

MUNSTER PLAN COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
September 9, 2025

The Munster Plan Commission held a meeting on September 9, 2025, at Munster Town Hall, 1005 Ridge Road, in the Main meeting room and could be accessed remotely via Zoom webinar, a videoconference application.

Call to Order: President Baker called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Moment of Silence and Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call:

William Baker, President, Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 01/15/2007 -Term Expiration: 12/31/2026

Roland Raffin, Vice-President, Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 03/12/2007 - Term Expiration: 12/31/2026

Jennifer Johns, member. Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 12/17/2018 - Term Expiration: 12/31/2027

Rachel Branagan, member, Appointed by: Town Council, Initial Appointment: 06/01/2022 - Term Expiration: 12/31/2027

Joseph Hofferth, Town Council Rep., Appointed by: Town Council President, Initial Appointment: 01/06/2025 - Term Expiration: 12/31/2025

David B. Nellans, Town Council Rep., Appointed by: Town Council President, Initial Appointment: 01/06/2025 - Term Expiration: 12/31/2025

George Shinkan, Town Council Rep., Appointed by: Town Council President, Initial Appointment: 01/06/2025 - Term Expiration: 12/31/2025

Members in Attendance Members Absent:

Jennifer Johns
Rachel Branagan
Joseph Hofferth
David Nellans
Roland Raffin
George Shinkan
William Baker

Staff Present

Sergio Mendoza, Planning Director
Nicole Bennett, Town Attorney
Denise Core, Administrative Assistant

President Baker said we have a quorum.

Approval of Minutes: August 12, 2025

Motion: Councilor Shinkan moved to approve the August 12, 2025; minutes as presented.

Second: Commissioner Branagan

Vote: Yes –7 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

Preliminary Hearings:

PC25-011 SUBDIVISION PRELIMINARY PLAT: Bruce Boyer on behalf of Crew Car Wash requests review of Primary Plat for a 1-Lot subdivision at 111 Ridge Road.

Director Mendoza said Crew Car Wash is already in operation. They are located at the corner of Forest Avenue and Ridge Road. Currently the parcel is 5 lots of record divided into two parcels. They are seeking a preliminary plat approval to create one lot of record. The proposal for this is to submit a development plan, which the Plan Commission will see next, that combines the entire use of the property and includes additional parking, an emergency exit, landscaping, and a dumpster, with everything being recorded on one lot of record. He said they had previously received a developmental standard variance to allow a dumpster off-site, but this combining of lots into one lot of record would make it comply with the standards of the zoning code. Staff is recommending that this be scheduled for a public hearing. President Baker asked for questions from the commissioners. When there were none, he asked anyone who wished to speak on behalf of this petition to state their name and address for the record.

Mr. Bruce Boyer of Boyer Properties and Boyer Construction introduced himself saying they are here to request and motion to set a public hearing for the replat of the two lots at the northeast corner of Forest Avenue and Ridge Road, basically to combine the lots that had previously held a retail building and a vacant house into one lot that now is the Crew Car Wash; it was formerly the Munster Car Wash.

Councilor Nellans said Mr. Boyer mentioned the northeast lot, but it looks like the northwest lot. Mr. Boyer clarified that it is on the northeast corner of Forest, there is a northwest lot, Lot 1. Commissioner Branagan said she wanted to make sure they understand this because she thinks most of this is already built. Mr. Boyer said both lots were purchased by Crew Car Wash in 2022. They did receive approval on a number of zoning variances to proceed with the remodeling and the construction of the new Crew Car Wash but the lots were never combined at that time. He said they're just attempting to clean up the whole property and get it redeveloped, finished, and landscaped.

It was explained that this is a preliminary hearing and there would be no public comments at this time. The same property has a public hearing for the development plan that would be opened for public comment coming up in the next docket.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to set PC Docket No. 25-011 to a public hearing

Second: Commissioner Johns

Vote: Yes – 7 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries.

Public Hearings:

PC25-012 DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW: Bruce Boyer representing Crew Car Wash requests approval of a Development Plan to allow onsite parking, dumpster enclosure, and emergency exit from car wash exit drive at 111 Ridge Road.

Director Mendoza said this is the development plan for the combining of five lots of record into one lot of record. The proposal is to convert part of the open space that was created from the removal of the two buildings into additional parking, build an emergency exit off of the drive for the car wash portion of that,

relocate the dumpster and transformer, rebuild the entranceway to the parking lot, and add the landscaping requirements per the ordinance and per approved development standard variance that were granted about a year ago on this matter. A rendition of the proposed site plan is found on page 3 of the staff report.

President Baker asked if the commissioners had any questions for staff. Commissioner Raffin asked if this is was the exact same plan that was previously presented since he didn't remember the driveway exit heading out that way. Director Mendoza said this is a brand-new development plan; this has never been filed. He said they had filed for multiple variances with the Board of Zoning Appeals but this is the first development plan on file for this site. Commissioner Raffin said this usage plan and a site plan would have been nice to see before all the variances started. President Baker asked Mr. Boyer to introduce himself and explain the phasing and plans for this of this project.

