

MUNSTER PLAN COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
Meeting Date: May 14, 2024

The announced meeting location was Munster Town Hall and could be accessed remotely via Zoom, a video conferencing application.

Call to Order: 7:30 pm by President Baker

Pledge of Allegiance

Members in Attendance:

Bill Baker
Jennifer Johns
Joseph Hofferth
Jonathan Petersen
George Shinkan
Roland Raffin

Members Absent:

Rachel Branagan (With Notice)

Staff Present:

Sergio Mendoza, Planning Director
David Wickland, Attorney

Approval of Minutes:

a. April 9, 2024, Draft Minutes

Motion: Mr. Raffin moved approve the April 9, 2024, minutes.

Second: Mr. Shinkan

Vote: Yes – 6 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries

Preliminary Hearings:

- a. PC24-005 PUD AMENDMENT: Jay Lieser with Maple Leaf Crossing, LLC, representing Maple Leaf Crossing Development is requesting to amend the Maple Leaf Crossing Planned Unit Development to modify the Signage Design Criteria of Lot 1, located at 9410 Calumet Avenue.**

Mr. Mendoza said he would turn this over to the applicant and their representative to discuss the project. He had not had the opportunity to review the application and research it thoroughly. President Baker asked if there someone that would like to help them understand what is going on.

David Beach of 1630 Cherry Blossom Drive introduced himself and said they are here today to specifically discuss 9410 Calumet Avenue which is the 60,000 square foot, four-story professional office building which had been approved by this Commission and by the Council 4 years ago. He said they want to discuss the signage on that building. The signage they have for the building is of the same design that you may have seen on Park West. He distributed photos of that sign as an example. He explained that this is signage that was done in 2006 so it has been up now for about 18 years. It consists of a metal aluminum lettering that is into the limestone. It has held up well over time; it has been a good design and has worked out well. When they went to design this office building, the architectural drawings and the renderings that they submitted to this Commission back in 2020 had the same design. He said, for the Board's recollection, he had a copy of what was

submitted to the Board in 2020. He distributed copies of this to each Board member for their review. He said this is the same drawing that accompanied the architectural plans that they submitted in 2020 and which were approved. The only difference between this rendering and what they are doing today is they have the actual names of the occupants of each of the suites. This building contains 16 individual suites, they are all occupied. Fifteen of these are condos that are owned by the occupant, and one is under a long-term, ten-year lease. He said, as you can see on the architectural drawings, all the windows are clad with black aluminum. The roof coping is black aluminum, and the letters match in the same color and in the same material as the windows and the coping. That was part of the architectural design they had submitted originally. Mr. Beach continued, and said your sign ordinance 701.c., states that no sign permit is required for signage which is made up of bronze or aluminum and is permanently affixed to the building as part of the architectural design. It is the same color, it is the same style, it was part of the design. He said what has happened most recently, now that all the suites are spoken for, they have been in touch with all (the tenants). He said he should point out that 9410 (Calumet Avenue) has its own POA and they have a more restrictive signage criteria than (the Town) has in its ordinance. They don't allow multiple colors, they don't allow neons, they don't allow backlighting; they don't allow a lot of the different materials that would pass the Munster signage ordinance. All that is allowed is the black aluminum lettering that matches both the window clad and the coping because that was part of the architect's design for the building. Mr. Beach ended his presentation by stating that his read of the code is that this does not require any permit but, obviously, that is up to you [the Board]. Now that they have presented it to all the occupants, they have one sign company that they have recommended. They have all approved that, they have gotten quotes for that, they'd like to put down deposits so they can start doing the fabricating and cut the metal letters that will be pinned into the building. They want to get the Board's blessing before they proceed.

