# MERRILLVILLE PLAN COMMISSION MINUTES
# TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2026
# 6:30 PM

Plan Commission President Margaret Uzelac led the Meeting of the Merrillville Plan Commission at 6:30PM to order and then led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance at the Merrillville Municipal Complex, 7820 Broadway, Merrillville, Indiana.

**ROLL CALL:**
Members in attendance were Mr. Brian Gong, Mr. Jeff Swike, Councilman Shawn Pettit, Mr. Kristopher Mellon, Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering, and Plan Commission President Margaret Uzelac. Staff in attendance were Building Director Sheila Shine, Town Engineer Steve King, and Attorney Ricardo Hall.

**MINUTES: JANUARY 20, 2026**
Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering made a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jeff Swike.
There was a unanimous voice vote of 6 – 0 to approve the minutes.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**
None

**COMMENTS FROM CHAIRMAN**
None

**OLD BUSINESS**

1. **P2Ps1-0325 HAVLIN PROPERTIES, LLC, PETITIONER & OWNER**
Located at 2003 East Main Street
Request: Preliminary (1) Lot Subdivision Approval on 21.32 Acres in a M-1, Limited Industrial Zoning District
Purpose: To Allow Storage Buildings (9)

Mr. Adam McAlpine of 398 E 400 N, Valparaiso, Indiana and Mr. Jack Havlin of 2003 Main Street, Griffith, Indiana presented their petition to the Plan Commission.
Mr. Adam McAlpine stated that the plans of the proposed project have been reviewed by Robinson Engineering and the Fire Department.

Plan Commission President Margaret Uzelac asked the Town Engineering team for their comments on the proposed project.

Mr. Bob Csanyi of Robinson Engineering stated that the site development plan has been reviewed and approved and there are some comments on the plat that will need to be worked out.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering commented that when the petitioner builds out, they will not be able to build to the south of the project due to the land being wet.

Mr. Kristopher Mellon inquired if all the items that the Town staff needed the petitioners' plans to be rectified on this project have been completed.

Mr. Jack Havliln stated that fire hydrant issue and accessibility issue has been corrected with the Fire Department.

Councilman Shawn Pettit inquired about a letter in October 2025 from Mr. Bob Csanyi of Robinson Engineering.

Mr. Bob Csanyi explained that once the petitioner receives the approval, the petitioner must provide the application from the Army Corps of Engineers to the Town of Merrillville.

Councilman Shawn Pettit inquired about the permit application.

Mr. Jack Havlin stated that he wants to see the status of this petition before he moves forward.

Plan Commission President Margaret Uzelac asked if there is a retention pond and Mr. Bob Csanyi answered yes, there is a detention pond on the west side which will drain to the north across Main Street.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering inquired if the final approval should be conditional on the review of the Army Corps. Of Engineers.

Councilman Shawn Pettit commented that if an approval is granted for this petitioner tonight, the petitioner will file for the next petition in either April or May.

There was a discussion of the next step of this petitioner.

Mr. Kristopher Mellon announced that Councilwoman Leona Chandler – Felton has arrived at the meeting.

Building Director Sheila Shine read the staff report.

Councilman Shawn Pettit inquired if the petitioner has received any comments about the proposed project from the Ward Councilwoman Rhonda Neal and the petitioner stated that Councilwoman Rhonda Neal stated that she would like the proposed site to look nice.

Lake County Parks Superintendent Craig Zandstra spoke about some of the concerns that the Lake County Parks Department has about the proposed site such as the drainage, the impact on the wildlife, the endangered flora and fauna, the impact of the lighting from the proposed site and the parklands value.

Councilman Shawn Pettit inquired if Lake County Parks owns three sides adjacent to the proposed project site and Mr. Craig Zandstra answered yes.  Councilman Shawn Pettit asked Mr. Zandstra if he had discussed the concerns with the Merrillville Stormwater Director and with the Town Engineers.  Councilman Shawn Pettit continued that the proposed project site is zoned M-1, and if this petition is denied, the Town might possibly have a litigation suit against it.

There was a discussion about why the LCPD didn't purchase an adjacent property near the Lake County Parks Department property.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering stated that zoning for the proposed project site was done by Lake County Planning Commission before the Town of Merrillville was established.  He continued to explain that the petitioner has a permitted use and that if the Army Corps of Engineers says no to the project, the project will not proceed as it is.

