

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE PLAN COMMISSION
VALPARAISO, INDIANA
May 6, 2025**

The Plan Commission of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, met on Tuesday, May 6, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in City Hall. Matt Evans called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Present were Diane Worstell, Vic Ritter, Harris Peterson, Sarah Litke, Clay Patton, Tim Warner, Ellen Kapitan, Matt Evans, and Max Rehlander. Also present were Bob Thompson, Attorney Mark Worthley, Jessica Gage, Seyi Aletan and Petitioners.

Minutes

March 4, 2025 and April 1, 2025, minutes were presented for approval.

Motion: Diane Worstell moved to approve the March 4, 2025 minutes. Vic Ritter seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion passed with a 9-0 vote.

Motion: Harry Peterson moved to approve the April 1, 2025 minutes. Ellen Kapitan seconded the motion. Upon voice vote, the motion passed with a 9-0 vote.

Old Business and Matters Tabled

A25-001 (Public Hearing was closed)

A petition for annexation into the City of Valparaiso has been filed by Lake Acquisitions, Inc., and Prairie Development, LLC. The Plan Commission will consider the zoning recommendation to the City Council for the proposed annexation area at a public hearing. The annexation area is approximately 80 acres made up of 4 parcels located north of CR 500 North and west of CR 175 West.

Matt Evans – Tonight is the second hearing on this matter. The Public Hearing was last month. Since last month's meeting letters have been received from the public. These will be added to the record.

Emails received have been distributed by staff to all Commission members and are available for review by the public in the file kept in the Planning Department at City Hall.

Ed Reckentwall and Kevin Paszko presented.

Kevin Paszko - They are here tonight to receive a recommendation to the City Council for their proposed annexation and rezone of the Midwood Terrace project. Last month they gave an overview of the project. There was a Public Hearing. They answered questions from the public and the Commission. Everything they presented last month is still the same today. They

followed up with staff to see if there was anything they needed to do and have not heard anything back from them.

Questions/Comments from the Commission

Ellen Kapitan – She is excited about this project and making sure there's different price points available for people coming into the City or staying in the City. She has learned that a lot of people are looking for this price point. They are trying to downsize and we don't have the housing stock for a couple that now doesn't have three kids living at home and they want a smaller place to live. She appreciates the work that has gone into finding a solution that fits what a growing city is looking for. This is a beautiful piece of property. There is a tree grove and a couple of beautiful old trees. Do you have any flexibility in greenspace preservation? Some of the emails also discussed buffering the homes to the south.

Kevin Paszko - They have extensive buffering along 500 north and 175 west to offer a break between their development and the adjacent subdivisions. They are offering buffers between uses within the community. They have another buffer on the north side and the west side. They have several areas of park space.

Ed Reckentwall - The buffer along 500 is pretty significant. There is a 50' pipeline easement that will remain as green space. They are providing additional buffering behind the pipeline easement that they plan to landscape significantly to provide separation from the roadway. There is a tree grove in the middle of the parcel. The trees are scrub trees. There is a significant oak on the frontage that they are going to try to preserve.

Ellen Kapitan – The Commission approves the zoning with the intention that this plan is what comes forward. Who has the ability to follow up and see if this buffer is what they said it would be?

Matt Evans – This is a review for annexation and zoning. This is a concept plan at this point.

Bob Thompson – There is going to be a development agreement that is going to be before the City Council. Ellen Kapitan can always ask to have this put in the development agreement.

Matt Evans – The plat approval comes back to the Plan Commission if the annexation and zoning is approved into the City.

Ed Reckentwall – The landscape plan will show all that buffering at the plat stage as well.

Ellen Kapitan – It is important for the audience and people listening to know where they can still voice their concerns. She would like to have it mapped out so they can continue having conversations with residents.

Sarah Litke – She asked what density the current zoning from the County allows. The original layout was 184.

Ed Reckentwall – It was R2 zoning. It ended up being somewhere in the 180 to 190 lot count and that was about 2.2 units per acre.

Sarah Litke – She just wanted to have an idea of how much more density this allows compared to what is already approved.

Bob Thompson – He was somewhat involved in that with the County. There were 8,000 sq ft lots. It is more density and the lot sizes are considerably less than what the Suburban Residential zoning is in some of the areas around here. They went through the open space ordinance which allowed them to have a considerable reduction in the bulk standards within the county. They did ask for paired housing on that. They were going for PUD. The county said no. They liked the product but did not think it was the location. It is approved for single family at about 8,000 square foot lots.

Ellen Kapitan – There were a couple of questions asking if this type of zoning is approved, what else does that open the gate for. They specifically asked about businesses and gas stations.

Bob Thompson – Fire station is allowed under Urban Residential but as far as a gas station, or business, or commercial – No.

Clay Patton – He thought the Commission was supposed to get minutes from Porter County when they said no to a similar proposal for this parcel. He has not seen them. He wanted to gain a better understanding of what the Porter County Plan Commission was thinking.

Bob Thompson – He received them but did not forward them because in his opinion those minutes did not answer the questions that you were asking for. They did not give the reason in the minutes.

Ellen Kapitan – She asked that it be clarified that sewer and water are not under City services.

Max Rehlander – Indiana American Water butts up to the north side of 500 North. City services resume south of 500 North. For sanitary sewer services it is Aqua Indiana. Storm water would be serviced by our Utilities Department as well as Public Works would be responsible for street snow plowing and street maintenance.

Ellen Kapitan – There have been questions that came in about water retention and storm water. Have there been issues in this area? What are we planning for to accommodate that?

Ed Reckentwall – They are being held to county standards which are more restricted than the City. Their release rate is further restricted than what would have been required if they would

have just gone into the City limits. The drainage pattern is from the southeast and then it wraps around and through to the detention pond.

