



# 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, September 4, 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*
- ✓ Chris Hickman – *present*
- ✓ Mark Milam – *absent*
- ✓ Doug Rice – *absent*
- ✓ Mike Ruse – *present*
- ✓ Geoff Schortgen – *present*
- ✓ Cheri Slee – *present*
- ✓ Joe Vogel – *present*

### **3. Approval of the Meeting Minutes – August 7, 2025**

The minutes of the August 7, 2025 meeting were not reviewed due to a clerical error in distribution. Staff had provided the incorrect set of minutes to members. The August minutes will be reviewed at the October meeting.

### **4. Old Business**

#### **Unsafe Premise Order – 25 N. Perch Drive (Mary Chandler)**

Mr. Campbell reported that the property has been cleaned and demolition completed. The contractor requested to delay seeding due to dry weather conditions but committed to finishing once rain was forecast. Payment had been issued and neighbors expressed no concerns. The Commission agreed no further action was required until seeding was complete, at which point the case would be formally closed.

#### **Ordinance Review with Banning Engineering**

Mr. Campbell presented a summary of proposed revisions to Chapter 5 of the zoning ordinance. The reformatting consolidates development standards into single-page summaries for each zoning district, with updated diagrams and clearer tables. Staff noted that a significant number of variances in recent years were related to setbacks, especially side yards and roadway setbacks

in residential areas. Proposed changes aim to reduce unnecessary variance filings while preserving safety and compatibility.

Other discussion points included:

- Consideration of minimum lot sizes in AG-1 to preserve farmland while maintaining practical parcel sizes.
- Clarifying setback language in residential lakefront districts.
- Reviewing permitted uses in FRC (Forest, Recreation, Conservation) zones, where current language is inconsistent.

Staff emphasized that all proposed changes are still in draft form, shown in redline for Commission review. Board members were encouraged to provide feedback as the process continues.

**Unsafe Premise Order – 140 W. Sims Street, Servia (Ezra & Loretta Gahl)**

Staff provided photographs showing substantial cleanup progress. Remaining items were sorted into piles of recyclable metal, wood, and concrete. The property otherwise appeared satisfactory. The Commission commended the owners for their efforts. Staff will continue monitoring to ensure piles are removed, but no further hearings are required unless compliance stalls.

**5. New Business**

**Unsafe Premise Order – 535 E. Pike Street, Roann (William & Monique Craft)**

Staff reported that repairs were underway on the home, with roof shingles removed, sheathing replaced where necessary, and underlayment installed in preparation for a new metal roof. The owners had been in consistent contact with staff and were cooperating to bring the property into compliance. The Commission agreed that continued monitoring was sufficient and that the owners would not be required to appear again unless further issues arise.

**SE-25-008 – Timothy Eviston, Pleasant Township**

**Request:** *Special Exception to allow the construction of a pond exceeding 400 square feet in an A1 zoning district, with associated variance request for setbacks.*

The petitioner requested approval to construct a pond at 5135 E. 400 S. The pond excavation would provide fill material for a new pole barn. Due to the narrow lot dimensions, the pond could not meet the 105-foot setback from the property lines and roadway centerline. Staff explained that in addition to the special exception, a variance would be required to reduce setbacks. A protective berm would also be required between the roadway and the pond to minimize vehicle entry risks.

No remonstrators were present. The Commission discussed the proposed site plan, confirmed that the contractor (Eads Construction) was experienced, and noted compliance with drainage requirements.

Mr. Ruse made a motion for a Favorable Recommendation. Mr. Vogel seconded the motion. Ms. Hicks called roll:

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

✓ Joe Vogel – yes

## **6. Staff Reports**

### **Monthly Report**

Mr. Campbell presented the monthly permit activity and financial reports. Permit revenues remained consistent with prior months, with variance filings trending higher than average. The Commission also received an update on the approved 2026 budget, noting only minor adjustments from the Council.

An update was provided on unsafe premise collections, including payments received from a property in Wabash with an outstanding demolition judgment. Staff confirmed wage garnishments were in place to recoup costs.

Charts comparing year-to-date permit activity and variance totals for 2024 and 2025 were included in the packet for review.

### **Complaints Update**

Staff reported 49 total open complaints, including:

- 35 active confirmed complaints
- 12 in legal proceedings
- 2 unsafe premises
- 16 on monitoring status

Since January 1, 2025, the office has received 32 new complaints and resolved 26 cases. Only two reassessment-related complaints remain open from 2024; all others have been closed. Staff continues to send letters for reassessment-related violations, most of which involve unpermitted sheds or decks.

## **7. Adjournment**

With no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Vogel moved to adjourn. The motion was seconded by all members voting “aye.” The meeting adjourned at 7:38pm.

**Others Present:** Latheda Metzger, Ezra Gahl, Monique Craft, Nicky Burnsworth