

MUNSTER PLAN COMMISSION
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
May 13, 2025

The Munster Plan Commission held its regularly scheduled meeting on May 13, 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:

Members in Attendance

Rachel Branagan
Joseph Hofferth
Jennifer Johns
Roland Raffin
George Shinkan
Bill Baker, President

Members Absent

David Nellans

Staff Present

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

Approval of Minutes: April 8, 2025

Motion: Councilor Shinkan moved to approve the April 8, 2025; minutes as presented.

Second: Commissioner Branagan

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

Preliminary Hearings:

President Baker introduced PC25-007 PRELIMINARY PLAT: Attorney Scott Yahne for Midwest Orthopedic at Rush requests approval of a Preliminary Plat: LOT 4 of LAKE BUSINESS CENTER SUBDIVISION FIRST RE-SUBDIVISION of LOT 3, located at 9260 Calumet Avenue.

Director Mendoza said this is a very similar project to one that occurred about a year ago in April, 2024. The lot, highlighted in blue on page 2 of the staff report, was subdivided into Lot 3. They are now proposing to make another subdivision out of Lot 3 and have proposed Lot 4. This will complete the sequence of lots numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 within the Lake Business Center development. He said the intention is to create a legal lot of record for future development which will be heard next in PC25-008, a PUD Amendment, followed up with PC25-009, a development plan proposing a two-story medical office building there.

President Baker thanked Director Mendoza for the overview as asked the Plan Commission members if they had any questions for staff regarding this petition; there were no comments. He asked if anyone wished to speak on behalf of the petitioners. He recognized Attorney Yahne and asked that he state his name and address for the record.

Attorney Scott Yahne, business address 3 Lincoln Way, Suite 201, Valparaiso, Indiana, introduced himself and thanked the commissioners for entertaining their project this evening. He said the project team was in attendance so if there were questions, the right people were available to answer those questions. He said his client is Munster MOB 1, LLC. He said that is the purchaser of this proposed Lot 4. He stated there is an existing PUD for the Midwest Business Center and, as Director Mendoza aptly described, they are seeking to have this lot platted at the terminus of Fran Lin Parkway. They are coming in off of Fran Lin just beyond the light so they don't need any curb cuts or anything of that nature. He explained that they have several items for discussion this evening, they have this preliminary plat for the subdivision and they will have the final plat approval; they have the PUD amendment and the development plan. He said he could talk about them collectively for this preliminary meeting, or he could segment them depending on the pleasure of the Commission. President Baker said this is a public sector scenario so they should follow the agenda. Attorney Yahne said they would confine the discussion to the preliminary plat. He introduced members of the team, Fred Campobasso, who is the Managing Partner responsible for this development, Brian Avery, of Cannon Design, the architect who also supports a team, Michael Boyle of RX Health and Science Trust who are the owners of this property, and Odari Lewis and Kayla Sullivan from Kimley Horn, the engineers. He said they will be talking about stormwater reports later in the evening and they have a traffic study as part of these processes so that will also be discussed. He said the team has been working with Director Mendoza and team and they went through Site Review where they made some adjustments. He said they are now before the Plan Commission on the first petition, which is the Preliminary Plat approval of Lot 4. He said if there are professional question, he has the people assembled here who can address those. He said he understands they will be coming back next month for a public hearing, and they will have their notices and everything else in order to go forward then. He said there will be more information to present with the development plan.

President Baker acknowledged that this petition is to create a new plat and the owner of the currently platted parcel and the owner of the new parcel are present. Attorney Yahne confirmed this. President Baker asked how big the proposed Lot 4 parcel will be. Director Mendoza said 2.3 acres. President Baker asked if the access road, the ring road, would stay with the current ownership. Attorney Yahne said it is subject to the existing covenants that will remain in place, so it remains for the benefit of all users and the property owners. He noted that there are a couple of separate property owners that the road serves. President Baker said these are CCRs (Declarations of Restrictions) and asked Attorney Bennett if those would run with the land. Attorney Bennett said yes. Attorney Yahne said, to be clear, their lot does not intrude upon any of the declared easements under those covenants; it goes right up to and abuts those easements. President Baker asked if the Commission members had questions for the petitioner on creating a new parcel within Lake Business Center. He added, for historical perspective, that this will make a significant number of parcels that have been carved out of the original PUD. Chairman Raffin addressed Director Mendoza and asked him to explain the staff position on the findings and recommendations regarding cross-access easements and other items in the staff report. Director Mendoza said Lot 3 has recorded covenants for cross-access easements, including the plated and recorded ingress/egress; there does not appear to be any of these proposed for Lot 4. He said the applicant can speak towards that but he suspects that there will be no cross-access easement or use of the parking lot like the other parcels. Attorney Yahne said he and Dan McCarthy, the attorney for the transaction, have worked collaboratively to make sure those covenants absolutely serve their new Lot 4 because we need them there; there is not an eyelash of daylight between that Lot 4 property and those easements. He said there are cross parking easements that exist, there are access easements, and there are utility easements. He said they had worked quite closely with Michael (Boyle) in configuring some of them and he has given them some

helpful advice in running NIPSCO lines and so forth. Mr. Raffin asked if all the easements, the cross-access agreements, and everything based on the covenants would be submitted and recorded in the final plat. Attorney Yahne said they would be shown on the plat but they are linked to existing recorded easements so they don't anticipate new easements that will be created as a result, with the exception of possibly one. Attorney Bennett said they should just reflect where they are for the exterior lot lines but it won't actually be on Lot 4. Attorney Yahne said that is correct. President Baker asked if there were any more question for the petitioner.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to set PC Docket No. 25-007 Preliminary Plat: LOT 4 of LAKE BUSINESS CENTER SUBDIVISION FIRST RE-SUBDIVISION of LOT 3, located at 9260 Calumet Avenue to public hearing.