Mr. Bruce Boyer of Boyer Properties and Boyer Construction said in answer to President Baker's question, he was not involved with the project at that time, but he understands that when the petition was filed for some of the variances for the construction of the car wash, there was a site plan presented along with that that showed some potential future development on this site. At the time, the house and retail building were still there. He said they came back and met with staff; they were able to tear down the retail building so they could finish the back of the car wash building. He said, as it sits today, they still need to finish the back of that now. He said they had some issues with the location of the transformer because NIPSCO requested that they relocate the transformer. It came back to the town and the staff helped work on the new location; they tucked it back as far as they could into the corner of the building. He said this is really an attempt to clean up this entire site and make it one cohesive development. He said they'd like to finish that parking lot, get everything landscaped, extend the retaining wall along the alley, and extend the existing fence that was done with the car wash along that alley as far as west as they can. They'd like to replace all the sidewalks on Forest Avenue, completely re-landscape that lot, and get it all in a good, cohesive order, and finish the redevelopment. Councilor Shinkan noted the parking is only going to be used for employees. Mr. Boyer said that was correct; they are currently parking on the street as did the employees of the Munster Car Wash.

President Baker asked if the dumpster location had been reviewed by the Site Review Committee to make sure the garbage trucks can get in and out. Mr. Boyer said they had a number of discussions at site plan review at the staff level. He said they only use a 2-yard dumpster on wheels that can be rolled out to make it accessible to the truck. He said they also discussed moving the driveway to be more in line with the dumpster area but the staff recommended they keep it away from Ridge Road as much as possible. He said they didn't want to get any closer to the alley on the north side so this is a good compromise since they use a 2-yard dumpster. President Baker asked Director Mendoza if this is a new curb cut and if he could show an aerial view to show its how it's aligned on the west side and how it affects that entire area. Mr. Boyer said there is no driveway across, there is just Ridge Road and the alley. Director Mendoza projected the plan shown in Exhibit B noting there is no curb cut across the street on Forest Avenue, the dance studio enters their parking from the alley, and the parking on this site is not accessible from the alley.

Councilor Shinkan asked for the height of the retaining wall. Mr. Boyer said the concrete retaining wall behind the car wash property is about 4 feet tall, and then they have a 6-foot, screen fence on top of that. He said that retaining wall will be continued further to the west as far as they can go and add the fence across the back of that property. He said they have to maintain a visibility triangle there at the alley and they want to completely screen the car wash up to the north.

Commissioner Raffin asked if there was a sidewalk that's delineated at the property line or if it is just asphalt pavement at one corner; he thought there was a discrepancy in the different plans or he might be missing a page. Mr. Boyer said that was a good point. He said down at the corner, the existing sidewalk really doesn't go to the west like it should and connect across Forest Avenue. He said they've agreed to rework that entirely when they rebuild that sidewalk and turn it so there's a crosswalk across Forest on the north side of Ridge Road.

Commissioner Raffin asked about the hours of operation, he said he hasn't heard any feedback or complaints about noise from vacuums or the car wash and was curious. Mr. Boyer said there are no vacuums installed or planned for the site and he believes there was an agreement for variances in 2023 to limit the hours. Attorney Bennett said the hours of operation were restricted to 7am to 8 pm from November to March as a condition of the variances that were previously granted as was the 6-foot fence on top of the 4-foot retaining wall and the no vacuum facilities. She said there is no discretion of the car wash to change that if they want to keep occupancy.

President Baker asked if the lighting for the new development component would be similar to what they have at the for drive-through for the car wash, or will it be less aggressive. Mr. Boyer said it is a little less impactful. He said the original plans for the car wash had a number of pole lights along the west side of the property line that they eliminated, they also eliminated the one pole light that was proposed at the southwest corner of the building. He said there are two pole lights that were part of the original Crew Car Wash approval plan that are in place in those two landscape islands at the north end of the property; the rest of it is done by lighting off the building. He said they eliminated 4 or 5 pole lights so of the 3 shown on page 4 of the staff report, 2 remain. Councilor Nellans asked if they have full cut-off shades on them. Mr. Boyer said he believed so but that was an agreement we had so if they are not, they'll certainly add them. He said he was just made aware of a discrepancy; there plans that were approved for the construction of the car wash showed a 20-foot pole on a 3-foot concrete base and the limit is actually 20 feet for a mounting height. He said they are certainly willing to take those poles down and replace them with something a little bit lower if that's the desire of the Plan Commission.

President Baker opened the public hearing. He invited anyone who wished to speak on this particular petition to come to the microphone and state their name and address.

Ms. Debbie Albrecht, a resident at 8221 Forest Avenue introduced herself and said she lives right on the alley. She said their house is a 1950's L-shaped ranch and her dining and living rooms are oriented to look out into that alley. She said this process has been remarkably frustrating as a neighbor. She said she was at that BZA meeting, and there have been changes to that plan. She knew they were tearing down the house but she didn't know they were tearing down the boutique but one day she woke up, and there's construction equipment outside, again, making lots of noise and tearing up things. She asked why the plans keep changing, even in this meeting. She said she looked at the Valpo site and that footprint included the emergency exit in that plan so they knew they needed this from the very beginning. Instead of putting that on the original plan, they told the neighbors and the BZA that they were going to create a park-like atmosphere, that this would be more beautiful than what they had with the house and the boutique. She said what they're getting now is a parking lot, a little bit of landscaping; in fact, they are actually going to eliminate landscaping, not add landscaping. She said they have tried working with and talking to Crew. She said they always respond. She said they don't ignore them but they say things like, we didn't expect this, we didn't know this, or we didn't plan for this. She said the neighbors are waiting for the day when they wake up and realize they got a variance

for vacuums today because she missed the email, the BZA meeting, or the certified letter because she was out of town; she said she got a certified letter for this meeting on Saturday. She said she just wants the park-like thing they promised. She expressed concerns about someone getting hurt by the emergency exit and people speeding on her street with her grandkids and all the kids from the dance studio, noting that the dance studio customers park on the street, not in the parking lot. She said a Crew employee was not accurate when he told her husband that the buildings were dilapidated. They had let them sit empty since they bought them in 2022, they were not sitting empty before that. She said they're not adding to the property values or the atmosphere of our neighborhood. She concluded by saying they're putting too much on that footprint and should go back to the original plan.

