

**MUNSTER BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS**  
**MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING**  
Meeting Date: November 18, 2025

The Board of Zoning Appeals held a meeting on November 18, 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 6:02pm.

**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:**

Jennifer Johns  
Roland Raffin  
Sharon Mayer  
Dan Sharpe

**Members Absent:**

Brad Hemingway

**Staff Present:**

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

**Approval of Minutes: September 9, 2025, BZA Minutes**

Member Mayer noted that this is version 3 of the September 9, 2025, meeting minutes. She asked what the revision was for. Attorney Bennett said it was to the motion that was made on page 3 as to the petition, BZA25-006; the motion made by Member Johns at the bottom of page 3 that was corrected to follow the recording verbatim. Member Mayer said this was for the set back. Attorney Bennett said yes. Member Mayer asked Member Johns if the revision reflected what she had indicated in her motion. Member Johns said it did.

**Motion:** Member Mayer moved to approve the revised minutes of September 9, 2025.

**Second:** Member Johns

**Vote:** Yes –4 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried

**Approval of Minutes: October 14, 2025, BZA Minutes**

**Motion:** Member Mayer moved to approve the minutes of October 14, 2025.

**Second:** Member Sharpe

**Vote:** Yes –3 No – 0 Abstain – 1. Motion carried

Member Johns abstained saying she wasn't here for the meeting.

**Preliminary Hearings:**

**BZA25-009 DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS VARIANCE:** Sean Begley representing the School Town of Munster requests variances from SECTION 26-6.405 Q. PRIVATE LIGHTING STANDARDS: Height, Head Type, and Color Temperature; for the replacement of parking lot lighting at Eads Elementary located at 8000 Jackson Avenue.

Member Mayer said since this one and the one that follows are basically the same thing at Eads and Elliott Schools, she asked if they could take them up together.

Director Mendoza said we can address them together, but they need to be voted on separately. He started with Eads Elementary which is on the northwest side of town. He said they are proposing to replace their existing parking lot lights; he identified the areas marked on the rendering where they are proposing the replacements. He explained that currently the lights are 25-foot high, 5,000K with a box light type head. They are looking to replace the quantity of lights for a more streamlined type of head fixture with the same LED lumens, which is 5,000K, and 25 feet in height. He projected the existing and the proposed lighting plans from the staff report as well as the concept of the electric required by code.

**BZA25-010 DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS VARIANCE:** Sean Begley representing the School Town of Munster requests variances from SECTION 26-6.405 Q. PRIVATE LIGHTING STANDARDS: Height, Head Type, and Color Temperature; for the replacement of parking lot lighting at Elliott Elementary located at 8718 White Oak Avenue.

Director Mendoza said the other one is for Elliott School. They are proposing to replace the existing lights, but the difference here is with regards to the quantity. There are 6 located along 35th Street, another 6 located along the rear of the property, and the ones in red are located adjacent to a residential rear yard or side yard property. They're proposing, again, to vary from the existing lighting code. They have proposed 5,000K lumens with a Cobra or streamlined box light fixtures compared to what is there, and the 25-foot height that was requested for both schools. He said the one question he would ask the applicant is if there's any interest in amending their application to include a fence for future interest within the playground area. Member Raffin asked if there were any questions for staff. When there were none, turned the presentation over to the petitioner.

Mr. Sean Begley, Director of Operations for the School Town of Munster, introduced himself. He said he was not prepared to discuss a fence at Elliott. The current height from the base of the concrete stand is 23.4 feet and they continue to go up, so the height is approximately 25 feet. He said they'd like to do a replacement in kind, but they're completely open if the Board would like them to reduce the height or the lumens. They would be fine with a recommendation, but they would like to get moving on this project and get it passed at the next meeting. He said the current poles are rusting, and the current lights are rusting and starting to fail so it's time that they get them changed out. He said they would prefer to keep the Cobra type head, which is more directional; it points into the parking lot and keeps the light out of the neighbor's property. The current height is 25 feet.

Member Mayer asked Director Mendoza if the variance is because the height is above code. Director Mendoza said that was correct; the code is 20 feet. Member Mayer asked if the amount of lumens are in line with the code. Director Mendoza said the proposed amount is 5,000K, the code requires 3,000K. He

said the variances requested are highlighted in the staff report. Mr. Begley said it was told to him that amount of lumens on the existing lights is 5,000K, so that's what he put down as his replacement in kind. He said they do like keeping it lit up when they're doing different things at the school, but if they have to go down to 3,000K, he's sure they can do that.

