

MUNSTER PLAN COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING
Meeting Date: January 10, 2023

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

Call to Order: 7:53pm

Pledge of Allegiance

Members in Attendance:

Andy Koultourides
Steve Tulowitzki
Roland Raffin
Rachel Branagan
Lee Ann Mellon

Members Absent:

Brian Specht (With Notice)
Bill Baker (With Notice)

Staff Present:

Tom Vander Woude, Planning Director
David Wickland, Attorney

Swearing in of Officers: Wendy Mis

- a. Roland Raffin was sworn on for an additional four year term at the beginning of the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting this evening.

Election of Officers: Chairman Raffin proposed postponing the election of officers until our all members are in attendance.

- a. **President**
- b. **Vice President**
- c. **Executive Secretary**

Motion: Mr. Tulowitzki moved to accept this postponement

Second: Mr. Koultourides

Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0 Abstain – 1. Motion carries

Approval of Minutes:

- a. **December 13, 2022, Regular Business Meeting**

Motion: Mr. Koultourides moved to approve the December 13, 2022 Regular Business Meeting minutes

Second: Ms. Branagan

Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries

Preliminary Hearings:

- a. **PC 22-024 Travis Bridges of OKW Architects on behalf of Simborg Development requesting approval of an amendment to the Lake Business Center Planned Unit Development to include an additional 9,000 square feet of warehouse space at 9200 Calumet Avenue.**

Mr. Vander Woude said the owners of the western portion of the Lake Business Center, Simborg Development, have presented plans to construct an approximately 9000 square foot warehouse connection between what is called the renovated north warehouse and the south warehouse on the Lake Business Center property at 9200 Calumet Avenue. The purpose of this connection is to allow Pepsi trucks to move between the two warehouses. Pepsi leases out the south warehouse and a portion of the north warehouse. The intent of the connection is to allow the flow of vehicles between the two warehouses. There is no intention to store any goods or conduct any real operations in this area. In addition to that warehouse space, they are also proposing to modify the dock area in the west edge of the warehouse and install some new parking spaces in this existing paved area between the two warehouses. They also plan to clean up the area between the two warehouses spaces and Calumet Avenue, which currently holds rubble and debris. He said this is an expansion of the footprint of the buildings on the site that is not included in the currently approved Planned Unit Development site plan and requires an amendment to the Planned Unit Development. He said they propose matching the existing building with painted metal paneling and a stone base. He said in the existing Planned Unit Development plan, the original plan for the southwest corner of the building included a very formalized parking area with trees and curbs and drive aisles. The current proposal does not include any landscaping. The entrance area is an open paved area with no landscaping used for the maneuvering of the trucks and some employee parking. There is a fence that divides the property. The staff perspective is that landscaping is not required in a loading area but a parking area, should comply with our landscaping standards like other places on the site. He said the area where the warehouse is proposed is currently paved so there is no increase in impervious surface and no need for additional detention. He said that at some point in the future there is a plan to connect the Lake Business Center development to the future Maple Leaf Boulevard, which is planned to take the Pepsi truck traffic out through a signalized intersection rather than through the unsignalized driveway south of that south warehouse.

Travis Bridges, a partner at OKW Architects located at 600 West Jackson Boulevard, Chicago, IL, said they have been working with Simborg since 2004 on the whole master plan and the repositioning of the campus. The south part of the north warehouse has been difficult to lease over time. Pepsi approached them to expand their operations, stay in Munster at the Lake Business Center and take the space if they could get the connection between the south warehouse and the north warehouse back. Before the renovations, these buildings were connected so it is kind of reestablishing a connection point that was there but in a different location. They talked to Pepsi a little more closely on how they want to use the back side of the property with their trucks and second and third shifts. That is partly why the trees don't work for them and they want their operations to work. Mr. Bridges said that other tenants have a more formal entry but that type of entry is not needed for Pepsi.

