

Approved

**Village of Gurnee  
Planning and Zoning Board Minutes  
November 1, 2023**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m.

Planning and Zoning Board Members Present: Chairman James Sula, R. Todd Campbell, Dane Morgan, Josh Pejsach, and Liliana Ware

Planning and Zoning Members Absent: David Nordentoft and Edwin Paff

Other Officials Present: Tracy Velkover, Planning Manager; Atrian Fard, Senior Planner; and Bryan Winter, Village Attorney

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

**3. Approval of the PZB's meeting minutes**

**a. October 4, 2023**

Mr. Sula asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the minutes. As there were none, a motion was made.

Mr. Campbell motioned, seconded by Mr. Morgan, to approve the October 4, 2023 meeting minutes, as presented.

Voice Vote:

All "Ayes," no "Nays," none abstaining

Motion Carried: 5-0-0

**b. October 18, 2023**

Mr. Sula asked if there were any questions or comments regarding the minutes. As there were none, a motion was made.

Mr. Campbell motioned, seconded by Mr. Morgan, to approve the October 18, 2023 meeting minutes, as presented.

Voice Vote:

All "Ayes," no "Nays," none abstaining

Motion Carried: 5-0-0

**4. Public Hearing: Veterans Assistance of Lake County (5626-5625 Northridge Drive)**

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Ms. Fard introduced the item by stating that Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County (VAC) is requesting a Special Use Permit to establish and operate a Government Office on property at 5626-5652 Northridge Drive. The subject site is comprised of four parcels and is zoned C-2, Community Commercial district. The surrounding zoning also includes C-2 Zoning. The Village's Comprehensive Land Use Plan envisions commercial zoning for the subject site. The VAC offers programs and services to the veterans, their families, and the community. For this site, they intend to construct a new one and three-story multi-use office building containing 44,000 square feet in gross floor area. She noted that the new building will offer fitness areas, café and kitchen areas, a community hub, office spaces, and conference/board rooms. The facility offers professional consultation and assistance to veterans and their families regarding wellness, benefits, finances, and recruitment. Ms. Fard stated that the petitioner is also requesting a Parking Modification to allow a reduced number of parking spaces on the site. The Zoning Ordinance requires a minimum of 176 parking spaces for a government office and the site provides 149 stalls. She stated that the PZB has the authority to make the final determination on parking modification requests. If the PZB determines that further parking should be provided on the site, there is an ability to land-bank approximately 10-15 parking stalls within the green space along the east side of the building. It is important to note that the project still needs to undergo a detailed Site Plan Review and will be returned to the PZB for consideration if any further relief is identified during the process.

Mr. Sula asked that anyone who wished to speak on this matter by sworn-in. Mr. Winter conducted the swearing-in. Mr. Sula then turned the floor over to the petitioner.

Mr. James Kelly, attorney for the petitioner, stated that he and Mr. Andrew Tangen, Superintendent for Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County, have completed the Special Use Permit application form and believe it meets the four standards for issuance. He noted that the current C-2 zoning allows for free-standing office buildings, and that this use will not be detrimental to public health, safety, or welfare. He also noted that the use is compatible with the surround zoning districts and land uses. The property has been vacant for approximately 10 years, and they believe the use to be appropriate for the area. Finally, he noted that their intentions are to fully comply with all ordinances of the Village, with the exception of the parking reduction, but that if they need any other zoning relief they will be back before this Board.

Mr. Andrew Tangen stated that the VAC of Lake County has been around since 1926 and predates the US Department of Veterans Affairs. They are comprised as a unit of local government under the Illinois Constitution under the Military Veterans Assistance Act. Their mission is to provide for the needs of veterans and their families and the families of deceased veterans. Notably, Lake County is the only county in the State to see an increase in the population of veterans (over a two-year time frame). It is also the only County in which the majority of veterans are under the age of 60. He explained the reason for their request is that, going forward, veterans will need increased care, comfort, and aid as they navigate their post military life. Their mission is increasing as Congress just passed the PACT Act, which expands VA health care and benefits for veterans exposed to toxic burn pits and other toxic substances. He stated that they have been in Gurnee for five years. The VAC loves being in Gurnee--the veterans and their families love that

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VAC is in Gurnee--so, they want to make Gurnee its permanent home. Wrapping up, Mr. Tangen offered that he is open to any questions.

Beginning discussion, Ms. Ware thanked the applicant and stated that their mission is commendable. Noting that they mentioned that there would be a variety of other veterans' organizations in the building, she also stated that their written information discussed planning for growth that would include increased staff and programs. She asked for clarification on both of these items.

Mr. Tangen explained that they assist all VWFs, as well as all American Legions and Disabled Veteran Posts. They will service all veterans, as well as provide the ability of these organization to use their facility. As for any growth, their goal is for this facility to provide a holistic approach to veterans' wellness. As such, their growth will include some additional staff and programs within the proposed building. They will provide financial, spiritual, familial, and mental health services. They partner with Nicasa and will have staff on-hand for emergencies and mental health clinicians available by appointment.