Second:

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

President Baker introduced PC25-008 PUD AMENDMENT: Attorney Scott Yahne for Midwest Orthopedic at Rush requests an Amendment to the LAKE BUSINESS CENTER PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT located at 9260 Calumet Avenue.

President Baker said they are doing an amendment that will go to the Town Council. Director Mendoza confirmed that ultimately the Plan Commission recommendation will go to the Town Council for a final decision. Director Mendoza said what they are proposing is very similar to what was done last year, a modification of the lot lines that are part of the PUD. They are essentially creating Lot 4 as well as design guidelines and bulk standards that are accompanied within this application as well. He said they have identified additional language to support the development plan which will follow this. He said it is outlined in the staff report and the full document is included as Exhibit B; it is 8 pages of discussions in regard to use, size, building size, and materials and other standards. President Baker said the PUD overlays the entire property, including all of those parcels that have already been carved up, and asked what consistency of materials is included in this amendment. Director Mendoza said that, historically, there appears to have been separate guidelines and standards designed, or plans submitted, to either support guidelines or lack them so this amendment would be just Lot 4. President Baker said then this amendment is going to basically carve it out as its own entity, almost like a single parcel in town. Director Mendoza said it will have separate guidelines and design standards that would not accompany other portions of this entity. President Baker noted that the current owner had re-signed the entire property and asked if this amendment would mean they would no longer have to adhere to that same overview. Director Mendoza said that is correct, this proposed sign package will overlay what was previously approved. Commissioner Raffin asked if the proposed signage meets our current ordinance. Director Mendoza said that was not confirmed because this is unique. Commissioner Raffin said we should know which signs will be in compliance, and what signs will not be in compliance since there should be some consistency across town. Attorney Bennet said from a legal standpoint that does not apply in here.

President Baker asked if anyone wished to speak on this petition, they should sign in and introduce themselves.

Attorney Scott Yahne, 3 Lincoln Way, Suite 201, Valparaiso, Indiana, introduced himself and said he would start with the last topic first, which is signage. He stated that in the design standards, they have addressed this pretty significantly, including the sizing of the font on the signage. He said they had

worked collaboratively with Director Mendoza on several drafts of these design standards. He explained that, behind the scenes, he told his folks to fit within the sign ordinance; he has been down this walk a few times and he knows it's a lot easier if they do that. He said he got the commitment from his folks, they are pretty limited on what their signage is, so he'll make sure they can point it out as they go forward. He said Brian (Avery) can help show that to the commissioners when they get to the development plan but they do plan on sticking within the ordinance and not pushing the envelope. He said this is one the messy old-style PUDs, where there were no design standards. He said we have all been around for a while and have seen this project get developed over the years and we know its history; it was all different components. He said Mike (Boyle) and his team have done a really nice job of giving it unity but there is not a completely unified type of approach in terms of building materials. He said they are proposing to be held to what is in their development plan in terms of construction, materials, and attributes. He said they have covered everything from parking to uses to building materials, landscaping, and lighting. He said they are going to give the Plan Commission what he thinks they will find to be a Class A building and development, and those are the standards that will apply. He said he hopes when the commissioners see the proposed development plan, the elevations and renderings, that they will you all agree that this is a Class A building that is going to reflect well upon the town, and they are going to be held to some very high standards. He said that is very important to Mike (Boyle) and Fred (Campobasso) as well. He said he'd be happy to address any specific questions on the bulk design and use standards. He said if there are any particular interests, they may be served in the Development Plan presentation; they can take specific questions then.

Commissioner Raffin asked if Mr. Yahne could bring a facade mock up with the materials to the next hearing. He was told that the petitioners have them today but would definitely have them next month. Commissioner Branagan asked if it would be more appropriate to keep her questions about the building until the next agenda item. President Baker said to ask the question. Commissioner Branagan said she was not at the BZA meeting earlier so she did not have that background but she had questions about the elevations on page 12 of the staff report. She asked if the top elevation pictured is facing the street and the left, middle elevation is facing Calumet. A discussion ensued and the staff report was referenced regarding the elevations and potential signage, including building, monument and directional, the streets they would be facing and the reasons for those decisions. President Baker asked that the petitioner be prepared to present all the signage at the next hearing; it should include how they're going to get people around and where are they are going to place the directional signs when exiting Fran Lin onto this property.