President Baker asked the Board members if they had any questions for Mr. Beach. Mr. Raffin said that the staff hasn't had a chance to review this, but he was curious to know if meets the square footage requirements based on the building having sixteen signs. Mr. Beach said, as he understands the square footage requirements, if you are talking about, for instance, a band sign with a back panel behind it. He said the Town probably approved one like that for the BIBIBOP Asian Grill. There you have a big orange panel that has illuminated lettering on top of that. This doesn't have any of that, it is just the letters, there won't be a big panel. If you were looking at a band, it could stretch one hundred percent of the width of the building; they are not going to do that. It really doesn't fit into any of the criteria, it is part of the architectural design.

Mr. Wickland said he does agree with Attorney Beach so far. In other words, the law in Indiana in that regard says that the standards fixed in the subdivision code under Section B [I.C. 36-7-4-702] may be waived, which means that there is more flexibility in the Plan Commission. If they choose to go that route, then they would be sending a favorable recommendation to the Town Council. Mr. Raffin said the PUDs are totally different so they can assess signage differently. When you say square footage, you wouldn't want signage from one end of the building to the other end of the building. There must be some kind of square footage limitation because they couldn't go with 4 bands all the way around the building just for the signage. Mr. Raffin continued and said he is not saying that this doesn't look great, it is just that there must be some kind of square footage that they can look at for a sign, but he thinks it blends nicely with the building.

Mr. Beach said he should mention that all the lettering is going to be along the same height line; it is not going to vary from the first border, to the second, to the third. Everything is going to be the

same, not just the material but also the height line. Mr. Raffin noted that with the 16 condos sold, there is not the concern about changing poles [post/pins] and signs every two years and that should help. They are drilling into that stone and with the purchase of the condos, the turnover will be less. Mr. Beach said what they have sold to all the owners is the raw square footage and that was a significant investment. They have all had to finish out the interiors, which is doubly significant. They have several medical and professional companies that have made very substantial investments that are specific to their businesses. As to the pins, they are little holes that are drilled into the stone. If ten years from now somebody moves, these signs can be removed, or their holes can be filled so a new sign can go in the same place. These signs won't go on the stone, so they won't leave any markings on the stone. There will be a hole that should be unnoticeable to someone who walks by.

President Baker held up the 2019/2020 rendering of the building and stated that at that time each of the four stone panels on the façade had a sign on it, he asked if that is still the goal because what he sees in the presentation is that not all the stone panels have signage on them. Mr. Beach said that he believes they have at least one occupant who may not want a sign. They put it out to all the occupants and everyone, except one, agreed to this signage. The presentation picture shows what will be the actual signage with the names of the occupants. President Baker said there is a gap in one corner and two are missing from one side. He is assuming the building is full so there is enough signage, his question is whether it is going to be consistent around the building or is it going to be three, then two, and three and skip one. He reminded everyone that this has to do with aesthetics, and this is a high-profile Calumet Avenue location. It is a nice building, and it has a lot of what the Board originally approved but it has those gaps. Mr. Beach said the entire third floor is occupied by one individual who has finally signed on within the last two days and he [3rd floor tenant] had originally wanted more colorful signage which he was discouraged of and was reminded of their 9410 POA limits. President Baker asked for confirmation that each corner, all four, would be occupied as it related to the signage on the exterior. Ms. Johns also asked them to clarify that there will be no additional, that there will only be a total of 8 signs. Mr. Beach said there are eight on each side. Each floor is divided into four units so, on the north side you will see eight and on the south side you will see eight. Mr. Raffin said for next month, it might be easier to put the elevation on both sides to show that. Mr. Beach said the architect had done those renderings. Mr. Raffin said that a sign guy can do that, too. Ms. Johns asked if the image presented was the originally submitted plan. Mr. Beach said that what you see here today is what they submitted, which shows a rendering with the actual occupants. Mr. Raffin said a sign guy can also draw everything to scale so they can see the size of each one in relation to the others. Mr. Beach said he believes this is to scale but he couldn't say with certainty that is the case. President Baker asked if they are all the same height and length? Mr. Beach said the height is the same; the length may vary depending on how many letters are in the name. He said the spacing will be the same and they will all have the placement to the end of the building.