Ms. Ware also noted that it appears the third floor is a storage area.

Mr. Tangen clarified that they are still in the design phase of the interior of the building, but that the third floor will probably house at least some rooms for programs, as well as provide space for expansion.

Mr. Morgan asked where they are currently operating from and the size of their facility.

Mr. Tangen answered that they are currently operating out of an approximate 7,000 square foot space in Hawkston Hall. They have 22 staff members, with the potential to add another 17 staff members (in the new facility). Ultimately, the new location would have a staff of 36 in the next couple of years.

Mr. Campbell stated that this type of facility is greatly needed and appreciated. He noted that it appears there could be upwards of 100 people there for hours.

Mr. Tangen responded that they anticipate 15-50 people on the site during any hour, as appointments are generally an hour long. He noted that the facility will have a gym that veterans can use to work out and address physical issues, which can add people to the site.

Mr. Pejsach thanked the applicant and expressed that this type of facility is needed. He offered that he likes the building design and stated that his questions were answered already.

Mr. Winter asked if the applicant had any theories about why Lake County's veteran population is growing.

Mr. Tangen stated that he is not certain, but Lake County has had the second largest veteran

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population for years and the increase in population has only occurred in the last few years. He suggested that there are probably several reasons, including people leaving the military and veterans moving out of Cook County.

Mr. Sula stated that this is an office use and that he supports the requested special use permit.

At this time, Mr. Sula opened the floor to the public. As there was no one wishing to speak on this matter, he then closed the floor to the public.

Mr. Sula asked the Board members if they had any other questions or comments, and suggested that—if not—a motion would be in order.

Mr. Pejsach motioned, seconded by Ms. Ware, to forward a favorable recommendation on the petition of Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County for a Special Use Permit to allow the establishment and operation of a Government Office at 5626-5652 Northridge Drive in substantial conformance with testimony provided to the Planning & Zoning Board on November 1, 2023.

Mr. Sula then asked if there was any discussion to be had over the motion; as there was not, a vote was taken.

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Morgan, Pejsach, Ware, and Sula

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion carried: 5-0-0

#### **5. Parking Modification: Veterans Assistance of Lake County (5626-5652 Northridge Drive)**

Mr. Sula stated that it appears that the amount of parking provided is adequate, but that he agrees that land-banking parking, as a safety net, is a good idea in order to get parking as close to code as possible, if needed.

Mr. Sula then reminded that the Board has final approval on this decision, and asked that a motion be made in the form of an approval.

Ms. Ware motioned, seconded by Mr. Morgan, to approve the request of Veterans Assistance Commission of Lake County for a Parking Modification to allow parking below the code requirement for a government office building consistent with the applicant's testimony provided to the Planning & Zoning Board on November 1, 2023, and subject to land-banking parking in the open space/meadow area which is to be constructed only if a parking problem develops.

Approved

Roll call vote:

Ayes: Campbell, Morgan, Pejsach, Ware, and Sula

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Motion carried: 5-0-0

Mr. Sula then wished the applicant good luck on the project.

## **6. SECOND INFORMAL REVIEW: Alden Foundation (935 Rogers Road and 4977 and 4961 Grand Avenue)**

Ms. Velkover introduced this item by saying that the Alden Foundation is seeking a second informal review of a plan for a 41-unit affordable age restricted housing facility on approximately 1.7 acres located at the southeast corner of Grand Avenue and Rogers Road. At the October 4th meeting, the PZB's most frequent and serious concerns were the amount of parking provided (42 parking spaces for 41 units) and the difficulty of entering and exiting the site due to its proximity to the Grand and Rt. 21 intersection. Included in the access concerns were concerns with the character of Rogers Road, which has a rural cross-section (narrow roadway without curb and gutters or sidewalks). Other concerns, although not as much consensus on these included: density and inconsistency with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. In regard to the concerns over Rogers Road, engineering will be requiring the improvement of this road, which includes widening from approximately 19 to 24 feet, as well as the installation of curb and gutter, and sidewalk. The applicant has revised the plan to provide additional parking and remove the second access point from Rogers Road. They have also provided information on the number of parking stalls and unit counts for their other facilities in the area, as well as a Preliminary Traffic Statement by KLOA to address the access issues. She noted that the applicant is in attendance to walk the PZB through their revised plans and that any feedback that can be provided will help determine their next step.

Mr. Sula reminded that this is an informal review and no decisions will be made this evening. He then turned the floor over to the applicant.

Mr. Steven Stivers, Executive Director of the Alden Foundation, introduced himself and Mr. Michael Bailey, President of the Alden Design Group. He thanked the Village Staff for working with them to incorporate the feedback of the PZB from the October 4th meeting and for allowing a second informal review. He noted that the Alden Foundation has to make a decision by tomorrow whether to invest a significant amount of resources into this site or not. He walked the PZB through the changes that they made, which include:

- Increasing the number of parking spaces from 42 to 48
- Eliminating the second curb cut on Rogers Road
- Moving patio out of the Grand Avenue setback

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- Moving of the monument sign out of sight triangle
- Removing the emergency access per Fire Department.