Commissioner Branagan said it was a little blurry but it looks like the dark gray is all brick; she asked for a walk through of the materials. Mr. Avery said the dark gray is a face brick; it's a darker with a blue tint to it. He said they are adding some texture with that and with a detail that they call recessed banding where every course is recessed in or pulled out a little bit and that creates some of the texture that you see across the facades. He said another material that you see on there is a banding of aluminum composite material that is a kind of banding that is seen wrapping around the south and the sides. He said they have some soffits of a composite wood material which is adding some color to the elevations. He said some of the other renderings show a better perspective. He said you can see the glazing with the 2-story curtain wall at the corner; they have a waiting area behind that at the entrance, and there is a storefront that wraps around the lower level connecting the entrance to the rehab gym. He said there is also some lighter colored masonry that continues that metal band around the southern and west facades. He said that is the entirety of the materials. Commissioner Branagan said she thinks it's a great

building and the kind of architecture she'd like to see. She added that she is familiar with Cannon Design. Mr. Avery said they have material samples. If the commission members would like to see them, or they will bring them back next month. Commissioner Branagan said her one concern is the Calumet elevation and if that meets our requirements glass and window sizing on a major street. Director Mendoza said they did not compare the PUD material design standards to the amended PUD but they can do that. Commissioner Branagan said this is a concern because the rest of the building is so great but the Calumet Avenue side is an important elevation and it seems to be like a backside, almost an afterthought. She said she would look at the floor plans and see what is happening on that side. Mr. Avery offered to show more perspective that shows the approach on Calumet from the south when they come next time. President Baker asked for this from the north as well. There was further discussion on the facades as seen from all directions and specifically the few small window surrounded by blank wall facing the major thoroughfare.

President Baker asked Attorney Bennett and Director Mendoza about the changes from the current PUD for this particular location; he asked where in the 50 pages, could he find the requested changes to the PUD and the staff's position on those requests. Director Mendoza said it is on page 14 of the staff report and is labeled Exhibit B. Commissioner Raffin said it starts with THE STANDARDS FOR BULK DESIGN AND USES and goes on after that section B introduction. President Baker said he wanted to know what the modifications are. Director Mendoza said we can do a comparison and then summarize that if that is what the commission would like him to do. He said the standards vary from the character-based code. President Baker said we have done 4 or 5 amendments in this particular PUD so he is trying to see if there's a deviation from the previously approved ones so they are not creating more of a jigsaw puzzle than we already have. Director Mendoza said, as the attorney for the petitioner had mentioned, it was a messy PUD. He said going back to pull those ordinances for the design guidelines and bulk standards, if they were even identified, has proven to be difficult but we will do what we can. Attorney Bennett said they should remember that the amendment is from that PUD in 2006; it is not from the character-based code. President Baker said that would be for the design of the original building from when this was a manufacturing site. Attorney Bennett said the original 1996 PUD was for the entire Lake Business Center. President Baker said that was all manufacturing; it was Simmons manufacturing plant, so it had nothing to do with new amendments; he said the new ones came with hotels, DaVita, and restaurants, those were all the modifications to the PUD. Attorney Bennett said they were not modifications to all of the parcels. President Baker said they were treating each one of them as if it's its own animal and not part of the PUD. Attorney Bennett said that in the amendments that have been done, they are still Lake Business Center but are identified as Lake Business Center Lot 3 or Lot 7 or Lot 5. President Baker said the thought process is to carve out the new lots so, at some point, they can sell those and not have an impact with the rest of the development. Attorney Bennett said she and Director Mendoza discovered that in the 1990's and the early 2000s, this was the way that development was done in town; there were 25 or 30 communities built during that time. She and Attorney Yahne explained that oftentimes it's just a map with the standards in a separate document or you may have to look at the plat to try to determine if there were standards and that's why they have to get cleaned up.

Commissioner Raffin addressed Attorney Yahne and said he saw the landscaping but no mention of irrigation in the landscaping Section K. He said he assumes it is or it will be fully irrigated. Mr. Avery said it will be fully irrigated for the green space.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to set PC Docket No. 25-008 to a public hearing.

Second: Commissioner Johns

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

President Baker introduced PC25-009 DEVELOPMENT PLAN: Attorney Scott Yahne for Midwest Orthopedic at Rush requests approval of a Development Plan for a new 30,00SF, 2-story medical office building to be part of the LAKE BUSINESS CENTER PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT, located at 9260 Calumet Avenue.

Director Mendoza this is the same discussion but now we are focused on the development plan, which includes landscaping, lighting, monument and other signage. President Baker invited Attorney Yahne to present.

Attorney Scott Yahne of 3 Lincoln Way, Suite 201, Valparaiso, Indiana, said he hopes the commissioners find that they are presenting a Class A medical building that will be affiliated with Rush. He said occupational therapy will be one of the things they'll be doing there. There will also be an advanced imaging suite with MRI and CT, and an orthopedic center. He said this is going to be a high standard, high quality, facility that will have many attributes and medical equipment that he can discuss if the commissioners would like to know more. He said there is a traffic study. He said they wanted to make certain they have enough parking so they have excess parking for our needs. They also have high number ADA spaces, more than required but that are required by the people that would visit our facility. He said they have a full stormwater engineering report adding that there had been a lot of work done on that. He said Mr. Boyle has been directly involved to come up with the best solution for stormwater. He said after a lot of assessment and actually running out and doing tests of existing facilities, they have determined that they have a good workable system. His marching orders were not to just do enough to get by but to make sure there was never a problem; they have to meet high expectations for the new occupants of this building and that includes more than adequate stormwater capability. He said he would turn it over to the professionals for questions on that. He said the commissioners may want to hear more about the building elevations and materials from Brian (Avery). He noted that their building is located behind two restaurants on Calumet Avenue, and that they are on a ring road which makes it awkward. If they face the building toward Calumet Avenue, they would be obscured by the buildings in front of them. Another issue is how to circulate traffic to get people in and out.

