



Wabash County Plan Commission

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Wabash County Plan Commission – Meeting Minutes

Board Members: Randy Curless, Jeff Dawes, Sam Hann, Chris Hickman, Mark Milam, Doug Rice, Mike Ruse, Geoff Schortgen, Cheri Slee, Joe Vogel

Staff: Mark Frantz, Board Attorney; Brian Campbell, Plan Director; Jennifer Hicks, PC Secretary

Thursday, December 4, 2025

1. Call To Order

The Wabash County Plan Commission meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chair Randy Curless.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Hicks, Plan Commission Secretary called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless – *present*
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *present*
- ✓ Sam Hann – *present*
- ✓ Chris Hickman – *present*
- ✓ Mark Milam – *absent*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *present*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *present*
- ✓ Geoff Schortgen – *present*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *present*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *present*

3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes – November 6, 2025

The minutes from the November 6, 2025 meeting were presented for approval.

Mr. Hann made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Dawes seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless - *abstain*
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *yes*
- ✓ Sam Hann – *yes*
- ✓ Chris Hickman – *yes*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *yes*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *yes*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *yes*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *yes*

The motion carried.

4. Old Business

Unsafe Premise Order – 25 N. Perch Drive (Mary Chandler)

Mr. Campbell reported that the project remains on hold due to weather conditions. The site requires seeding and stabilization, but the fall drought followed immediately by early winter weather prevented grass establishment. The contractor intends to complete the remaining work

when conditions allow, likely in the spring. Staff will continue monitoring progress. No Action Taken. The matter remains open.

Ordinance Review with Banning Engineering

Plan Commission Members continued discussion of the ordinance update proposal from Banning Engineering. Mr. Campbell explained that approximately 50–60% of the ordinance revisions recommended in the earlier Banning review have already been drafted internally. Many of the most complex chapters, particularly Chapters 4, 5, and 6, have undergone extensive staff edits and are in a draft using Banning’s prior guidance.

Mr. Campbell expressed concern about the cost of the full proposal given the significant amount of work already completed in-house. Mr. Campbell and Ms. Hicks emphasized the desire to remain involved in the revision process in order to fully understand intent, maintain day-to-day usability, and avoid replacing existing language with unfamiliar terminology. A hybrid approach was discussed: staff completing the substantive legal and structural editing while Banning Engineering potentially assists with diagrams, charts, formatting, and a final comprehensive review.

Members of Banning Engineering were present and explained the two-phase structure of their proposal—first improving readability, diagrams, and usability; second, detailed chapter editing. They indicated a willingness to review chapters individually as staff completes them.

Commission members discussed funding, staff workload, and overall timing. The consensus was that staff should continue internal revisions and re-engage Banning once more chapters are completed. Staff will provide an update to the Commission in approximately three months. No motion was required.

Unsafe Premise Order – 140 W Sims, Servia (Ezra & Loretta Gahl)

Mr. Campbell reported that debris remains on the site and must be removed before the case can be closed. Staff will conduct another follow-up prior to the next meeting. No Action Taken. The matter remains open.

Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) Draft Ordinance

Mr. Campbell provided an update on the draft BESS ordinance. After beginning work on a standalone BESS ordinance, staff identified substantial similarities with proposed Data Center regulations. Because many data centers include battery storage systems, staff is now merging both sets of regulations into one combined ordinance. This approach is expected to save significant time. Staff requested any additional information or concerns from Commission members as drafting continues.

5. New Business

SE-25-010 – Rana & Michael Poe, Pleasant Township

Request: *Special Exception to allow the placement of a manufactured home in an RL2, non-lakefront zoning district.*

Mr. Campbell presented the application and reviewed setbacks, buildable area, and replacement requirements under the ordinance, including foundation, skirting, minimum square footage, and roof pitch. The applicants have not yet selected a specific home model, so approval would be contingent upon meeting all ordinance standards.

Plan Commission Members discussed the improvement in appearance and value that a new home would bring, along with the required conditions listed in staff’s report.

