

**TOWN OF MUNSTER
MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 15, 2025**

A meeting of the Munster Town Council convened at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, September 15, 2025. Ordinance 1830 is the basis for holding electronic meetings. The announced meeting location was Munster Town Hall, 1005 Ridge Road, Munster, Indiana. Councilors, Staff, and the public had the option to participate via Zoom meeting technology.

Councilors George Shinkan, Joseph Hofferth, Chuck Gardiner, David B. Nellans, and Jonathan Petersen were physically present in Town Hall. Also present in Town Hall were Clerk-Treasurer Wendy Mis, Town Manager Jim Marino, Controller Patricia Abbott, Police Fire Chief Mark Hajduk, Director of Operations Bob Valois, Planning Director Sergio Mendoza, Town Attorney Dave Westland, and Hammond Sanitary District representative Mike Hawkins. Chief Stephen Scheckel was not in attendance. The news media were not represented.

President Shinkan presided and opened the meeting with a moment of silence, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING: 2026 BUDGET AND TAX LEVIES

Tonight, Council will conduct the public hearing and have first reading on the ordinance for the 2026 budget. The most recent session of the General Assembly capped the growth factor for property taxes at 4.00%. Miscellaneous revenues are calculated based on State-provided amounts or historical data depending on the revenue type. The property taxes less circuit breakers plus miscellaneous revenues dictate how much is available to appropriate. The proposed 2026 budget includes the following.

- Department head requests for day-to-day and capital expenses
- 2.00% cost of living increase for all regular full-time and firefighters
 - 50 sworn police officers
 - Recently approved positions of Assistant Town Manager, Economic Development Director and Communications Director
- 3.00% and 7.00% increase for medical and dental insurance, respectively
- Use of TIF funds for police officer wages
- 16% increase for NIPSCO charges

The Town Manager and Clerk-Treasurer Staff met with Department Heads individually and reviewed the expenditure requests. A separate budget presentation for Council with Department Heads was held last week with follow-up information provided. The matter was discussed at the Agenda Review for this meeting, and final opportunity for Council review can happen prior to adoption on October 6, 2025.

A separate session to discuss the potential impacts of SEA1 was held last month. Numerous possible savings and revenue streams were identified and presented to Council. Some have already been implemented (e.g. not filling recently vacated positions, Comcast internet cancellation, reduction of outside contractor services that can be performed in-house, eliminating certain training/conference attendance). Increased fees for services and programs, the introduction of new fees, and changes to employee benefits will be brought to Council when thoroughly assessed and ready for approval.

The 2026 Certificate of Net Assessed Valuations (NAV) shows a 3.4% growth in Munster's NAV. Depending on the 2025 GO and Park Bond interest rates, the overall 2026 tax rate for the Town is projected

to drop about 3 cents per \$100.00 of assessed valuation. The current tax rate is \$0.6465. The levy and rates are set to be adopted at a higher rate so that the Town is best positioned to provide the services and amenities the residents expect.

Ordinance 1991 has been drafted in the format dictated by the Department of Local Government Finance and shows, by fund, the requested appropriations, tax levy, and tax rate.

President Shinkan opened the floor for comment.

Mr. Tom Jurich, 1839 Magnolia, asked the Council to look for cuts without eliminating positions. He requested the Town weigh a need versus a want.

There being no one else requesting to speak, the floor was closed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The Town of Munster accepts public comments submitted both in-person and electronically. The public was informed, via the agenda posted at munster.org, that questions or comments about an item on the agenda were to be emailed to wmis@munster.org. All in-person public comments are limited to two minutes and limited to a total of twenty minutes for the public comment section.

Mr. Randy Palmateer, Business Manager Building and Constructions Trades Council, expressed gratitude for the Town of Munster adopting Ordinance #1900, Responsible Bidders Ordinance.

Mr. Phillip Lewers, 1318 Fran Lin Parkway, questioned the reduced speed on Fran Lin and asked why the same was not done on White Oak Avenue.

Mr. Tom Jurich, 1839 Magnolia, expressed concerns about traffic and safety especially on Fran Lin Parkway.

Mr. Brandon Walker, 1408 Ridge Road, questioned what the Town is doing to keep our utilities costs down.

No one else rose to claim the floor.

