

MUNSTER BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING

Meeting Date: July 23, 2025

The Board of Zoning Appeals held a special meeting on July 23, 2025, at Munster Town Hall, 1005 Ridge Road, in the Main meeting room and could be accessed remotely via Zoom Webinar, a video conference application.

Call to Order: Member Raffin called the meeting to order at 6:08pm.

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

Roland R. Raffin, Member, Appointed by: Plan Commission, Initial Appointment: 08/20/2018-Term Expiration: 12/31/2025

Sharon A. Mayer, Member, Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 10/23/2000-Term Expiration: 12/31/2026

Jennifer Johns, Member, Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 06/01/2018-Term Expiration: 12/31/2027

Brad Hemingway, Member, Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 3/7/2022-Term Expiration: 12/31/2025

Dan Sharpe, Member, Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 07/07/25 Term Expiration: 12/31/27

Members in Attendance:

Roland Raffin

Sharon Mayer

Dan Sharpe

Members Absent:

Jennifer Johns

Brad Hemingway

Staff Present:

Sergio Mendoza, Planning Director

Nicole Bennett, Town Attorney

Denise Core, Administrative Assistant

Member Raffin confirmed we have a quorum.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: Member Mayer moved to accept the June 10, 2025; minutes as presented.

Second: Member Raffin seconded the motion.

Vote: Yes – 3 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

Preliminary Hearings:

Member Raffin introduced BZA25-004 USE VARIANCE: Andrew Syrios of Precision Control Systems, Inc. requests a variance from TABLE 26-6.405. A-6 DISTRICT STANDARDS, PRINCIPAL USE, LIGHT INDUSTRIAL USE CATEGORY to allow a Building Systems/Construction Business use at an existing building located at 10350 Calumet Avenue.

Director Mendoza reported that this site is located approximately northwest of the intersection of Calumet Avenue and Main Street. It is the old Harley Davidson building, just north of the gas station at the intersection. The applicant is with Precision Control Systems. They are an HVAC building systems construction company primarily dealing with commercial use. He said Andrew Syrios is here to present the project and could elaborate a little bit more on their goal. He said they'll relocate from several of their buildings and consolidate some of their offices into this location. They've indicated that they currently have about 60 office employees, 60 field employees, and they would require about 30 to 40 parking stalls. They would have 2 to 4 service vans, and deliveries are expected to be once or twice a week of various sizes. They're looking to move forward with this, however, prior to that, they require a use variance recommendation to the Town Council to allow a building systems construction business at this location. Member Raffin asked if the Board members had questions for staff. When there were no

questions, he said if anyone wanted to speak on behalf of Precision Control Systems, they could come to the microphone and state their name and address for the record.

Mr. Andrew Syrios introduced himself and thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak. He said their current office is at 405 East Ridge Road in Griffith. He distributed handouts he had prepared for this presentation showing some preliminary office plans and layouts. He said they are still playing with layouts for the facility and explained where they are in our process. They currently have an agreement for the sale in place and are working down parallel paths. They are looking at budgets for renovation while going through this process for a zoning change. He said the plans are very preliminary; a feasibility study more or less. He said Precision Control Systems is a 45-year-old, Northwest Indiana based, family-owned company. They perform temperature controls and mechanical HVAC service for commercial facilities like hospitals, schools, and commercial buildings. They are currently located in Griffith but have outgrown their facilities; they have a few employees working from rental spots in different areas around Griffith right now. He said their main territory is Northwest Indiana, and the south and southwest suburbs in Illinois. They plan to primarily occupy the office as an engineering and accounting office. He said in their office, right now, their employee count is in the mid-fifties; they have engineers, project managers, programmers, accounting, and staff to support the sales staff. In the field, they have pipe fitters and electricians that perform the work at various sites. He said the general plan under consideration is keeping the front office layout as open office space and adding some training rooms so they could open up the doors in the summer. That would mean converting the front area into a more traditional engineering office space and the back area would be their warehouse. He said it is more space than they need right now and it would be nice having them connected. He said they would store tools and things like PPE and gang boxes for job sites but the primary activity in the warehouse would be receiving the deliveries for their projects. This could be a lot of little boxes that may come palletized in bigger cardboard boxes which they would open, sort, and organize the parts into different projects. He said they have employees in the shop currently who may run parts out to the crews in the field. He addressed expected delivery questions by saying that they may get big tractor trailer deliveries, some days they have none and on a high traffic day we may have one or two. He said some of their field staff from Indiana may stop by the warehouse to pick up parts and things they need on the way to a customer site in Illinois. He said their architect did an analysis of the parking counts and they believe they're well within the Town ordinance or code on that front. He said people arrive between 6 and 8 in the morning, and they're typically gone between 4 and 6 at night. He said they are not planning to do anything on the exterior of the building but they will eventually work through putting up signage. He said they don't thrive off foot traffic so their signage is for identification. He said he would like to keep all the garage doors to have a nice lunch on a nice day or, depending on how the layout goes for training rooms, they may replace some of them with storefront windows that match what's there. They are not planning additions or major renovations that would change the general appearance. He said they would comply with the code for landscaping requirements. He concluded by saying that are excited and hope to be accepted as part of the Munster community where they work with a lot of the healthcare and related businesses and where they currently contribute to the Theater at the Center and the Northwest Indiana Symphony. They hold their annual Christmas party in Munster and their employees want to do a winter Golf League at the indoor golf simulator business here. He said they would be a good addition to Munster.