Councilor Shinkan asked about the traffic study which could be found starting on page 52 in the staff report. Attorney summarized some points from the study. He said they are going to have 159 total parking spaces.; they had determined our operational demand at 133 spaces which includes staff, clinic patients and physical therapy patients, family members, and people that help the patients get to and from their facility. Councilor Shinkan asked if there would be any spill over into other parking lots. Attorney Yahne said no, in fact, it may be a relief valve. Councilor Hofferth asked what direction people would come from Fran Lin considering the congestion around Starbucks.

Mr. Odari Lewis with Kimley Horn at 4201 Winfield Road, Warrenville, Illinois said the traffic study found that there is no real significant impact to any of the Starbucks traffic. He said they propose to just change the through arrow to a through and left turn arrow as well as to provide some stop control on the minor streets. President Baker asked what stop signs would be added on the ring road. Mr. Lewis said they will have stop signs coming out of their site as well as some stop signs going onto Fran Lin from their side. President Baker asked who maintains that road considering the amount of pressure that comes out of this particular location; who is responsible for repainting the stop line and makes sure the sign is there.

Mr. Mike Boyle with RX Science and Trust introduced himself said they are the owners at 9200 Calumet. He said that road is maintained by Simborg and his company right now. He said they have an existing agreement between the two groups that stipulates who maintain it, who plows it, and who maintains the storm water system that carries all the water from their property up north left, and then jogs into the lift station. He said it is all very spelled out. President Baker asked who the property management company is. Mr. Boyle said it is his company. President Baker asked Director Mendoza how a problem on this ring road, for instance, if the stop sign was down, or the white line not being painted correctly would be resolved. Director Mendoza said typically we get the call first because people assume it's a public road, and we would reach out to the management company and advise them on the inconsistencies or discrepancies outside. He said once we're aware of it, we do share that information.

Commissioner Raffin said this has been split off in parts of pieces, so he is not sure really who manages what but over the years a lot of the landscape plants and trees have died in that area and they have never been replaced. He said he thinks it would in the town's interest to go back to some of those drawings and see what was originally proposed and approved compared to what they have now. He said he could guarantee the plantings they have now are not what was approved back when it was a similar project to this but the entire parcel should be up to the landscaping code. Director Mendoza said we can forward this information to the zoning officer; she can pull the approved site plans, do site visits, and determine what is currently intact. Commissioner Raffin answered President Baker's question about the irrigation by saying he did not see the irrigation plan in either the landscaping plan in this petition or in the landscaping section in the prior petition. Commissioner Raffin asked how deep their light pole bases and foundations will be. Kayla Sullivan said the light poles will be on the electrical plans which may be done by Kimley Horn.

Commissioner Branagan questioned the architects again about their color choice again; she thinks it looks great but wanted to know what drove that, given the color of the surrounding buildings are more brownish; it doesn't have to match, just complement. Mr. Avery said the gray masonry is an element on the Midwest Orthopedics buildings they have elsewhere so it is a kind of a branding masonry for them. He added that when he looked at existing buildings in the surrounding area, they thought it complemented fairly well. He said they added the lighter band, the metal panels, and the other bricks on the parapets to complement that darker brick color. She asked about the uses in the building specifically on the east elevation and asked if that was for the MRI and imaging rooms. Mr. Avery said that's exactly right, there will be imaging on both floors along that facade. He said there are 2 smaller work rooms which are where you see those 2 small windows; the taller windows at the corner are in the lobby. Commissioner Branagan said she still has some hesitations with the east and south elevations but the north elevation is great.

President Baker asked that the petitioner to prepare an aerial overlay that shows the outlot buildings in relation to this building; he thinks this building is all the way down to the south end of the lot but he wants to see it with the other buildings to get an idea of what the sideline is going to look like. Mr. Avery said absolutely. Commissioner Raffin said he can see that all the mechanicals are screened on the roof; he asked if they intend to have backup generators at the site. Mr. Avery said there were no plans for that. Director Mendoza said if they want to add one in the future, they would need a building permit issued and would need to follow the code for screening.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to set PC Docket No. 25-009 to a public hearing.

Second: Councilor Hofferth

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

Public Hearings:

President Baker introduced PC25-006 Development Plan: Marc Smith, with E. Anthony for Family Christian Center requests approval of a development plan for a building addition, approximately 25,500 square feet, located at 340 45th Street.