The commissioners discussed parking lot stacking, traffic flow, curb cuts, and the entrances and exits. President Baker said they would continue the public portion of the hearing and return to this discussion.

Mr. Daniel Albrecht, also at 8221 Forest Avenue, said his concerns were with lighting and noise or light pollution and noise pollution. He said they have buzzers anytime a car comes around, it sounds beep, beep, beep, to let them know that the car's there, even though the guy's standing right there waiting for the car to come around. He said that starting at 7 am, they hear them screaming "car wash" repeatedly. He said for a while, they had bullhorns at 7 am. He called them that morning and (complained) and he was asked what time he thought they should be able to start using the bullhorn; his answer is never. He said he knows they are a business and he is not against business but there is constant noise, there should be ways to keep noise down when you're right beside a neighborhood. His second concern is the lighting. He said they have a light bulb that just brightens up his front yard, it's like daylight in his front yard; they said they were going to shield that but it's a high pole. He said he can't have peace in his front yard. He said there is somebody working with the garage open in the back until 11 pm or 12 pm, so that light is beaming into their yard. He said there are some sconces on the wall that they had on for a few days, and they were like two headlights. He said he got a hold of them and they said they're having a hard time getting the right lighting. He said they should be more proactive since they're in a neighborhood rather than the neighbors having to tell them whenever something is not right.

Mr. Will Schenkel of 7944 Hohman Avenue said back in December of 2023, they put out a picture of a fence on top of that concrete wall so that noise, dirt, debris, and garbage that people throw out their windows at the car wash wouldn't go into that alley because that was one of their biggest frustrations, the abundance of trash from all those businesses flying down that alley. He said their solution was that they got a fence up but it's 4 inches off the concrete so there's an 8-inch gap along the bottom. He asked if there are checks and balances to make sure they are doing what was approved since that does not seem to be what is happening. President Baker asked Director Mendoza who is responsible for making sure the approved lighting and fencing meet the correct specifications. Director Mendoza answered that we have a zoning officer that goes out to the site, reviews the plans that have been submitted and approved by the Planning Commission, and registers compliance. If there's no compliance, they do not receive their final occupancy. President Baker asked how he or a resident driving by would know that an issue was to be corrected, a red tag, for instance. Director Mendoza said that it is done through the zoning officer in his office. Mr. Schenkel asked about the gap between the concrete and the fence and that is nothing like the picture of fence, which has the fence going right on the concrete wall; they don't want light or the debris coming through that 8-inch gap. Director Mendoza said we don't have regulations on how high the fence can be off the property. We only have regulations on the total height of the property; they got a variance to put the fence on the wall.

Ms. Nancy Nixon, 8004 Homan Avenue said she agrees a lot with the first couple that live right off the alley. She said she has lived in this neighborhood for all these years and Forest Avenue has become a cut-through for Ridge Road. She said even further down, because of the light on Broadmoor, people speed all the way down. She said having another cut-through onto that road is just more problematic; they already have tons of curb cuts in a two-block area on Ridge Road with people coming and going every which way. She said now they want to put something out into the neighborhood; it's not a good idea.

Mr. Jeff Nixon, 8004 Holman Avenue, said he is also in support of all the concerns that have been mentioned. He said this company is a very successful; they have at least 45 units in Indiana and Minnesota. When they buy property, they know exactly what they need but they say they didn't realize that they were going to have to do these things, because they just started building this, or they realized it as they were building it, or now it's up and running and they're seeing what some of the issues are; he thinks that was the whole plan from the beginning. They would get something that was presentable, that everybody would agree on, and then take the rest of the issues to the back door, and now that they're here, they're all established. He said that would be easier to get whatever the problems are taken care of in their eyes, but not really in the eyes of the neighborhood.

Mr. Anthony Christopher of 1908 Martha Street said he had no intention of talking on this topic today, but as a Crew Monthly member, he's there often enough to understand what they want to do. He said a pass-through for people speeding down Forest is not the intention, it's an emergency exit if you're stuck in between cars. It is where the line is coming off of Ridge and it would be an emergency exit if you're stuck in between, meaning your car is not getting washed. These cars are not just zipping off Forest for the heck of it; there's a reason, either they can't get in, or they have to leave. He said at the ribbon cutting, he went for car wash and couldn't park anywhere. He said if he was a resident there, he would much rather have employees park in this little lot than park in front of a house all day long, it gives employees their own space versus taking up resident space. He said he doesn't think that the fear of people just going 25 miles an hour is realistic.

When there were no additional comments, President Baker closed the public hearing.