Ellen Kapitan – There were questions if the roads were big enough to handle the increase in traffic.

Ed Reckentwall – Part of the Transit Plan is these roads are identified as future thoroughfares. They will be widening these to whatever the requirements are. They will have decell and accel lanes at both entrances. For now that intersection is still considered a three way stop. There are no plans to alter that.

Ellen Kapitan – What are the lot sizes of the surrounding subdivisions?

Bob Thompson – Hampton Mannor is about 12,000 to 15,000 sq ft lots

Matt Evans – One resident that wrote in was concerned about the density around the firehouse and along county roads. This is not the final design but you might want to consider center loading the neighborhood density. I know you are trying to wrap the fire station as well. There is a balance there. Some creative planning could be done to make them more comfortable with the proposal when it comes before a plat review.

Ellen Kapitan – The price points can only be predicted as much as outside factors allow. What can the Commission and the Council do to ensure that they will go for \$250,000 to \$350,000? How can we confirm this is what happens?

Attorney Mark Worthey – You are constrained with the zoning districts. The zoning districts say nothing about price point. If you are concerned about a certain district not meeting that criteria, then your only alternative is to say no to that district.

Matt Evans – As a real estate professional he would say the market commands where they actually should be.

Harry Peterson – Looking at the plans that have been submitted, almost everyone could agree that the general residential area is fine. When they get to the town homes people are saying it is jamming houses in a smaller area. From Olthof's perspective, is this something that is in demand? On the other hand we see developments go up and there are empty lots. Do you see a demand for more affordable and more densely located housing?

Ed Reckentwall – There is definitely a demand for this type of housing. They feel this is a very marketable housing option.

Harry Peterson – In some developments, especially when it is town homes, they build a few and decide to build more when they see how well it takes off. Is it Olthof's plan to build them all or build in pieces?

Ed Reckentwall – They will phase the project. Right now it is planned for one large phase on the west. The eastern side would probably be two phases at most. A significant portion of the town homes on the east side would be built right away.

Matt Evans – One question from the public was that there are TIFs being offered. Is that the case?

Ed Reckentwall – No TIFs.

Clay Patton - In October, 2021 you went before the County and it was denied. Did you take this proposal before the County first. Or did you decide let's take it before another governmental agency and try to annex?

Ed Reckentwall – This is all predicated that a fire station was wanted to be located in this general vicinity. When they approached us, that changed the plans significantly from what is currently approved. We didn't come here and change something. We were asked to look into providing a public service area without a project. That is why they are back before the City of Valparaiso.

Clay Patton – Fire protection services in Center Township and in Valparaiso are combined. What does that matter that there's a fire station?

Ed Reckentwall – They would have to change their plan no matter which entity they go to. They decided if they have to change their plan they may as well ask for annexation into the City of Valparaiso.

Clay Patton – Was the plan before to have 8,000 sq ft lots?

Ed Reckentwall – Yes. The lots on the west have not changed from what the County plan is.

Sarah Litke – When it was denied in 2021, then you went back to the County and got another plan approved with 184 lots? Is it correct the fire station came to you and asked about a lot?

Ed Reckentwall – They approached Olthof about having a fire station location.

Bob Thompson -UR does allow for the fire station. The construction of the fire station, because of the district, has to look like a residential structure in the area. Any residential district that the City has will allow for a fire station.

MOTION: Vic Ritter moved to approve Case A25-001 and to send a favorable recommendation to the Council for annexation with a zoning of General Residential and Urban Residential. Harry Peterson seconded the motion and so approved with an 8-1 roll call vote. Clay Patton voted No.

Roll Call Vote:

Diane Worstell – Yes
Sarah Litke – Yes
Vic Ritter – Yes
Tim Warner – Yes
Harris Peterson – Yes

Matt Evans – Yes
Clay Patton – No
Ellen Kapitan – Yes
Max Rehlander – Yes

Bob Thompson – This is just a recommendation. It has to go in front of the City Council for a hearing. He is going to request this to be read at the City Council on June 9th. He will explain the case to the Council and then they will vote on whether or not they want to move forward and have a second hearing. The second reading will be June 23rd in front of the City Council. June 23rd is when the Public Hearing will be held for this case.

Ellen Kapitan – It would be helpful for the Councilmembers to have copies of the written comments as well.

Rules and Procedures

Bob Thompson – The current Rules and Procedures date back to 2005. They needed some updating. Attorney Worthley has reviewed the draft. Members have a draft.

Ellen Kapitan – What was the biggest change made?

Bob Thompson – The 20 day deadline. The 90 day Deadline to Council which is by State statute. The biggest one is Article 9 – Hearings. That is expanded considerably.

Clay Patton – Matt had sent an email asking if we could see changes lined out. Do we have that or not?

Bob Thompson - He will try to do that. He sent an outline of all the changes.

Max Rehlander – He will help Bob with that. Some of the City policies have not been dusted off for a number of years. Certain best management practices they follow aren't codified. He thanked Bob for taking the time to put this together.

Bob Thompson – The 2005 version mentions a seal. He cannot find a seal. He asked attorney Worthley if a seal is important.

Attorney Mark Worthley – He thinks what is important is the signature. A seal is not required by statute.

Ellen Kapitan – She appreciates Bob going through this. She needs time to look through it and offer any suggestions.

Bob Thompson – His goal is to have this posted on the city website. He wants it to be easy to read and understand. He is working on an RFQ for a new comprehensive plan update. You can find the current version on the website under planning documents. This version was approved in 2007.

ADJOURNMENT:

Motion: Ellen Kapitan moved to adjourn the meeting. Harry Peterson seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 9-0 vote.



Matt Evans, President



Bob Thompson Executive Secretary

Next Meeting: Tuesday, June 3, 2025