

The meeting of the Plan Commission of the City of Hammond, Indiana was held on Monday, May 19, 2025, in the Council Chamber, 2nd Floor, 5925 Calumet Avenue, Hammond, IN 46320, and via www.Zoom.us, at 6:00 p.m.

President Button called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m. President Button led the Pledge of Allegiance. President Button called for the roll call.

PRESENT	ABSENT	ALSO PRESENT
Roger Brock (IP)		Brian L. Poland, AICP
Dean Button (IP)		Director of City Planner
Thomas Dabertin (IP)		
Michael Dye (Z)		Tom Novak
William Hutton (IP)		Asst. City Planner
Thomas Kazmierczak (IP)		
Ronald Sims (IP)		Shannon Morris-Smith
Daniel Spitale (IP)		Recording Secretary
Marcus Taylor (IP)		

PRESENT – 9

ABSENT – 0

QUORUM

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

President Button called for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 18, 2025 meeting as amended. Mr. Dabertin so moved, seconded by Mr. Kazmierczak. Roll call vote. Roger Brock/yes, Thomas Dabertin/yes, Mike Dye/yes, William Hutton/yes, Thomas Kazmierczak/yes, Ronald Sims/yes, Dan Spitale/yes, Marcus/Taylor/yes, Dean Button/yes. Nine “Ayes”, Zero “Nays”, Zero “Absent”, and Zero “Abstentions”. Motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

NEW BUSINESS

CP-25-03	Petition of City of Hammond Board of Public Works and Safety to Reclassify Property at 600 177 th Street and 626 177 th Street from C-1 Local Commercial District to C-4 General Commercial District in Order to Develop the Property for New Uses in Conjunction with the Redevelopment Plan for the River North Subarea Expansion Area of the Gateways Redevelopment Area
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President Button asked if the notification requirements had been met. Ms. Morris-Smith stated “Yes”. Ms. Morris-Smith advised the Commissioners that Janet Hanrahan, 610-177th Street, Hammond, IN contacted the office to inquire about what would be allowed with the rezoning of the subject properties.

President Button asked the Commissioners if there were any objections to Mr. Poland acting as the petitioner and the reviewer. There were none.

Brian L. Poland, Director of City Planning, 5925 Calumet Avenue Room G-17, Hammond, IN 46320, represented the petitioner. Mr. Poland stated that 600 & 626 177th Street was located south of the Borman Expressway and west of Calumet Avenue. It was also known as the "Haunted House Site" and the "Indiana Botanical Gardens Building". The City of Hammond acquired the property through eminent domain. The City expanded the Gateway Redevelopment Area with the River North Subarea Expansion Area to the Gateways Redevelopment Area. This plan discussed changing the commercial make up of the area. This included the subject properties, adjacent properties on the south side of 177th Street, a portion of properties at the intersection of Calumet Avenue and River/River North Drive, the bike trail landing on the west side of Calumet Avenue, the cell tower on the north side of River/River North Drive, and two parcels to the west of the subject property.

Mr. Poland explained the creation of the redevelopment area and the acquisition were the first and second steps in how the City would like to develop the property. The rezoning from C-1 to C-4 was the third step. This step would put things in place to obtain RFP's to look for new development opportunities. The specifics have not been defined.

The C-4 zoning opens up all of the permitted and conditional uses allowed in the four commercial districts in the zoning ordinance. The redevelopment plan intends to develop commercial offices, retail, and hotels.

President Button asked if the remaining residual properties to the west were zoned C-4. Mr. Poland stated the two parcels to the west that were previously mentioned with the billboard and the adjacent parcels would remain C-1. The City does not own those properties to rezone. The two parcels to the east with the cell tower and the bike trail landing were not a part of the petition.

President Button asked if there were any additional questions from the Commissioners. There were none.

President Button opened up the public hearing.

Kevin Kappa, 633 River Drive, Munster, IN 46321

- He lives south of the subject location in Munster
- Concerned about light, sound, and privacy protection with the development
- Quality of life
- Proper precautions are taken when demolition is done for asbestos and other contaminants
- Consider the neighborhood to the south with the consideration of uses

President Button closed the public hearing.

Mr. Poland stated there were regulations in the zoning ordinance that restrict light from a site. The measurement is 3 footcandles at the property line. There are regulations for light fixture to not spill over to the adjacent property. Landscaping requirements were based on 10% of the parcel. There is flexibility in the combination of landscaping. Mr. Poland further stated the levee would not be impacted in a negative manner. All statutory requirements would be followed for asbestos removal for any project. The Hammond Department of Environmental Management monitors all projects within the City of Hammond through the permitting process to make sure all regulations are followed in accordance with applicable laws.

President Button asked if there were any additional questions from the Commissioners. There were none.

Mr. Poland summarized the staff report, but it is presented below in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

The petitioner, the City of Hammond Board of Public Works and Safety, is the owner of property formerly known as the Haunted House Site and the Indiana Botanical Gardens. There are two parcels subject to the rezoning: 45-06-13-426-003.000-023 at 600 177th Street and 45-06-13-426-002.000-023 at 626 177th Street. The property is located within the River North Subarea Expansion Area of the Gateways Redevelopment Area. The property was recently acquired by the City of Hammond via eminent domain.