Mr. Tulowitzki said Maple Leaf Boulevard is going to connect to the new Kenmara development. Right now, the only reason you would drive behind that warehouse is because you are curious or you have some business there. It doesn't need to be necessarily sightly, but it is going to be a new part of town with commercial office traffic and we don't know what sort of tenants will be there. That does put a little different story on the landscaping for the aesthetics on the backside of this warehouse. He said an aerial image shows that there are a lot of tractor trailers in storage. He could imagine the logistics of the maneuvering that happens in that space. He asked if there had been any consideration for the frontage.

Mr. Bridges said is not aware of the Kenmara project. He knows they'd had conversations with Pepsi directly but it was about a connection point just at the Pepsi routes.

Mr. Tulowitzki said that in conversations with Saxon Partners, part of what they are doing is completing the bike path connections throughout the Town. They are discussing with them which side of the Maple Leaf Boulevard the bikes should cross when they meet the train. It is not only commercial office worker traffic, it also becomes a residential bike course connecting the bike path. It was asked what kind of right-of-way there is going to be off this property line and what kind of landscaping can be put in that to help with frontage, a wall or something. Right now, with the amount of truck traffic they get, it is right up against the property line for Pepsi. Mr. Vander Woude said the road itself is pushed as close to that property line as possible. Mr. Tulowitzki said it is more important than it normally would be considering that it is one of the few remaining parcels that we have to develop. Ms. Mellon said she was going to say the same thing because now that is no longer going to be an industrial park. There is a hotel there so it will be a little more visible overall. She agrees with staff that the landscaping should be kept consistent overall with our code. She asked about the vertical metal siding. They said the color was to match the office and building and the same with the base. The last time they were approached and they gave approval, she believes it is for the new Rush, Mr. Mitch Simborg was there and he said it would match the office building. When she looks at it the metal, is not the same kind of corrugated metal. It is thinner and it doesn't look the same. She wants to know which one they are matching, is it just matching color. She was disappointed because it is of the same width but it looks less expensive, and that is probably the case. Mr. Raffin said that's why we don't give them an occupancy permit. Ms. Mellon said on a picture it looks like it's corrugated metal, you assume it's going to match. Mr. Raffin said that if Mr. Simborg did not represent those comments and accuracy, he should be here to address that. Mr. Bridges said they had nothing to do with the 18,000 square foot building renovation in the center. They did the office building to the north and the north warehouse. Their intention on this project is to match those. Mr. Raffin asked if Mr. Simborg leases that space out or if he sold that space. Mr. Vander Woude said the adapted office building is owned by CAHST, the group who came in to get the sign program. It is no longer owned by Simborg. Mr. Raffin asked how they enforce Planned Unit Developments and covenants when you have architectural standards of the covenants. Mr. Vander Woude said the Lake Business Center doesn't have any specific architectural standards that are written down. They are approved on an individual basis each time there is a Development Plan approval or a Planned Unit Development amendment. Thus far, he thinks the Plan Commission has used the precedent from prior approvals to say the next one will conform to the previous ones. Mr. Raffin said that sitting there with the group and looking at the samples in that building and the standards that were used for the for approval; if they are not using the same siding, that is a problem. For example, for this new warehouse, it wasn't on the plan. It didn't say all future buildings would be made of a particular material. Mr. Raffin said he missed that meeting if that was approved. Ms. Mellon said she didn't know if those panels were approved. They look like panels; they don't look like brick. She feels like they were told it is going to match but maybe that was just the color.

Tony Grabelle, General Construction with Simborg Development, said to clarify, all the metal panels are exactly the manufacture with the exception of the north office building. All of the retail buildings and what is now where Rush is, are all the same Firestone product. They may have changed their profile slightly. Ms. Mellon said it is thinner. Mr. Grabelle said that might be but he can guarantee it is a Firestone product. They order everything through their contractor who does all the installation so it is

the same the same product through Firestone. It is all the same color; it is all the spec. Ms. Mellon said it is the same color. Mr. Grabelle said the profile might change slightly over a few years. They did Starbucks, Potbelly and Noodles and Company. Those profiles may change. Mr. Raffin said there should be a gauge, a gauge is a gauge; it should be 12, 20, or 22. They would have a spec on that. Mr. Grabelle said it is the same stuff; he orders from the same place every time. They didn't try to sell them on something different than proposed. Mr. Raffin said that they would want it to match, too, they don't want it to look like an eyesore. Mr. Grabelle said they will match it.

