

MUNSTER BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING
Meeting Date: October 14, 2025

The Board of Zoning Appeals held a meeting on October 14, 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: Chairman Hemingway called the meeting to order at 6:00pm.

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:

Brad Hemingway
Roland Raffin
Sharon Mayer
Dan Sharpe

Members Absent:

Jennifer Johns

Staff Present:

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

Chairman Hemingway confirmed we have a quorum.

Approval of Minutes: September 9, 2025, BZA Minutes

Member Raffin asked that the Board table these minutes; he has a question and wants to go back and look at the recording regarding the setback for the fence and how it's going on Cobblestone Road for the wording in the minutes and the Findings of Fact.

Motion: Member Raffin moved to table the minutes of September 9, 2025.

Second: Member Mayer

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

Preliminary Hearings:

BZA25-008 DEVELOPMENT 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 Columbia Avenue.

Director Mendoza gave a brief overview of the project. The proposed tennis sport complex is located behind the School Town of Munster High School within the park, just northeast of the existing community swimming pool. Through a lease agreement with the Parks Department, they are requesting to install 10 tennis courts. As part of this sports complex, they are requesting a 10-foot-high fence with screening, as well as 12 stadium lights for the proposed tennis courts. He showed on screen an image of

the type of fence with screening that would circulate the proposed tennis courts. Their lighting, which exceeds the permitted height, and the head type do not meet our standards, so they are seeking variances from our zoning code to accommodate this sports complex. Chairman Hemingway asked if the Board had any questions for staff. When there were no questions, he asked if a person from the town would like to share any information on this.

Mr. Jim Glascott said he is the principal in charge of civil engineering with the WT Group, 2675 Pratum Avenue, Hoffman Estates, IL. They are the civil engineers working on the project for the School Town. They are seeking variances for fence height and for the court lighting, noting that the code does not effectively speak to the use of tennis courts. He said the fence height of 6 feet is typically used for a screening fence or a yard fence; with tennis courts, you want to have that a little bit higher to keep the balls from leaving the facility. The lighting on the court is there for use later in the afternoon. He said Mr. Begley from the School Town could speak about any late-night use but the code just does not have direct language for this type of use.

Mr. Sean Begley, Director of Operations for School Town of Munster, said they've had a long relationship with the town where the school tennis courts are used by the public when they're not using them for the teams. During the day, it will be used more for the gym classes, afternoons will be for the athletic teams and competitions, but, for the most part, the lighting is used by the public when they're using the courts after school hours. He said there is a difference in the lighting they want to build from what they have currently in that it will be on push-button timers that will turn off after one hour if no one is there. He said this will be better for energy conservation and the lighting will be used less often. Mr. Glascott said they are available for questions.

Chairman Hemingway said this is the same location of the old tennis courts back in the 70s and 80s. Mr. Glascott said that is correct. Mr. Begley said a member of their board went back to 2013 and believed there were 2 located there.

Member Mayer asked if this is in preparation for another project with the existing tennis courts. Mr. Begley said, that is correct, that's where they want to build a multipurpose building and they want to improve the circulation around the campus. They want to improve the traffic coming in the mornings, the bus parking, and the student drop-off. He said they're looking to build a multipurpose building in the location where the current tennis courts are now to be utilized by the middle school and the high school.

Member Raffin asked if the School Town of Munster has a master plan for the parking so, instead of doing this in bits and pieces, the Board can see what it's going to look like for the whole complex. Mr. Begley said they have the concepts for parking that they could provide. Mr. Glascott said part of the next project they're working on is developing a comprehensive parking and circulation layout. They're looking at doing a multisport addition in the current tennis court area, in the middle of the site. They're working on replacing the drive aisles around the entire site, working on providing parking in strategic locations where it's a little bit closer and more effective, and then providing a discrete area for the bus parking adjacent to the middle school building. He referred to the site where the bus parking is currently, noting that the parking spaces are kind of overlapping each other in that area. They're looking to separate those out to provide some additional parking on the site and bring the counts up a little bit, and rework all the overall circulation. They're working with a traffic consultant to try and figure out the best layout for all the drive aisles on the site and any improvements needed to Columbia Avenue

Member Mayer asked about the plan that shows the red outlines of the site. Director Mendoza displayed the site plan. Member Mayer said it may be extended but the outline shows the tennis court overlapping what she thought might be the softball field. Director Mendoza said the lines jumped as a result of the conversion from a Word document to .pdf document. He described that the curb hugs around the existing swimming pool, it does not go over the detention pond or the softball field. Mr. Glascott added that it is just fitting in that open green space.

