

**WHITLEY COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
APRIL 17, 2019 7:00 P.M.**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Doug Wright	Brad Wolfe
John Woodmansee	Tom Western
Thor Hodges	Mark Mynhier
John Johnson	Joe Wolf
Elizabeth Deckard	

STAFF

Nathan Bilger
Jennifer Shinabery

ATTORNEY

Dawn Boyd

VISITORS

There were 31 visitors who registered their attendance at the April 17, 2019 regular meeting of the Whitley County Plan Commission. A signed guest list is kept on record.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mr. Wright called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Ms. Shinabery read the roll call with all members present.

CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION OF THE MEETING MINUTES

Mr. Wright asked if there were any additions or corrections to the March 20, 2019 regular meeting minutes. There being none, Mr. Western made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Ms. Deckard. The motion passed 9-0.

OATH TO WITNESSES

Mr. Bilger administered the oath to those present who wished to speak during the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

19-W-REZ-4 Robert & Linda Hoffman, 8120 S. Westfield Trail, Columbia City, requested an amendment to the Whitley County Zoning map by reclassifying 18 parcels from AG, Agricultural District to RR, Rural Residential District. The properties have various owners, including the Hoffmans, and are located on the southeast corner of E. 800 South and S. 700 East. The properties include the Westfield Passage subdivision, Burris Estates, and 2 adjoining parcels, for a total of approximately 50 acres in Section 24 of Jefferson Township.

Mr. Bilger reviewed the petition and staff report that was initially presented at the previous meeting. He reviewed the existing zoning classifications and land uses, explaining that the petitioner is requesting the zoning amendment to align the zoning district with the current usage of the properties involved. He referred to aerial views of the properties and discussed the review criteria for the Commission to consider. He explained that the petition was continued at the March meeting due to an ownership issue that has since been resolved.

Linda Hoffman, 8120 S. Westfield Trail, Columbia City, stated that she was the representative of the owners of the properties in the petition. She confirmed that she was able to receive the signature of Susan Knake on behalf of Lot 11 of Westfield Passage (7252 E. 800 South) and

100% of the owners in the petition have signed for their support. She reviewed the petition and cited the intent of Rural Residential District to 'promote, maintain "rural character" in Whitley County' by 'allowing suburban-style residential subdivisions in areas where high demand for residential growth is high and basic services are available'. She explained how the land in the petition was more suitable for RR zoning. She reviewed various reasons behind the zoning change request, including protecting home values against conflicting land uses, aligning the zoning with existing uses and also the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan. She explained and gave an example of how the current zoning does not provide protection against many land uses that could negatively impact property values and quality of life. She concluded by requesting a favorable recommendation.

Mr. Western asked about the two parcels not connected to sanitary sewer. Mrs. Hoffman provided further clarification and details.

Mr. Wright asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak regarding the petition.

Cindy Weist, 7701 E. 800 South-92, Fort Wayne, stated that she owns property located at 7405 E. 800 South, adjacent to Westfield Passage. She stated that she is a life-long resident of Jefferson Township and is concerned of all of the zoning changes and does not understand why they are necessary when there are already subdivision covenants to prevent undesirable uses. She stated that she wants to see the integrity of the land protected and would like the Commission to discuss whether rural residential is appropriate and best for the area before entertaining any rezoning petitions.

There being no further public comment, Mr. Wright closed the public hearing at 7:32 p.m. Mr. Woodmansee made a motion to give a favorable recommendation to the County Commissioners; Mr. Wolfe seconded. The motion passed 9-0.

NEW BUSINESS

19-W-REZ-5 Micropulse Incorporated, 5865 E. State Road 14, Columbia City, is requesting an amendment to the Whitley County Zoning map by reclassifying 8.86 acres from the AG, Agricultural and GC, General Commercial Districts to the IPM, Industrial Park/Manufacturing District. The property is located east of the existing Micropulse IPM property in Section 3 of Jefferson Township.

Mr. Bilger reviewed the petition and his staff report, referring to aerial views of the property. He explained that the request would accommodate future expansions, one of which could be possible yet this year. He explained that development standards such as building placement, draining, parking, lighting and buffering would be evaluated, as required, during Development Plan review. He reviewed the surrounding existing zoning classifications and land uses. He also discussed the review criteria for the Commission to consider.

Brian Emerick, 5865 E. State Road 14, Columbia City, presented the petition as owner and President of Micropulse Incorporated. He provided a business overview and highlighted various statistics for the company. He reported that the business just celebrated 30 years with a good

track record. He explained how the business has supported several incubator companies. He expressed his support for economic development in Whitley County as well as the entire region of Northeast Indiana. He concluded by discussing the history of the company's growth over the years and expressed that he is cautious and responsible with any growth that occurs.

Mr. Johnson asked whether there were any plans for an access off of S. 600 East. Mr. Emerick stated there were no current plans for that. He gave further details of the proposed expansion and addressed the complaints and concerns that were submitted regarding drainage, explaining that he continues to work closely with the Whitley County Drainage Department.

Mr. Wright asked if there was anyone present who wished to speak regarding the petition.

Jon Myers, 2100 E. Cider Mill Road, Columbia City, President of Whitley County EDC, spoke in favor of the petition. He stated that Micropulse is the 6th largest employer in Whitley County and discussed how supportive and involved the company is in the community. He discussed in greater detail the incubator companies in the County that have received the support of Micropulse. He explained that partially due to strict FDA regulations, the company cannot easily relocate and expressed his support of the request.

Roberta Davis, 5730 S. 600 East, Columbia City, stated that she and her husband are against the petition and do not want Micropulse to continue to expand at their current location. She stated that the business should relocate to US 30 and stated that any further expansion would adversely affect neighboring residents, especially given the location of the proposed expansion and its proximity to residences. She reviewed the written comments that were submitted to the record on behalf of five neighboring properties. She discussed various adverse effects the proposed expansion could have on neighbors such as flooding, increased traffic, lights, noise, pollution and limited fire response time.

Mr. Wolf assured Mrs. Davis that the Jefferson Township Fire Department is capable of providing a swift and immediate response to any incident that may occur at the Micropulse location.

Ann Evilsizer, 5840 S. 600 East, Columbia City, expressed drainage concerns and also stated she did not want to see an additional access off of 600 East.

Mr. Emerick responded to the concerns expressed, stating that they desire to be good neighbors. He addressed the lighting concerns, emergency response time, and drainage issues. He explained that the proposed location of the expansion is a result of practicality and the recommendation of engineers and other professionals that have investigated various possibilities.

Mr. Western asked for details of future proposed expansions to which Mr. Emerick responded, referring to the aerial view of the property.

Mr. Woodmansee asked if Mr. Emerick would consider planting trees as a buffer. Mr. Emerick responded that he will be planting trees and will follow any recommendations made during the Development Plan review stage.

Mr. Wolfe asked for further details on the parking lot. Mr. Emerick explained the proposed plans.

Mr. Mynhier asked how drainage is addressed currently and what is proposed. Mr. Emerick responded and explained that there are plans to expand the east detention pond. He also referred to a letter submitted by Mike Knafel from the Whitley County Drainage Supervisor.

There being no further public comment, Mr. Wright closed the public hearing at 8:23 p.m. Mr. Woodmansee made a motion to give a favorable recommendation to the County Commissioners; Mr. Johnson seconded. The motion passed 9-0.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Bilger provided the Commission members with a handout from the Center of Business and Economic Research titled, *Economic Considerations for Indiana's Housing Markets* from February 6, 2019. He provided a brief training session on density, form and fiscal impact related to residential development.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Wright declared the meeting adjourned at 8:39 p.m.