Councilman Shawn Pettit inquired if the Merrillville Stormwater Director has a citation that can be placed on a project if there is a violation and Town Engineer Steve King stated that the Merrillville Stormwater can issue a citation, and the issue would be presented to the Merrillville Stormwater Board
.
Town Engineer Steve King suggested that Mr. Craig Zandstra submit his concerns to Merrillville Stormwater Director Matt Lake, so the concerns and issues can be clarified.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering clarified that the Town has a strong lighting ordinance, which means that the lighting from the proposed project site must stay within the boundaries of the proposed project site.

There was a discussion about the approval of the Preliminary petition.

Councilman Shawn Pettit made a motion to approve this petition with the condition of the Army Corps of Engineers application being submitted and approved, and the review and the approval of Merrillville Stormwater in conjunction with the Lake County Parks Department. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Leona Chandler – Felton. There was a unanimous voice vote of 7 – 0 to approve this petition.

**2. <u>P1PS1-0126</u>** **<u>MERRILLVILLE DEVELOPMENT II, LLC, OWNER & COSTCO WHOLESALE CORPORATION, PETITIONER</u>**

Located at 1420 E 79th Avenue and 1500 E 79th Avenue

Request: Preliminary (1) Lot Subdivision on 1.968 Acres in a Plan Unit Development / C-3, Highway Commercial Zoning District

Purpose: To Allow a Costco Employee Parking Lot

Mr. Larry Dziurdzik of 1955 Raymond Drive, Northbrook, Illinois presented his petition before the Plan Commission. He explained that the extra parking is needed, the crosswalk has been reviewed, the parking lot will be paved with asphalt, and the proposed parking lot will be limited to employees only.

Mr. Jeff Swike inquired if the petitioner will have a system which an employee will press a button before crossing 79th Avenue, there will be a flashing red light which will signal for motorists to stop and to allow the pedestrian to cross safely over 79th Avenue.

Councilman Shawn Pettit asked Patrol Commander Nick Berzac since 79th Avenue is a public right-of way, if a motorist runs the red light, can an officer ticket the motorist and Patrol Commander Nick Berzac answered yes.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering stated that he would like the proposed site to have:

- Signage that states “Costco Employee Parking”,
- A Hawk System traffic/cross walk light
- A shuttle system for the employees during inclement weather
- A waiver and release for the Town

Councilman Shawn Pettit inquired if the petitioner would petition for the final approval in April 2026, and when will the project start.

Mr. Larry Dziurdzik stated that the petitioner is proposing to start the project in June 2026 and the total project value will be approximately $2,000,000.00

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering inquired if Costco will be purchasing the proposed site or leasing the proposed site and Mr. Larry Dziurdzik answered that Costco will purchase the proposed site.

Attorney Ricardo Hall commented that the legal document be called a Waiver and Release and not to be called Indemnification.

Building Director Sheila Shine read the staff report.

Councilman Shawn Pettit reminded the Plan Commission members that the petitioner was granted a Use Variance from the Board of Zoning Appeals in February 2026.

There was no public comment.

Councilman Shawn Pettit made a motion to approve this petition. The motion was seconded by Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering.
There was a unanimous voice vote of 7 – 0 to approve this petition.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**3. P2Fp1-0326 TERRANCE FRANKLIN/FRANKLIN ESTATES, PETITIONER & 8257 GRANT STREET LLC, OWNER**

Located at 8257 Grant Street

Request: Final Planned Unit Development Approval in a Planned Unit Development on approximately 3.32 Acres

Purpose: To Allow a Residential Development

Terrance Franklin of 8257 Grant Street presented his case to the Plan Commission.

Building Director Sheila Shine read the staff report.

Mr. Terrance Franklin explained that he is proposing to build 24 townhomes and 1 single family home.

Mr. Jeff Swike inquired about the price range for the townhomes.

Mr. Terrance Franklin stated that the four-bedroom town homes will have a cost of $425,000.00

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering inquired if Mr. Franklin has resolved the issue with Independence Hill Conservancy District and Mr. Franklin answered yes.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering asked if the 'mother-in-law" suite will meet the fire codes and have an ingress/egress.

