the language to be updated.

46  
47 Mr. Schoon then referred the Board to page 19 and identified design guidelines versus requirements  
48 relating to specific awning size, shape and projection along with other design guidelines and asked the

Board for direction as to whether the design guidelines are still helpful. Ms. Niehoff referred to instances relating to inconsistencies in connection with Hometown in terms of the second-floor awnings being inconsistent with the first floor. The Board Members discussed the building's appearance. Ms. Meiners stated awnings should be consistent on each floor level. Chairman Albinson questioned whether more flexibility should be built in the ordinance or additional clarity provided. The Board Members agreed more clarity should be provided. Chairman Albinson then referred to Items E and F in the illustration as preferred images. Ms. Moor commented as long as the size is restricted, it would be fine. Chairman Albinson referred to the Sarah Campbell awnings in terms of consistency and the Board's discussion on that request. He stated a business applicant's individuality should be taken into consideration in the context of a larger building to allow for differences. The Board Members discussed possible changes to the language.

Mr. Schoon then referred to the awning color language. The Board Members suggested alternative language. Ms. Meiners suggested the use of an applicant's primary and secondary colors. Chairman Albinson referred to several instances of awning requests containing multiple colors and Mr. Schoon explained the difference between the design guidelines and variances. He then referred to additional awning requirements including text size, awning colors with the text and logo required to be on multiple businesses in a storefront. The Board Members agreed the requirement should be removed and to only require a single business to have the same color text. Chairman Albinson then referred to item 6(c) relating to all awnings on one building being required to have the same color and the Board Members discussed alternative language for the requirements. Mr. Schoon noted second floor awnings cannot contain text. Chairman Albinson suggested allowing more individuality for first floor awnings with more stringency being applied for second floor awnings and the Board Members agreed. He then referred to item 6(d) relating to awning sign application methods and suggested less antiquated wording be used along with wording that indicated relative consistency with Design Guidelines.

Mr. Schoon stated after going through the requirements and the design guidelines, in terms of direction, he is hearing from the Board that the most they could do is give Village staff limited review authority relating to replacement awnings and to not continue a certain design, form or shape with additional consideration to be given. He then stated revised wording would be presented at the next meeting.

**b. Discussion of Residential Design Guidelines for Single-Family Homes**

Mr. Schoon referred to the history behind the issue and the numerous attempts made since 1989 to address residential height, GFA, articulation requirements, etc. He stated they were put in place since buildings were designed without guidelines and referred the history of how it developed. Chairman Albinson asked how many times the GFA has been increased over the years and Mr. Schoon confirmed it has gone down at least twice, particularly in the R-4 and R-5 zoning districts. Ms. Meiners referred to the number of instances where very large homes are built on small lots and asked how that happened. Ms. Moor stated it related to zoning and where loopholes are instituted.

Chairman Albinson asked the Board Members if they are concerned with the relationship of the size of the home compared to the lot. Ms. Moor responded yes in terms of aesthetics which relates to the amount of value realized by property owners, especially for developers. She referred to several instances where homes are oversized for the lots although the homes are nicely designed. Ms. Niehoff referred to a new home near her which is very large and was done in an aesthetically pleasing manner. She also referred to another new home which was more appropriately scaled but was built with less expensive materials. Ms. Meiners stated her main concern related to bigger homes on smaller lots which lead to drainage issues, etc. Chairman Albinson stated after more consideration with his initial concern that there

1 should not be residential design guidelines, he referred to leaving the Village better than they found it  
2 and referred to builders maximizing their product while questioning the element driving the product. He  
3 then referred to whether there is a correlation between having an informal survey to create an incentive  
4 to go through the residential design review process and if FAR is significantly reduced, they would not run  
5 into issues of oversized homes, the FAR bonus could be given to those who go through the residential  
6 design review process. The Board Members discussed the pros and cons of Chairman Albinson's  
7 suggestion.  
8

9 Ms. Moor referred to the tax benefits given to an historic home in order to save it, she also referred to a  
10 home in her neighborhood was scheduled to be torn down, but the developer did not tear it down once  
11 it was granted approval for additional floor area. Mr. Schoon then provided background on the home Ms.  
12 Moor mentioned which the Landmark Preservation Commission found to be historically significant. Ms.  
13 Niehoff stated the Board has to clearly define what they are trying to achieve in terms of bulk, design  
14 quality, etc. The Board Members agreed with Ms. Niehoff's comment. Ms. Niehoff also suggested an  
15 expedited permit review be added as an incentive along with sustainability. She then referred to a home  
16 on Tower Road which is undergoing deconstruction. Ms. Meiners suggested the Board discuss the matter  
17 with the ZBA and the EFC and collaborate with them. Chairman Albinson asked the Village staff to provide  
18 a framework to the Board to help facilitate the discussion which includes methods which are not punitive  
19 and identify the potential problems which exist without it such as bulk and design quality, how would such  
20 residential design guidelines conceivably be put together and guidelines which can be made available to  
21 the public.  
22

23 Mr. Schoon referred to the past draft residential design guidelines which took 7-10 years to put together  
24 and asked the Board for their feedback in terms of what they mean by design while encouraging the Board  
25 Members to provide examples of certain homes where they are questioning how they were built.  
26 Chairman Albinson asked for the assignment to be provided to all of the Board Members. Mr. Schoon  
27 reminded the Board Members that emails fall under FOIA. Chairman Albinson stated they can continue  
28 the discussion by separating the issue into different areas including whether there should be oversight of  
29 new single-family construction and the consideration of formalizing publicly available single-family design  
30 guidelines from the Village. He also suggested that the Board Members at least be on the same page in  
31 terms of the Village Council presentation.  
32

### 33 **Other Business**

#### 34 a. **August 18, 2022, Meeting - Quorum Check.**

35 The Board Members discussed their availability.  
36

#### 37 b. **Comprehensive Plan Update.**

38 Mr. Schoon stated that the Plan Commission presented the Comprehensive Plan Visioning document to  
39 the Village Council which discussed certain Comprehensive Plan items, which included residential design  
40 guidelines. The Commission's current recommendation is to encourage good design. Trustees discussed  
41 going further by creating a residential design review process. Some trustees expressed support for such  
42 a concept, while others expressed concerns.  
43

44 Chairman Albinson reminded the Board Members that Mr. Klaskin's term on the Board has concluded and  
45 asked the Board Members to consider replacement suggestions.  
46

### 47 **Adjournment:**

1 A motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Niehoff and seconded by Ms. Meiners. A vote was taken and the  
2 motion unanimously passed, 4 to 0:  
3 AYES: Albinson, Meiners, Moor, Niehoff  
4 NAYS: None  
5 The meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.  
6  
7 Respectfully submitted,  
8  
9 Antionette Johnson  
10 Recording Secretary