



Wabash County Plan Commission

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Wabash County Plan Commission – Meeting Minutes

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

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

Thursday, May 7, 2026

1. Call To Order

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

2. Roll Call

Ms. Hicks, Plan Commission Secretary called roll:

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

Ms. Hicks declared a quorum was present.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes –

Minutes from the April 2, 2026 meeting were presented. Mr. Rice made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Mr. Hann seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless – *yes*
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *yes*
- ✓ Sam Hann – *yes*
- ✓ Chris Hickman – *abstain*
- ✓ 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. Cambell noted there are no major new updates on the property. He stated he plans to

contact Mr. Shane to discuss the final seeding to be able to close out the unsafe premise order demolition order. It was brought up the concern with seeding the property is the ongoing maintenance and mowing of the property. The Plan Commission approved moving 25 N Perch Dr to the monitor list and allow Mr. Campbell to close it out as deemed necessary after the completion of the terms from the demolition contract with Mr. Shane.

Ordinance Review

Mary Strawder with Banning Engineering presented a proposal to assist Assistant Director Jennifer Hicks in updating and reformatting the comprehensive zoning ordinance. The project involves breaking down the existing text via Excel into a more user-friendly, consistent document consisting of approximately 10 chapters, without executing structural text amendments. Because Ms. Hicks' extensive preliminary work successfully reduced the overall consulting costs, resulting in a total of \$20,000.

Mr. Rice asked if there was funding available for the proposal. Mr. Campbell stated the funds are not in the current budget, but an appropriation could be requested. Mr. Hann noted that there were some funds earmarked from the Commissioner's budget. Mr. Ruse asked to confirm this would cover everything that needed to be done with the ordinance. Mr. Campbell confirmed that the office staff is hopeful that this revision would resolve a multitude of issues with the current ordinance.

Mr. Rice made a motion to request the funds from the Council/Commissioners. 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.

Unsafe Premise Order – Ezra & Laura Gahl

Mr. Campbell explained the main bulk of the property has been cleared, with only minor areas holding water and small patches of recycled material remaining. Because the site is no longer deemed actively unsafe, the board directed Brian to move both the property to a monitor status and close the order internally without requiring further monthly board reports.

BESS / Data Center Draft Ordinance

Mr. Campbell explained to the Commission that he spoke with a few peers from around the state and based on their guidance, he feels it would be best to regulate BESS and Data Centers separately to simplify any future amendments. He did note that it was discovered that BESS are mentioned and regulated by the current Commercial Solar Energy ordinance.

Mr. Campbell noted that the Data Center Moratorium was tabled at the April meeting. Mr. Frantz advised the Commission that they would need to approve the proposal for the Data Center Moratorium then take it to a public hearing.

Mr. Rice made a motion to approve the moratorium proposal and schedule a public hearing. Mr. Vogel 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.

Sandy Beach Dumpster Request

Mr. Campbell reminded the Commission of a request he had received from the public requesting funding a dumpster to aid in the clean-up of the Sandy Beach area. Mr. Campbell stated that after speaking with the County Auditor, it was determined that the current funds budgeted for dumpsters was to be used for unsafe premises only, not for general clean-up. It was discussed that if the County or Plan Commission wishes to pursue future cleanups, a general budget line item would need to be included in the budget and requested through the county council during the upcoming budget cycle. No action was taken on the current funding request.

5. New Business

Carbon Capture and Sequestration Ordinance Amendment

Mr. Curless read a statement notifying those in attendance the this is not a public hearing regarding the proposed ordinance; it is the formal acceptance of the proposal received from the Carbon Capture and Sequestration Committee.

Mr. Campbell explained that in order to schedule the public hearing, a formal acceptance and approval of the draft ordinance was required. Mr. Rice asked if there were any changes. Mr. Campbell stated there had been no changes to the draft that was sent from the committee. It was discussed that it was requested to put Soil and Water back into the ordinance in regards to assisting with soil monitoring plans, as well as removing the fee per ton of carbon sequestered in order to put that amount in the fee schedule.

