

CITY OF COUNTRYSIDE

*803 Joliet Road
Countryside, IL 60525
www.countryside-il.org*



Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Plan Commission

Zoning Board of Appeals

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

7:00 P.M.

City Hall

Board Members

**Chairman Robert Schwarz, Secretary Tina Grotzke,
Marco Gutierrez, Ronald Ward, Steve Kehr, Jack Benton,
Tom Geraghty, Danielle Edenfield, Jonathan Gertsmeier**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Schwarz.

Roll Call: Secretary Grotzke called the roll of members physically present:
Present: Robert Schwarz, Tom Geraghty, Marco Gutierrez, Tina Grotzke, Jon Gertsmeier, Ronald Ward, Jack Benton
Also Present: City Attorney Erik Peck, Planning Manager Richard Trent
Absent: Danielle Edenfield, Steve Kehr

Approval of Minutes – The regular meeting minutes of March 3, 2026, were previously distributed to Board members.

A motion was made by Mr. Ward, seconded by Ms. Grotzke, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 7 Schwarz, Geraghty, Gertsmeier, Grotzke, Gutierrez, Ward, Benton

Nay: 0

Chairman's Comments – There were no comments.

Action Items:

1. CASE #PTA26-0002: Consideration of a Text Amendment

- a. To consider and recommend amending Zoning Code Section 10-5A-5 (Yard Areas) to amend the front yard setback language in the R-1 Zoning District; and
- b. To consider and recommend amending Zoning Code Section 10-5B-5 (Yard Areas) to amend the front yard setback language in the R-2 Zoning District.

Mr. Gutierrez moved to open the public hearing on this matter, seconded by Mr. Gertsmeier, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

Planning Manager Trent noted that consideration of the Text Amendment was requested by City Council and presented the background of the case. Redlined versions of the proposed Text Amendments are included in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated April 14, 2026. Per the Code, any changes to the R-2 Zoning District would also apply to the R-3 Zoning District.

City Attorney Peck provided additional details, noting a trend for property owners to set their homes farther back. This can result in homes being set significantly farther back than their neighbors, which some consider unsightly. City Council's opinion on the matter is split, and Board feedback is requested.

Mr. Trent added that determining the setbacks to neighboring buildings for a proposed development would be the responsibility of the Petitioner, thereby incurring additional costs and time commitments for potential new residents.

Mr. Gutierrez inquired whether the City would require surveys of the neighboring properties or accept the Petitioner's measurements. Mr. Trent responded that he believes only the locations of the structures'

corners would be required with a submitted survey. Mr. Gutierrez noted that this would still incur costs. He expressed concern that developers who wish to build next to existing homes with large setbacks would be required to have larger setbacks than they would prefer, which could result in unsightly scenarios. He suggested that the Petitioner be allowed to choose the lesser of the two options rather than be obliged to implement the greater.

Mr. Trent inquired whether a homeowner with a setback of forty feet (40') might be displeased if a neighboring home is built with a setback of thirty feet (30'). Mr. Gutierrez responded that being required to implement a setback that is the average of one's two neighbors would result in the new homeowner having a home between them and the street.

Ms. Grotzke cited a property on 56th Street with an excessively large setback, surrounded by homes that appear to have standard thirty foot (30') setbacks. She noted that the large setback is unsightly and would result in the home having a view of its neighbors' backyards, which may cause discomfort to the neighbors, as backyards are expected to be more private than front yards. Mr. Trent noted that the subject property is a flag lot; there are not many of them in town, but they carry some limitations.

Mr. Gertsmeier inquired whether the term "building" could include a detached garage or shed and suggested that more specific language be used. Mr. Trent responded that the term refers to a single-family home. Accessory buildings should be behind the home and are described in another section (specifically Section 10-2-9) of the Code. The section in question includes only single-family homes.

Mr. Geraghty asked how many lots in Countryside would be affected by the Text Amendment. It was noted that, aside from empty lots, additions would be affected, as well as property owners who wish to demolish a house and rebuild. Mr. Trent responded that the majority of R-1 and R-2 zoned properties are in Ward 2 & 3, and the majority of R-3 zoned properties are in Ward 1. He noted that many property owners who are currently building homes prefer larger backyards, and the proposed Text Amendment may limit that ability.

Mr. Benton noted that if property owners were to implement setbacks based on the average of their neighbors' setbacks, sightlines would be skewed.