Mr. Stivers then went through a slideshow that showed 13 other Alden projects in the Chicagoland Area and the number of parking stalls and number of units for each. He stated of the 10 facilities that are not in a campus setting, 40% have a 1:1 parking ratio, 30% have less than a 1:1 parking ratio, and 30% have more than a 1:1 parking ratio. Of those that have greater than a 1:1 parking ratio, the parking ranges from 1-25% over the number of units provided at the site. With the 48 parking stalls proposed for the Gurnee location, it will operate with about 17.5% over the number of units on the site. Based on that, he noted that the Gurnee site will have one of the highest parking ratios that they have in the area. He then addressed the concern that the PZB had about access into and out of the site, explaining that they contracted with KLOA to access the traffic impacts and the determination was that there would be no material disruption of traffic and no material risk associated with the access points. Wrapping up, Mr. Stivers then thanked the Board.

Beginning discussion, Ms. Ware asked about the truck traffic mentioned in the traffic statement; specifically what type of trucks are prohibited.

Mr. Sula clarified that residential streets typically restrict larger classes of trucks (i.e., semis) and not Amazon delivery trucks.

Mr. Morgan thanked the applicant for the modifications. He liked the additional parking and noted the inconsistency with the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. He stated that he hoped the traffic report is accurate and noted that the changes are making this project more feasible.

Mr. Campbell stated that the safety concern appears to be addressed and noted that he does not have as much concern about the project as he had before.

Mr. Pejsach indicated that he had no other comments and thanked them for addressing the parking and traffic issues.

Mr. Sula stated that he is still struggling with the use, as it is a departure from the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Mr. Stivers once again thanked the Board for their time.

## **7. Approval of the PZB's 2024 Meeting Schedule**

Ms. Fard presented the proposed 2024 PZB meeting schedule and noted the following:

- Staff attempted to schedule the meetings on the first and third Wednesdays of the month while avoiding holidays.

Approved

- Overall, meetings did not overlap with any holidays for most months, except for June, July, and October.
- In June, the second meeting in the month was moved from the third Wednesday of the month, June 19, which is the new Federal Holiday of Juneteenth, to the fourth meeting of the month.
- Consequently, the two meetings in July were moved from the first and third Wednesdays of the month to the second and fourth Wednesdays, because the first Wednesday of July would have been on July 3, the night before a holiday, and only one week apart from the last meeting in June (the 26th). In addition, there are five Wednesdays in July; therefore, moving the meetings to the second and fourth Wednesdays, will maintain the two-week spacing from the end of June until the first meeting in August.
- The only potential remaining issue would be in the month of October, with the first, third and fourth Wednesdays coinciding with Jewish holidays. It seems October 9 (the second Wednesday) and October 30 (the fifth Wednesday) would be the least conflicting Wednesdays during that month. However, October 30 would only be one week from the first meeting in November (the 6th), so the PZB may either recommend keeping October 30 as a meeting placeholder with two potential back-to-back weeks with meetings (October 30 and November 6) or having only one meeting in October, on the 9th. Again, there are five Wednesdays in October—and, the meeting of October 9 would be three weeks from the meeting of October 30. With that, staff believes two back-to-back meetings at the end of October and the beginning of November would be manageable and not overwhelming. Of note: holding a meeting on October 30--shifting the meetings of November and December from the first and third Wednesdays to the second and fourth Wednesdays--will not be an option, due to the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

Mr. Sula stated that he supports the meeting schedule as proposed, including the proposed meeting on October 30. He feels that it is easier to cancel a meeting than to call a special meeting. The other members of the PZB concurred.

Mr. Pejsach motioned, seconded by Mr. Campbell, to approve the 2024 meeting schedule, as proposed including the meeting on October 30, 2024.

Voice Vote:

All "Ayes," no "Nays," none abstaining.

Motion Carried: 5-0-0

### **8. Next Meeting Date: November 15, 2023**

Ms. Fard stated that there are no public hearing items scheduled for the meeting of November 15, but that there are several non-public hearing items (i.e., ROW vacation, minor sign exception, subdivision plat), that could be scheduled for that night.

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Mr. Sula advised the PZB members to “stay tuned” to see if a meeting will be held on that date or not.

### **9. Public Comment**

Mr. Sula opened the floor to the public. As there was no one in the audience, he then closed the floor to the public.

### **10. Adjournment**

Mr. Pejsach motioned, seconded by Mr. Morgan, to adjourn the meeting.

Voice vote:

All “ayes,” no “nays, and none abstaining

Motion carried: 5-0-0

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Joann Metzger  
Recording Secretary