

Wabash County Plan Commission

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Wabash County Plan Commission Board – Meeting Minutes

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

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

Tuesday, November 7, 2024

1. Call To Order

Randy Curless, PC Chairman, called to order the Plan Commission Board meeting at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call

Jennifer Hicks, BZA Secretary, called roll:

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

Jennifer Hicks declared a quorum was present.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 5, 2024

Joe Vogel made a motion to approve the minutes from September 5, 2024.

Sam Hann seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

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

The motion to approve the minutes passed 5-0-1.

4. Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 12, 2024

Approval of September 12, 2024 tabled until December PC meeting.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes – October 3, 2024

Approval of October 3, 2024 tabled until December PC meeting.

6. Monthly Report

- ❖ Monthly Report read by Brian Campbell
 - No Action Needed

7. Old Business

❖ **25 North Perch Drive, Mary Chandler - Unsafe Premise Order Hearing:**

A continuous enforcement order was presented following a hearing on October 3rd. Mark Frantz explained that the order is a record of the hearing and a necessary step in the process of demolishing a building. The property is the Twin Lakes property with the mobile home, located at the corner of Perch and St Rd 114 near Disco.

Jeff Dawes made a motion to approve the continuous enforcement order.

Sam Hann seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

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

The motion to approve the minutes passed 6-0.

❖ **Special Exception #15 - Mark Buckingham, Lagro Township:**

The request to build and operate a water bottle cleaning facility in an AG 2 zone district had been withdrawn. No action was taken as the request was withdrawn after being continued to this meeting.

❖ **Ordinance Review by Banning Engineering:**

Joe Miller of Banning Engineering presented a proposal to review the county's zoning ordinance. The review would identify potential issues, recurring problems, and areas for improvement, drawing comparisons with other communities. Cheri Slee explained that funds were available for this review, and it is partially motivated by feedback received since adopting a new comprehensive plan. Discussion ensued regarding the high number of variance requests (49 for the year, with approximately 95% approved), indicating potential issues with the current ordinance.

Joe Vogel made a motion for a favorable recommendation to ask the commissioners to move forward with the ordinance review by Benning Engineering

Sam Hann seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

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

The motion to approve the minutes passed 6-0.

8. New Business

❖ **Special Exception #16 with variance – Roann Park Committee/Town of Roann:**

The Town of Roann/Roann Park Committee requests to build a detention pond with an area greater than 400 sq ft with a variance for the east property line setback. The pond, designed by an engineer and approved by the drainage board, would be located east of the ball diamond's backstop. The property is technically in the county, not the town limits, due to a past annexation error. The town intends to annex the area in the future, along with other areas.

Sam Hann made a motion to provide a favorable recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Jeff Dawes seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

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

The motion to approve the minutes passed 6-0.

❖ **Special Exception #17 – Bass & Bucks, Noble Township:**

Request to operate a firearm manufacturing and assembly business in a zone not specifically authorized for such use. Glenn Butcher, Bass & Bucks Owner, explained that they currently have a Class 1 firearm license but need a Class 7 manufacturing license due to the modular nature of TC Arms products. The request is for assembly only, not machining or building. Discussion likened the request to a similar one approved a year prior.

Mike Ruse made a motion to provide a favorable recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Joe Vogel seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

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

The motion to approve the minutes passed 6-0.

9. Other Business

❖ **Moratorium on Carbon Capture and Sequestration:** Discussion initiated due to public inquiries about a potential moratorium on carbon capture and sequestration projects. A draft proposal for a temporary moratorium was presented, citing the lack of regulations in the current zoning ordinance. Representatives from Poet and Vault 44.01 (Aaron Kuhn and Hugh Caperton) attended spontaneously to provide information about their project. The project aims to capture and store carbon dioxide underground, potentially offering long-term benefits to the biofuel industry and local economy. Vault 44.01 is working on multiple similar projects across North America. Extensive Q&A with Poet and Vault 44.01 representatives covered topics including:

- Project safety and risk mitigation

- Timeline (estimated 2.5-4 years before a project could come online in Wabash County)
- Voluntary participation of landowners (currently at 10%, with a goal of 100%)
- Comparison to other carbon capture projects
- Impact on groundwater
- Use of tax credits
- Measurement of carbon
- Monitoring of injection wells
- Economic development potential
- Transparency and public engagement

The board decided to table the moratorium discussion pending further information gathering and public meetings. Poet and Vault 44.01 offered to host informational meetings for the board and the public.

❖ **Exterior Remodel Permits**

Discussion regarding the \$20 fee for exterior remodel permits (siding, roofing, windows, doors). Concerns raised about the fee's necessity and enforcement, given limited resources and the prevalence of unpermitted work.

Sam had made a motion to remove the residential exterior remodel permit from the fee schedule.

Cheri Slee seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

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

The motion to approve the minutes passed 6-0.

❖ **Countywide Complaint Update**

Brian Campbell provided an update on countywide complaints.

There are 39 open complaints, including those rolled over from 2023. 43 complaints were rolled over from 2023, 27 of those 43 have been closed so far this year. 64 new complaints have been received in 2024; 41 of which have been closed. There has been a total of 107 complaints worked in 2024 with 68 resolved.

❖ **Public Comment – Long Lake/LR1 Zoning Areas**

Dave Terflinger updated the board on the DNR's establishment of a line of demarcation between county and DNR responsibility at Long Lake. He requested that this be included in the ordinance review to clarify jurisdiction.

❖ **Public Comment – 25 North Perch Drive**

Lisa Evans, a Twin Lakes resident, inquired about the timeline for cleanup of the unsafe property located at 25 N Perch Dr. Discussion was had regarding ownership of the property and the responsibility of the clean-up. Mark Frantz explained that Mary Chandler, despite being deceased, is still the legal owner. The bank has a lien on the property, but is not the owner. Mark Frantz estimated potential cleanup by March, pending legal processes.

10. Adjournment

Joe Vogel made a motion to adjourn. Mike Ruse seconded the motion.

The meeting adjourned at 9:18pm.