Director Mendoza stated this is the Family Christian Center; they are proposing to expand on the existing facility to the north and to the east. He said the expansion to the east would be primarily for storage use and their needs to increase capacity. To the north, they are expanding their lobby area for gathering of fellowship and entryways for their patrons and of the Family Christian Church. He stated there is no impact to any other lighting or landscaping; they will be impacting parking towards the east, however, they are currently over on their parking requirements. If this other plan moves forward, they would be at 720 spaces, the requirement is 635. President Baker said this is the first time the Plan Commission has seen this, and it is a public hearing. Director Mendoza said that is because of the ordinance states that single site development plans go straight to public hearing. He researched previous development plans and they did not go to preliminary hearing first; only PUD development plans require a preliminary hearing. President Baker asked if anyone wished to speak on behalf of this petition.

Mr. Antonio Belmonte, 9987 Margo Lane Munster, Indiana, said he is a liaison for the FCC (Family Christian Center). He said he has a team in attendance which includes two architects, Pastor Steve Munsey, and Mark Smith from B. Anthony, Inc. He said they are asking to go forward with the additional on the east side of the current church, which is the area in green on page 4 of the staff report. He said once the front elevation is redesigned, it's already redesigned and added, you won't even see the addition. He said the addition does several things, it adds storage space that is desperately needed because currently FCC rents storage space from the warehouse across the street on 45th and every time they have a stage event, all the staging is dismantled and taken across the street and stored for the next year. He explained that it occupies a lot of space and as they are transporting everything back and forth, there is damage so they have to be rebuilt or touched up. He said it will be easier to have everything in house versus hauling stuff back and forth constantly. The other issue is that the auditorium is quite large with a large seating capacity so the small funerals and weddings tend to get lost in that facility. He said in the Pastor Munsey wants to have a small chapel located towards the north end of that green area, to be able to have smaller funerals and little wedding ceremonies there to make it more intimate. He said this small chapel would be open to the community 24/7 with security so people can just go there and pray in the chapel instead of opening the entire facility.

President Baker said he was reviewing the submitted documents that show the expansion is 25,500 SF but, in the overview, it looks like the first floor goes from a little over 60,000 SF to a little over 86,000 SF; the second floor goes from 38,000 SF to 71,000 SF. He asked the petitioners to explain that since it doesn't seem like 25,000, as presented. Mr. Belmonte said the existing first floor in the blue area is 60,457, the second floor above that bluish area is 38,516 so the existing square footage is 98,977. He said the proposed addition on the east side would be 14,758 and the north addition which is the red end of it, is 10,785, which adds up to 25,543. He said that, again, the east addition, is 10,293 and the north addition would be 749 on the second floor so the current total addition is 25,000 SF.

Zenon from Ridgeland Associates, 1 Riverside Road, Riverside, Illinois, said that was not correct, it is 36,500 with the second floor. Commissioner Raffin asked Director Mendoza to display page 16 of the staff report and he showed the petitioners where the 157,499 proposed total was in the application package material. President Baker said the math needs to be checked on the submitted document since it doesn't add up. The petitioners said they will double check everything.

Commissioner Raffin asked if the square footage would affect the parking calculations. Director Mendoza said it wouldn't, in our code, the parking calculation is based on the number of pews. Commissioner Johns said that she understands that they are creating storage and a small chapel and that they are currently nicely within code for parking, however, she feels that parking is often burgeoning. She asked if they thought these additions and all the activities will impact their parking needs. Mr. Belmonte said he lives nearby and drives by this location 4-5 times a day. He stated the total parking they currently have is 810 but it is 790 right now. He said there are 90 parking spaces at the back end of the building that is currently not striped. If there is an event or something, they'll have trucks there for the staging and for the transportation we talked about earlier. Commissioner Johns said those 90 spaces accounts for the difference between the 720 into 810 spaces. This was confirmed as correct. Mr. Belmonte added that if something is happening in the chapel, perhaps a funeral, there is not going to be anything happening in the big church so parking wouldn't be affected. Commissioner John asked how many pews, what capacity, is proposed for the chapel since there doesn't seem like there is enough parking. She asked them to assume that someday there may be large event going on and a smaller gathering in the chapel. She asked how many people they could expect.

Pastor Munsey from the Family Christian Church at 340 45th Street said on the chapel will not seat over 200, but they're not fixed chairs; they for 100 or 125, it just depends on how they lay it out. President Baker asked if, after the expansion, they plan to push the existing access road to the that front door further north. Pastor Munsey said no, he referenced the rendering explained that the entrances are different; they are on either side as far as drop off, they are on either side. He said the huge lane that they have now that goes underneath the carport to drop off, will be carports on either side, and that lane will be encompassed with the lobby. He said it will be enclosed; it is all glass. He said they are pretty excited because it's two instead of one and that will be better for people. There was further discussion about parking spots lost; there are none in the front and 30 lost on the east which will be made up for with the 90 in the back. Commissioner Johns asked if the parking requirement will be met with the 90 additional spaces for the 200 additional seats. Director Mendoza said that would depend on how many seats there are within that 3,000 square foot chapel; the way the parking ordinance reads for places of worship are one car-1 parking space for every 3 seats. Commissioner Johns asked what the capacity the main sanctuary holds, pastor Munsey answered it is 1909. Pastor Munsey said he understands the concerns but they believe the parking is sufficient. He said they never know how many people are coming; if they have 3 services on a Sunday morning and they're packed, they go to a 4th service.