President Baker asked Director Mendoza to expound on the lighting concern he noted in the staff report. Director Mendoza showed the lighting information located on page 4 of the staff report. He said the information we received regarding the lighting standards are for the wall mounts, he has the specs for those identified in purple on the lower line on the spreadsheet; the locations are identified as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6. He said staff did not receive any information on the pole lights spec, they're identified as possibly new lighting standards. He said we are looking to receive that information to advise the applicant on whether they will comply with the existing zoning codes for pole height and head type or if they would have to seek a variance based on our existing zoning code. Commissioner Branagan asked if Director Mendoza thought the neighbors would be pleased with the new lighting information and consider it beneficial to them when it comes in. Director Mendoza said he won't know until he gets the information. They will have to adhere to our standards or seek a variance. If they seek a variance, it will end up in the public hearing process through the Board of Zoning Appeals. The concern is not with the illumination, the lumens identified on the photometrics comply with the code. The concern is that we don't have the specs of the construction of the proposed pole lights and we need to verify compliance with the code. Councilor Nellans asked if the amount of light coming off this property is to code or are they lighting up the neighbor's properties all night long. Director Mendoza said the current standard reads zero (foot candles) along the residential property line. Attorney Bennett said it

should be understood that zero does not mean no light. Director Menoza said the photometric plan shows 0.3, 0.2, 0.1. He said there is always going to be light reflection but it should be minimal as opposed to lighting up the front yard, as was described. Mr. Boyer said the plan is showing minimal light leaving the property and he didn't believe the full lights are on the home all night long; It should be only during operation. He said what sometimes happens is when people off-site see the light source which is different than a light illumination beyond the property. He said they are willing to shield those as much as they can to hide that light source but he believed that they are more than meeting the requirements. Councilor Nellans said cut-off shades do help. Mr. Boyer said the fixtures themselves have cut-off lenses in them that redirect the light and that's what they're providing, but they can add some additional shades to that to stop even the appearance of seeing the light source. Commissioner Johns asked if lowering the fixtures might help. Mr. Boyer said that lower the light source would tend to increase the light level on the property and decrease the light level off the property.

Commissioner Raffin asked if this new site plan meets our landscape standards for the different lot layers. Director Mendoza said it does based on the variances that were granted through the Board of Zoning Appeals. Mr. Boyer said they are providing screening of the parking lot, dumpster and transformer; they will screen the required areas. He said they cannot extend the fence any closer to the sidewalk due to the required visibility but they are willing to change the curb, extending it at an angle to create a little more landscaped area rather than having an empty space between the end of the fence and the landscape area. He said he thought that could be an improvement. Councilor Nellans asked if everything, including the new area, would be irrigated. Mr. Boyer said yes. Councilor Nellans asked what the screening height would be. Mr. Boyer said they are limited to 30 inches for visibility coming out of the alley and the retaining wall up to a 6-foot fence. He said he wasn't aware of a gap between the fence and the top of the retaining wall but they can certainly fill that with fence material. The screening that's going to screen the employee parking can be higher than 30 inches and the intent was just to screen with some higher bushes, particularly in the dumpster area. He said there is an existing driveway onto that property that was a driveway from the house that was there. He said this is an emergency exit in case something happens in the tunnel, and we have cars stacked up; they want to be able to get people out here, rather than trying to back everybody out onto Ridge Road. He said this has been a car wash for years and there was never any screening on the alley at the time of Munster Car Wash; it was wide open. He said they've improved the alley, they paved the entire alley behind the property, and they've filled the area between the alley and the retaining wall with pavement to clean that whole area up and be able to maintain that much easier. Councilor Nellans made the comment that those buildings along Forest were very dated and old, in fact, they wanted to put a residence inside one of them and that was rejected. Councilor Nellans said he didn't know what the original plan was but it makes sense to have an emergency exit to get vehicles out of the queue when something jams up, and it makes sense to have the employees park on the property instead of on the street. He said they need to have a dumpster and that's being addressed. He said he would agree that they're not anticipating a whole string of cars flying out of this car wash and speeding down Forest although that traffic and speeding are problems all over town. He said we need to make sure the landscaping meets our code and it has to be maintained. Mr. Boyer said Crew Car Wash spends an extraordinary amount of money on landscaping and maintaining that landscaping and planting flowers for different seasons of the year at their other 2 locations nearby.

Mr. Boyer addressed some of the issues that were raised. He said they did submit a photometric plan for the lighting, which he believed was acceptable and meets the standards of the county. He said the lack of information on the pole lights was an oversight on their part; it's the same type of fixture as the wall mount, it's just a pole mount rather than a wall mount. He said they can submit that. He said he will also correct the

construction drawings to show a 20-foot pole instead of a 20-foot pole on a 3-foot concrete base. President Baker asked if the staff was concerned with illumination or aesthetic. Director Mendoza said the Commissioner Johns asked Mr. Boyer to address concerns with the noise and what could be done about all those buzzers. Mr. Boyer said once they finish the lot and complete the fence by extended that as far west as they can, that'll diminish the noise; they'll have a 10-foot-tall screen across the back of the property. He said it also will eliminate the light from the tunnel that Mr. Albrecht had mentioned. He said he is 6'1", and he can't see over the top of that 6-foot fence from the alley; it is almost a 10-foot screen from the alley elevation that'll completely hide the entire back of that building. She asked about the bullhorn at 7 o'clock on a Saturday morning. Mr. Boyer said he was not aware of that and would have that conversation with the operator. Commissioner Johns asked if anything else could be done if the fence does not sufficiently reduce the noise level going back into the neighborhood. Mr. Boyer said he wasn't sure; this was a car wash before and there was no screening at that time. Councilor Nellans pointed out that they have to have everything done to a new standard.