CONSENT AGENDA

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Minutes of a regular meeting held on September 4, 2025

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE VOUCHER REGISTERS

Confirmation of Voucher Register #25-7M dated 07/31/2025 totaling \$58,279.28
Approval of Voucher Register #25-7N dated 07/31/2025 totaling \$7,962,646.45
Confirmation of Voucher Register #25-9B dated 09/04/2025 totaling \$328,917.77
Confirmation of Voucher Register #25-9C dated 09/05/2025 totaling \$548,670.24
Confirmation of Voucher Register #25-9D dated 09/10/2025 totaling \$59,572.01
Confirmation of Voucher Register #25-9E dated 09/10/2025 totaling \$62,613.38
Confirmation of Voucher Register #25-9F dated 09/11/2025 totaling \$358,522.69

Approval of Voucher Register #25-9G dated 09/15/2025 totaling \$369,091.81

WATER LEAK ADJUSTMENTS 2025-36

Staff received requests for adjustment under the leak adjustment policy adopted by the Town Council on April 8, 2013. The customers have completed the required form, and the requests meet all the criteria for adjustments as follows:

<u>Adjustment Number</u>	<u>Average Usage</u>	<u>Actual Usage</u>	<u>Length of Time</u>	<u>Original Bill</u>	<u>Requested Adjustment Amount</u>	<u>Adjusted Bill</u>
2025-36	5,000	29,000	2 months	\$ 222.81	\$ 97.09	\$ 125.72

ACCEPTANCE OF SURETY BOND: TOWN MANAGER

There are statutory needs for certain officers and employees of a town to file individual surety bonds for the faithful performance of their duties.

IC 36-5-5-5 stipulates that a town manager “must, in the manner prescribed by IC 5-4-1, execute a bond for the faithful performance of this duties.” ID 5-4-1-18(c)(2) requires the “amount of the bond of any other person required to file an individual bond shall be fixed by the fiscal body of the unit” at not less than \$5,000.00. James Marino is the Town Manager of the Town of Munster. The Public Official Bond has been executed by the Clerk-Treasurer and is now ready for acceptance by the Town Council.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, to suspend the rules, waive the readings, and adopt the Consent Agenda as presented. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

ORDINANCE 1990: RESPONSIBLE BIDDERS

Introduced ORDINANCE 1990 is AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH RESPONSIBLE BIDDING PRACTICES AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS FOR SUBMITTING BIDS TO PERFORM CONSTRUCTION WORK ON PUBLIC WORKS PROJECTS. The ordinance had first reading at the September 4, 2025, meeting. Since that time, revisions were made to the ordinance including setting a \$300,000.00 project cost threshold and better defining the apprenticeship program.

Councilor Petersen moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, to adopt Ordinance 1990 on second reading as amended. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

ORDINANCE 1991: 2026 BUDGET AND TAX LEVIES

Proposed ORDINANCE 1991 is the 2026 ORDINANCE FOR APPROPRIATIONS AND TAX RATES. This matter was subject of a public hearing earlier in the meeting.

Councilor Hofferth moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, hear the proposed Ordinance 1991 on first reading and set October 6, 2025, for second reading and adoption. Discussion regarding cutting costs, and improving efficiencies ensued not just in 2026 but in future years as well. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

FIT AND CVET ALLOCATIONS

HEA 1392 changed how the Financial Institution Tax (FIT) and Commercial Vehicle Excise Tax (CVET) will be distributed. Historically, each of these taxes was distributed on a pro-rated basis among the funds that receive property tax. Under HEA 1392, municipalities will determine which fund(s) will receive these distributions.

These taxes are received from Lake County in June and December of each year. For 2025 the estimated FIT distribution is \$33,950.00 and the estimated CVET distribution is \$33,154.00. Appropriations for 2025 were based on both FIT and CVET being divided proportionally among each of the property tax-supported funds. Staff recommends following through with that method for 2025.

With the changes being faced by SEA1, Staff recommends having all future FIT and CVET distributions go into the General Fund. This fund can be used for any government purpose. For 2026, the estimated FIT is \$27,161.00 and the estimated CVET is \$32,548.00. The 2026 budget has been prepared to reflect these amounts going into the General Fund.

