

The Thorntown Plan Commission met in a regular meeting on October 13, 2025, at 6:00 PM at the Thorntown Town Hall.

Members in attendance were as follows:

- President Don Gray – Citizen Member.
- Nancy Durkin – Citizen Member
- Erick Smith – Citizen Member.

Others in attendance: Marcellus Johnson, Planning Administrator.

President Gray calls the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

OPENING CEREMONIES

President Gray leads the Plan Commission in the Pledge of Allegiance.

DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

President Gray declares that there is not a quorum. The Commission may not take any actions that require a vote but may discuss.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The minutes could not be adopted due to lack of quorum.

AGENDA CONSIDERATIONS

There are none.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

There are none.

NEW BUSINESS

Item #1. Application PLAT-02-2024 – Secondary Plat for Westfall Place PUD Section 1

Subject:	Review of the Secondary Plat for phase 1 of Westfall Place PUD. This phase of the project is 22 acres and proposes 70 single-family residential lots.
Location:	Several parcels located southwest of the intersection of SR 47 and Oak Street and some south of SR 47.
Petitioner:	Arbor Homes, Inc. and Innovative Engineering & Consulting, Inc.
Property Owner(s):	Scott A. Schuler, Thorntown Development LLC, and Threlkeld Farms Inc

Mr. Johnson explains that the ordinance does not require the APC to vote on the plat or on the official determination of the bond amount. It is unclear what requires a vote, but the APC may vote on the bond amount or to accept the amount.

President Gray suggests that if a vote is necessary or desirable the APC may need to schedule a special meeting so as to not delay things more than necessary for Arbor Homes.

Mr. Smith expresses concern with the volatility of prices and worries that a 20% incidental may not be enough.

Mr. Johnson explains that the bond should be 120% of the total cost of the improvements, but the vast majority of the improvements have already been completed, so the full bond amount should be able to cover any reasonably expected price increase should the remaining work not be completed for some reason.

Mr. Smith asks if the amounts reported in the completed column are self-reported estimates.

Representing Arbor Homes is Brock Sears, Land Development Manager. Mr. Sears explains that his role is largely administrative, managing the contracts and coordination of the various permit approvals. He says that most of the work is complete with the last major item being completion of work on the lift station, which is anticipated to finish on October 20.

Mr. Sears presents 8 separate bonds for the following improvements in the following amounts:

Asphalt paths and common walks	\$202,233.60
Sanitary sewer facilities	\$1,552,090.80
Water facilities	\$962,498.40
Streets (base binder)	\$469,545.60
Streets (surface)	\$110,466.00
Curbs	\$110,361.60
Signs and Monuments	\$4,200.00
Dirt work	\$124,243.20

Mr. Sears explains that the amounts were based on the estimate the engineer provided to the APC and the invoices Arbor Homes received from the subcontractors responsible for the work. Work on the paths and sidewalks and the curbs was not included in the engineer's estimate. Mr. Sears also says that this list represents the bonds he typically orders for similar projects in other municipalities. All of the values above are 120% of the engineer's estimate or of the amount invoiced.

Mr. Smith asks why the estimate and the bonds don't include any electrical facilities.

Mr. Sears says that electric is not usually bonded, but he's not sure why that is the case. He assures the commissioners that electricity infrastructure is being installed and that Arbor Homes has been billed for that work, but because it isn't bonded those costs were not represented in the estimate.

Mr. Sears explains that his goal tonight is to get all of the information in front of the APC and figure out what needs to be done to get the plat all wrapped up. He also has questions about approving the design of the playground.

President Gray asks how many lots have been sold.

Mr. Sears says that they have just started selling and have sold maybe 3-4. The lack of a secondary plat makes giving potential buyers a schedule difficult.

Ms. Durkin asks if the Parks Board will need to review the playground submittal.

President Gray offers to ask his son-in-law, who is on the Parks Board. He asks Ms. Hickman when the next Parks Board meeting is. She replies that is November 3.

Mr. Sears says that he hasn't filed an application yet and wants to get the plat sorted first, but will be filing soon. He reiterates that he is hoping to have the plat signed tonight even if that means the APC holds onto the signed plat until everything else has cleared and it can be recorded.

Mr. Johnson explains that it is the TAC that approves the secondary plat and then the APC President and Secretary sign the plat to certify its approval before it can be recorded. He adds that the performance bonds must also be accepted before the plat can be certified and recommends against signing the plat before everything else has occurred.

Mr. Smith asks if everything goes as expected at the TAC meeting, can the plat be signed then.

Mr. Johnson says that the bonds must be accepted before the plat is recorded.

President Gray again suggests a special meeting the following Monday (October 20) at 6. Ms. Durkin and Mr. Smith both say they can make it.

The commissioners present agree to schedule a special meeting for October 20 at 6:00 pm to accept the bonds and certify the plat.

Mr. Sears asks what it is the APC wants to see submitted for the playground. He offers to submit cutsheets and brochures for the equipment.

Mr. Smith asks who is on the Parks Board. Ms. Durkin says that there are 3 members, but she doesn't know their names. President Gray mentions again that his son-in-law is one of them.

Mr. Sears asks where the TAC meeting will be held. Mr. Johnson and Ms. Durkin tell him it will be in the same place they are meeting now.

Mr. Sears thanks the APC for scheduling the special meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

There are none.

OTHER BUSINESS – APC DISCUSSION

Item #2 UDO Updates

President Gray asks if anyone has had a chance to look at the four chapters of the UDO Mr. Johnson had provided for their review. Ms. Durkin says that she was reading them the other day.

President Gray asks who the "Administrator" is. Mr. Johnson says that is him.

