

**MUNSTER PLAN COMMISSION**  
**MINUTES OF BUSINESS MEETING**  
Meeting Date: September 14, 2021

**Call to Order:** 7:48 PM

The announced meeting location was Munster Town Hall. In accordance with the Governor's Executive Orders 20-09 and subsequent orders related to the COVID-19 pandemic placing restrictions on the number of people allowed to gather in one location, some members attended the meeting remotely via Zoom, a video conferencing application.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

**Members in Attendance:**

William Baker  
Stuart Friedman (via Zoom)  
Chuck Gardiner  
Lee Ann Mellon  
Roland Raffin  
Brian Specht  
Steve Tulowitzki

**Members Absent:**

**Staff Present:**

Tom Vander Woude, Planning  
Director  
David Wickland, Attorney

**Approval of Minutes:**

- a. **August 10, 2021 Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Motion:** Mr. Gardiner moved to approve as presented.

**Second:** Mr. Tulowitzki

**Resolved:** Yes: 7. No: 0. Abstain: 0

**Preliminary Hearings:**

- a. **PC Docket No. 21-012 Planned Unit Development Amendment**  
**PC Docket No. 21-013 Commercial Subdivision Preliminary Plat**  
**PC Docket No. 21-014 Development Plan Approval**  
**Hospitality Project Services requesting an amendment to the Lake Business Center PUD, approval of the 2nd Resubdivision of Lot 1 of Lake Business Center Subdivision, and approval of a development plan to permit the development of a Home2Suites hotel at 9200 Calumet Ave. in the Lake Business Center PUD.**

Mr. Vander Woude said that the three cases have been bundled together because there are three actions that can be taken for a single project. Mr. Vander Woude said that Hospitality Project Services is requesting approval to construct a Home2Suites hotel at the Lake Business Center. He said the Lake Business Center PUD has been amended multiple times. He said the proposed site is on the northwest corner of the PUD and is currently a vacant field with an underground detention area and the PUD site plan shows the area to be a parking lot. The applicants are proposing to subdivide the lot and improve it with a hotel, amend the PUD to permit the hotel rather than the parking lot, and receive approval of a development plan for the hotel, which are three separate actions. Ms. Darci Pellom of Cripe introduced

herself and Sam Miller project architect and Hospitality Project Services Jim Dora and Bob Armstrong. She said they are proposing a 1.489 development with a four story 107 room hotel with 21 parking spaces above the underground detention system and they intend to share spaces with the Homewood Suites to the east. She said Hospitality Project Services owns the Homewood Suites and the Hampton Inn. She said they are proposing to share 55 spaces with the warehouse to the south. She said they performed a parking analysis that shows that the PUD is short of spaces, but they won't create any additional shortages. She said the building architecture conforms to the zoning ordinance. She said they received some questions about drainage from the Site Plan Review Committee, but they have committed to upgrading the underground detention to accommodate the needed stormwater. Mr. Sam Miller said that the building materials conform to the Town standards with two different types of brick, limestone around the base and then lexan and metal panels. He said the entrance is on the east with a pedestrian passage connecting to the south and east.

