



Village of Barrington Hills
112 Algonquin Road
Barrington Hills, Illinois 60010-5199

Date: Friday, January 22, 2010

To: The Residents of Barrington Hills

Subject: The President's Message for January 2010

Illuminating Lighting

Unless you have been living on Pluto during the last year, you have most likely been hearing a lot about lighting issues in the Village. Even the Wall Street Journal decided that lighting in our Village warranted a nationally published editorial. Apparently, we are more weighty a subject than the troubles in banking and the economy.

The Issue: From my perspective, the fundamental issues are property rights, long term protection of our character and environment, and governance. Over use of lighting has been a concern of the Village since long before I came onto the Board in 2001. It is driven in part by technology, architectural fashion, and operational and safety concerns.



In summary, does one resident have the unlimited right to light their property at the substantial detriment created by the halo to another? And, if we are to balance these competing rights, what mechanism should we use and how should we go about discussing it?

The unique rural environment and character in Barrington Hills is fundamental to our property values and our lifestyle. We enjoy the night as well as the day. A clear night sky filled with stars on a warm summer evening or a crisp January night is part of the spectacular character of our community. As residents, we expect to enjoy our property with little or no impact from our neighbors. With the advancement of lighting technology in the last decade, a number of residences (mostly builders trying to advertise new spec homes), and some institutions have installed wide scale property lighting. In particular, lighting positioned high above the ground, and/or washing the sides of buildings. On an intermittent use basis this would not be a problem. However, some of these locations have brilliant lights on during all dark hours on a daily basis. This creates a 'halo' effect in the night sky which many consider light pollution. These lights can also shine in windows, spill out onto surrounding properties, and disrupt the overall character of night in our Village.

I do not believe that the abuse of lighting is yet a wide scale problem. There are 20 or so properties, both residential and institutional that are currently problematic and impacting the rights of surrounding neighbors. But, as a community, we should consider how to prevent this issue from becoming wide spread given the recent growth in the problem.

The Recent History: In 2000, a lighting ordinance had failed to pass with some of the same controversy we have seen over this last year. In order to address continuing complaints the Board received from residents, and in keeping with the perspective of small and non-intrusive government, Trustee Fritz Gohl and I authored changes to a simple lighting ordinance and enacted them in May of 2003. (See BH Ordinance 7-1-5) In short, it says that outdoor lights shall not create excessive glare or light levels so as to be dangerous to the public or result in annoyance or discomfort to the public or adjacent land uses. It also says that if you can see the ***light bulb*** from the property line, you are out of compliance. This was designed to address the spotlight shining into another's yard or into someone's windows. It has been effective, easy to enforce, targeted, and solved a large number of problems since its enactment into our code. Typically, resolution involved simply reorienting the light or adding a small shield.



Village of Barrington Hills
112 Algonquin Road
Barrington Hills, Illinois 60010-5199

More recently, there has been increasing complaints caused by larger scale lighting as I described above that this existing ordinance was inadequate to address. In an attempt to solve this problem, the Village Board asked the Plan Commission, through Trustee Steve Knoop, to look into the problem and make recommendations regarding this issue.

The Process: The Plan Commission began holding public hearings in June 2008. Like all Plan Commission hearings, they were public, regularly scheduled, and their agenda was posted on the BH WEB site. Late in the fall of 2009, the Plan Commission issued a draft ordinance as a result of its findings. This draft was sent to the Zoning Board of Appeals for further review, as we do with all ideas for ordinance changes. The ZBA is specifically organized to process these drafts, review them technically, take more public comment, and make a specific recommendation to the Village Board. This recommendation can range from 'do nothing' to substantial changes to the Village code. The ZBA is presently in the middle of these hearings.

Once the Village Board receives the analysis from the ZBA, I will instruct the Board to review these recommendations, take more public comment, and then vote on a final action. It is the vote of the Board that determines what action the Village will take in this matter. I suspect that it will be at least March before the Village Board takes up this matter. Please continue to check the Village WEB site for meeting and agenda updates.

My Perspective: The lighting ordinance draft created by the Plan Commission and before the ZBA, from my own perspective, is overly burdensome and too draconian to achieve the correct balance between the property rights of neighbors and provide protection to the character of the Village. It impacts many residences and institutions that are not a problem. Substantial changes and modifications are necessary before I can support an ordinance on this issue. I have been clear about my perspective on this for a fair number of months.

The nature of this draft is not unexpected. The Plan Commission, as well as our other committees frequently create drafts which are not suitable for direct inclusion as a text amendment to the Village Zoning Code. The Plan Commission's purpose is to create a detailed library of issues and possible solutions. They have done a good job of drilling down on many details of lighting, its impacts on our community, and provided a series of possible solutions. It is the job of the ZBA to select from this library and create a Zoning Code text amendment, if they feel any is needed, which balances the issues and the concerns of our community. The process is working precisely as it should.

It is imperative that the review of this issue continue to be conducted in an open and balanced way so that all sides can weigh in, without fear of retribution or being shouted down by any particularly loud organization. My primary role in this process is to ensure that democracy is not short-circuited or otherwise corrupted to the advantage of one view or another.

Please remember that our commissions and Board members are made up of your neighbors. The work our commissions are doing is difficult and they need your cooperative input. I commend their patience in this process as with every issue they deal with. I commend their willingness and fairness to consider the quiet voices as well as the shrill ones.

It is without question that our community is well numbered with strong, independent, colorful, and committed people. That is why part of the long term answer is to be considerate of your neighbors. Take a critical look at your own property from your neighbor's point of view. Let's work together in preserving this unique community that is shared by us all.



**Village of Barrington Hills
112 Algonquin Road
Barrington Hills, Illinois 60010-5199**

I encourage you to continue to communicate directly with me and the Trustees. We need your feedback and ideas. I invite you to attend our regular Board and committee meetings and get involved. I can be reached directly either by e-mail or phone and I look forward to hearing from you.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. G. Abboud". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Robert G. Abboud
President, Village of Barrington Hills
Village Hall Office: 847-551-3000
Home: 847-381-8174
Cell: 847-921-1932
Bob@RGALabs.com