Pastor Munsey said he is very excited for Munster, because the front of this building is going to be really beautiful after it is built and it's going to be convenient for the people. Commissioner Branagan said she agrees, it is certainly an improvement. She said she has a question on the proposed exterior elevations labeled A-2.3 on page 36 of the staff report. She said the portico shared on either side is not showing that pyramid or diamond skylight. Pastor Munsey said that was a nice idea but that got cut off and it's not in the final. He explained that was his idea but it got shot down because his wife didn't like it.

Commissioner Raffin said he saw the civil plans but not any kind of landscape plans. He asked Mr. Belmonte if they are adding any additional landscaping. Director Mendoza said there is no additional landscaping or changes to the existing landscaping. Pastor Munsey said there is some landscaping they're tearing down the stuff on the east side, but no landscaping is touched in their addition. The petitioners said it won't affect the parking islands; they will stay there. President Baker asked if there were any more questions for the petitioners; there were none.

President Baker opened the public hearing and asked if anyone wanted to speak.

Zenon said he is with Ridgeland Associates, the architects for the project and he wanted to add a few things. He said they are not asking for any variances and they are expanding over paved areas so it doesn't affect water capacity storage and their detention pods will stay the same. He said they are basically creating a larger vestibule where people show up before mass and after mass to exchange greetings. He said, to address the parking requirement, it is important to mention that during normal Sunday events, the entire property is open; this small chapel is going to be as an auxiliary component that will be operated at different times than the regular mass. He said he would be happy to answer any questions regarding architecture and the plans.

President Baker asked if there was anyone else who wished to speak in the public hearing. There were no additional comments; he closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Raffin made a motion to continue this petition until next month while we address the square footage requirements that are shown in this package. Commissioner Johns seconded the motion. President Baker asked for clarification on the motion, that the reason to continue this is based on the square footage discrepancy between the existing total of 98,977 square feet, and the proposed total of 157,499 square feet and that is a discrepancy that must be cleaned up, because that seems to be a major one.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to continue the public hearing on PC Docket No. 25-006 until June 10, 2025, to address the discrepancy between the submitted square footage and the actual square footage.

Second: Commissioner Johns

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

President Baker introduced PC25-005 DEVELOPMENT PLAN: Jim Glascott of WT Group representing the School Town of Munster requests approval of the construction of a parking lot, bleachers, lighting, landscape, and expansion of a storage building at 8823 Columbia Avenue.

President Baker said this is a continued public hearing. Director Mendoza said he wanted to point out some of the changes that were included since the last review. He said they have relocated the landscaping buffer that was adjacent to the residential property and they've installed a 6-foot wood fence on that buffer. He said they have relocated the lights that were initially in the center of the parking lot; they have been relocated to the outer areas of the parking area. They have applied for a variance and received a favorable approval for the landscape islands in the parking lot as well as for the light fixtures. President Baker asked how deep the wood fence goes on 35th Street. He said he had a second question that will go to the

petitioner, that is, why they would they want to do wood which has to be painted and maintained and it rots. Director Mendoza said the fence is not running the entire length, it is running to the edge of the property line.

Mr. Jim Glascott with the WT Group said he is the civil engineer on the project. He said they installed that fence along the east property line from the property line on the south right-of-way with 35th and it runs down to an "L" into the north base of the building so it will close off that area along the east side. President Baker asked why it was only along the parking lot. Mr. Glascott said they put it there in order to block the lighting from cars turning into the parking lot at the request of the neighbors and the Plan Commission at the last hearing. President Baker said they were doing this for the parking lot, for the automobile lights, but they were doing nothing for the illumination of the parking lot in and of itself. Mr. Glascott said that is correct. President Baker said they were not doing anything with the existing chain link, either. Mr. Glascott said that is correct. President Baker asked if they were going to say they don't have the money.

Mr. Sean Begley, Director of Operations for the School Town of Munster, said they do have money but it is a zero-sum game; if they put in a new fence there, and it's going to take away from something else in the project. He said they are open to different materials; the purpose of that fence is to block the light from bleeding over into the neighbor's property. A discussion continued on the use of materials for maintenance, weather-resistance, and durability, consistency of material throughout the project, reduction of garbage buildup, and the benefit of creating a sound barrier which might be favorable to the neighbors. Commissioner Johns said, in agreement with Commissioner Raffin's earlier comments, that we live in a community and the reason our property values are what they are is greatly because of our schools and the marching band and everything that goes along with it. She said she is a big proponent of improving our facilities but, in partnership. She said if there is something that can be done to take away some of the concerns with maintenance, the eyesore of chain link fencing next to wood fencing that will become dilapidated and, instead, use a more consistent fencing, that may address several of the concerns and perhaps reduce some headaches going forward for the School Town. President Baker suggested that it would not have to be done all at once, it could be done in phases over a few years. He asked Director Mendoza if there were any other changes from the previous month's package. Director Mendoza said the lighting fixtures that were initially located in the center of the parking lot have been relocated.