Motion: Member Mayer moved to set BZA Docket No. 25-008 to a public hearing.

Second: Member Sharpe

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

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 gave an overview stating that the applicant has submitted a variance request to install a new sign for the Munster High School Performing Arts or Auditorium on the south side of the building. They are proposing to cover up some architectural details of the building identified as an institutional architectural design from the mid-60s which includes a limestone triangle with exposed I-beams that are forming the architecture that design of the building. Our code prohibits the covering of any architectural elements. They are proposing a sign made of aluminum that wraps around the existing exposed I-beams and covers the limestone architectural interest there with aluminum pushed through acrylic and a design or logo of the high school, but the content is irrelevant, it is just the materials and the location of the use of covering of the architectural design itself.

Member Raffin asked what the hardship is to switching to a sign that doesn't meet the code. He said he asked because there has been a lot of hours into signage to make a consistency in the town, and he always believed the Town of Munster municipal buildings and the School Town in Munster should always lead the way in making sure that we're following the codes and standards. He doesn't know if anyone has a problem finding an auditorium; he had a daughter that was in choir for 4 years, and he made it to the auditorium all the time. He thinks there is an element of architecture amongst the School Town buildings He said he remembered when Dr. Hendricks and Mr. Wells were here and talking about painting all those red accents to keep that as part of the standard, to make the building look consistent around the whole building. He said now we're talking about the architectural style of the building and taking away or hiding some of the stonework that an architect years ago thought of to show a different style for that doorway and hiding it all with a sign. He said he is just trying to see what the hardship is and what the need is for changing it to such a big sign that doesn't meet the minimum code. When there were no further comments from the board, Chairman Hemingway opened the public hearing.

Mr. Shaun O'Brien, 125 Wind Whistle Ct., Valparaiso, said he is with Legacy Sign Group, and the Town of Munster High School came to them with the entryway into the auditorium that they did not think was very aesthetically appealing. He said the letters on the limestone are probably from the 60's when it went in, the limestone is cracked and very stained; it basically blends into the, to the brickwork that's surrounding it. He said he didn't know what architecture the I-beams are, they are just I-beams that were painted and are very faded now. He said aesthetically, the School Town of Munster is wanting to

upgrade the appearance of their buildings. A prime example is just to the north, the middle school added color and some logos to the building, they painted some of the tops of the buildings to give it some vibrant colors, and it looks very welcoming now. He said the high school looks dated and old. He said the marketing director there wanted to cover up the limestone, because of the condition it is in right now, and it's going to be even worse if they pull these letters off. He said there is going to be 100 holes in that limestone and there will be fading behind where those letters are so you will still see the letters on the limestone. He said the look of the I-beam is just not appealing to her. He said a triangle is probably the worst design you can apply letters to, it's not proportional, and it's very hard to get any size of letters into that and make it conform to that shape. They came up with a design where the lettering is more of a rectangular shape to make it fit the letters better and to make the entryway more inviting for people to come in. He said they illuminated it because most people come to the auditorium at night; there are shows, especially in the wintertime, that are after hours, so they want them to be more visible. He said the location on the south side of the building is not very visible from the street now. It is 475 feet from Fisher, which has trees lining the whole way, it's got a ditch, it's got a sidewalk, so it's not very visible from Fisher at all. He said they are not trying to attract people Fisher; they're just trying to make it stand out a little bit more than it does since it is sunken back from the parking lot. He said they're trying to make it a little more appealing to go into the performing arts center. He said that is another reason for the change, they want to get away from the verbiage of the auditorium and want it to be a performing arts center. He said without the proposed, larger panel, the entryway is still going to appear unfinished, weathered, and visually confusing, which distracts from the building's image and the visibility.

Mr. Sean Begley, Director of Operations for the School Town of Munster at 9770 Indiana Parkway, said it should be noted that this is not the original entrance. The original entrance from the 60s when in about 20 or 30 feet. He said this entrance was built later as an addition, possibly a 1990s project. He said they've done a lot of work inside to improve the look of the theater and auditorium. They've improved the band areas, the choir area, and the orchestra area. They've improved the outside area where a rusted garbage can was; that's been removed and cleaned up. He said they're really trying to get the outside area to pop and to look inviting to all their students and the community. He said there are two areas at the School Town of Munster that are used the most by outside rentals, one is the pool, and the second is the auditorium which is used by several outside groups. He said the previous Monday, a bank had used it for professional development as a rental. He said they are trying to improve the wayfinding, not just on the building, but to improve the signage around the whole campus, so people know where they're going. In addition to that, they're also working on improving the signage inside the building, because the high school is completely different from the 1960's. He said it's a giant project that Kim Peirick, Mr. Nolan, and he are all taking part in to try to get it updated with a good naming convention for the inside room numbers and to improve the look on the outside. He said that one of the projects they want to follow this one is all the red paint, because it's fading. He said they painted that about 4 years ago and they need to come up with a better solution to keep the red color because it looks pink or salmon, that is a serious problem they want to correct. He said the school has good bones, it's got good structure and it's in good shape, but it does need to have a facelift to improve the outside and its appeal to the community.