Member Raffin said he was looking at the foot candles at the property line, and it looks like it is bleeding over. Mr. Begley said he has had discussions with the lighting engineer, and they are struggling to get it completely to zero.

Member Raffin asked if there were any other questions for the School Town of Munster and reminded them this is a preliminary hearing so they're setting this to a public hearing; there will be more discussion next month.

**BZA25-009 DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS VARIANCE: Sean Begley representing the School Town of Munster requests variances from SECTION 26-6.405 Q. PRIVATE LIGHTING STANDARDS: Height, Head Type, and Color Temperature; for the replacement of parking lot lighting at Eads Elementary located at 8000 Jackson Avenue.**

**Motion:** Member Mayer moved to set BZA Docket No. 25-009 for a public hearing.

**Second:** Member Johns

**Vote:** Yes —4 No — 0 Abstain — 0. Motion carried

**BZA25-010 DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS VARIANCE: Sean Begley representing the School Town of Munster requests variances from SECTION 26-6.405 Q. PRIVATE LIGHTING STANDARDS: Height, Head Type, and Color Temperature; for the replacement of parking lot lighting at Elliott Elementary located at 8718 White Oak Avenue.**

**Motion:** Member Mayer moved to set BZA Docket No. 25-010 for a public hearing.

**Second:** Member Johns

**Vote:** Yes —4 No — 0 Abstain — 0. Motion carried

Member Raffin asked Mr. Begley to work with staff regarding all the public notification requirements.

**BZA25-011 DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS VARIANCE: Peter Alemis from Family Dental Care requests variances from SECTION 26-6.701.B.5.t GENERAL SIGN PROVISIONS and TABLE 26-6.701.B MONUMENT SIGN SPECIFIC STANDARDS: Dimensions, Area, and Description; to permit modifications to an existing monument sign located at 131 Ridge Road.**

Director Mendoza gave an overview of the project. He said this was before the BZA a few months ago and they have returned for an alternate design. They will not be moving forward with what was previously approved; they would like to maintain the existing structure on site. He said his understanding is they will also be repairing or rebuilding the existing brick columns on the side and they want to replace the wood sign for a cabinet sign. The proposed square footage of the cabinet sign would be 21 square feet; the code currently requires 18 square feet. He said their existing sign is 23 square feet, so they need a variance from that. He said, in addition, the Munster Code prohibits cabinet signs to be used as monuments and they're requesting the cabinet sign be used as part of the monument. He said the other variance request is that the sign must be placed on a solid base. In this case, they're looking to replace it between the two brick pillars, so it would not meet the highlighted section of the code included in the

staff report. Member Raffin asked if the board members had any questions for staff. When there were none, he called upon the petitioner to speak.

Mr. Peter Alemis from Palos Heights, IL, thanked the Board for allowing him to speak and thanked everyone for their help. He asked Director Mendoza to project the sign photos side-by-side. He said the picture on the right in the staff report is the current sign. He said it has been there for almost 40 years, so it's getting a little dilapidated and they've had a couple tenants leave. He said the previously approved sign was quoted at about \$40,000 from their sign guy who was going to bring a mason, a concrete layer, and a brick layer. They thought that was a little insane, so they decided to switch gears and make it simple by keeping the brick and just flipping the signs. He said they feel like they're not really changing that much, and they were hoping to get the variances. Member Raffin asked if there were any questions for the petitioner.

Member Johns said in order to meet our code; the Board would like to see that middle (upper) section framed in. She asked if Mr. Alemis was agreeable to working with his sign guy to meet our code from that perspective and build a base between the bottom of the sign and the base along the ground. Mr. Alemis said they are very willing to work with their sign guy. He asked for clarification to understand what they mean to fill the base, if they meant brick. Member Johns said Director Mendoza could correct her if she was wrong, but the code requires that the sign be along the ground; there should not be that space. She said that space was there previously but now they have the opportunity to correct it. Director Mendoza said the request would be for that sign to sit on a solid base; the description for monument signs indicate a sign that is erected on a solid base directly on the ground that is itself constructed of solid material. He said that the code requirement that the petitioners are asking for variance from is to maintain the sign above a non-solid base. Member Johns asked if it could be made compliant by adding another panel below that touches the existing brick base and then framing in the top. Director Mendoza said (the base) requires a solid material; if she was asking if an aluminum box could be extended, that would be hollow; it needs to sit on the solid base. He said it could be brick on the bottom and a metal piece to top it off. Member Johns said she was just trying to find a way to make it compliant rather than asking for a variance. Mr. Alemis said they could work with that, it would fit by making it a rectangle. Director Mendoza said if the applicant wants to fill the base in with brick, which would be a compliant material, and then cap off the top, the only variance that would require would be for 3 square feet of signage.