Mr. Morgan Nolan, 9749 Whitehall Garden, Munster principal of Munster High School, said they requested that the lights in the parking lot be moved to the outside of the parking lot instead of the middle, which is the standard tradition, because they are hoping to use this space for a multi-purpose area, not just for parking. He said with the variance for the islands in the parking lot, they hope to be able to paint lines there for marching band to have practices earlier rather than late into the evenings to help with some of the noise issues. He said they have some other plans for the use of that parking lot; they would be able to roll out an additional turf field they will be getting from the NFL for girl's flag football. They want to that area to be flexible and having light poles in the middle of it bars it from being flexible. President Baker asked if there were any plans for student parking. Mr. Nolan said there are no plans for student parking there at this point in time. He added that he is not saying they will never have students park there; there might be circumstances where they are hosting an event during the day while classes are going on. They might need to move some students or staff there during the day for an event but they are not planning to use that for student parking because of cross-traffic and related issues. He said they do okay on student parking in and around the campus; their biggest parking issues are with events. At evening and weekend events, big football games, swim meets, and town events that they're hosting, they are short on parking. He said

another reason for this lot is to be able to get into it right after school if a group needs it instead of waiting on cars to move out and leave; they are not using it for pickup or drop off. They want to use it for groups right after school and get that group off if there is an evening event going on, like a baseball game, they can move baseball parking in there to alleviate some of the pressure and people are not walking all the way down from the south lot to the baseball fields.

Councilor Hofferth asked if this parking lot will be gated. Mr. Nolan answered that it is already gated and there is already an entrance, but it is a gravel lot that gave them access to the current storage building. They want to expand it, pave it, light it, and use it more effectively. They also want to expand the storage building. Councilor Shinkan said that was the old softball field and it was used for football practice when the football field was redone.

Councilor Hofferth asked about the lighting, whether it would be illuminated every night, and if it might be annoying to the residents nearby. Mr. Nolan said they looked for lighting that would minimize that; the drawings show the deflectors on the lights that are closest to the residents and neighbors. He said they are going to try to force as much light back, but it is a light and it goes everywhere. Councilor Hofferth said he is on Elliott and since they changed the lights at the football field, he can't tell if a game is being played or not when he is sitting in his house. Mr. Nolan said they have done a better job of working with some light engineers and the technology has come a long way with LED lighting. He said the variance they asked for allows them to use upgraded lighting which is more efficient and can stream the light better.

President Baker asked how parking for events will be managed in this lot. Mr. Nolan said they will do what they currently do at all of their events. They will use police officers for large events, they hire staff, and they work with their SROs and school community to manage their parking facilities for large events. It might be first come, first served for that lot. If they need to manage it from an entry/exit standpoint, they'll look at either having their SROs or their on-campus Student Services Department managing that as needed. He said they are pretty familiar with parking and big events. He said it is not perfect; the weekend events they are not hosting as a school are the biggest ones. He said they do a pretty good job managing parking for football games and those types of events, they are just limited. Commissioner Raffin said there is also some sharing with Munster Park District's softball and baseball. Mr. Nolan said he gets calls about people parking in bad spots and they track down the cars when there is nothing happening at the High School; it could be Little League games going on and parents parking bad. He said they all have to work together in a small postage stamp. There was further discussion on specific event parking and how that is managed. Councilor Hofferth said he understands the residents and their concerns. He said this has morphed somewhat from the originally planned use of 19 or 20 times a year, but he likes what he's hearing that it's not going to be student parking. Mr. Nolan said they are not looking at student parking, they are looking at event parking and big event parking for 25 or less events per year but on a regular basis, they're looking at servicing their students after school. He reiterated that they are one of the few schools in the state of Indiana that has both middle school and high school sports all in one facility. He said they are blessed to have 3 fields now, but they still have groups that have to rotate through, and they try to make sure there is equal access. He said they are looking to add and expand their fall sports package for student athletes at Munster High School, which means tighter facilities. He said they are trying to service their kids and a community, both with growing needs, but there is no more land. They want to make sure that they have a place that is multi-purpose and flexible. He said they are doing the same thing in the building; if there is a classroom, they are not bolting chairs to the floor; they are making it as flexible as possible. A group may come in and need to

dance in the room so they can move all the chairs out of the room and they have dance space. If they need to have a meeting in there, they put the chairs out.

President Baker asked about the faux wrought iron fencing along Columbia Avenue. Mr. Nolan said it is aluminum and is the same fencing that goes all the way around the property. It was done when they remodeled the entire campus around 2009 and it is aluminum wrought iron fencing per town code. He said the only fencing they have that is chain link is the property line fencing that's existing. President Baker asked if there were plans to continue all the great events and wins from the high school by putting more signage on that fence. Mr. Nolan said yes, they hope to fill it up; the goal is to continue the pride and excellence they have for the School Town of Munster and their students in this community. He clarified that the signage is in compliance in this zoning district.

President Baker asked if the committee members had any more questions; there were none. President Baker opened the continued public hearing and asked anyone who wanted to speak on this matter to step up to the microphone and state their name and address for the record.