Commissioner Branagan asked about the hours of operation and whether that is being violated with clean up, citing the neighbor's concerns. Attorney Bennett said the winter hours variance granted by the BZA previously was 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. from November to March for their operation or business hours. For the cleanup and other things after that, the noise ordinance in town is essentially 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. which applies to municipal trucks picking up trees and branches or trash and for construction. That would clearly apply here; that's not an additional requirement the Plan Commission has to put on. She added that everything is laid out in the ordinance, including where that noise is measured from. She asked the commission members to keep in mind that the approval of a development plan by the Planning Commission does not approve conditions or items in the development plan that are not compliant with the ordinance. They are required to comply with the ordinance or get BZA variance approval; this commission cannot approve something having to do with lighting or landscaping that was not already previously granted a variance. The mere fact that it's on this plan does not allow it, so even if they approve the development plan, the requirement is still that it has to comply, or they have to seek a variance. She said the lighting issue would be addressed that way; once they get the information to Director Mendoza they can be verified. She said they can impose reasonable conditions as part of the development review like fixing that area in the fence which Mr. Boyer has said they could do. There was a discussion about the summer hours of operation, clean up times after business hours and possible turning down the volume of buzzers, alarms and bells as had been done for drive thru squawk boxes in the past especially since there is no sound-absorbing type material and noise bounces around hardscape.

Commissioner Raffin asked if they might put a gate arm at the emergency exit to make sure they are not using the exit for anything else. Mr. Boyer said they could look at the budget but that was a reasonable request.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to defer the public hearing for one month for PC Docket No. 25-012 so confirm the additional light standards and continue the discussion.

Second: Councilor Nellans

Vote: Yes – 6 No – 1 Abstain – 0. Motion carries.

President Baker voted No.

PC25-014 REZONE: Gary Warfel, SPIN Munster, LLC c/o Saxon Partners on behalf of Kenmara Development requests to Rezone 58 acres from CD-4.B. to a PUD TECHNOLOGY PARK at S of 400-440 Fisher Street.

Mr. Mendoza said this application was before the Plan Commission last month in the preliminary hearing; this is a public hearing. The applicant is requesting to rezone the property, which is south of the NIPSCO right-of-way, north of the railroad tracks, and east of the state line, to a PUD Technology Park. They have submitted conceptual architectural renderings and a conceptual site plan for the development plan with a conceptual replat or resubdivision of the site into multiple lots. He said they've provided development standards and design guidelines for this PUD.

Councilor Nellans asked what is being proposed because across northwest Indiana, there's a lot of technology parks and data centers and some communities have rejected them. He said some of the discussion is that they consume a lot of water, generate a lot of noise, and suck down a lot of energy; this Plan Commission has not had that discussion yet. He said not everyone has welcomed this and he wanted to know why we should since there seem to be some concerns, and we need to have assurances that those aren't the problem. Councilor Shinkan and he has read how they're very good for a community, the tax dollars, the tax base you get especially with the hit they are we're going to take in a budget. Councilor Nellans said he was interested in those aspects of this particular project; he wanted to bring it up for discussion. President Baker asked Director Mendoza about technology parks in our current zoning, whether the Zoning department has vetted them, or if this is just the state law that's just now coming the attention of the town of Munster. Director Mendoza said this is a state law that's been on the books for years; this is the property owner looking into the state law and applying it to this property. He said our current zoning code does not list the permitted uses within that state code and that is why the applicant is here requesting to rezone the property to the technology park. Since the uses are not listed, they would require various use variances in order to proceed in whatever current zone classification it is. He said the petitioner is proposing these types of industries within that PUD. President Baker recognized the petitioner and asked him to state his name and address.

Mr. Gary Warfel, of 25 Recreation Park Drive, Hingham, MA, said he represents Saxon Partners and Scott Yahne, their local council, was present as well. He said they have been here many times before; they have worked very closely with the town to try to activate the largest economic development opportunity that exists in this town at 81 acres. They had attempted to work hand-in-hand with existing zoning, CD-4. B and no one liked it. He said they didn't like it because there are inconsistencies in that zoning code; it is not really consistent with the strategic plan for the town, and they know there are efforts underway to come up with new zoning code. He said the reasons to rezone to PUD is based on four real concepts in the development plan. Number one is to maximize the economic impact to the town through tax revenue, number two is to minimize the traffic that's going to come into the town, number three, as they have made very clear in their development plan and proposal, is not to pursue residential density that would add more school children into the school town of Munster, and number 4 is not to pursue a public roadway connection to Illinois. He said the current development plan meets all those objectives, however, to do all those things, it's incumbent upon changing the zoning to PUD. Just like any large development opportunity in the town, a PUD is more consistent for the development plan; when it came to understanding exactly what they want to do to check all these boxes, they favor a Certified Technology Park, which is Indiana code. He said there are only two certified technology parks in Northwest Indiana, one was started in Hammond, which never really happened, and then the other one is Purdue Technology Park in Merrillville. He said they have been studying the 22 parks across the state, their goal and our desire is to bring science, technology, and innovation into this site

and help activate not only economic development opportunities but to bring this in as education for Munster High School students as well. He said there is technology happening all around us, AI is going to change the world, robotics is going to change the world and they would like to do is work within the context of a certified technology park. He said they are proposing this as a PUD but they are going to have to come back to the Plann Commission, they don't have a specific use set for the site. They are asking for just two things, two changes to the original development plan. The first is to combine lots because they're restricted in a CD-4.B to a 2,400-foot perimeter which would make it difficult to do a larger-scale technology building. The second is they are willing to keep the 22-acre north parcel as open space and bring that into the community. He said it has a lake that's larger than the lake at Centennial Park, it's a piece of land that nobody can see and nobody can get to. He said they have now been able to get NIPSCO to deed land to the town. That will enable Fisher Street to connect through to the site to activate the opportunity. He said they think the PUD rezone is the perfect choice here; they have worked very hard with the town to try to come up with a use that makes the most economic sense and what is best for the town residents.