Mr. Kristopher Mellon stated that as long as the petitioner is complying and is doing what the Town is requiring Mr. Franklin to do, Mr. Mellon has no comments.

Councilman Shawn Pettit asked Mr. Franklin if he is building where Mr. Earl Goldberg had previously built and Mr. Franklin answered that he is building the Auburn Woods subdivision.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering made a motion to approve this petition.
The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Leona Chandler – Felton.
There was a unanimous voice vote of 7 – 0.

**4. P3Fp2-0326 KENDALL PROPERTY GROUP, PETITIONER & LAKE COUNTY TRUST CO., TRUST #4078, OWNER**

Located at 400 West 87th Avenue

Request: Final Planned Unit Development Approval in a R-5, Medium Density Multi-Family Residential Zoning District on 17315 Acres

Purpose: A Luxury Multi-Family Residential Development

Mr. Greg Lorig of DVG, 1155 Troutwine Road, Crown Point, Indiana presented the petition to the Plan Commission.

Building Director Sheila Shine read the staff report.

Mr. Brian Gong had no comment.

Mr. Jeff Swike inquired about the rent fees and Mr. Greg Lorig stated that rent would range from $1200.00 for a studio apartment, and from $2200.00 for a 3 Bedroom apartment.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering commended DVG for being cognizant of the neighbors of the proposed site and for being thorough with the petition.

Mr. Bob Csanyi of Robinson Engineering stated that there are some comments that DVG and Robinson are working through to get resolved.

Plan Commission President Margaret Uzelac inquired if the petitioner has acquired a sewer availability permit.

Mr. Greg Lorig stated that the petitioner has been in contact with Merrillville Conservancy District and the petitioner is aware that sewer availability permits will be needed.

Councilman Shawn Pettit made a motion to approve this petition. The motion was seconded by Mr. Jeff Swike.
There was a unanimous voice vote of 7 – 0 to approve this petition.

Councilman Shawn Pettit inquired if there are covenants for this PUD Multi Family project.

Building Director Sheila Shine stated that the petitioner is going to have a management agreement which will be presented to the Town.

5. **P4Rs1-0326** **SAVANNAH RIDGE, LLC PETITIONER AND OWNER**
Located at Grant Street South of 73rd and North of US Highway 30
Request: Resubdivision of Lot 58 and 59 in Savannah Ridge Unit 8 in A R-2, Residential Zoning District on 0.61 Acres
Purpose: To Allow a Single-Family Residence

Attorney Richard Anderson presented the petition to the Plan Commission.

Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering inquired if the mylar will be revised and recorded at the Lake County, Indiana recorder's office and Attorney Richard Anderson stated that the revision will be reflected on the new mylar which will be recorded with Lake County, Indiana recorder's office.

Mr. Bob Csanyi of Robinson Engineering stated that it is a resubdivision of the two lots into one lot.

There was a discussion that the owner will build on the lot and the cost of the homes in the existing subdivision.

Mr. Bob Csanyi of Robinson Engineering stated that the right plat has been completed.

Councilwoman Leona Chandler – Felton made a motion to approve this petition. The motion was seconded by Councilman Shawn Pettit.
There was a unanimous voice vote of 7 – 0 to approve this petition.

6. **Resolution** **RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILLE PLAN COMMISSION DETERMINING THAT A RESOLUTION APPROVED AND ADOPTED BY THE TOWN OF MERRILLVILE REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION CONFORMS TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AND APPROVING THE RESOLUTION (LIBERTY ESTATES WEST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AREA)**

Councilman Shawn Pettit explained that the Redevelopment Commission had issued a $10,000,000. Developer Backed Bond to Mr. Randy Hall. Mr. Randy Hall is requesting a $20,000,000. Developer Backed Bond for the infrastructure. There will be two more steps afterwards. He continued that there was a bond issued to Mr. Hall for $33,000,000 which no more than $12,000,000 will go toward the Whitcomb Street improvements.

Councilman Shawn Pettit made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Leona Chandler – Felton.
There was a unanimous voice vote of 7 -0 to approve the resolution.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Councilwoman Leona Chandler – Felton made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Plan Commission Vice President Brian Dering.
There was a unanimous voice vote of 7 – 0 to adjourn the meeting.
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:41PM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Marie Wilson,
Recording Secretary