Council must take an action to approve how the FIT and CVET distributions will be allocated among the property tax-supported funds. This allocation will remain in place moving forward unless Council takes an action to formally change it.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, to approve the allocation of FIT and CVET distributions on a pro-rated basis among the property tax-supported funds for fiscal year 2025 and to approve the allocation of FIT and CVET distributions to the General Fund thereafter. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR RECRUITMENT SERVICES

Staff has been authorized to hire an Assistant Town Manager and has secured three proposals from recruitment firms to perform an executive search for the role. The limited scope option does not include background checks, guarantees for selection and tenure, the creation of interview questions, initial interviews conducted by the consultant, facilitation of interviews or reference verifications. The proposals are as follows.

<u>Provider</u>	<u>Full Scope</u>	<u>Limited Scope</u>	<u>Recruitments</u>
Organizational Development Solutions	\$16,000.00	NA	None
CPS HR Consulting	\$25,000.00	\$20,000.00	32
MGT	\$26,000.00	\$22,000.00	70+

Although Organizational Development Solutions (ODS) provides the most competitive pricing, Staff believes the other providers have more experience. CPS and MGT focus on municipal recruitments across the country. Their representative list of recruitments for town manager and assistant town manager positions since 2021 surpasses that of ODS.

Councilor Hofferth moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, to approve execution of a consulting services agreement with CPS HR Consulting to provide executive recruitment services in the

amount of \$25,000.00 pending final approval of the agreement by the Town Attorney. The councilors discussed if the position was a want or a need and debated the importance of filling the role. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; Councilor Petersen voted against. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF CONTRACT FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

Council approved an RFP for Strategic Communications Services at the February 3, 2025, meeting. Staff scored the submittals, and at the May 14, 2025, Agenda Review, American Structurepoint presented their proposal to Council. Their plan includes conducting researching, plan development, and implementation at a cost of \$83,186.00.

Staff requested American Structurepoint to revise the proposal with each deliverable separately priced.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Hofferth, to accept the proposal from American Structurepoint to develop a strategic communications plan in the amount of \$82,600.00. Discussion ensued regarding the necessity of the position and the benefit of the position. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; Councilor Petersen voted against. Motion passed.

RESOLUTION 2156: 2025-2026 ROAD SALT PURCHASE

Proposed RESOLUTION 2156 is a RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE TOWN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE JOINT PURCHASING PROGRAM FOR ROAD SALT. Munster has participated in the joint purchasing of road salt through the State of Indiana Department of Administration since 2009. For the 2025-2026 snow season, towns had to commit to a volume of salt to be purchased.

Each year the commitment amount is based on current usage, salt inventory, and future weather trends. Public Works Staff committed to 2,500 tons of treated salt for a price of \$222,275.00. Any additional salt will be purchased at the current market price. With the current inventory in the salt dome, the Town is positioned to have an ample supply for a severe snow season. Salt is purchased from the Local Road and Street Fund.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, to approve Resolution 2156 as presented authorizing the Council President and the Director of Operations to purchase 2,500 tons of treated salt from the awarded State Contractor through the 2025-2026 State Joint Purchasing Program Bid on Road Salt for INDOT LaPorte District #40. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

ANNUAL WINTER FOUNTAIN REMOVAL, MAINTENANCE, STORAGE, AND INSTALLATION

Aquatic Control has provided fountain maintenance for the Town since 2000. The lake/pond/ditch maintenance and fountain maintenance contracts were consolidated under Aquatic Control in 2018. It is time to renew the contract for the 2025-2026 season. The contract provides winter removal, storage, routine maintenance, and re-installation in the spring of 2026. The following fountains are included in the proposed agreement.

West Lakes Subdivision	7 fountains
White Oak Estates Subdivision	7 fountains

White Oak Woods	1 fountain
Community Estates	<u>2 fountains</u>
	17 fountains = \$8,218.00
Centennial Park (Maynard Lake)	2 fountains = \$850.00

Aquatic Control has offered two quotations, one each for the Park and Public Works Departments.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Hofferth, to approve the two Aquatic Control proposals dated September 4, 2025, for 2025 fountain winter removal, maintenance, and storage and 2026 Spring installation in the amounts of \$850.00 for Quotation #431994 and \$8,218.00 for Quotation #431995. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion carried.

RELEASE OF BLOCK 5 SURETY BOND

Community Foundation of Northwest Indiana, Inc. (CFNI) presented plans to subdivide and develop approximately fifteen acres west of Calumet Avenue, east of Powers Drive, south of Hagburg Circle to approximately 550 south of Treadway Drive. This is the area with the new Immediate Care Center. As part of that work, CFNI provided a Performance Surety Bond.