Under the River North Subarea plan, the City will be seeking new development for the I80-94 corridor at the first interchange from Illinois. The City will seek a higher level development off a major highway and striking a balance with the levee that protects the area from flooding from the Little Calumet River.

The River North Subarea Redevelopment Plan recommended for the rezoning to C-4.

Subject property and adjacent properties, present use and zoning classification

The subject property is currently zoned C-1 Local Commercial District. To the north is S-1 Open Space and Recreational Facilities District containing I 80-94 interstate. To the east is C-1 containing the pedestrian ramp for the bike trail overpass on the former church site and a parking lot with a cell tower. Beyond that is the interstate interchange which is zoned S-1. On the west, it is a part of the C-1 district containing a vacant lot and a billboard. To the South is the Little Calumet River and the Town of Munster.

ANALYSIS

State statute identifies five criteria to be addressed when considering a zoning petition.

1) Comprehensive Plan

The subject property is located in Planning District IV South Hammond Planning District. The City of Hammond's 1992 Comprehensive Land Use Plan recommends the

subject property to be commercial. The Plan also identified the open space around the former Indiana Botanical Gardens building and the previous flood plain designation. The levee allowed for the reclassification of the area to Flood Zone X.

2) Current conditions and character

The building is in poor condition and a demolition order has been issued by the City.

3) Most desirable use for the property

The reclassification of the flood zone has opened up opportunities for new development. The bike trail overpass provides a recreational connection and pedestrian access to the property that could be an advantage for new development. Commercial uses are appropriate for a quadrant of an interstate interchange. New development needs to be balanced around the competing factors of the levee and bike trail system, the visibility of the site beyond the sound barrier wall of the interstate.

4) Conservation of property values throughout the area

New development, in general, has a positive effect on property values. The commercial development will revitalize the area and increase the property values.

5) Responsible development and growth

This is a great opportunity for new commercial development attracting customers from a high volume of traffic from the interstate as well as being an entrance to the City. The site is separated from the residential area and park across Calumet Avenue. It will be the first commercial development from the interchange and will enhance the Calumet Avenue commercial corridor and acting as a link to both Hammond and Munster.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Plan Commission action is the next step in following through on the proposed plans that emanated from the River North Subarea Expansion Area Redevelopment Plan and the eminent domain action.

Staff recommends that the Plan Commission forward the petition to the City Council with a favorable recommendation.

If the Plan Commission agrees with the recommendation, the staff requests that this report is adopted by the Plan Commission as Preliminary Findings of Fact.

The presentation was concluded.

President Button asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners. There were none.

President Button called for a motion to forward the petition to the City Council with a favorable recommendation. Mr. Taylor so moved, seconded by Mr. Spitale. Roll call vote. Roger Brock/yes, Thomas Dabertin/yes, Mike Dye/yes, William Hutton/yes,

Thomas Kazmierczak/yes, Ronald Sims/yes, Dan Spitale/yes, Marcus/Taylor/yes, Dean Button/yes. Nine "Ayes", Zero "Nays", Zero "Absent", and Zero "Abstentions". Motion passed.

President Button called for a motion that the Plan Commission adopt the staff report as preliminary findings of fact. Mr. Kazmierczak so moved, seconded by Mr. Taylor. Roll call vote. Roger Brock/yes, Thomas Dabertin/yes, Mike Dye/yes, William Hutton/yes, Thomas Kazmierczak/yes, Ronald Sims/yes, Dan Spitale/yes, Marcus/Taylor/yes, Dean Button/yes. Nine "Ayes", Zero "Nays", Zero "Absent", and Zero "Abstentions". Motion passed.

Mr. Poland stated Councilman Emerson was a pending sponsor for the ordinance. Mr. Poland asked Councilman Spitale to Co-Sponsor the ordinance. Mr. Spitale stated "Yes".

CP-25-04 Determination of Fencing Requirements Pursuant to Zoning Ordinance 8514 Title/Section 22.20 for provisions regarding containment control fencing around playing fields

President Button asked the secretary if the notification requirements had been met. Ms. Morris-Smith stated "Yes".

President Button asked the Commissioners if there were any objections to Mr. Poland acting as the petitioner and the reviewer. There were none.

Brian L. Poland, Director of City Planning, 5925 Calumet Avenue, Hammond, IN 46320. Mr. Poland stated City staff has been working with a developer on a project at the old YMCA. The proposal was to set up an outdoor sports facility. There would be two soccer fields and one sport court. The nature of the facilities would require a containment fencing to keep the playing ball on the field. Containment fences were anywhere from 12'-20' fences. The zoning ordinance language does not adequately address this type of sports facility. Mr. Poland further stated in preparation to writing an amendment to the zoning ordinance a determination was being made to set an idea on how to manage and keep the process moving. Mr. Poland further reviewed the supplemental document Standard Guide for Fences for Ballfields and Other Sports Facility that was shared with the Commissioners.

