

**MUNSTER PLAN COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES OF REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING**  
Meeting Date: September 10, 2024

The Plan Commission meeting was held at Munster Town Hall, 1005 Ridge Road in the main meeting room and could be accessed remotely via Zoom, a video conferencing application.

**Call to Order:** President Baker called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Members in Attendance:**

Bill Baker  
Rachel Branagan  
Joseph Hofferth  
Jennifer Johns  
Jonathan Petersen  
George Shinkan

**Members Absent:**

Roland Raffin

**Staff Present:**

Sergio Mendoza, Planning Director  
Jennifer Barclay, HWC Consultant  
David Wickland, Attorney  
Denise Core, Administrative Assistant

**Approval of Minutes:**

**August 13, 2024, PC Minutes Draft**

Director Mendoza stated there was a working draft that would be refined and will be ready for distribution.

Member Shinkan motioned to table the approval of the August 13, 2024, minutes until next month.

Member Johns seconded the motion.

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

**Preliminary Hearings:** None

**Public Hearings:**

**President Baker introduced PC24-008 DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW: Jeanne Armando of MRV Architects, Inc is proposing a Development Plan approval for the exterior renovation including parapet walls, exterior finishes, signage, landscape island to control drive thru flow, upgraded drive thru equipment for Taco Bell at 7949 Calumet Avenue.**

Director Mendoza stated this was the Taco Bell at 7949 Calumet Avenue. He added that Ms. Armando was in attendance to present a Development Plan for approval for the exterior renovations of the site including parapet walls, exterior finishes, signage, landscape islands and modifications to control the drive-thru traffic flow. He explained that signage would not be a part of this approval since it is a separate permit and approval process. He noted that the applicants had presented to the Site Review Committee twice and are in compliance with all the codes. He concluded that need Plan Commission

approval because the exterior changes exceed 50% of the building. He asked Ms. Barclay if she had anything to add.

Ms. Jennifer Barclay, HWC Consultant made reference to the staff report that includes the following:

This is a request for development plan approval to reconfigure parking lot and drivethru as well as update façade.

7949 Calumet Ave is part of Calumet Munster Shopping Center Subdivision Lot 5. The lot houses a 1,940-sf Taco Bell with associated parking, drive-thru and dumpster. The building was constructed in 1992. Today, Taco Bell desires to overhaul the interior and exterior of their building to fit with new corporate brand standards. Proposed improvements include:

1. The removal of the clay tile roof and building up the parapet walls to cover the roof top equipment.
2. New exterior finish of thin brick will be applied over the entire building.
3. New brand image signage will be installed at the entrance tower along Calumet Avenue however signage is not part of this approval.
4. The interior of the building will receive new finishes in the dining room and restrooms.
5. The kitchen will have some equipment relocated to achieve a better and more productive work low.
6. The drive-thru is being reconfigured as well as parking to alleviate congestion. New drive-thru speaker, post entrance and clearance bar are proposed.
7. New directional signs will be added to the site to help customers navigate to the drive-thru.

Staff is encouraged to see investment and improvements in properties. Overall staff is satisfied with the application as presented.

The Plan Commission may wish to consider the following motion: Motion to conditionally approve, the conditions being: 1. All signage will be applied for and approved separate of this application and approval.

President Baker asked if there was anyone who wished to speak on this petition.

Ms. Jeanne Armando of MRV Architects, 5105 Tollview Drive, Rolling Meadows, IL, stated this is an extensive remodel project designed to bring Taco Bell up to brand standards. She added they want to address the confusing parking lot layout and improve traffic flow and congestion caused by the number of access points into the site. She added details of the proposed landscaping, building plans and materials and plans for improved traffic flow. She concluded that she is working with staff on the signage.

President Baker asked for a red-lined version of the plans to show the exactly where all the changes would be made to the site. He asked what the exterior color scheme would be.

Ms. Armando stated that the brick shown on the rendering will be a dark gray, almost black, the lighter color shown will be a lighter gray. Ms. Armando showed an image of a completed project to each Plan Commission member.

President Baker asked about the ingress and egress into the interior access road. There was a discussion on the traffic control measures detailed on page 8 of the staff report.