Mr. Gutierrez expressed concern that contractors often do not build to exact measurements, and some older properties may therefore have twenty nine foot (29') setbacks; this could result in issues if new neighbors re-measure the setbacks. He also expressed concern that the proposed Text Amendment would limit the rights and freedoms of property owners.

Ms. Grotzke expressed agreement, noting that the only issue is that the current Code allows for excessively large setbacks. Mr. Trent responded that this would be mitigated by the rear yard setback requirements and summarized the rear yard setback requirements for the R-1, R-2, and R-3 Zoning Districts.

Mr. Gertsmeier noted that the 2001 Code states that the front yard setbacks shall be not less than 30 feet, while the 2017 Code states that they shall be 30 feet, and requested clarification of the language. Mr. Trent responded that “shall be 30 feet” is interpreted as a minimum and applied as such.

Mr. Peck noted that the Code specifies the setback line, not the location of the building. He added that the proposed Text Amendment was provided for consideration and that the Board should feel free to amend it.

Mr. Gertsmeier noted that requiring a homeowner to implement a setback that is the average of their neighbors’ setbacks might prevent some homeowners from achieving the rear setback requirement. Mr. Gutierrez acknowledged that it would reduce the buildable area and perhaps discourage prospective buyers.

Mr. Gutierrez and Ms. Grotzke suggested that property owners be allowed to choose the lesser of the two factors: the thirty foot (30’) minimum setback or the average of their neighbors’ setbacks.

Chairman Schwarz suggested that the homeowner be allowed to choose a setback within a range, with the minimum being thirty feet (30’) and the maximum being the average. Mr. Trent noted that the average may present an issue if one’s neighbors have setbacks under thirty feet (30’) due to a nonconformity and/or prior variance requests.

Mr. Ward requested the reason for the Text Amendment. Mr. Peck responded that, initially, there were concerns regarding mismatched setbacks. Also, a homeowner with a large setback noted that, after a neighbor built a home with a thirty foot (30’) setback, he was no longer able to see his children walking on the sidewalk. Some Aldermen would like to leave the Code as it is; others wish to specify the average as a setback; and others have concerns with homes that are set too far back.

Mr. Geraghty inquired whether larger setbacks were required in the past, noting that some older homes seem to be set further from the street. Mr. Ward responded that this was a common preference, and setbacks were not as closely regulated in the past. Mr. Trent noted that some parts of Countryside were annexed later, and the existing properties were built per different rules.

Mr. Gertsmeier suggested that the minimum setback be 30 feet, and the maximum setback be the larger setback of the two (2) neighboring properties. There was a discussion regarding whether the maximum should be the larger of the two (2) neighboring setbacks or the average.

There was a discussion regarding whether to make a motion to leave the Code as it is, to make a motion suggesting new front yard setback language, or to CONTINUE the discussion to the May 5, 2026, meeting. No Board member was in favor of accepting the Text Amendment as proposed in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated April 14, 2026. All Board members expressed an inclination to either leave the Code as it is or allow for a range.

Mr. Trent noted that the staff would coordinate with Mr. Peck to draft a *revised* Text Amendment in accordance with the preferences expressed by the Board.

A motion was made by Mr. Ward, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez, that discussion of CASE #PTA26-0002, Consideration of a Text Amendment, be CONTINUED to the May 5, 2026, PC/ZBA meeting. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye:	7	Schwarz, Geraghty, Gertsmeier, Grotzke, Gutierrez, Ward, Benton
Nay:	0	

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

Other Business

Ticket Statistics (for March 2026) – In March, 32 tickets were issued in total, compared to 5 in March 2025. Twenty-eight (28) tickets were issued for parking and storing tractors and trailers compared with two (2) in 2025; and zero (0) tickets were issued for trucks parked on property not registered to the business compared to two (2) in 2025. Staff would note that four (4) tickets were issued for idling trucks. The year-to-date total was 61 tickets, compared to 25 for the same time period in 2025.

2018-26 Zoning Cases – The list of past cases was updated.

Next Meeting – The next meeting is scheduled for May 5, 2026. The agenda will include a Special Use and Variance requests for the Dunkin' Donuts located at 5500 South LaGrange Road. The owner would like to demolish the existing building and redevelop the site to construct a new building with a drive-through facility.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Mr. Gutierrez, seconded by Ms. Grotzke, that this meeting be ADJOURNED; motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Chairman Schwarz declared the meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

APPROVED:

Respectfully Submitted,



ROBERT SCHWARZ, CHAIRMAN

/ms