President Button asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners. There were none.

President Button opened up the public hearing. There was none.

President Button asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners. There were none.

Mr. Poland summarized the staff report, but it is presented below in its entirety.

BACKGROUND

In reviewing the Title XXII Fences and Landscaping, it was discovered that the Ordinance had a gap in determining fencing and containment barriers around outdoor sports facilities. Due to the nature of containing the sports equipment (i.e. footballs, soccer balls, baseballs, tennis balls, etc.), taller fences and containment are required to keep the balls in play as well as control the balls from leaving the site or going into the streets and then causing traffic conflicts. The fences and containment screening are taller than the allowed 6' height in certain residential and commercial applications or 8' in industrial areas.

The staff is requesting the Plan Commission to make a determination and to set appropriate zoning provisions to allow for fences and containment screening around outdoor sports fields to address the public purpose of health, safety, and welfare.

ANALYSIS

Each individual sports field has different requirements of fencing and containment directly related to the trajectory of the ball being used. The requirements are also related to the age, player level, and proximity to a street or other activities and structures adjacent to the individual sports facility play area.

Research was conducted to find authoritative sources that are more familiar with the needs of the individual sport. Some sources including, but not limited to, are the ANSI (American National Standards Institute), ASTM International (Advancing Standards Transforming Markets fka American Society for Testing and Materials), ITF (International Tennis Federation), PGA (Professional Golfers' Association), IHSAA (Indiana High School Athletic Association), Urban Soccer Park/FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association), etc.

Staff believes the requirements for fencing and containment of the sports facilities playing areas are individualized and the particular sports' authorities are better suited to determine the appropriate need. Staff only seeks to provide guidance in the Zoning Ordinance to clarify what may be allowed and to not allow the misapplication of the 6' and 8' fence limits.

STAFF PROPOSAL

New Ordinance Section

Section: 22.19 Fences and Containment for Outdoor Sports Facilities.

The height of fences and containment around outdoor sports facilities shall be subject to authoritative sources of the particular sport. These include, but are not limited to: ANSI (American National Standards Institute), ASTM International (Advancing Standards Transforming Markets fka American Society for Testing and Materials), ITF (International Tennis Federation), PGA (Professional Golfers' Association), Urban

Soccer Park/FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Association), IHSAA (Indiana High School Athletic Association), Indiana State Building Code or similar authorities.

The fences and containment around outdoor sports facilities are to be setback a minimum of 10 feet from right-of-way and shall comply with T/S 18.20 Corner Vision Obstruction. Said fences and containment around outdoor sports facilities are not subject to T/S 22.20 and T/S 22.21.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends for the Plan Commission to determine that the proposed Fence and Containment for Outdoor Sports Facilities provisions are accepted and direct the staff to prepare an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance for a new section 22.19 or other section number as may be determined.

If the Plan Commission agrees with the recommendation, the staff requests that this report be adopted by the Plan Commission as Preliminary Findings of Fact.

The presentation was concluded.

President Button asked if there were any questions from the Commissioners. There were none.

President Button called for a motion that the Plan Commission to make a determination that the proposed Fence and Containment for Outdoor Sports Facilities provisions are accepted and direct the staff to prepare an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance for a new section 22.19 or other section number as may be determined. Mr. Dabertin so moved, seconded by Mr. Taylor. Roll call vote. Roger Brock/yes, Thomas Dabertin/yes, Mike Dye/yes, William Hutton/yes, Thomas Kazmierczak/yes, Ronald Sims/yes, Dan Spitale/yes, Marcus/Taylor/yes, Dean Button/yes. Nine "Ayes", Zero "Nays", Zero "Absent", and Zero "Abstentions". Motion passed.

President Button called for a motion that the Plan Commission adopt the amended staff report as Preliminary Findings of Fact. Mr. Kazmierczak so moved, seconded by Mr. Taylor. Roll call vote. Roger Brock/yes, Thomas Dabertin/yes, Mike Dye/yes, William Hutton/yes, Thomas Kazmierczak/yes, Ronald Sims/yes, Dan Spitale/yes, Marcus/Taylor/yes, Dean Button/yes. Nine "Ayes", Zero "Nays", Zero "Absent", and Zero "Abstentions". Motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE

There was none.

COMMISSIONER'S COMMENTS

There were none.

STAFF COMMENTS

Mr. Poland advised the Commissioner that a June meeting was not anticipated.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Kappo requested a two week notification because he was on vacation and only had seven day notice. Mr. Kappo further requested that the noise from HVAC trucks be considered during construction.

ADJOURNMENT

President Button called for a motion to adjourn, Mr. Hutton so moved, seconded by Mr. Dabertin. The meeting adjourned at 6:31 p.m. "Ayes" all. Motion carried.

PREPARED BY

Shannon Morris-Smith

Shannon Morris-Smith,
Secretary to Plan Commission

APPROVED BY THE PLAN COMMISSION

Dean Button

Dean Button, President

Date Approved: 6-16-25