President Baker asked Director Mendoza to bring the Exhibit F to the screen. He then asked Mr. Warfel if all the infrastructure for the site has been completed. Mr. Warfel said none of that work has been completed but it has been approved and the land for the Fisher Street extension has already been deeded to the town. He said they have a Phase 1a development agreement, none of that has changed; once they obtain the rezoning, they intend to move forward with that Phase 1a connection. He said the town actually owns the land now, they were able to work with NIPSCO to give the town a 114-foot right-of-way onto the site. He said all the engineering is done, all the utility work has been approved, they already had preliminary design review by the town, and that's been accepted so the design for Phase 1a is complete, and it's been accepted. The next step is to file for a permit. He said the extension of Fisher Street, the rerouting of Timrick, and the added green space at that intersection that gets us onto the site is approved. He said they had first started a Phase 1 development plan, which would be Fisher Street, Maple Leaf Boulevard, all of the off-site infrastructure, and it became very difficult to get done because they are talking about TIF, pilot programs not-for-profit, and different things. They decided to break it down, they stripped out Phase 1a, which is Fisher Street, and put everything else into what's called a future phase development agreement. Once they get the rezoning and start doing some active marketing, they will come back and slightly amend the development agreement. He said it won't be very much, because they think it's pretty well set but we're going to have to begin a discussion on what that future phase development agreement looks like, and then we'll also have to come back with any amended requirements on the plan which will need to be re-vetted by Plan Commission and the Town Council.

Commissioner Branagan asked if they would eventually be extending Maple Leaf Boulevard since it is not on the plans in this packet. Mr. Warfel said they will eventually have to address that; all of the engineering work has been done and all of the clearances have been received with NIPSCO, but they need to spend a little more time with agreements to get that complete. He said the one thing they did on behalf of the town when they started this process back in about 2021, they were in quick enough to coordinate with NICTD on the Westlake extension of the elevated train line. They coordinated a pass-through, which exists today, a tunnel under the elevated grade ramp, which would eventually allow the Pennsy Greenway to connect from all points north, under the tracks, down to Centennial Park. He explained the initial economic impact study that showed a total tax revenue of \$320 million over 30 years coming into the town off this property with \$6 million going to the school town of Munster and they believe with the technology park designation, they are going to have higher assessed value than they would with a commercial development. He said they were a bit nervous about a commercial development since the

office vacancy in the Chicago suburban market is about 37%. They had always thought that it would be an opportunity to bring a Class A tenant from the East Loop down into Munster, and that still could be a possibility as part of this scheme, but they now think they are better off bringing in a technology-based tenancy into this project and they don't know what that would look like. He said they pulled together a plan that would comply with open space requirements for the combined lots, and they had a bigger footprint to see what that might look like and maintain that 70% maximum cover, which does not include the north parcel. He said if they add the north parcel, our open space that are down to about 40% coverage. Councilor Shinkan said the north parcel is going to be more green space and a park. Mr. Warfel said it will be all green space.

Councilor Hofferth asked if they were deciding the transition as Fisher extends into this property, that is a Timrick and Manor. Mr. Warfel said no, that is complete, that was in the Phase 1a development agreement that was approved under the prior administration. President Baker noted that, under this proposal, there's less density as far as people in and out and that means less traffic on Timrick and Fisher. He said they will have to address the Technology Park component and all the concerns we continue to hear about as it relates to data centers. He asked Director Mendoza if a data center does come to this location, would they need to come back to the Plan Commission. Director Mendoza said what is being presented at this public hearing is the design guidelines and bulk standards to begin the process of attracting these types of industries to this site, as by-right uses within the PUD, or established PUD, as it goes through the Council. The next step would be the process of identifying and creating the individual lots, at which time the individual development plans would come in for approval by the Planning Commission, supporting the guidelines and bulk standards that were presented. President Baker asked Mr. Warfel if there had already been interest in this side as it relates to power and water, he said these are always the issues and then everybody shows up because they're worried about the sound. Mr. Warfel said they have done some pretty extensive research on the site in terms of water and power resources and it turns out that the site actually benefits from a tremendous amount of water, on several fronts.

1. Indiana Lake on the north parcel has a pump house that was the source of irrigation for the golf course. That is spring-fed so there's never been a depletion in that lake because of golf course irrigation.
2. They would never suggest a use on this site that would compromise the municipal water supply in Munster. They ran flow tests on the meters with the Fire Department and the Water Department. He said all of those water lines were recently replaced, the amount of water out of those municipal mains is tremendous.
3. They are advancing an 8-inch well on the site so, just like Briar Ridge which takes their water out of a well for all their irrigation, there are 3 sources of water. He said what they're trying to do is whatever water usage comes onto the site will not be the town's municipal supply.
4. For power, there is a NIPSCO substation right there and there is natural gas. He said there are two high-pressure gas mains that come right through the middle of their property. They come from Texas, and they feed 9 states on the East Coast so there is a tremendous number of resources here.