Mr. Baker asked if they are discussing the entire PUD or just the individual lot. He said the narrative shows a parking discrepancy and the proposed building is located across from a truck warehouse. He asked if ingress and egress is through the back of Walgreens. He asked whether the Lansing Country Club project would have an impact on this site. Mr. Vander Woude said that the applicant is not proposing to make any off-site improvements. He said access is at Fisher and at Calumet. He said that the developer of the Lansing Country Club is aware of this project and there is no plan for connecting these projects. He said the traffic projections for the Lansing Country Club don't take into account this project. He said the entire development was built on the idea that there would be shared parking. He said the area is shown as a parking lot, but it is not being used as such. He said they are adding 21 spaces for the hotel. Mr. Baker asked if they are including the shared parking on their subdivided parcel. Mr. Vander Woude said that they are not. He said that it would be appropriate for a shared parking agreement to be in place. Mr. Raffin pointed out that the use could change in the warehouse and there may be more vehicles using the parking lot to the south. Ms. Pellom said that there are 58 spaces available to share on the Homewood Suites. Mr. Raffin said that the Homewood Suites parking is shared with the rest of the Lake Business Center. Ms. Pellom stated that the development is short 492 spaces. Mr. Vander Woude said that without shared parking, the center is currently short 369 spaces and with the addition of the hotel, the deficit increases to 481. He said that the development was improved with the understanding that there would be shared parking. Ms. Pellom said Hilton brand standards only require 1 space per room while the Town requires 1.25 spaces and with different uses that have different peak times. Mr. Raffin asked if other towns the size of Munster have 5 hotels. Ms. Mellon said that the original PUD did not have three hotels; she said that another 4-story building next to Cambridge Court would surround that residential area with hotels. Mr. Vander Woude said that the PUD action is a recommendation from the Plan Commission to the Town Council. He said that the guide for making a recommendation is the comprehensive plan, which contemplated a transit-oriented development in this area, so the standards to review are whether the zoning complies with the general standards of zoning in the Indiana code. He said for the subdivision, the standards are in the subdivision ordinance, and for the development plan, the standards are in the zoning. He said with respect to the latter, the standards are met, so the question is really whether a hotel is a desired use and whether the Town would be interested in amending the zoning for that.

Mr. Jim Dora said that his company has been working in Indiana since 1962. He said that the Hampton Inn is 10-plus years old and the Homewood Suites newer than that. He said the Town of Munster is a terrific market. He said in 2019, the Homewood Suites ran 90% occupancy and the Hampton ran 82% and in 2020, the Homewood Suites ran 74.2% occupancy and the Hampton ran 66.1%. He said that they

were the highest occupancy hotels in the state. He said that they lose customers if there is not enough rooms. He said that the goal is to build the hotel in Munster and if they can't someone else will build it somewhere else in the area. He said having multiple hotels is helpful for staffing because it allows them to cross train. He said they'll hire additional employees including sales managers. Mr. Tulowitzki said that in order to make an amendment to the PUD, they have to have a compelling reason from the perspective of the Town and residents. Mr. Dora said that the project will add to the tax base, create more availability of rooms within the city for local citizens; he said there is no restaurant or bar, so the guests are using the local restaurants, he said they're going to hire more people; he said they promote from within. He said they're an industry where you can begin at the entry level and work your way up to general manager. He said they'll hire local contractors and purchase goods locally. Mr. Tulowitzki asked if they have any complaints from the hotel. Mr. Dora said that he's not aware of any complaints. He said with the high occupancies, they're drawing a high rate, which does not attract trouble. He said he's not aware of any noise complaints. Mr. Tulowitzki asked about the rates for the Home2Suites. Mr. Dora said the Homewood Suites is more expensive because it has a true suite, whereas the Home2Suites is not a true suite. Mr. Tulowitzki asked whether they would wait until the train stations are developed to see how that would affect the development. He said that they are getting close to 590 fewer spaces in the development and the warehouse user could change. Mr. Dora said that their peak hours are different from other businesses, which can balance the parking. He said that allowing the hotel to go somewhere else will hurt the Town's tax base. He said that they have a van service at their hotel, which could be used to transport customers to and from the train station. Mr. Raffin said that hotels will bring transient people to the Town, and he's seen other communities where the hotels have changed and they caused problems. He said that he's also worried about uses changing in the development and it being handicapped because they don't have enough parking spaces. Mr. Dora said the Hilton brand is very specific about how their hotels are maintained and the capital is going to be available. Mr. Dora said they have 20 year franchises and in this type of market they last longer than that; he said that the market is very strong and the brand protects the market. Mr. Gardiner asked what percentage of the Lake Business Center is occupied and what is vacant. He said that there may be additional road improvements inside the Lake Business Center that need to be made such as lighting and sidewalks to make it safer for guests.