President Baker opened the public hearing. Hearing no comments, President Baker closed the public hearing.

Ms. Branagan asked Ms. Amando to explain the void shown on the south façade shown on the plans.

Ms. Armando stated they normally would have artwork in that area, but artwork is considered signage in Munster so that element had been removed. She stated they are substituting lights so it will not be a big blank wall.

President Baker asked if the development plan was in compliance with landscaping, including irrigation, lighting and stormwater.

Director Mendoza stated that the proposed plans are in compliance and staff has received a photometric plan.

Ms. Armando stated the lighting has already been updated to LED. She added they are updating all the landscaping per the ordinance which includes irrigation.

Member Branagan motioned to approve the Development Plan for PC Docket No. 24-008.

Member Shinkan seconded the motion.

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

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

**President Baker introduced PC24-009 DEVELOPMENT PLAN APPROVAL: Nick Georgiou with Region Contractors received Conditional Approval of a Development Plan for an 11,476 SF addition to an existing 4918 SF CD-4.B building, including exterior facade, parking lot expansion, landscaping, sidewalks, and stormwater detention at 620 Progress Avenue.**

Director Mendoza stated that the Findings of Fact include the conditions that were imposed as part of the approval. The Findings of Fact identifies the exterior meets the conditions of BZA Docket No. 24-006, which was previously approved. The parking lot expansion is approved, and the landscaping meets the current code. Sidewalks will be installed when adjacent properties on either side of them add them at a future date, this will officially be recorded with the deed. Stormwater and detention meet code. Mechanical A/C units on the east and the dumpster enclosure on the west will be in the same materials as the building. He concluded that tenants must meet staff approval as required by the BZA24-007 approval conditions.

President Baker asked if there was something is in the public record that would trigger the sidewalks to be installed.

Director Mendoza stated this document should be recorded with the title. There was further discussion about collaborative policies and procedures needed to enforce these triggers.

Member Petersen motioned to approve the Findings of Fact for PC Docket No. 24-009.  
Commissions Member Shinkan seconded the motion.

**Vote:** Yes –6 No – 0 Abstain – 0. Motion carried.

**Other Items/ Additional Items for Discussion:**

**President Baker introduced Study Session: PC24-007 PUD AMENDMENT: Andrew Qunell of VRQ, LLC representing Power's Health is requesting an amendment to COMMUNITY HOSPITAL PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT to add a CHP (CoGeneration Unit) to the northeast side of Community Hospital located at 901 MacArthur.**

Director Mendoza stated that at the last meeting, it was decided that a study session would be conducted, and adjacent stakeholders would be contacted. He added that the petitioner, Mr. Qunell, contacted adjacent stakeholders and he has submitted letters from them identifying that they have no concerns with the proposed project.

Member Petersen stated the letter he read on behalf of Westminster Presbyterian had a discrepancy in the decibel volume. The letter indicated the Westminster representatives were advised that it would be no more than 55 but the petitioner acknowledged that the ambient sound would be as much as 75 decibels at a distance.

Member Hofferth stated the neighbors are stakeholders and he wanted to experience a functioning operating system.

Director Mendoza stated the residents will be contacted as part of the public hearing; the Plan Commission had not motioned this petition for a public hearing. He added that the petitioner has not provided the requested sound study.

Mr. Andy Qunell, 2158 45<sup>th</sup> Street, Highland, IN, stated he was in attendance with Mr. Jay Ballard with Bernhard Engineering, whose corporate office is located at 1 Galleria Boulevard, Metairie, LA.

Mr. Qunell stated the unit proposed for this site would have an enclosure that provides 55 dba at 10 meters. He added that a study could not be done because there was not a similar enclosure set up like this anywhere. He concluded that the wall would also add buffering from the noise.

Mr. Ballard stated the closest installation of this equipment is 236 miles away; it has been running 24/7 for 18 months but it is not the same system as the one proposed for Munster. He added that it is a CoGeneration system but without the sound reducer kit that this one would have.; this one would also have a sound reducing wall as an added buffer. He explained that the system without the retainer walls was 76 dba at 55 feet; this one would be 55 dba at 10 meters. There was further discussion on the equipment, the sound from different levels, and the state design release.