Mr. Rice made a motion for a favorable recommendation to be sent to the Board of Zoning Appeals with the required conditions regarding setbacks, foundation, skirting, minimum square footage, and roof pitch. Mr. Ruse seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless - yes
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – yes
- ✓ Sam Hann – yes
- ✓ Chris Hickman – yes
- ✓ Doug Rice – yes
- ✓ Mike Ruse – yes
- ✓ Cheri Slee – yes
- ✓ Joe Vogel – yes

The motion carried and will be heard at the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting on December 23, 2025.

SE-25-013 – Multani II, LLC, Paw Paw Township

Request: *Special Exception to operate a liquor store in a GB zoning district in a building currently being used as a convenience store/gas station.*

Mr. Campbell summarized the proposal, including site plan issues, parking constraints, ADA accessibility concerns, and the need to accommodate loading zones. Staff noted that the Town of Roann did not allow public comment during its meeting, despite the Plan Commission’s request for towns to accept public input prior to PC review.

The applicant’s attorney presented additional information regarding the Alcohol & Tobacco Commission review, petition signatures from Roann residents, operational details, and alcohol control procedures. He clarified that an enabling ordinance is not required for package alcohol sales, though the town’s actions demonstrate support for the project.

Commission members expressed concern about the lack of public input at the town level but noted that a public hearing will occur at the BZA, where notices and newspaper publication will occur.

Mr. Hann made a motion to forward a favorable recommendation to the BZA. The motion was seconded by Mr. Ruse.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless - yes
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – yes
- ✓ Sam Hann – yes
- ✓ Chris Hickman – yes
- ✓ Doug Rice – no
- ✓ Mike Ruse – yes
- ✓ Cheri Slee – yes
- ✓ Joe Vogel – yes

The motion carried and will be heard at the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting on December 23, 2025.

SE-25-014 – Brian & Constance Searing – Lagro Township

Request: *Special Exception to operate a to-go barbecue concession business in Speicherville.*

Mr. Campbell provided the Plan Commission Members with a summary of the request. He explained that Mr. & Mrs. Searing is requesting a special exception to open a business in Speicherville in an A2 zoning district. Furthermore, Mr. Campbell explained that the primary concern was traffic safety on State Road 13 having an entrance and exit to the business onto the busy state road. The petitioner responded to the concern by constructing a separate rear exit onto Washington Street to prevent potential issues on the highway.

The petitioner described substantial property improvements, removal of old structures, installation of gravel, upgraded electrical service, and the intent to operate a to-go barbecue trailer approximately three days per week. No indoor seating is proposed.

Mr. Rice made a motion to forward a favorable recommendation to the BZA. Mr. Hann seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless - *yes*
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *yes*
- ✓ Sam Hann – *yes*
- ✓ Chris Hickman – *yes*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *yes*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *yes*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *yes*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *yes*

The motion carried and will be heard at the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting on December 23, 2025.

DNR Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance Update

Mr. Campbell reported that DNR recently audited county floodplain permitting practices and determined that the county's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance is outdated. DNR provided an updated model ordinance with required revisions, optional provisions, and formatting changes.

Mr. Campbell and Mr. Frantz recommend repealing the existing ordinance and adopting the updated version in full.

Mr. Rice made a motion to approve the draft ordinance to be sent to Indiana DNR for their approval. Ms. Slee seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless - *yes*
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *yes*
- ✓ Sam Hann – *no*
- ✓ Chris Hickman – *yes*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *yes*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *yes*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *yes*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *yes*

6. Staff Reports Monthly Report

Mr. Campbell presented the monthly permit activity and financial reports. Permit numbers are up by 61 from the previous year, and revenues are also increased. Variance applications remain lower than last year's unusually high volume.

Complaints Update

Mr. Campbell reported the following:

- 27 active confirmed complaints
- 12 in legal
- 2 unsafe premises
- 20 on monitoring status
- 59 complaints were rolled over
- 43 new complaints have been received in 2025
- 41 complaints have been closed

Mr. Campbell continued with reassessments as follows:

- 23 rolled over from 2024
 - 2 remain open
- 47 new received in 2025
 - 13 remain open

7. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Vogel moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by all members voting "aye." The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

Others Present: Cheryl Ridgeway, Brian Ridgeway, Mike Thompson, Josh Leffell, Clark Kirkman, Sukhjinder Singh, Brian Searing, Constance Searing, Rana Poe, Michael Poe

(bac)