

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, Mike Ruse, Geoff Schortgen, Cheri Slee, Joe Vogel

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

Thursday, March 6, 2025

1. Call To Order

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

2. Roll Call

Jennifer Hicks, PC Secretary, called roll:

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

Jennifer Hicks declared a quorum was present.

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 6, 2025

The Minutes from the February 6, 2025 meeting were presented. Mr. Joe Vogel made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Mr. Jeff Dawes seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless – *abstain*
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *yes*
- ✓ Mark Milam – *yes*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *yes*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *yes*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *abstain*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *yes*

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Monthly Report

- ❖ Ms. Hicks stated that the next PC meeting would have the monthly reports for February and March.

5. Old Business

❖ **Unsafe Premise Order – 25 N Perch Dr, Mary Chandler, et al.**

- Mr. Mark Frantz provided an update on the property at 25 N Perch Dr. There isn't much of an update due to waiting for the courts and mandatory waiting periods. He expects to have more of an update next month.

❖ **Ordinance Review – Banning Engineering**

- Ms. Hicks notified the board that the PC office received a communication from Banning that they were running a little behind, but that they are still working on the current zoning ordinance. Hopefully there will be more to report next month.

6. New Business

❖ **SE-25-002 – Property Owner, Lagro Township**

- The property owner was not present at the meeting. Mr. Vogel made a motion to continue SE-25-002 until the April meeting. Mr. Dawes seconded the motion.

Jennifer Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless – yes
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – yes
- ✓ Mark Milam – yes
- ✓ Doug Rice – yes
- ✓ Mike Ruse – yes
- ✓ Cheri Slee – yes
- ✓ Joe Vogel – yes

The motion passed unanimously.

7. Other Business

❖ **Countywide Complaint Update**

Ms. Hicks provided an update on countywide complaints.

There are currently 37 complaints open, including 31 rolled over from 2024. 14 are currently with legal counsel. 10 have been closed so far in 2025.

❖ **Public Comment**

- Ms. Ridgeway, Wabash County Resident, spoke with concern regarding Wabash City's Solar Ordinance and their use of prime farm ground in the buffer zone. She asked if the city has to stay within the 2,000 acres stated in the Wabash County ordinance. Mr. Frantz answered by saying, no, however, the acreage they use is counted in the total for the county so if the city allows 2,500 acres of solar in the buffer zone, then the county would not be able to permit any solar due to being over 2,000 acres within the county as a whole.
- Ms. Ridgeway continued by asking if the solar companies would be able to get tax abatements. Mr. Frantz answered that it would be a question for County Council, as the Plan Commission doesn't handle tax abatements. Ms. Ridgeway continued by asking if the city or the county would get incentives for solar in the buffer zone. She also asked who monitors leases in county areas and since the county maintains the roadways, but the city is wanting to approve the solar who would handle it. Mr. Frantz stated that even in the buffer zone the county maintains the roadways so the county then would enforce something along those lines. Ms. Ridgeway asked how would the county know what to enforce if the city doesn't share the contracts with the

county and what would happen if the solar company just walks away. Mr. Frantz stated that hopefully the landowner read the lease and are covered.

- Discussions regarding solar in Wabash City's buffer zone continued including more regarding tax abatements, incentives, taxes, and if a bond would be required. Due to not having a solar ordinance from the city, the majority of the questions could not be answered with specifics.
- Mr. Dawes asked about taking away the buffer zone. Mr. Frantz stated the county and the city have a joint comprehensive plan and there would need to be an ordinance.
- Ms. Ridgeway asked if there was anything in the comprehensive plan regarding preserving farm ground.
- ❖ Mr. Curless asked if there was any other public comments or questions.
 - There were none.

10. Adjournment

- ❖ Mr. Vogel made a motion to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 7:27pm.

Also present: Cheryl Ridgeway, David Pyle, Dave Blocher, Suzanne Peebles, Cheryl Ross, David Terflinger