Member Branagan asked for an explanation for the wall height discrepancy and if there would be additional screening above the wall.

Mr. Ballard stated the wall is built 8 feet below ground. He added that screening above the wall could create a safety concern.

President Baker asked for a rendering of the east elevation of the hospital to show what the street view from Columbia Avenue would be.

Mr. Ballard stated they could provide an east elevation rendering.

Mr. Qunell stated they could bring equipment to the site that would generate the sound of 55 decibels at 35 feet. He added that this would not factor in the sound buffering the wall would provide.

Mr. Ballard stated the manufacture's public sound data number with the silencer kit installed guarantees 55 db. He suggested that the manufacturer may be able to provide a comparison showing the decibel levels with and without the silencer.

It was concluded that the petitioners would set up a mockup sound study before the next regular meeting to demonstrate the expected decibels levels.

Letters from Stakeholders are attached as EXHIBIT A.

**Next Meeting:** President Baker announced that the next Regular Business Meeting will be October 8, 2024.

**Adjournment:**

Member Shinkan motioned to adjourn.

Member Johns seconded the motion.

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:22pm

---

President Bill Baker  
Plan Commission

---

Date of Approval

---

Executive Secretary Sergio Mendoza  
Plan Commission

---

Date of Approval

## EXHIBIT A

**From:** Heller, Bret S. <bsheller@munster.us>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 6, 2024 10:52 AM  
**To:** andy@vrqlc.com  
**Subject:** Proposed Project at 901 MacArthur Facility

Mr. Qunell,

Thank you for informing the School Town of Munster of the project taking place at Community Hospital. On behalf of the School Town of Munster, we have no issues with the proposed CoGeneration unit being proposed at the 901 MacArthur facility.



**Dr. Bret Heller**

Superintendent of Schools



219.836.9111 x1025



[bsheller@munster.us](mailto:bsheller@munster.us)

This email message (including any attachments) is for the sole use of the intended recipient(s) and may contain confidential information covered under the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA) as well as proprietary information of the School Town of Munster that is intended for the sole use of the intended recipient. If you are not the intended recipient, disclosure, copying, re-distribution or other use of any of this information is strictly prohibited. Please immediately notify the sender and delete this transmission if you received this email in error.

**From:** preschool@wpcmunster.org  
**Sent:** Friday, September 6, 2024 10:26 AM  
**To:** andy@qunell.org  
**Subject:** Impact of Community Hospital Project

Mr. Qunell,

Thank you so much for informing me of the project taking place at Community Hospital. I appreciate the notification and any concern over noise impacting our preschool here at Westminster Presbyterian Church.

With our close proximity to Columbia Avenue, we are used to road noise while our preschoolers are enjoying their time in our playground space. Since the noise output from the project will be under 55db, we do not feel this is something that will impact our students or staff while outside and certainly not while inside.

Moving forward, should we have any concerns, I will certainly reach out to you.

Sincerely,

*Tricia Shelton*

Tricia Shelton  
Director  
Westminster Preschool  
8955 Columbia Avenue  
Munster, IN 46321  
219-838-3131  
Cell: 219-794-4179  
[preschool@wpcmunster.org](mailto:preschool@wpcmunster.org)

**From:** Mark Heintz <mheintz@munster.org>  
**Sent:** Friday, August 16, 2024 4:04 PM  
**To:** Andy Qunell (andy@vrqlc.com)  
**Cc:** Dan Repay (danrepay@gmail.com)  
**Subject:** CoGeneration Unit

Andy,

Just to summarize our conversation today. On behalf of the Town of Munster Parks and Recreation department, we have no issues with the proposed CoGeneration unit being considered as proposed at the 901 MacArthur facility.

Mark Heintz, CPRP  
Director of Parks and Recreation  
Town of Munster Parks and Recreation Dept.  
1005 Ridge Road  
Munster IN 46321-1849  
(219) 836-6925  
[mheintz@munster.org](mailto:mheintz@munster.org)  
[www.munster.org](http://www.munster.org)