He pointed out that they're working with engineers from both the Metropolitan Water Reclamation of Cook County, Illinois, and ITEM, and engineers from both states to create an interstate detention system so they can move stormwater off this site into Illinois so they'll end up with a lot more of the stormwater detention and the wetlands have been mitigated. He said from an environmental standpoint, they're in pretty good shape.

Commissioner Raffin said he noticed things on the architecture standards and he thought that when they get to the design phase of this building, they should be looking holistically at what these buildings might look like 30 years from now and how they can be repurposed because the data centers of today and tomorrow might be the office building of tomorrow. He said the right architectural design team may be able to see how things can work and tweak the windows, for instance, with an eye toward repurpose in the future. Mr. Warfel said things are moving so quickly, with technology, we don't know what tomorrow's going to look like. Once they start having conversations with users or tenants, they'll understand more about what are they looking for and what is good visibility in these buildings. For the most part, the technology parks they're seeing are more open space concept, so they are easily divisible, but the windows, glass, and egress are as yet to be determined. He said they are generally larger format buildings, and that's why we went to this plan; by definition, a larger format building can be subdivided more easily. Chairman Raffin said they are not in the public eye in this location but there are design elements that should be considered regarding architectural design, sound continuation, environmental impact, architectural control committees, and project labor agreements.

Councilor Nellans reminded everyone that these are just concepts at this time. If they approve the PUD, it will still review and oversight. He said he supports the building department in making sure they get all the information they need and if it is not delivered, they should put the brakes on.

Mr. Scott Yahne, 3 Lincoln Way, Suite 201, Valparaiso, Indiana, said they should keep in mind that the use may change these are a list of items under this designation in the state statute. For that reason, anything that is going to be developed will have to come forward with a development plan; it is difficult to comprehend what design standards they will want in place at that time. He suggested that the Plan Commission could consider as an approval this evening that gives the petitioner the ability to come back with the development plan with the design standards tailored to them. This could help them move forward now and do the fine-tuning later.

President Baker opened the public hearing and asked anyone who wanted to speak on this petition to come to the microphone and state their name and address for the record.

Mr. Michael Becze of McColly Bennett Commercial at 221 Carnation Street, Dyer, made some remarks in support of the project. He said he knows the value Munster places on their school system; it's the best in class in Northwest Indiana. He said something like this serves as a launching pad for some students to go to; it's not just a medical, it adds more diversity to the local market. This area is kind of the center of the wheels spoke for a lot of school systems like Purdue, IU, a lot of the Big Ten, and the Chicago school systems and universities. He said something like this will allow for more of a research component, it will allow for more innovation, and it will be beneficial from an economic standpoint for the town; he'd like to see something like that happen, if not just to break up all the medical, but also, because he thinks it's the highest and best use for what's allowed.

Mr. Anthony Christopher, 1908 Martha Street said he is also with McColly Bennett Commercial and a Munster resident. He said he is very active in the community and is well known here. He said he thinks the land has two uses, one is higher density housing, retail and restaurants which are not what the town has on their agenda. There are benefits but there are also risks and liabilities to that. On the other end is what Mr. Warfel brings to the commission, which is the best allowed use, in his opinion. He said you can see how many medical office and professional office spaces are for lease when driving down Calumet

Avenue; we don't need more. He said people think they're coming from Illinois, that we're able to recruit them, but, as Mr. Warfel earlier said, since COVID, Chicago is a ghost town. They are incentivizing people to stay there; it would be very hard for Munster to meet that incentive to bring them here so you just have vacant buildings for a very long time. He stated that a tech campus is low impact on our community service, there won't be much traffic, and they certainly won't have the outrage from some residents if they were putting a bunch of restaurants and homes in that area; it would be pretty low-key. He added that getting the NIPSCO agreement to extend Fisher and to allow the community to be benefit. He said the tie to the Pennsy Greenway is huge for our community, it's something for us to get out and do, and enjoy our community. He concluded by saying we that it would add to the tax revenue based on what the current allowance would be.

When there were no further comments, President Baker closed the public hearing component.

Councilor Shinkan made a motion to defer PC25-014, a proposed rezone to a Planned Unit Development, Kenmara Technology Park, to October 14th, 2025 so the applicant may update the proposed technology park for bulk standards, design and uses documenting all discussions and findings. Councilor Nellans seconded the motion. President Baker asked if there were any discussion items.