Ms. Laurelyn Goralczyk of 1144 35th Street, Munster, Indiana said she had a few concerns about the fence idea and wonders about when it gets older. She asked what fence President Baker had suggested earlier. President Baker said it is a maintenance free, like cement board or PVC or plastic but it looks a lot nicer because of the new technology. Commissioner Raffin said it is like on Calumet Avenue in Dyer. Ms. Goralczyk said she and her husband, John, would prefer that to wood. It was determined that they are in the house right where this fence is going. She said won't like the wood looking bad on her side. She said her main concern is the tree buffers along 35th and Columbia. She said it looks like it will obscure the view of the police and others to know what's happening inside that parking lot. Councilor Shinkan said it will be gated so, as he understands it, the only people going in there are those that the school allows to be there. Ms. Goralczyk asked if they know how many people jump the fence and squeeze through the opening every day. Councilor Shinkan said he used to be one of them back in the day. Ms. Goralczyk said the gate gets left open and she can see that people know the routines and discover that they could go in there and have little car shows or whatever; they have gatherings in all the parking lots around town to do that. He asked if that (the buffer) were to happen, that would make it so (the police) couldn't see what's going on in there and it will make it so she can't see when she backing out of her driveway and she is concerned about that. She asked why it is going to be put there, if it was just to make it prettier. President Baker asked if she meant the landscaping. Ms. Goralczyk said yes, along Columbia and 35th Street, but mostly on 35th Street. Commissioner Raffin explained that this part of our code; landscaping is required around new construction. Ms. Goralczyk said the code must not have required when it was built. She asked what specifically is required in the code. Director Mendoza said it is an enhanced buffer yard for the parking, and they have complied with that. Ms. Goralczyk said she will have a fence that she can't see through all the way to the sidewalk, and then she'll have these trees that she can't see through once she gets past the fence. President Baker said the trees will be a trunk; it's not going to be pine trees, per se. Ms. Goralczyk asked who she should contact when this is done if she can't see when she's backing out of her driveway. President Baker said Mr. Nolan. There was a discussion about parkway tree in general. Ms. Goralczyk said she was not aware that it was a code that was required. She was advised to call Mr. Nolan when the kids are jumping the fence and all that and cutting through, or are trespassing when they are trying to grow grass. She concluded by saying she knows she has to be a good neighbor as well.

Ms. Laura Stuart 1208 Fisher Street said the existing fence around the outer part of the field, on Columbia and 35th Street, has zip ties and is broken all over the place. She said the kids just bend the aluminum down

and climb in. Referencing the fence down on the southeast corner, she said when she called years ago about the condition of the path to the wooden bridge, she was told by Mr. Wells that it wasn't school property. She said she told him it is their property so they started to maintain it since then. She said she told him the kids climb the fence there all the time, and the pipes are all disconnected, and he said they would fix that but within 24 hours, there was a BMW parked in front of the house, and kids were climbing over it with their shovels to go play soccer and shovel the snow so that doesn't work. She said they can check with the police department on the number of times the residents on Fisher Street have called when there are sometimes full teams in the middle of the night running around on the field and they get spotlights out there to try to find them. She said they are over the fence all the time. She asked how they expect to control the area with no trespassing on one end and a lock the gate, and then have a gate that, even in the last few weeks, has been left open regularly. She said years ago, she could just email Mr. Wells at 11 o'clock at night to shut the lights off and it would go to his phone and he called somebody to shut the lights off but now they have to call the police.

Mr. John Goralczyk of 1144 35th Street said he would ask that the fencing go down their property line and not stop at the garage since their property line does go past that. He asked that they propose an 8-foot fence versus 6-foot fence and in the concrete board or something that it is favorable for them. He said he had asked at the last meeting if they would put some type of barrier at the end of the parking lot that could protect his home from anybody speeding through that parking lot to go to the entrance. He would still like that to be considered.

President Baker asked if anyone else wished to speak. There were no further comments; he closed the public hearing and brought the matter back to the commission.

Commissioner Raffin asked Mr. Nolan if there was any consideration made while they are doing the underground work to pipe the electrical for security cameras on these lots so they can see what is happening at any time. Mr. Nolan said they have pretty good security cameras all around except for in this area that hasn't been done but those additions will be made. He said the trees will be trimmed and there are State standards that they have to follow as a school district. President Baker advised an audience member that the public hearing was closed. Commissioner Raffin made a motion to approve PC25-005, development plan approval for 8023 Columbia Avenue. He added that they had talked about the School Town of Munster being a good neighbor, working with staff, and a privacy fence along that area. He said the Plan Commission cannot dictate the material as long as it meets privacy fence standards in town, but he would encourage them to use one that is maintenance-free with the best standards that meet the privacy concerns of the neighbors.

Motion: Commissioner Raffin moved to approve PC Docket No. 25-005 granting approval of the Development Plan for 8823 Columbia Avenue.

Second: Commissioner Johns

Vote: Yes -5 Abstain- 1 No- 0

Commissioner Branagan abstained

Findings of Fact: None

Next Meeting: President Baker announced the next regular business meeting will be held on June 10, 2025.

Adjournment:

Motion: Commissioner Raffin move to adjourn.

Second: Councilor Shinkan

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

Meeting adjourned at 8:36 pm

President Baker
Plan Commission

Date of Approval

Executive Secretary Sergio Mendoza
Plan Commission

Date of Approval

