

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, June 5, 2025

1. Call To Order

Mr. Mark Milam, PC Co-Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll Call

Jennifer Hicks, PC Secretary, called roll:

- ✓ Randy Curless – *absent*
- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *present*
- ✓ Sam Hann – *present – arrived at 7:10pm; present thereafter*
- ✓ Mark Milam – *present*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *present*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *present*
- ✓ Geoff Schortgen – *present via zoom*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *present*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *present*

3. Approval of Meeting Minutes – May 1, 2025

Motion:

Mr. Vogel made a motion to approve the minutes.

Mr. Rice seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Jeff Dawes – *yes*
- ✓ Sam Hann - **not yet present*
- ✓ Mark Milam – *yes*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *yes*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *yes*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *yes*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *yes*

The motion passed unanimously.

4. Monthly Report

Mr. Campbell presented the monthly financial and permitting report, noting variance requests remain consistent year-over-year, with 17 received as of this date both this year and last year. Additionally permit revenue is currently \$2,701.49 higher than the same period last year.

No action was required; the report was presented for informational purposes only.

Mr. Campbell invited the board to suggest any additional data they would like to see included in future reports.

5. Old Business

Unsafe Premise – 25 N Perch Dr. (Mary Chandler)

Mr. Milam opened discussion on the unsafe premises order for 25 N Perch Drive.

Mr. Frantz reported that the court has issued a default judgment, allowing the County to proceed with demolition. He and Mr. Campbell have been preparing the necessary documentation, with the goal of obtaining bids and moving forward within the next month or two.

Mr. Campbell noted a recent call from a neighbor expressing concern about illegal dumping and small fires occurring on the property. The neighbor also indicated interest in purchasing the lot. Mr. Campbell emphasized the urgency of cleaning up the site to reduce hazards and stabilize the neighborhood.

Zoning Ordinance Update – Banning Engineering

Mr. Campbell reported on a meeting earlier that day with Banning Engineering regarding the ongoing zoning ordinance review. Banning provided a prioritized list of recommended changes categorized as high, medium, and low priority. Highlights included:

- 173 high-priority items
- 123 medium-priority items
- 93 low-priority items
- 52 items flagged for further questions
- 17 items not yet categorized

Mr. Campbell and Ms. Hicks will begin reviewing and editing the ordinance. These drafts will be reviewed internally and, as needed, returned to Banning for additional input.

Particular concern was expressed regarding Chapter 5 (Development Standards), which contains 84 suggested changes and significant redundancy. Chapter 11 followed with 48 recommended changes. Mr. Campbell noted the need to focus on making the ordinance practical and efficient, prioritizing sections relevant to daily operations rather than purely reducing length or complexity.

He concluded by stating that a revised draft will be shared with the board once ready.

Fee Schedule Review and Update – Special Exceptions, Variances, Vacations, and Rezones

Mr. Milam opened discussion on the ongoing review of the department's fee schedule.

Mr. Campbell summarized prior research, noting that the board had previously reviewed fee schedules from larger and smaller communities across Indiana. The most recent handout included a broader mixture of counties for comparison, organized alphabetically with itemized fees for various zoning-related applications.

The board discussed whether to revise the existing fee structure, particularly regarding the collection of mailer and newspaper ad fees. Current ordinance language requires fees to be paid at the time of application submission; however, the actual costs of ads and mailers are unknown until quotes are received from vendors. As a result, the department has historically invoiced applicants after submission, with payment due prior to the meeting. This approach conflicts with ordinance language but has worked well for applicants and staff.

Mr. Campbell and Ms. Hicks explained that:

- Fees vary depending on the number of mailers and publication charges.
- Averaged data shows typical combined costs as follows:
 - **Special Exception:** ~\$96.91
 - **Variance:** ~\$82.36
 - **Rezone:** ~\$140
 - **Vacation:** ~\$185 (includes a \$25 recording fee)

The board acknowledged that:

- Charging up front is difficult due to unknown final costs.
- Issuing a flat fee might simplify the process and eliminate under- or over-charging.
- A few applicants have canceled late, leaving the county unreimbursed for incurred ad and mailing costs.

Ms. Hicks raised concerns about possible complications for the Auditor's office if partial reimbursements were issued. Mr. Ruse suggested collecting a deposit; however, the logistics and administrative burden were considered problematic.