Member Raffin asked if the cabinet and the lettering all meet the code. Director Mendoza said the lettering meets the code, it's metal and they are proposing to use metal, and then the cabinet would be covered, so it wouldn't be an exposed cabinet. Member Raffin said the petitioner would have to decide if he could work with those parameters. Member Johns said it may still be cost-effective. Member Sharpe asked Mr. Alemis if he thought they could match the color of the brick and everything. Mr. Alemis said he thought they could work with them to do something similar, at least. Member Johns said, to Member Sharpe's point, they obviously want it to be aesthetic. Director Mendoza said if they could figure a way to reduce the square footage, they wouldn't need a variance for that. Mr. Alemis said they had tried that, they looked at a rendering that was done of the reduced area, and it just looked a little awkward, proportion-wise.

**Motion:** Member Johns made a motion to move BZA Docket No. 25-011 to public hearing.

**Second:** Member Sharpe

**Vote:** Yes —4 No — 0 Abstain — 0. Motion carried

Member Raffin asked Mr. Alemis to please work with staff regarding all the public notification requirements.

#### **Public Hearings:**

**BZA25-007 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS VARIANCE: Emma O'Brien of Legacy Sign requests variances from TABLE 26-6.701.B WALL SIGN SPECIFIC STANDARDS: Dimensions, Additional Standards; to increase the permitted height and obscure an architectural element for a proposed new auditorium entrance sign at Munster High School located at 8808 Columbia Avenue.**

Director Mendoza reported that at the last meeting, the board members had asked the petitioners to redesign the sign to allow the exposed I-beam part of the architecture element of the building to be left exposed and to look at other options for covering up the stone. He said they have returned with a revised sign; the new proposal is an aluminum sign with push-through acrylic, and the logo is internally lit. They are seeking variances from the Internal width of the size of the sign and the coverage of an architectural component, which is the limestone triangle. He said they are proposing a revised sign which is included in the staff report. Member Raffin asked if the board members had any other questions for staff. When there were none, he recognized the petitioner and asked him to state his name and address for the record.

Mr. Shawn O'Brien of Legacy Sign Group introduced himself and gave his address as 135 Wind Whistle Court, Valparaiso, IN. He said they were here last month and after some discussion, they've revised the design. He explained that they were covering up the I-beams before; they have now reduced their height, so they are not covering up the I-beams. He said they have changed the lettering, making it a little bit smaller, to incorporate it better. He concluded by saying he hoped this is what the board members were looking for. Member Raffin asked if anyone from the School Town wanted to speak.

Mr. Sean Begley, Director of Operations at the School Town of Munster said he would just add that they have put a lot of work into the interior of the school. They've redone the theater, the band room, and the choir room. He said they've made a new percussion room, so the inside is looking a lot nicer now. He said they've made changes to the exterior by replacing all the concrete that was cracked and falling apart, and they have some planters out there to make it more aesthetically pleasing. He said they will probably be coming back in the near future to change the parking lot lights on another project. He said they really want to meet the board's expectations with keeping the architectural part in it and have done a lot to try and clean the limestone. He said they tried doing it over at Wilbur Wright, as well, with little success. They ended up putting coverings over where it comes out to give it less of an industrial look. He said they were trying to do the same thing here by putting that sign up. He said they have used chemicals and stain and power washed it, and they are still struggling to get the limestone to look presentable, so this is what they've come up with.

Member Raffin asked if they are trying to keep a consistent branding on the school for future signage, all with the same kind of font. Mr. Begley said Kim is overseeing this to make sure that their logos are the same, they're using the same color schemes, and they're having some uniformity with the School Town branding. Member Raffin asked if there were any questions for Mr. Begley.

Member Johns asked what material the sign is made of. Mr. O'Brien answered that it's basically constructed of aluminum, a painted aluminum material, the lettering is then cut out of aluminum and

backed with acrylic, and the logo is a painted acrylic. He said at night, only the “Munster High School Performing Arts Center” will light up, the white light will shine through.

Attorney Bennett said she knew that previously the public hearing had been closed, but since this was set over to take additional information from the petitioner, she would ask that the board open the public hearing again for public comment. Member Raffin opened the public hearing and asked if anyone would like to come up and speak on behalf of BZA25-007, School Town Munster signage at the Performing Arts Center. When there were no public comments, Member Raffin closed the public hearing.