Mr. Rice made a motion to accept the draft ordinance with the addition of Soil & Water and moving the fee for each ton of carbon sequestered to the fee schedule. 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.

Fee Schedule Amendments

Ms. Hicks presented the Commission with a proposed new fee schedule format and adjustments to the current fees. While adjusting the formatting for easier readability, several inconsistencies were noted. Fees for lean-tos and private greenhouses were brought in line with the rest of the schedule, utilizing the standard \$0.05 per square foot for unfinished structures and \$0.07 per square foot for finished structures.

Additionally, Ms. Hicks explained that nearly one year ago the fee scheduled was changed to a flat fee for variance, special exception, vacation, and rezoning requests. The new format is working out well; however, staff is requesting to adjust the fee that the initial \$100 flat fee covers up to three requests on a single parcel. Any requests over the initial \$100 will incur an additional \$25 each to cover the added paperwork, time, longer legal ad, etc. Furthermore, it was requested to increase the penalty for “after-the-fact” variances and special exceptions be added to the main fee schedule. To discourage property owners from building first and seeking approval later, the penalty was increased to \$250 plus the variance or special exception fee. For non-profit and government entities it was agreed upon to charge only \$50 for a variance or special exception to cover the cost of the legal ads and mailers, which the office staff takes care of for the petitioner.

Carbon Capture and Sequestration Fee Schedule

Ms. Hicks explained the need to add Carbon Capture and Sequestration related projects to the fee schedule. After reviewing the draft ordinance from the CCS Committee, Ms. Hicks pulled any area where it was mentioned about fees for CCS projects. It was recommended that the Special Exception application for CCS project be consistent with any other special exception request at \$100; however, there are several other portions of the project that the ordinance requires fees.

The recommended fees are an initial deposit of \$100,000 into a separate review escrow fund to cover independent, third-party technical reviews, which much be replenished by the applicant if the balance drops too low, a one-time ILP fee of \$25,000 plus \$250 per well, an annual administrative oversight fee of \$10,000 to cover localized reporting, data verification, and coordination with other county agencies, and a monitoring fee of \$0.40 per injected ton to build a dedicated long-term fund, ensuring local taxpayers are not burdened with monitoring costs that fall outside of the state coverage after a facility ceases injection.

Ms. Hicks reminded the Commission that having the fees on the fee schedule rather than in the zoning ordinance makes future adjustments easier.

Mr. Ruse made a motion to approve all of the proposed changes to the fee schedule. Mr. Hickman 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.

6. Staff Reports

Monthly Report

Mr. Campbell presented the March and April monthly reports.

Complaints

Mr. Campbell presented the Commission with the current complaint and reassessment numbers.

7. Other Business

Assessor's Office Request

Mr. Campbell informed the Commission that there was a request from the Assessor's office to include the estimated cost of construction projects for taxing purposes. Mr. Campbell reminded the Commission that without a building department, nothing on the inside is inspected or regulated (other than requiring septic or sewer information for bedrooms and bathrooms). Mr. Campbell did inform the Commission that the office does require structure drawings for new homes and commercial structures, for sheds and simple pole barns or homeowner-built structures it's a little harder. Additionally, he mentioned that there are too many variables when it comes to some construction projects.

Ms. Slee mentioned the issue with people applying for permits for pole barns then converting them to living space without notification.

Mr. Vogel mentioned that a Building Inspector would need to be the one going and checking the properties for if a structure is converted or changed from the original plans. Mr. Campbell confirmed that those types of inspections or checks are outside of the realm of the office knowledge.

Public Question

A member of the public asked if the Carbon Capture and Sequestration draft ordinance would be on the county's website for review before the public hearing. They were informed it would be as soon as a location was secured and the date set.

8. Adjournment

With no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Vogel made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by all members voting "aye." The meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.