After discussion, Mr. Rice made a motion for the following **flat fee structure** for ease of use and cost recovery:

- **Special Exceptions:** \$100
- **Variances:** \$100
- **Rezoning:** \$200
- **Vacations:** \$200

Mr. Milam asked for clarification that these fees would cover mailing and publication costs. Mr. Campbell confirmed, with the exception that vacation applications include an additional recording fee, which is now built into the \$200 flat rate.

Motion

Mr. Rice made a motion to adopt the updated flat fee structure as listed above

Ms. Slee seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

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

The motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Campbell clarified that the fee schedule is separate from the ordinance and may be updated without formal ordinance amendment. Mr. Hann requested the new fee schedule be reviewed annually.

6. New Business

SE-25-005 – Fred & Rhonda Webb – Request to maintain livestock (chickens) in a residentially zoned district

Address: 356 E 500 N, Urbana, Lagro Township

Mr. Campbell explained that while the property is currently zoned R1, it was previously zoned Agricultural. The property lies outside the town limits and is surrounded by agricultural land. When the zoning maps were updated under the current ordinance, several properties, including the Webbs', were reclassified to residential without input from landowners.

Due to the change in zoning, the Plan Commission Office advised Mr. Webb an approval to maintain the livestock, in the now residentially zoned area, would be required. Therefore, Mr. Webb filed a Special Exception application.

Board members discussed the unusual zoning change, and several agreed that properties such as this, with longstanding agricultural use, should likely have remained agricultural.

Motions:

- Mr. Rice made a motion to send a *favorable recommendation* for the special exception to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Seconded by Mr. Vogel.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

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

The motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Rice also made a motion to *waive all fees* for the special exception request.

Seconded by Mr. Dawes. Motion passed.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

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

The motion passed unanimously.

7. Other Business

Complaint Update

Mr. Campbell provided an update on code enforcement and complaints:

- 59 complaints rolled over from 2024
- 23 new complaints filed in 2025
- 33 currently active
- 2 unsafe premise orders issued
- 14 legal actions pending
- 17 total complaints resolved in 2025
- 15 properties currently under monitoring
- 81 total complaints worked in 2025

Mr. Vogel inquired about a complaint raised by Mr. Terflinger at the last BZA meeting. Mr. Campbell responded that the subject of that complaint has filed for a variance, which will be heard at the upcoming BZA meeting. Issues related to the structure and rocks have been partially addressed.

Linkenhoker and Gahl Properties – Update on Enforcement Orders

Mr. Campbell gave updates on the two properties:

- Gahl Property (140 W M Sims, Servia):
Structure has been partially demolished, but significant debris remains. Cleanup progress is slow. A *continuous enforcement order* will be issued. A letter will also be sent requiring attendance at the July 3rd meeting if cleanup is not completed by July 1st.
- Linkenhoker Property (57 E Geary St, Ijamsville):
Demolition has been largely completed, with minor debris remaining. The site is nearly in compliance aside from final grading and seeding. A *continuous enforcement order* will be issued with a letter indicating that if cleanup is completed before the July meeting, attendance may not be required.

Motions:

- Ms. Slee moved to approve the *continuous enforcement order* for Ezra and Loretta Gahl. Seconded by Mr. Vogel.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

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

The motion passed unanimously.

- Mr. Dawes moved to approve the *continuous enforcement order* for Miriam Linkenhoker. Seconded by Mr. Hann.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

- ✓ Jeff Dawes – yes
- ✓ Sam Hann - yes
- ✓ Mark Milam – yes

- ✓ Doug Rice – yes
- ✓ Mike Ruse – yes
- ✓ Cheri Slee – yes
- ✓ Joe Vogel – yes

The motion passed unanimously.

No civil penalties were imposed for either case.

Carbon Sequestration Moratorium – Committee Formation Discussion

Mr. Campbell reported that the County Commissioners approved a moratorium on carbon capture and sequestration. The Plan Commission must now determine how to proceed with ordinance development. Discussion included:

- Whether to create a committee or involve the full board
- Holding public “work sessions” where the public may attend but not comment
- Concerns about delays or lack of quorum over summer months
- Timeline considerations: a moratorium should not extend beyond 6–12 months without clear progress

Mr. Frantz advised that while the state’s final rules are pending, Wabash County can begin working on its ordinance using the draft regulations already available.

Mr. Campbell confirmed he would consult with Chair Randy to determine the path forward.

8. Adjournment

Mr. Vogel made a motion to adjourn.

Seconded by Mr. Rice.

Meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Also Present: Fred Webb, Steve Hicks, via zoom Dave’s Phone

(bac)