



VILLAGE OF SKOKIE

APPEARANCE COMMISSION

Welcome to the Appearance Commission

The Village of Skokie Community Development Department welcomes you as a Petitioner before the Appearance Commission. The Commission consists of a chairperson and six members who are appointed by the Mayor with the approval of the Board of Trustees. The Commissioners are residents of the Village or persons employed within the Village.

The Skokie Appearance Commission holds public hearings to consider for approval signs, site landscaping, and elevation drawings for new buildings and additions. To properly perform its duties and to provide a thorough review of your plans, all required documents must be submitted to the Building Division at least 14 days prior to the hearing. The Commission will not hear your case unless all required documents are submitted. A list of required documents can be obtained from the Building and Zoning Division. As the Appearance Commission is a final hearing body, building or sign permits cannot be issued without its approval.

The Community Development Department staff also review the aesthetics of each submittal and make a report to the Appearance Commission. Staff comments on each case will be read into the record at the meeting when your case is called.

As a Petitioner before the Appearance Commission the following steps must be followed in order for your case to be heard and progress to review and possible approval:

Step 1.

Review your project with the Community Development Department staff. The Village's professional staff will, at no cost, review plans and make recommendations to improve projects for compliance with Village codes and ordinances. This review can reduce the risk of costly and time-consuming delays.

Step 2.

File all required documents with the Building Division. In order to accurately carry out its duties and to give a proper review of your plans all documents required on the "Appearance Review Submittals" (available at the Building and Zoning Division), must be submitted to the Building Division at least 14 days prior to the hearing.

Step 3.

The Community Development Department staff will review your complete application after its submittal. Staff will not review every application at the time of submittal, however, the professional staff will review all documents prior to the hearing. Staff will call you if there are any missing documents, plans are not properly dimensioned, plans are drawn to an uncommon scale or if the plans are not drawn in a professional manner suitable for review. Although building plans do not have to be drawn by an architect they must be of sufficient quality and detail to be easily reviewed by staff and the Commission. Failure to submit required or revised documents prior to the hearing will result in the case being removed from the agenda. The Village will also send notices of the meeting to the neighboring property owners of all residential requests.

Step 4.

The Appearance Commission usually meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month from April through September, and only on the 2nd Wednesday for the remaining portion of the year. The meetings are held at 7:30 p.m. in the Village Hall Council Chambers.

Step 5.

At the Appearance Commission meeting you will be able to present your plans and sample materials. The Village staff will give the Commissioners copies of the plans that were submitted as part of your application. Any individuals opposing or supporting the request wishing to speak will be given the opportunity to do so. After all testimony is presented the Appearance Commission will discuss and vote on the case. Based on a review of the plans, the Commission will make a decision to approve, deny or continue the case for additional information or plan modifications. Unless the case is continued or withdrawn it will be concluded on the night of the meeting.

Step 6.

A Certificate of Appropriateness will be granted by the Commission for all cases that are approved which will allow the issuance of permits.

The entire public hearing process will take approximately 20 days to complete unless the case is continued for additional information or analysis. If the request involves modifications from the Zoning chapter of the Village Code, or special use permit or site plan approval, additional hearings may be required before the Zoning Board of Appeals, Plan Commission, and/or Board of Trustees, which will lengthen the approval process.

If you have any questions about the Appearance Commission hearing process or would like to discuss a project/plan with Village staff please call the Building Division at (847) 933-8223.

Questions & Answers

Q. Why do I need to go to the Appearance Commission prior to obtaining a Building Permit?

A. The Village established an Appearance Commission to protect property values of neighborhoods and assure that all new construction, signs and landscaping are visually pleasing, compatible with existing development. Thus, all new construction projects must be reviewed and approved by the Commission before a Building Permit can be issued.

Q. Is there a filing fee to have my case heard by the Commission?

A. No fee is required.

Q. If I cannot provide all required documents can my request be heard?

A. No. All documents must be submitted prior to the scheduling of a case. In addition, samples of exterior siding, roofing, paint and brick must be brought to the meeting when the items will not match the existing materials. Do not submit these items to the Building Division. When matching existing materials, a clear picture must be presented showing the items in question. Again, failure to provide the required materials will result in your case not being heard or postponed.

Q. Why does the Village notify neighboring property owners on residential requests?

A. The construction of a new home or large addition often has a significant impact on a neighborhood. By providing notice to neighbors their comments can be heard by the Commission and community concerns can be addressed.

Q. Will I be able to present my request to the Appearance Commission and answer questions?

A. Yes. As a petitioner you will be given the opportunity to explain your request to the Appearance Commission and address any questions and comments. The Commission members like to work with

Petitioners on design solutions, although they will not design the building, sign or landscape plan.

Q. Will I need my architect or contractor at the meeting to explain my request?

A. No. There is no requirement that your architect or contractor be present at the meeting. However, if you do not feel comfortable verbally presenting your case, or you are unfamiliar with the design elements or materials, an architect or contractor would be helpful in presenting your request.

Q. Does it matter if a neighbor opposes my request?

A. Although some neighbors may oppose a request, the Appearance Commission reviews the plans and testimony presented in each case and makes a decision based on the merits of the case. The Commission often considers design changes to make a building more compatible with existing development.

Q. Does the Appearance Commission have criteria for reviewing and approving requests?

A. Yes. The standards are contained in the Village's Appearance Review Plan that is used as a guide in making decisions. Based on specific findings, the Commission shall issue a Certificate of Appropriateness unless the plan does not conform to this Appearance Plan, or the proposal is not in compliance with Village codes, or the proposed building, structure, sign, awning/canopy, or landscaping will be inappropriate to or incompatible with the character of the immediate neighborhood as expressed through the Village's design standards.

Q. Will the Appearance Commission vote on my request at the meeting or will I be informed of their decision?

A. In most cases, the Appearance Commission will complete its review of a request in one meeting. After all testimony is presented and all information reviewed the Commission will take a vote on the case. All decisions are made by majority vote, which is open to the public. There are no closed meetings or delayed findings that are sent to the Petitioner.

Q. What happens if the Appearance Commission denies my request or requires conditions that I do not agree with?

A. The Appearance Commission is a final hearing body; thus, the only appeal to a negative decision is through the Circuit Court. However, revised plans may be submitted to the Commission for further review.

Q. How soon after the Appearance Commission hearing process will I be allowed to apply for a Building Permit?

A. You may apply for a Building Permit after the public hearing process has been completed.