EST. 1836
MICHIGAN CITY
INDIANA

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE MICHIGAN CITY PLAN COMMISSION
February 24, 2026

The Michigan City Plan Commission held their regular monthly meeting in the Common Council Chambers, City Hall, 100 East Michigan Boulevard, Michigan City, Indiana, on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. local time; the date, hour, and place duly established for the holding of said meeting. Access LaPorte County Media recorded the meeting and it is available for viewing on their website.

CALL TO ORDER

President de'Medici called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Roll call was called by Planning Director Dr. Dominique Edwards.

Present: Ross Balling, Bruce de'Medici, Steve DePalma, Christina Espar (via zoom audio/video, Fred Klinder, Antonio Conley Rose Tejeda (via Zoom audio/video), Timothy Werner, Attorney Hale (via zoom audio/video)

Absent: Bryant Dabney

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by President de'Medici to approve the February 24, 2026 agenda, seconded by Mr. Klinder and was approved with the following vote:

AYE(8): Antiono Conley, Fred Klinder, Ross Balling, Bruce de'Medici, Rose Tejeda, Steve DePalma, Christina Espar, Timothy Werner

NAY(0):

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Mr. Klinder made a motion to nominate Mr. de'Medici as President of Planning Commission for the 2026 year, seconded by Mr. Balling and was approved with the following vote:

AYE(8): Antiono Conley, Fred Klinder, Ross Balling, Bruce de'Medici, Rose Tejeda, Steve DePalma, Christina Espar, Timothy Werner

NAY(0):

President de'Medici made a motion to nominate Rose Tejeda as Vice President of the Planning Commission for the 2026 year, seconded by Fred Klinder and was approved with the following vote:

AYE(8): Antiono Conley, Fred Klinder, Ross Balling, Bruce de'Medici, Rose Tejeda, Steve DePalma, Christina Espar, Timothy Werner

NAY(0):

Rose Tejeda makes a motion to nominate Fred Klinder as Secretary for the Planning Commission for the 2026 year, seconded by President de'Medici and was approved with the following vote:

AYE(8): Antiono Conley, Fred Klinder, Ross Balling, Bruce de'Medici, Rose Tejeda, Steve DePalma, Christina Espar, Timothy Werner

NAY(0):

MINUTES

A motion was made by President de'Medici to approve the December 18, 2025 minutes with the amendment to be made in the attendance reflecting that Attorney Hale and Dr. Edwards were present at the meeting, seconded by Mr. Werner and was approved with the following vote:

AYE(8): Antiono Conley, Fred Klinder, Ross Balling, Bruce de'Medici, Rose Tejeda, Steve DePalma, Christina Espar, Timothy Werner

NAY(0):

PETITION(S)
NONE

OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

Discussion of Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance:
Mr. York addressed the board and states that he does not have anything to bring to the board formally tonight, but what he has done is codify the code into what will be presented in an ordinance so the board can suggest that the ordinance go to council. Mr. York states that what he has done since the last meeting of further introducing this to the board is he has taken his drawings to an engineering firm who took them and made them more presentable with more mechanics and description. The idea is to the drawings can show how it works from a mechanical standpoint and be a little easier to follow. He explains to the board that you do not have to use the whole code that will be presented to them but pick and choose what parts they would want to use.

Ms. Vachet, Public Works Director, addressed the board stating that when this topic comes back to the board in March she wants to honor a request by Bruce de'Medici. She goes to explain how some of what has been proposed fits into the larger picture, she states that we need housing, all kinds of housing, affordable housing, attainable housing, high-end housing, all kinds of housing. This referendum with the Neighborhood Preservation Ordinance is ment to encourage infill housing. Why is infill housing necessary? Michigan City has the land, the infrastructure, and that is an important part for sustainable development. She states that speaking from a sanitary district perspective we as a city already have the ability to service. We have laterals, we have roads, streets, water. It is already here so we want to focus on encouraging infill housing within our city limits. The plant is there, the infrastructure has already been paid for. She states that a couple of other things to think about is neighborhood development, which is very important and looking at our existing neighborhoods, even if you think of the westside, there are a lot of places where there used to be houses or there is an extra lot. How does that become populated? Infill housing, that how we do it. She states that this is why this was put in front of the board. She continues to explain that many of us went to a zoning reform education workshop in early December, uh, that was put on by Michigan City, La Porte, um, the Health Foundation of La Porte, and the Unity Foundation to talk about breaking down barriers, to doing different kinds of housing. And it was interesting.