CFNI properly petitioned the Plan Commission for the release of the Performance Surety Bond and sought acceptance of a two-year Maintenance Surety Bond. At their August 12, 2025, meeting the Plan Commission voted unanimously to send a favorable recommendation to the Council for this action.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Hofferth, to release the Performance Surety Bond in the amount of \$2,990,000.00 for Community Foundation Inc., Block 5 and accept a two-year Maintenance Surety Bond in the amount of \$448,500.00 for improvements at Munster Immediate Care including street lights, signs, curbs, etc. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

APPROVAL OF LICENSE AGREEMENT

To complete the Bridges Over Ditches Project, NIPSCO requires an amendment to the existing “license for jogging, hiking and bicycle trail” on their property. The proposed amendment defines that permission to cross over both ditches and to run south to Martha Street in a second NIPSCO corridor. The agreement has a thirty-three year term with annual auto-renewals after that.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, to approve the first amendment to license for jogging, hiking and bicycle trail as proposed in the NIPSCO license #NSL38818-A1. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

ACCEPTANCE OF PROPOSAL FOR LEACHATE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

Over the past year, Council has approved repairs and installation of new sump system for the leachate removal system at the landfill. New riser panels, transducers and flow meters were included in the work approved April 15, 2025. After their installation, the equipment was tested, and it was discovered that the none of the pressure transducers or pumps were functioning as designed. A site meeting was held and it was determined that all of the pressure transducers and pumps need to be replaces to allow proper functions.

HD Mechanical has now presented a proposal to replace all of the cell riser pumps. This will allow the leachate to be pumped from the system, out of the collections cells, and into the storage tanks. This is in keeping with the original design of the system and will cause the entire leachate extraction system to be comprised of new equipment.

The proposal also replaces two storage tank covers which are brittle from age and could pose a danger. Andrews Engineering has stressed the importance of the improvements and the need to satisfy IDEM requirements for the landfill.

Councilor Hofferth moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, approve proposal #25-1163 Rev 1 from HD Mechanical dated August 6, 2025 in the amount of \$177,710.00. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

REMOVAL AND PARTIAL RELEASE OF PARCEL

The Town entered into a Financing and Covenant Agreement with Lake Business Center on August 1, 2011. The document was recorded with Lake County as Document No. 2011-046474 on August 25, 2011, and re-recorded as Document No. 2012-040598 on June 20, 2012. At the July 23, 2025, Munster Plan Commission meeting, Findings of Fact for PC 25-008 were executed and forwarded with a favorable recommendation to the Council for adoption of an ordinance to amend the Lake Business Center Planned Unit Development District for Munster MOB 1 LLC for a replat and to include Standards for Bulk, Design, and Uses on Lot 4 commonly known as 9260 Calumet Avenue.

Council approved Ordinance 1988 at the August 8, 2025, meeting. Munster MOB intends to develop Lot 4 and wishes to be released from the Financing and Covenant Agreement. The Town is willing to do so with the following terms.

1. The release shall not have any effect or bearing on the payment of real estate taxes, including taxes directed to the repayment of an existing TIF Bond.
2. The release shall be subject to completing the requirements of Ordinance 1988, and any other development or use ordinances subsequently adopted to Munster MOB, Lot 4.

Councilor Gardiner moved, with a second by Councilor Nellans, to approve the parcel partial release from financing and covenant agreement as presented. Councilors Hofferth, Gardiner, Nellans, Petersen, and Shinkan voted in favor; none voted against. Motion passed.

PORTFOLIO REPORTS

Councilor Gardiner reminded attendees of the Park Board meeting on September 16, 2025.

Clerk-Treasurer Mis shared our Town of Munster Standard and Poor bond rating was received as an A+ as our utility strategy made sense based on where we were on our projects. The rate setting lined up with what S&P likes to see. They cited our strong location economically as a factor in the rating.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

(Unless stated otherwise, all meetings of the Town Council begin at 6:30 p.m. at Munster Town Hall.)

The Town Council will hold a regular meeting on Monday, October 6, 2025. The Redevelopment Commission will hold a regular meeting immediately following.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, and upon a motion by Councilor Nellans and seconded by Councilor Hofferth, the meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m. by voice vote.

George Shinkan, President

ATTEST:

Wendy Mis, Clerk-Treasurer