President Gray asks about the provision concerning executive committees. Mr. Johnson explains that this is a smaller subset of the APC that would be focused on a special project or planning topic of special concern that would be carried out to conduct research and formulate proposals that could then be shared with the rest of the APC at the public meetings.

President Gray asks about the text shown in red in the provided chapters. Mr. Johnson explains that red text indicates text that has been added, while red text that is struck through indicates text that was in the existing ordinance but is to be deleted.

Ms. Durkin points out that the draft proposed revising the minimum floor area per dwelling unit down to 900 sf from the current 1200 sf.

Mr. Smith asks where that number came from. Mr. Johnson explains that it is a pretty standard minimum that is well above any definition of a tiny home or typical sizing for accessory dwelling units so it also makes a clear distinction between these kinds of housing. President Gray adds that 900 sf is a 30' x 30' building, which is a good size for a single person or couple.

Mr. Smith expresses his opinion that what matters most to him is that the people developing property and living in Thorntown are good neighbors. He is less concerned with the size of the home and more concerned that the property is well-managed and well-maintained.

[Additional information: Floor area minimums originally emerged to prevent the construction, sale, and rental of small homes that would be overcrowded with people as was commonplace in the early 20th century where entire families rented a single bedroom in a tenement or house. Their purpose was originally more of a health concern as small, crowded spaces allow disease to spread more rapidly. However, as time progressed, floor area minimums became a way to regulate away certain housing types and styles with the goal of creating or preserving a particular character for a community. Smaller homes became associated with blight and decay, and larger homes became associated with growth and upward mobility. Because of these associations, many communities favor larger floor area minimums because it will result in housing that is thought to reflect well on the community.]

Ms. Durkin asks what the ordinance says about subdividing a large single-family home into apartments.

Mr. Johnson explains that this is controlled in two ways: one is by the development standards, and the other is by the allowed uses. Each zoning district includes standards such as minimum floor areas per dwelling unit and minimum lot size per dwelling unit that must be met for the property to be legal. Each zoning district also has a list of uses that are allowed in that district, and single-family is a separate use from two- to four-family, which is also separate from five- to nine-family, and so on. Greater densities require special use permits in certain zoning districts, so this also works to control house subdivisions of this kind.

Mr. Johnson provides the following update: Debbie Luzier has completed a draft of Chapter 3, but Mr. Johnson hasn't had a chance to review it yet. He will send Chapters 3 and 4 together for the APC's review and comments.

Item #3 Rezoning for Storage Unit

Ms. Durkin asks what the news is on this case.

Mr. Johnson explains the process: the application is first heard a public hearing before the APC, who will vote to provide a favorable, an unfavorable, or no recommendation to council. Then Town Council will vote on whether to approve the rezoning.

Mr. Smith asks for clarification on the options for recommendations, particularly what a vote of “no recommendation” means.

Mr. Johnson explains: A favorable recommendation means that the APC believes that the proposal meets the intent of the Comprehensive Plan and the standards put forth in the ordinance and that the commission supports the proposal and thinks council should approve it. No recommendation votes are rare and occur only in select circumstances. *[Additional Information: Thorntown’s current Code of Ordinances does not mention a vote of “no recommendation”; it only states that the APC may vote to recommend the approval (favorable recommendation) or denial (unfavorable recommendation) of the proposed rezoning or amendment to the ordinance. The Indiana Code, does allow for a vote of “no recommendation” and should supersede the Thorntown ordinances in this regard. I couldn’t find how the Indiana Code defines this option, but other towns say this should only occur when the proposal contains information that the plan commission cannot evaluate.]*

Mr. Smith says his first response to the idea was “does the town really need a storage facility right in the middle of town?” but after driving by the site several times from several directions, he felt that this spot was already kind of an “institutional corner.” He also questions how many people would want to build a house next to a cemetery.

Ms. Durkin adds that there’s also the lift station there and asks who would want to build their house with the lift station in front of it.

Mr. Smith points out that rezoning opens the property up to future commercial or office redevelopment. He makes the point that five or ten years from now it could be an office or it could become a gas station, and he asks whether this uncertainty is something the APC and/or Town Council would be okay with.

Ms. Durkin says that one thing about the proposal that concerned her was the intention to build the storage units right up to the property line. She favors some kind of setback or buffer.

Item #3 BZA Appointments

President Gray says that at last week’s council meeting, they tabled nominations for the BZA. The eligibility requirements state that the members of the BZA must be citizen members and cannot hold any appointed, elected, or hired positions with the Town besides being on the APC. These requirements disqualify Mr. Smith, who serves on the Town’s Utilities Board. The town council will have to choose between President Gray and Vice President Doctor.

President Gray also mentions that one of the Town Council members has resigned from the council because she is moving out of town.

Item #4 Tiny Home Question

Mr. Smith asks if anyone has heard anything from Mr. Bechtold and Mrs. Campbell about the tiny home.

Mr. Johnson says that he hasn’t reached out to them yet about next steps because the BZA hasn’t been fully organized yet. When the membership is appointed, then he will reach out to them about applying for a variance.

Item #5 Building Inspector

Mr. Smith says it sounds like the plan is to contract out building inspections instead of hiring someone to fill the position. President Gray agrees that that seems to be the plan.

President Gray wonders if a contract building inspector would be allowed to serve on the APC because he would a part time employee. Mr. Smith and Ms. Durkin think that he would not able to.

Mr. Smith adds that the person being considered was once the building inspector in Lebanon.

Item #6 Annexations

Mr. Smith asks if there are any updates on Mr. Kelly's desire to annex his property into the Town. Mr. Johnson says that he has not submitted anything.

President Gray states that he's heard of several people out there interested in annexation.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There are none.

ADJOURNMENT

President Gray declares the meeting adjourned at 6:50 PM.

Donald Gray

President

Marcellus Johnson

Secretary