Mr. Raffin asked the applicants to work with staff to look at some of the issues that were raised before they come in front of the Plan Commission for the public hearing. For instance, coming up with a plan to shield the Maple Leaf Crossing road or landscape the back of the building. Mr. Vander Woude said that as a compromise between keeping that entire expanse cleared and creating room within the paved area, the equivalent landscaping could be placed on the edge of the property along the Town right-of-way as a screen. Ms. Branagan noted that the wall is 74 feet wide and asked if they might have a formal landscaping plan for the front and back. Mr. Koultourides who would see the landscaping in that little strip. Mr. Vander Woude said it is visible from Calumet Avenue. Mr. Koultourides said people going 35 to 40 miles per hour are not going to see it unless they are walking. He doesn't understand why they should put landscaping in there that no one will see. Mr. Raffin said you don't want rubble there. Mr. Koultourides said they could just put additional panels there and make it look completely closed from the front. They can add landscaping to the side where they are planning to screen the road. Mr. Raffin said putting in a seed bed is cheap. Mr. Koultourides said he would rather they invest in the side than that area. Mr. Vander Woude asked if he was suggesting a fence. Mr. Raffin said you still have to maintain it, either you put in a hard surface or a seed blanket that you have to maintain. If you put a fence there, you could have weeds growing up 8 feet high and no one maintains it. Ms. Mellon said they have had that issue on this property before with areas not being maintained. She thinks the new company is doing a good job with their portion but there were issues in the past. Overall, they all want it to be attractive, she can see that rubble there. She said if are putting money into the landscaping, it might be more valuable to put it in a spot where it is more impactful. Mr. Koultourides said they could put in artificial turf. Mr. Tulowitzki asked whether the Planned Unit Development still calls for a future office building to be there. He said the area will become more visible as that site develops. Ms. Branagan said people might want to bring their lunch and eat it there in the summertime when it is nice. Mr. Tulowitzki said he likes the idea in the back to look at screening and landscaping for more protection from the road and to allow it to still be open to and functional for maneuvering. Mr. Raffin said he doesn't have a problem if they have a contingency plan so that once that road is done, you have to have some kind of plan, at their expense, that will be in place and ready to go. That is his recommendation. They can work with staff before next month and have a plan on the drawing, conditionally. He doesn't care if they put it in now or when the road is put in. The Town will give them time to finish it. Mr. Bridges said if the Town will give them a drawing of that and the location, they can look at it and come up with a plan. Mr. Wickland said they can make it a condition.

Motion: Mr. Koultourides moved to set PC Docket No. 22-024 to a Public Hearing.

Second: Ms. Branagan

Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0 Abstain – 1. Motion carries

Public Hearings: None

Findings of Fact:

- a. **PC 22-022 Discalced Carmelite Fathers of Indiana, Inc. requesting approval of a development plan for a building arcade addition at 1628 Ridge Road.**

Motion: Mr. Tulowitzki moved to approve the Findings of Fact for PC Docket No. 22-022.

Second: Mr. Koultourides

Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0 Abstain – 1. Motion carries

Additional Business/Items for Discussion: None

Next Meeting: Mr. Raffin announced that the next regular business meeting will be February 14, 2023.

Adjournment:

Motion: Ms. Mellon moved to adjourn.

Second: Ms. Branagan

Vote: Yes – 5 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 8:26 pm

President Roland Raffin
Plan Commission

Date of Approval

Executive Secretary Thomas Vander Woude
Plan Commission

Date of Approval