**Motion:** Mr. Gardiner moved to schedule a public hearing for PC Docket No. 21-012 Planned Unit Development Amendment, PC Docket No. 21-013 Commercial Subdivision Preliminary Plat, and PC Docket No. 21-014 Development Plan Approval

**Second:** Mr. Friedman

**Resolved:** Yes: 7. No: 0. Abstain: 0

**Public Hearings:**

- a. **PC 20-009 Guy Costanza/GM Contracting requesting approval of a development plan for a commercial development at 407-411 Ridge Road.**

Mr. Vander Woude said that the site plan has met all the standards of the zoning ordinance in addition to receiving variances from the Board of Zoning Appeals. He said the project was tabled because the building architecture had not been reviewed. He said staff and the applicant have reviewed the building together and revisions have been made. He said that the comments in the staff report have been addressed. He said that the staff recommendation is to approve. Mr. John Reed representing the applicant said that the building is only 2500 square feet so its not a large project, but its in a prominent location. He said that the project meets the codes and they would like approval so they can begin

construction. Mr. Baker asked if the right-in/right-out will be supplemented by the Town to prevent vehicles from making a left in or out. Mr. Tulowitzki asked if the streetscape plan includes a median. Mr. Vander Woude said that the NICTD crossing will have a barrier median for the quiet zone.

Mr. Baker opened the public hearing. No comments. Mr. Baker closed the public hearing.

**Motion:** Mr. Tulowitzki moved to approve PC 20-009 subject to final staff review of the building design to ensure compliance with the relevant zoning standards listed in this staff report.

**Second:** Mr. Gardiner

Discussion: Mr. Raffin said that the Town should develop an architectural plan for Ridge Road to keep redevelopment consistent. Ms. Mellon said that she agreed that a more detailed plan will streamline the process. Mr. Tulowitzki agreed.

**Resolved:** Yes: 7. No: 0. Abstain: 0.

Mr. Reed described the façade grant program in Highland, Indiana. Guy Costanza said he has three other stores and he would participate in a façade grant program.

- b. PC 21-009 Subdivision – Preliminary Plat**
- PC 21-010 Development Plan Approval**
- PC 21-011 Subdivision – Final Plat**

**Parth Patel requesting approval of a 1 lot subdivision and a development plan to construct a 3-unit commercial building including a Smoothie King at 8130-8138 Calumet Avenue.**

Mr. Vander Woude said that the project came before the board at a preliminary hearing last month. He said there are three petitions that deal with the development of a commercial building at 8130-8138 Calumet. He said the applicant is consolidating the lots and seeking approval of a development plan. He said that both parcels have vacant commercial buildings. The applicant is proposing to demolish the buildings and construct a new 3600 square foot, 3-unit commercial building. The south unit will be a Smoothie King and the two north spaces are unknown. He said there will be a parking lot with 27 stalls. He said that the building will be constructed on the east lot line, with parking to the side and rear from the building and will be screened by a hedge. He said access is provided through a shared driveway with the property to the south since there is already an ingress-egress easement. He said the north curb cut will be eliminated. He said a ten-foot-wide Town alley will remain clear for cross-access to the properties north and south. He said the parking lot will be screened from the alley. He said the lighting plan, landscaping plan, and architectural renderings comply with the standards of the code. He said he's proposing a black and white brick building with a black storefront and the required base, middle, and cap.

Mr. Patel said that he brought samples of the brick material which will be an iridescent black. He said the building meets the codes and standards. He said the cornices will be metal and will have some shadow. He said the middle cornice will be brick soldier course. Mr. Gardiner asked if the Plan Commission is approving the sign. Mr. Vander Woude said the sign is to be submitted under separate permit.

Mr. Baker opened the public hearing.

