



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, August 7, 2025

1. Call To Order

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

2. Roll Call

Ms. Hicks, Plan Commission Secretary called roll:

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

3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes – July 3, 2025

The minutes from the July 3, 2025 meeting were presented for approval.

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

Ms. Hicks called roll:

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

The motion carried.

4. Old Business

Unsafe Premise Order – 25 N. Perch Street, Mary Chandler

Mr. Campbell reported that demolition and cleanup of the unsafe mobile home had been awarded to Chuck Shane, who signed the contract on July 8 with a completion deadline of September 8. Work was nearly complete, and the contractor anticipated finishing by the end of

the week. Staff would verify final cleanup but expected the project to be completed within the contract timeframe.

Ordinance Review

Staff provided an update on the zoning ordinance review with Banning Engineering. Current efforts are focused on reformatting Chapter 5, particularly consolidating redundant development standards into a single page per zoning district. Staff is also redlining issues identified both by Banning and through office experience. The majority of revisions are expected in Chapter 5, with progress hoped for by the September meeting so draft changes can be reviewed by the Commission.

5. New Business

SE-25-007 – Jonathan & Lisa Engle, Noble Township

Request: Special Exception request to build a pond in an A2 zoning district with a variance from the development standards to place a pond closer to a side (south) property line than permitted by ordinance.

Mr. Campbell introduced the request, noting that Mr. Engle filed on July 11, 2025 for a special exception to reconstruct a pond on their property. Historical aerial imagery from the 1970s and 1980s confirmed that a pond had previously existed in the same general location. The petitioner provided current photos and a site plan as part of the application.

The petitioners had obtained a favorable recommendation from the Wabash County Drainage Board on July 21, 2025. Staff reported that the location appeared generally suitable but advised that portions of the pond may not meet the required 105-foot setback from property lines. Measurements indicated that the pond edge might be only 45–50 feet from the southern property line, which would require a variance in addition to the special exception. Staff recommended approval of the special exception, with the setback variance to be addressed by the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The Commission reviewed the maps and discussed the proposed pond location and dimensions. Members noted the need for accurate measurements to ensure the variance request reflected the actual encroachment. The petitioner confirmed that the earthwork would be contracted out rather than performed personally.

No remonstrators appeared, and no written objections were received.

Mr. Ruse made a motion for a favorable recommendation to the Board of Zoning Appeals. Mr. Hann seconded the motion.

Ms. Hicks called roll:

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

The motion carried.

Introduction of New Member

Chairman Curless introduced Chris Hickman as the newest member of the Plan Commission. Mr. Hickman was appointed by the Wabash County Commissioners to replace Christian Rosen and this meeting marked his first as a voting member. The Commission welcomed him to the board.

6. Staff Reports

Monthly Report

Mr. Campbell presented the monthly financial and permit activity reports. Permit revenues were down compared to the same period in 2024, largely due to a decrease in new single-family dwelling permits, which generate higher fees than accessory structures. Five major permits had been issued by this time last year, compared to fewer in 2025.

Mr. Campbell also reported a bookkeeping error discovered in the Unsafe Premise Fund, where \$31.20 was mistakenly disbursed from the General Fund. The error was corrected prior to audit. Charts comparing permit activity and income breakdown from 2024 and 2025 were provided for review.

Complaints Update

Mr. Campbell reported 36 active confirmed complaints, including 2 unsafe premises. One unsafe case had been closed, but a new one was recently opened. 12 complaints were in legal proceedings, and 6 new 2025 complaints had been resolved. Including rollover cases, 23 total complaints had been resolved in 2025.

Mr. Campbell noted that reassessments were generating frequent new cases, typically 3–6 per week, related to unpermitted structures. Letters were being sent in bulk to affected property owners to bring them into compliance. Only 2–3 cases from 2024 remained unresolved.

7. Other Business

Agenda Updates

Staff informed the Commission that agendas will now list members' names with their term expiration dates, per a new state requirement. This formatting will serve as both compliance and a reminder for upcoming term renewals.

Public Comment

Mr. David Terflinger addressed the Commission regarding a zoning clarification dispute on a pergola structure at 64 W. Lakeside Drive. He recounted filing a complaint in July 2024 and raised concerns that the ordinance had been misinterpreted in determining setbacks for lakefront properties. He argued that a footnote in the ordinance chart required a 35-foot setback from the high-water mark, which he believed had been overlooked.

Staff and Commission members explained that the permit was issued based on the director's interpretation of the ordinance and that the proper procedure to appeal that decision was through the Board of Zoning Appeals. Commission members also acknowledged that inconsistencies in the ordinance exist and that Banning Engineering's ongoing review is expected to clarify terms such as "open" in the setback tables.

Other residents present expressed concern about the appeal process and fees, while staff reiterated that appeal fees are refundable if an appeal is upheld. The Commission agreed that ordinance clarity is needed and reaffirmed that the matter will be addressed in the zoning ordinance review process.

With no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Ruse moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously, with all members voting “aye.” The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:39 p.m.

Others Present: Steve Hicks, Tami Hickman, David Terflinger, Cheryl Ross, Jon Engle, Cheryl Ridgeway, Nicky Burnsworth, Bill Burnsworth