There were two different presentations that talked a lot about practical solutions. One of the practical solutions is use what you've got. And so, we already had the neighborhood... preservation ordinance on the books. It was something when I came on board, Skylar and I were talking about, um, and so moving it forward seemed to make sense. And so now, all of it's doing is taking the lessons learned from how it was created in the first place. Tweaking it a bit, making better graphics, making it fit better, and then applying it to new zoning classifications within the city. And I think it's important to recognize that it's voluntary, it really is an opportunity to flex the code, and that means to make it easier for people if they would like to do infill housing without recreating the wheel, or creating something that's new and complicated. So, I just wanted to mention that, because it is a very important part of economic development, it's very important. Ms. Vachet states that to the mayor, she speaks for herself, but it was brought up today, even at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon. It was one of the questions. What do we do about housing? And so I thought this was an opportunity to expand on that and to honor what President de'Medici had said is, how does what we do fit in, and it was a really great point, so I wanted to honor that point, and happy to answer any questions, but just some additional information, and then we'll have... Skyler said, updated graphics and some other things to make it hopefully easier to understand and apply.

President de'Medici asked Attorney Hale for clarification on whether today was just a discussion day, and they are not taking any formal action on the Neighborhood Preservation Commission.

Attorney Hale answered that he is correct, the board will not be making any formal decisions on this topic today.

President de'Medici asked the board if anyone has any comments or questions.

Mr. Klinder stated that he was listening to the news the other day and they noted that in Aurora, Illinois. There's a home buyers' incentive there that is sponsored by HUD and a local casino, and I'm sure Blue Chip would want to be involved, but it did come down to, they were talking about getting home loans that didn't have to pay interest. That was being taken care of, that people had different qualifications for it, but they were trying to do the same thing in Aurora, Illinois, trying to get more housing, and they had this incentive program. It struck a bell, and I just thought maybe it was something that we could call Jimmy Aurora and find out what's going on.

Mr. York addresses the board stating that's a great point. We are exploring all those options right now. We did a housing study just recently. It was released I believe at the end of last year. What the housing study told us is that about. I'm going to just use round numbers, 2,200 people look to Michigan City are looking in Michigan City, or looking at Michigan City to purchase a home, right? But what it did tell us is that there's a percentage of that, about 40% of that is inside Michigan City. There are people that already live here. So what it tells us is that we don't have the housing that people, people maybe like yourself who want to sell your home and move into, say, a town home because I don't want to mow my yard anymore, but we don't have that townhome, so they're staying in their house, so it doesn't open up that house for then someone else to take over the house. So, it's like a bottleneck of housing, is what's happening. So, it was an interesting housing study, and I'll try to get something to Dominique, maybe, and get it out to you guys. We are looking at what we have also done at the same time was like, what are some of the incentives that other communities are using to do this. Both new houses and how do you get a mortgage, and is it reduced mortgage, what tools are available to help people purchase a home, you know. Unfortunately, here in Michigan City, we've had a lot of homes that get sold on

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cash, and cash is always king when it comes to selling a house, right, so that affects us negatively, too, when people can get qualified, but they can't find a home quick enough, because there aren't enough on the market, or they can't find the home they want, and then someone swoops in and pays cash, and there it is, and it's gone. So, there's just a kind of a... call it a wicked cycle of housing here, and there isn't enough housing out there, but now we're being able to build more houses and more housing, and I'd say we're doing a pretty good job of it right now, which is what I'll talk about.
It kind of goes hand in hand with what I'll talk about next in front of you guys. Mr. York states that they are looking at those, all those incentives, and that's an interesting one to look at as well.

Discussion of Michigan City Economic Development Project report:
Mr. York addressed the board to explain and report on the project, he stated that this is a notification from the redevelopment Commission, it's actually from Economic Development Commission. So, there's two different codes that we use in redevelopment. There's a Redevelopment Commission code, and then there's an Economic Development Commission code. We do have an Economic Development Commission code. It's been around since 1973, we just haven't used it in a long time. We most recently used it for the train station. That was an EDC bond that we went through, and we established a building. A building corporation with that as well, which allows us to do a little bit more flexible bonding and give different incentives, so we have all these tools at our disposal. What we've done with this project that you got notified on, and I'd like for you to act on it to support it, I hope that you support it but let me tell you what it is. When we did the housing study, we also did a retail commercial study, industrial study at the same time to correlate with the population growth that we think we're going to see here. What that study told us is that we don't have a lot of Class A retail space, we have demand for retail, and as we grow, retail will need to grow as well. At the same time, the Redevelopment Commission had been looking at roads and all kinds of infrastructure in the south part of town, as we call it the South Tiff. South Tiff connectivity improvement project. Mr. Werner has been involved in it. The goal of that was to implement the 421 corridor plan and basically create new roads that would then open up more land that we already have in the city, as Ms. Vachet was saying. The best land to use is land that you already have. It's already, to some extent, has capacity in front of it. It has pipes in front of it. It has everything there. We don't have to pay millions of dollars to run things there. So, what this project is, it kind of fell in our lap. At the same time, a developer that I had been working with for a while, trying to figure out what kind of project he wanted to do here in Michigan City, he came to me and said, I've bought this piece of land, I would like to build some new Class A retail. This project will basically take the South Tiff Improvement Corridor, or the South Tiff connectivity improvement project, and implement it. Basically, they're going to be building a brand new road, they're going to expand Larkspur Lane, and they're going to go all the way to Cleveland, and then they're going to bring the road that is Meijer, connect to that behind the AMC theater. That's basically the 30 acres of land that they're purchasing right there, behind the AMC Theater, in between Lowe's, Menards, and Cleveland Avenue. They're going to be running a new road through there. It will be built a full spec road. Mr. Werner's already looked at that. But what we had to do from the EDC standpoint we used a code that allowed the Redevelopment Commission to pledge a $2 million incentive. Then through the EDC, we were able to loan them in a form of a forgivable loan, to the developer, to do a public-private partnership with them, and then that incentive is used to build this road. The road will cost way more than $2 million, it will cost probably around $4 to $6 million. The road will become part of our public infrastructure. It will be dedicated as a full public road. Now, there's another piece to this. We're just at the beginning. This is just the incentive piece of this. They still have to come back for their entitlements, so you'll be seeing this project again. They will go to site review, which Ms. Dr. Edwards has already taken care of. In site review, we'll talk