President Baker said if the Board had approved the PUD already, why are they amending it for what was on the original? Mr. Wickland said that is what we found. President Baker asked if this is a public sector matter? Ms. Johns asked how the signs would be justified, the ones on the left are all left justified, but will the signs on the right side be justified? Mr. Beach said that is correct in that all the signs will be outside justified. Mr. Raffin confirmed that the signs would line up the same, on the edge of the wall, Mr. Beach agreed.

President Baker asked if there were any additional discussion or questions. Mr. Wickland said by taking action tonight, you [the Board] are going to be waiving the Public Hearing and Notice

pursuant to our statute by Law [I.C. 36-7-4-702]. President Baker asked, since this is an Amendment to the PUD it is therefore a recommendation to the Town Council, correct? Attorney Wickland agreed. President Baker continued and noted this is for signage on the building and to make sure it is consistent, and it has symmetry. Mr. Lieser said they have one sign company that every suite owner signed on to. President Baker stated that with all that has been said, is there anything else? Mr. Shinkan said he would like to make to make motion and asked Attorney Wickland for guidance. Attorney Wickland asked Mr. Beach to clarify the characterization of this Amendment to the PUD. Attorney Beach replied to modify the signage design criteria.

Motion: Mr. Shinkan moved to send a FAVORABLE recommendation to the Town Council for PC 24-005 to modify the signage design criteria of Lot 1 located at 9410 Calumet Avenue.

Second: Dr. Hofferth

Vote: Yes –6 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries

Public Hearings: None

Findings of Fact:

- a. **PC24-001 PUD AMENDMENT:** Jason Spain with HWC Engineering, representing Lake Business Center (LBCOI) received a favorable recommendation to amend the Lake Business Center Planned Unit Development to modify LAKE BUSINESS CENTER SUBDIVISION, RESUBDIVISION, OF LOT 1, located at 9200 Calumet.

Motion: Mr. Raffin moved to approve the Findings of Fact for PC Docket No. 24-001.

Second: Dr. Hofferth.

Vote: Yes –6 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries

- b. **PC24-002 PRELIMINARY PLAT APPROVAL:** Jason Spain with HWC Engineering, representing Lake Business Center (LBCOI) received preliminary plat approval and final conditional plat approval for a 3-Lot Subdivision: Lot 1, Lot 3, and Outlot A of SECOND RE-SUBDIVISION OF LOT 1 OF LAKE BUSINESS CENTER SUBDIVISION, located at 9200 Calumet Avenue.

Motion: Mr. Raffin moved to approve the Findings of Fact for PC Docket No. 24-002.

Second: Mr. Shinkan

Vote: Yes –6 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries

Other Items/ Additional Items for Discussion:

- a. **Commission Training Opportunities**

President Baker called upon Mr. Mendoza for an update regarding training. He also acknowledged that he has seen an email on the matter and it appears that we will be spending a Saturday together. Mr. Mendoza agreed and stated, as previously requested, a Saturday training has been arranged. Ms. K. K. Fritz, FAICP was available on June 1st to offer training on the Citizen Planner program as well as presenting on planning and zoning processes. Mr. Mendoza continued by stating that they are currently working with the Town Council President, David Nellans, on securing a location and they will also

continue work with the Town Manager’s Office for lunch coordination. Mr. Mendoza anticipates we will have a 9:30am start time on Saturday, June 1, 2024. Training will run for about 4 hours with a break in between for a light lunch. Mr. Mendoza stated that due to an increase in training time, they were able to have expanded the topics with K.K. Fritz.

Mr. Shinkan said he will not be able to make it, he will be at a family wedding. Mr. Mendoza said they were concerned about training getting into graduation season and other summer events and they tried to keep training as early as possible in June.

Next Meeting: President Baker announced that the next Regular Business Meeting will be June 11, 2024.

Adjournment:

Motion: Mr. Raffin moved to adjourn.

Second: Ms. Johns

Vote: Yes – 6 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 7:50pm

President Bill Baker
Plan Commission

Date of Approval

Executive Secretary Sergio Mendoza
Plan Commission

Date of Approval