Michael Goepfert 10380 Oxford Place, via Zoom, said that he spoke with Mr. Vander Woude about his concerns. He said that the sidewalks surrounding Kitaro, Harvest Room, and El Salto are filthy because the buildings are pushed up to the street and the garbage is on display. He said that he doesn't see any bike racks at this development. He said that when he bikes, the buildings at Centennial Village block any view of cross-traffic. He said that between Kitaro and Simply Greek as he approaches that exit, he crosses blindly because of the obstruction of the building; its one of the most dangerous crossings in Munster. He said that the Citgo sign discussed at the BZA was required to adhere to a 25' visibility triangle and asked if these developments have to adhere to the same standard and will cyclists have visibility.

Mr. Specht recused himself from the discussion.

Mr. Vander Woude said that there is a 25' sight triangle for the intersection of two streets, not a driveway, but there is an approximately 25' space between the building and the driveway and there is only a low evergreen hedge within that triangle and there is a building to the south. Mr. Raffin asked if the streetscape plan calls for a median in Calumet here to make it right-in/right-out. Mr. Patel said that their trash enclosure is located in the back of the building, so it's not going to look like Centennial Village. Mr. Vander Woude said that the building to the south is set back from the property line. Mr. Tulowitzki asked if there are bicycle storage requirements in the code. Mr. Patel said that the code requires 1 bike rack per 10 parking spaces, so they have three bike racks. Mr. Raffin asked what the proposed uses are. Mr. Vander Woude said that in addition to the Smoothie King, there could be two office uses or one office and one retail. Mr. Patel said that he is going to locate his own corporate office in one of the units and he is going to try to find a retail user for the other. Mr. Raffin asked what the grout lines would look like. Mr. Patel said they could use silver or white and his preference is gray or silver. Mr. Raffin asked if he was going to seal the white brick. Mr. Patel confirmed that they would.

Mr. Baker closed the public hearing.

Mr. Gardiner asked if the conditions in the staff report would be addressed. Mr. Patel said that he would include the 3' to 3.5' foot fence screening the parking lot and reduce the size of the parkway trees. Mr. Baker asked if there would be a fence at the rear of the property. Mr. Vander Woude said that the required hedge will be planted between the parking lot and alley and that there is already a fence at the rear of the alley next to the residential property. Mr. Baker asked if they are keeping the alley. Mr. Vander Woude confirmed that there is a 10' alley.

**Motion:** Mr. Gardiner moved to approve PC Docket 21-009, approving the preliminary plat for a one lot subdivision consolidating 8130-8138 Calumet Avenue, to approve PC Docket 21-010, approving a development plan for a commercial building at to approve PC Docket 21-010, approving a development plan for a commercial building at 8130-8138 Calumet Avenue, and to approve PC Docket 21-011, approving a final plat for a one lot subdivision consolidating 8130- 8138 Calumet Avenue.

**Second:** Mr. Tulowitzki

**Discussion:** Mr. Raffin asked staff to make sure that the roof top mechanicals are screened.

**Resolved:** Yes: 5. No: 0. Abstain: 2. Ms. Mellon and Mr. Specht recusing.

**Findings of Fact:**

- a. **PC 21-006 HP Munster Investment LLC requesting approval of a development plan for a Hyatt Place Hotel at 9420 Calumet Ave. in the Maple Leaf Crossing PUD.**

**Motion:** Mr. Raffin move to approve.

**Second:** Mr. Friedman.

**Resolved:** Yes: 7. No: 0. Abstain: 0

**Other Business/Additional Items for Discussion**

- a. **PC 08-001 Community Resources Inc. requesting approval of an amendment to the preliminary plat for Community Resources, Inc Phase 2**