Member Raffin noted that this lettering doesn't match what's on the pool, in front of the main office, or anything else. Mr. Begley said it does not, the pool design came in 2010, and front of the building is the original part of the school going back to 1966. Member Mayer asked if their intent is to systematically change the signage around the school to match that style. Mr. Begley answered, ultimately they'd like to have some consistency around the building wherever they can. He doesn't think they can do much in the front and the pool is from 2010 so it's in good shape. He said from his perspective, and Mr. Tripenfeldas'

as security person, is hardening the front of the school. He said they put bollards and planters at (this entrance) so it prevents any vehicular traffic from accessing that entrance and that's what they'd also like to do in front of the school. He addressed Member Mayer's question by saying there is not too much they can do to the signage in front of the school; he thinks it looks pretty good, but it needs to be cleaned up and painted. He said he has not talked to Kim specifically about changing the signage all around the school. Member Raffin said something that was confusing to him about Munster High School, the lettering was on the doors, but you didn't know what areas were in those letters. Mr. Begley said back in 1966, there were two separate campuses, so north and south made sense and they've kept that, but they have some real problems in the building; it makes no sense that door S138 is next to door S157. He said they're really trying to tackle that problem for first responders and emergency personnel who come in and need to be able to figure out where they are. He said the architecture and the flow of this building is complicated because it's been added onto so many times. They are trying to figure out how to rename the inside doors, so it makes sense.

Chairman Hemingway opened the public hearing and closed the public hearing when there were no comments.

Chairman Hemingway asked if the petitioners would consider keeping the I-beams on the sides and rework the triangle. Mr. O'Brien said that is something they could look into redesigning. He said he could take that back to Kim since she is the ultimate decider of how she wants it to look. Attorney Bennett said that it would be the Board of Zoning Appeals. Mr. O'Brien asked what they wanted it to look like. Member Mayer said, basically there's two issues, one is covering the limestone, and the other is covering the I-beams. She addressed Chairman Hemingway and said she thought the petitioner was asking if they were just to cover the limestone that's in bad shape, what would that look like. Mr. Begley said they had the same problem with the limestone at Wilbur Wright; they power washed it and tried to stain it, and it does look like it has that factory look. He said they tried the same thing with this entrance, but they were unsuccessful in trying to clean it since it has years of stains in it where they're not able to get it cleaned. Member Mayer said maybe they could go back to the drawing board and come up with a design that doesn't cover up the I-beams. Chairman Hemingway asked Director Mendoza to Google the auditorium entrance to show that the board is saying that the I-beams are exposed and that should stay consistent with the rest of the building. Member Mayer said they would table this until next month and they can revise the drawings.

Motion: Member Mayer moved to table BZA Docket No. 25-007 until next month.

Second: Member Raffin seconded the motion.

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

Continued Discussion Items: None

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 Raffin moved to table the Findings of Facts for BZA Docket NO. 25-006 pending the clarification of the minutes.

Second: Member Sharpe seconded the motion.

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

BZA25-005 ADMINISTRATIVE APPEAL: Frank Zischerk received a decision to uphold the Town's interpretation of TABLE 26-6.405. A-3 DISTRICT STANDARDS, Private Landscaping and Fencing; and TABLE 26-6.405. A-1 DISTRICT STANDARDS, Screen; for the use of a tarp structure, located at 8031 Greenwood Avenue.

Motion: Member Raffin moved to approve the Findings of Facts for BZA2 Docket No. 25-006.

Second: Member Mayer seconded the motion.

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

Other Business: None

Chairman Hemingway announced the next regular meeting will be held on November 18, 2025.

Adjournment:

Motion: Member Mayer moved to adjourn.

Second: Member Sharpes seconded the motion.

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

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm

Chairman Brad Hemingway
Board of Zoning Appeals

Date of Approval

Executive Secretary Sergio Mendoza
Board of Zoning Appeals

Date of Approval