**Motion:** Member Mayer moved to approve the variance for BZA Docket No. 25-007.

**Second:** Member Sharpe seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Yes –4 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

**BZA25-008 DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS VARIANCE: Jim Glascott on behalf of the School Town of Munster requests a variance from TABLE 26-6.405.B CIVIC ZONE STANDARDS: Lighting, Screening, Private Landscaping and Fencing; to increase the permitted height and standards for proposed tennis courts located at 8839 Calumet Avenue.**

Director Mendoza said the School Town of Munster is here for a public hearing on a variance request for the heights on the both the screening height and the fence height. They are proposing 10 tennis courts in the area depicted in the staff report as a lease agreement with the Parks Department. He listed the variances they are seeking against the code requirements. The code requires the height of the fence be 6 feet; they're requesting 10 feet. They're also proposing the screening be 6 feet; they're proposing that the screening be as high as the fence, which is 10 feet. They're requesting a variance from the lighting standard, as well; they're looking to exceed the height requirement of proposed pole lights up to 50 feet in some cases for the tennis courts, as well as the head type. They currently have a box light, and they are proposing to maintain a similar box light for off-road lights in a slim structure design. They also request an increase in the color temperature from 3,000K to about 7,000K LED. Member Raffin asked if the board members had any questions for staff. When there were no questions, he asked if there was someone to speak on behalf of the School Town of Munster and asked them to state their name and address for the record.

Mr. Jim Glascott introduced himself as the principal in charge of civil engineering with the WT Group. He said they are civil engineers working on this project and they're prepared for any questions the board may have regarding their requests. He said they are proposing the taller athletic facility lights to provide adequate lighting for games in the evenings and low-light situations. They are proposing the 10-foot athletic chain link fencing, which is a standard height for tennis court facilities; noting that this is just something that's not specifically defined in the code.

Mr. Sean Begley, School of Town of Munster, 8616 Columbia Avenue, said this is a sporting facility. This would be the fence height and lighting that would be lighting up the courts like they currently have on Columbia Avenue. He said this would be an LED light similar to the light fixtures they currently have at the football stadium. He said they have gotten some good praise from the neighbors; when they used to light up the football field, the whole neighborhood would light up; these lights are much more surgical, and they're pointed straight down so these lights will be taller, but they will be more precise. He said they will also be on a timer, so when you push the button, the lights will go on for an hour. There will be the same public access that they've had with the town in the past. People can come and use them after hours, they can push the button and play, and the lights will go off automatically.

Member Raffin asked if there are security cameras for vandalism and all that. Mr. Begley said they will be able to lock the facility with the gates sometimes, but when it's open to the public, they will have some security cameras that they're able to place on the building that would show the tennis court area. He said he believes there will be more security cameras than are on the current courts.

Member Raffin asked Mr. Begley if he has talked to the administration about a comprehensive plan for the campus that they can start to develop as the schools continue to grow. Mr. Begley said they had met today with the Town Manager, Director Mendoza, Dr. Hicks, Mr. Melby from finance, and their architects and engineers. They all sat down to comprehensively go over a plan for the projects they want to complete in the next two to three years.

Member Raffin asked if the board members had any additional questions for the School of Town of Munster or staff.

Member Raffin opened the public hearing for BZA25-008. He asked if anyone would like to come up and speak regarding developmental standard variance for the tennis court project and Community Park. There were no public comments; he closed the public hearing.

**Motion:** Member Johns made a motion to approve PC Docket No. BZA25-008, a request for developmental standards variances to allow a fence and screen not to exceed 10 feet in height and stadium lighting not to exceed 50 feet in height utilizing off-road or similar light fixtures and for the color temperature not to exceed 5,700K for the proposed tennis courts, including all discussion and findings.

**Second:** Member Sharpe seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Yes –4 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

#### **Findings of Fact:**

**BZA25-006 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS VARIANCE:** Keegan Kisala received approval with conditions for a variance from TABLE 26-6.405.A-2 **DISTRICT STANDARDS: Private Landscaping and Fencing; to install a fence in the front yard of his corner lot property, located at 1020 Cornwallis Lane.**

**Motion:** Member Mayer moved to approve the Findings of Facts for BZA Docket No. 25-006.

**Second:** Member Johns seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Yes –3 No – 0 Abstain 1. Motion carried.

Member Raffin abstained.

#### **Other Business: None**

Member Raffin announced the next regular meeting will be held on December 9, 2025.

#### **Adjournment:**

**Motion:** Member Johns moved to adjourn.

**Second:** Member Sharpe seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Yes –4 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 6:35 pm

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Member Roland Raffin  
Board of Zoning Appeals

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Date of Approval

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Executive Secretary Sergio Mendoza  
Board of Zoning Appeals

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Date of Approval