about all the things they need to do to get their site in place. For their plat, they'll come through primary plat for you guys. That's where you guys will, uh, look at the subdivision. Mr. Werner will help lay out the road and make sure it meets all the specs. We'll come to you, and then we will build the road, hopefully construct the road, and then, uh, eventually it'll come back for dedication or bonding of anything left, and then you guys, they would be back before you to file for a final plat. There will be 12 new lots, 11 new buildings, they range between the size of 10,000 and 15,000 square feet, so they're not big box stores, they're smaller retail size, but they are the retail size that people are looking for right now. So that's the project in a nutshell of what's before you tonight for support.

President de'Medici asked Mr. York to explain what he means my support.

Mr. York states the code says is that we have you, and then if you choose to support said project, you can file a letter of support saying, yes, we think this is a good thing.

President de'Medici states that he is still not following, they do not have a report yet to be pondering over.

My York answered that tonight the board is just supporting the incentive of the project in general.

President de'Medici asks if this is something of an informal "yes, this looks good, we like this and are looking forward to what you bring us" he asks if that is in the realm of what Mr. York is asking.

Mr. York states that is correct, this is not a formal, "yes I'm going to support your plat." This is dealing with incentive only.

Mr. DePalma askes if there is an additional approval of the 2 million dollar incentive besides this commission.

Mr. York states that is also goes in front of the common council as well.

Mr. DePalma states that Council is voting on it but this commission is just giving their opinion on it.

My. York states yes he is correct.

Attorney Hale states that he wants to make it clear that the Commission is not approving anything, they are just legally required to notify the commission of the project. Attorney Hale states that they can indicate that the commission thinks it is a nice project and encourage them to move forward and can have a voice in what happens, but they are not approving the money for the project or the project itself.

Mr. Balling asks what the other three documents they have attached are for.

Mr. York answers that they are just the other bodies they were required to notify.

Mr. Balling asks if this suggests that they have reviewed it.

Mr. York answers yes.

Mr. Klinder states that 4-6 million dollars for a road seems excessive. He asks what is going to be done for the north end of Michigan city, he states that everything is being taken to the south end of the city.

Mr. York states that a great deal of time and money and been put into the north end of Michigan City. He states that as of right now everyone is seeing different investments going on all around town so it is not just focused on one part of the town, which is a good thing.

President de'Medici askes if we have retail in the location that Mr. York is describing are retailers in other parts of town going to feel a grudge that customers are being pulled to a different area of town.

Mr. York answers that there are going to be two different types of retail. Mr. York states that there are two different kind of retail, retail downtown is referred to as experiential retail, it means you go there for a reason, and you come back for a reason. The south side and downtown are just two different experiences being that the south side is where all of our grocery stores are along with our warehouses and factories.

President de'Medici asks Mr. York if he anticipates that this project might pick up some traffic from folks traveling from Chicago to the state of Michigan and we are a stopover location.

Mr. York states that he does believe that will happen. He states that he looked at our retail trade area and hour our retail trade area has changed over the last few years. We are drawing a lot of southwest Michigan people here now along with Valpo residents as well.

President de'Medici asked what the square footage of the buildings were again.

Mr. York answered 10,000-15,000 square feet. He states that some of those some of those will be lots for sale. If someone bought 2 lots, they might could do a bigger building, but you'll be seeing them. There'll be probably 10 to 15.

Mr. DePalma asked if it is important in this process that we certify it.

Mr. York answers no, it is simply a requirement they he notifies them, he simply just wanted the commission to be informed of what they were being notified about.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Scott Meland 200 Kenwood Place made a public comment.

COMMISSIONER COMMENTS

Mr. Werner made a comment to follow up on what Mr. Meland stated during public comments.

ADJOURNMENT

The chair entertained motion to adjourn.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner DePalma – seconded by Commissioner Balling.

The chair declared the meeting adjourned at approximately 6:41 p.m.

Bruce de'Medici, President

ATTEST:

Fred Klinder, Secretary