President Baker asked what is missing from the technology park standards for bulk design and uses that needs to be updated. Director Mendoza said the state law provides the opportunity to develop a technology park; the standards are at the local level as a PUD. He said the petitioners are establishing a new zoning code and there are missing items from the zoning code that they're proposing to operate under. Staff is asking that they supply that missing information which is detailed in the recommendations under the different sections that were outlined and represented in their design guidelines, standards, and bulk standards document. He clarified for President Baker that he is talking about the standards that were drafted by the petitioner and issued under this guidance in the document that guides the community and recommendations to the Town Council. Commissioner Raffin asked if that can be removed and they can continue and run it as a separate item. Attorney Bennett said that is the privilege of the PUD. That sets forth the required new development standards, just like it was its own zoning district. So, just like if it's an R1 or a C1 district, it sets forth what all of those requirements are including your lot coverage, lighting, construction standards, and all those things that are in the PUD ordinance. Since that is your zoning code, your hands are tied in trying to enforce anything later on. She explained that the development plan lays out what the proposal is for the lot, or for each specific lot after it's subdivided, but it would fall back to follow what is in the PUD ordinance. If those standards and those requirements are not in that ordinance, then you don't have your default to say comply with the zoning code. This becomes an issue because this is not contemplated in your zoning code, so height and size and other requirements there may not, in turn, meet the requirements of one of the existing standards in the zoning code. It is right to set those standards for the PUD as part of a PUD ordinance.

Director Mendoza added that in staff report, he had outlined different sections that are missing or where additional information is required. He said one discussion that he picked up on from some of the commissioners this evening is Section G and Section H of the Bulk Design Standards and Guidelines, which is the materials and designs. He told the commissioners that is their opportunity to put forward recommendations of what you'd like to see and not a "to be determined"; it is what their expectations are as part of this new development. He and Attorney Bennett encouraged the commissioners to be

ready, to look at this as though they were drafting the requirements, development, use, bulk standards, all of that; they are essentially creating a new zoning district that they get to custom design. A discussion ensued regarding the tedious work involved in the process, the amendments that may change something in the future, and the value in contemplating all the detail and the opportunity for creativity. Director Mendoza said the commissioners may offer and share with the applicant their recommendations to update and present the document next month. Councilor Shinkan said right now they are just approving this PUD to a technology center so they can start working together and get project going. Director Mendoza said it is a deferral for 30 days to allow the applicant to update the required sections as requested to create the document that would allow this technology part to move forward.

He said many times you have developments that occur that have weak, poor, insufficient or guidelines and plans that have not been thoroughly thought out. In many of those cases, they come back for amendments and the staff tells them that they can only do what they had put in put forward as their guidelines. This results in complaints the staff hears about how the process takes or what is the problem. The problem is because they didn't think this process through and provide the guidelines to help the development be facilitated through the review process, that is why he recommended a deferral. Attorney Bennett explained that the PUD can be amended at a later time but it is a much more difficult task once you've given the green light, and then ground breaks, then you have infrastructure going in, and you have layouts, and you're in the planning process, all that has to happen. Her point is that once it gets to that point, you're already confined, you're limited on what you can impose at that point.

President Baker reminded that commission members that there a motion and a second on the table. Councilor Shinkan asked the petitioner if that is what he wanted. Mr. Warfel said it is not. Councilor Shinkan asked if he could pull back the original motion. Attorney Bennett advised that It had been seconded, so it could not. A vote was taken.

Motion: Councilor Shinkan moved to continue PC Docket No. 25-014 until October 14, 2025, to allow the petitioner to submit the required changes and the missing information as defined in the staff report as well as to allow further review and discussion.

Second: Councilor Nellans

Vote: Yes – 0 No – 7 Abstain – 0. Motion failed

Attorney Bennett said the petitioner would like the commission to approve the PUD draft as it is laid out, they'll proceed from there, moving forward with the planning, and, tweaking from there, but then that would be coming back. Councilor Shinkan asked what it wasn't written like that. Attorney Bennett said that is because that was not the recommendation code from our staff; staff wants more time and staff wants more information. I understand it's not what the petitioner wants at this point. Commissioner Branagan said they need to we have still a lot more time to go through this.

Mr. Warfel and Mr. Yahne explained that they are only asking for this to the PUD approval to allow them to market the site as a certified technology park. Director Mendoza said the north lot is referenced in the standards.

After a lengthy discussion, Attorney Bennett suggested the following to allow the project to move forward for marketing purposes; to move forward today on a petition to rezone tract 1 only to PUD for the uses set forth as identified in Indiana Code 36-7-32 with all other bulk standards, additional uses, conditions, etc., to be presented at a later date. This will it prevent any construction from moving forward.

Motion: Councilor Shinkan moved to make a favorable recommendation to the Town Council for a zone change from CD-4.B to PUD for PC Docket No. 25-014 with the following conditions:

- The zoning change to PUD applies to the south parcel, tract 1 only. The north parcel, tract 2, is not included in this PUD rezone.
- The only uses set forth as a Certified Tech Park as defined in Indiana Code 36-7-32
- Nothing can be developed on the site until the PUD bulk standards are presented for approval at a later date.

Second: Councilor Nellans

Vote: Yes – 7 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries.

Other Business: None

Findings of Fact:

PC05-004 CERTIFICATE OF AMENDMENT: Ryan Zente, Steiner Homes, requests a change of address for Lot 22 of Community Resources Phase 1, from 10117 Allison Road to 444 Jenna Drive.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to approve the Findings of Fact for PC Docket No. 25-004.

Second: Councilor Shinkan

Vote: Yes – 7 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries.

Continued Discussion Items: None

Next Meeting: President Baker Raffin announced the next regular business meeting will be held on October 14, 2025.

Adjournment:

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to adjourn.

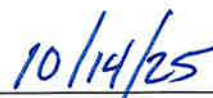
Second: Commissioner Johns

Vote: Yes – 7 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 8:53 pm



President Baker
Plan Commission



Date of Approval



Executive Secretary Sergio Mendoza



Date of Approval