Mr. Vander Woude said that the subject property is located along Columbia Avenue. He said that the original preliminary plat was approved in 2008, but it was never developed. He said when Phase 2 was brought in it included lots from Phase 1 but those were sold in the intervening years. He said they have a revised plat now that doesn't include those lots. He said that the Town Attorney advised that this is a new plat and not an amendment and must go through the public hearing process. He said they are proposing to complete the Andrew Lane cul-de-sac and develop 12 lots and dedicate park land on the northeast corner because its not accessible to a public road. Mr. Raffin asked if they could do a preliminary hearing and public hearing on the same night. Mr. Vander Woude said that it would be appropriate to schedule a public hearing for next month. Mr. Torrenga said that the reason Phase 2 was not completed because the Nike base was still there and they had to remove it. He said when they finished the work, the downturn in the economy started and they elected to put it on hold. He said that he is requesting permission to advertise for a public hearing. He said the engineering is nearly the same. Mr. Raffin asked if the site is contaminated. Mr. Torrenga said there was recently a Phase 2 environmental study completed and it found no contamination. He said they will submit the report. Mr. Gardiner asked if the park lot would be dedicated to the Town and why the Town would want it. Mr. Torrenga said that if they don't want it, they don't have to take it, but the subdivision requires that parkland be dedicated. Mr. Gardiner said that he wouldn't think that they would want that property along Columbia with no parking. He asked that staff look at that. Mr. Vander Woude said that the Park Board will make that decision whether to accept land or a fee. Mr. Tulowitzki asked if the applicant had any idea how that land would be used. Mr. Torrenga said they did not. Ms. Mellon said that Community Estates does not have a park. Mr. Gardiner said that this may not be the best location for a park. Mr. Torrenga said that it is accessible off Richard McCloughry Drive. Mr. Specht recused himself because he is on the Community Resources Board. Mr. Vander Woude said that one item that would need to be included in the approval is the waiver of the maximum length for a cul-de-sac, which is 600 feet and the proposed cul-de-sac is approximately 650 feet. Mr. Tulowitzki asked if it met the standard of the fire code. Mr. Vander Woude said that it was reviewed by the Fire Chief at a Site Plan Review Committee meeting, and he found it to meet the codes.

**Motion:** Mr. Raffin moved to set the project for public hearing.

**Second:** Mr. Gardiner.

**Discussion:** Mr. Gardiner told the applicant to make sure the submittal was on time so they have time for staff review.

**Resolved:** Yes: 6. No: 0. Abstain: 1. Brian Specht abstaining.

**b. Plan Commission discussion of density standards**

Mr. Vander Woude presented two options for the amendment of the zoning code to provide additional oversight of mixed use projects. The first option designated all residential in CD-4.A, CD-4.B, and CD-5. Districts as a conditional use. The second option designated only the residence portion on the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> floor stories of Live/Work, Mixed-Use, or Flex Building in the CD-5 district a Conditional Use. The Plan Commission discussed the options and concluded that option 1 would be an appropriate stop-gap measure to ensure that all projects are thoroughly reviewed. The Plan Commission suggested that a comprehensive plan and additional analysis should be completed in the near future to determine the appropriate locations and intensity of mixed-use development.

**Motion:** Ms. Mellon moved to schedule a public hearing for the text amendments to designate all residential in CD-4.A, CD-4.B, CD-5 as a Conditional Use.

**Second:** Mr. Raffin.

**Discussion:** Mr. Tulowitzki said that if we press pause on this type of project, then we should complete the comprehensive plan to identify the types of uses that the Town would like to encourage.

**Resolved:** Yes: 7. No: 0. Abstain: 0.

**Next Meeting:** Mr. Baker announced that the next regular business meeting will be October 12, 2021, at 7:30 p.m.

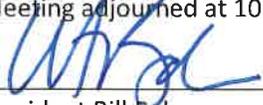
**Adjournment:**

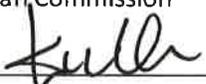
**Motion:** Mr. Raffin moved to adjourn the meeting.

**Second:** Ms. Mellon.

**Resolved:** Yes: 7. No: 0. Abstain: 0. Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

  
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President Bill Baker

Plan Commission  
  
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Executive Secretary Thomas Vander Woude  
Plan Commission

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