Member Mayer asked about the number of parking spaces. Mr. Syrios answered they are currently 72. Director Mendoza said staff had done an aerial calculation and came up with 65 parking spaces. He said they may want to do additional striping but the plan that was submitted shows 65. Mr. Syrios said the original plan was from a 2023 survey but he got a new one a few days ago that shows 72 but they will

verify that. Member Mayer said they have 60 office employees. Mr. Syrios said that was a rough number, they have less than that right now and the field techs just stop in or attend an office meeting. Member Sharpe asked if they are doing any kind of fabrication, Mr. Syrios answered that they don't do fabrication, it a non-production facility, solely warehouse. Member Sharpe asked if there were plans to store anything outside. Mr. Syrios said they keep a couple of spare vans which he sensed from an encounter in the hallway, may be a point of contention. He said they currently have 3 spare vans and a delivery pickup truck and if it were a point of contention, they could park them along the backside overnight, if spare vans are needed. He said that could be further evaluated depending on the final layout, it may be possible to store a vehicle on the north end but that may also obstruct the warehouse traffic patterns. In answer to Member Mayer's question, he said they are not planning to park any vehicles on the inside of the warehouse. Member Sharpe asked if the deliveries would be like UPS. Mr. Syrios said UPS and box trucks for the most part; a few times a week they may get a semi that will drop off a pallet. At their current location, they occasionally get a condensing unit that they would store at their current location. He said they are part of the Hill Mechanical Group so anything larger than that would be stored at their much larger facility. Member Raffin said what he was saying in the hallway is that this is one of the first buildings in Munster, this is a future medical campus all the way around here. He said he has lived within walking distance of this area for 20 years and he doesn't want to see semi-truck traffic coming out of a building that was built to be a retail office building. He said have manufacturing districts that are zoned manufacturing. He said there is empty property by 3 Floyds, a whole district off Superior. He said he was looking at their Griffith warehouse on Google Earth and there are 8 or 10 service vans all the way around there and he thinks they're creating a more industrial look on Calumet Avenue which is more of a business district. He said he would be a hard sell for him to rezone this to a manufacturing district when it has always been a commercial district. He said the traffic is bad enough without introducing more truck traffic to that area so it may not be the best fit for the area. Member Mayer said the building was built with that warehouse space and an industrial look to it. She said if Member Raffin's concern is that it's not in keeping with the other medical buildings and their appearance, maybe the Board should be talking to Mr. Syrios about some changes to the warehouse siding. There was further discussion among the participants regarding the truck traffic, truck storage, the original warehouse uses as a full service-shop, the difference in traffic from the previous and the proposed businesses with 60 people working there daily, and the industrial appearance of the building. Attorney Bennett said the issue before the Board is the use; the Board cannot legally tell the petitioner how to change the building. Mr. Syrios said the use would be warehouse whereas previously it was basically an auto shop. Member Raffin said the last petition for this location was medical.

Motion: Member Mayer moved to set BZA Docket No. 25-004 for a public hearing on August 12, 2025.

Second: Member Sharpe seconded the motion.

Vote: Yes –3 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

Member Raffin asked Mr. Syrios to work with the staff to make sure all the public notice requirements are met. Mr. Syrios said he would add that everyone he had worked with at the Town of Munster has been absolutely great.

Public Hearings: None

Continued Discussion Items: None

Findings of Fact:

BZA25-002 DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS VARIANCE: Alexander Alemis of Family Dental received conditional approval for variances from TABLE 26-6. 701. B SIGN TYPES, MONUMENT SIGN, Dimensions and Additional Standards for Area at 131 Ridge Road.

Member Raffin introduced this agenda item. Member Mayer said she had one correction under item number 4. In the last sentence “petitioner shall reduce the overall sign height to 6 foot as permitted by the sign code” but it doesn’t say anything about the width. She said they did have discussion in the in the minutes about the width of the sign as well but the Findings of Fact doesn't make any note on that. Attorney Bennett said the motion was to do it as they proposed; the motion, specifically, was that to allow them to construct, based on the width that they were proposing, but to remove the address, and then to reduce this the height down to the 6 feet. She said the motion did not say the width, the motion said to approve the width as proposed in showing the photos, and that is attached to the Findings of Fact documentation. She said if the motion specifically detailed the width, that would have been what was specifically put in there; the record has to follow what the plan was and the motion was accurate and to the point, and very specific to that drawing.

Motion: Member Mayer moved to approve the Findings of Fact for BZA Docket No. 25-003.

Second: Member Sharpe seconded the motion.

Vote: Yes – 3 No – 0 Abstain – 1. Motion passed.

Continued Discussion Items: None

Member Raffin announced the next regular business meeting will be held on August 12, 2025.

Adjournment:

Motion: Member Mayer motioned to adjourn.

Second: Member Sharpe seconded the motion.

Vote: Yes –3 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:34 pm

Vice Chair Roland Raffin
Board of Zoning Appeals

Date of Approval

Executive Secretary Sergio Mendoza
Board of Zoning Appeals

Date of Approval