

The Thorntown Plan Commission met in a regular meeting on November 10, 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
- Frank Clark – Town Employee
- Dalton Humphreys – Town Employee
- VP Gene Doctor – Citizen Member

Others in attendance: Marcellus Johnson, Planning Administrator. Tim and Shawna Williams.

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 a quorum.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Motion by Mr. Smith, second by Ms. Durkin, to adopt the minutes from the special meeting on October 20, 2025

AYES: Don Gray, Erick Smith, Nancy Durkin, Gene Doctor, Frank Clark. NAYS: Zero. ABSTAIN: Zero.
Motion carries 5, 0, 0.

AGENDA CONSIDERATIONS

There are none.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

There are none.

NEW BUSINESS

Item #1 2026 Meeting and Filing Deadline Calendar

Mr. Humphreys arrives about 2 minutes after the start of the meeting.

President Gray describes the way the calendar is structured. Meetings will remain the second Monday of the month.

Motion by Mr. Smith, second by Ms. Durkin, to adopt the 2026 Calendar of Public Meeting Dates and Filing Deadlines.

AYES: Don Gray, Erick Smith, Nancy Durkin, Gene Doctor, Frank Clark, Dalton Humphreys. **NAYS:** Zero. **ABSTAIN:** Zero. Motion carries 6, 0, 0.

Item #2. Public Hearing: Application REZ-01-2025 – Self-Storage Facility

Subject:	Public hearing concerning an application to rezone the property at 416 N Pearl St from Residential to Business to allow the development of a self-storage facility.
Location:	416 N Pearl St
Petitioner:	Tim and Shawna Williams
Property Owner(s):	Tim and Shawna Williams

President Gray introduces the application and applicants. Mr. Johnson invites the applicants to describe their proposal.

Mrs. Williams describes the proposed layout and the plans for development while the site plans submitted with the application are displayed on the screen. A full description of the proposal can be found in the staff report that was published ahead of this hearing.

VP Doctor asks what they envision for the outdoor storage down the hill in the north “panhandle” section of the property.

Mr. Williams says that will most likely just be storage for his stuff, trailers, and things like that.

VP Doctor asks to clarify that it will not be storage for anything that is going to leak oil or other harmful chemicals into the soil. Mr. and Mrs. Williams confirm that they will not allow leakage of harmful chemicals from anything stored outside.

President Gray asks if the outdoor storage area is going to be out in the open or covered up in anyway.

Mrs. Williams says that it would be all open air, no roof. She adds that they have done a lot of work to clean out that area, including removing several wrecked cars and other improperly discarded items.

President Gray brings up efforts to clean up the brush on the other side of the property line in the Old Cemetery, which is owned by the township government. Mr. Williams agrees that there is a lot of clean up work to do, and President Gray suggests that the Williamses see if they can coordinate their efforts with [Sugar Creek Township Trustee] Lynn [Davis] to clear dead and fallen trees and brush along their shared property line.

VP Doctor asks if there are any utilities on the property. Mr. Williams says that he has not requested locates for any underground utilities. He reports that there is a water meter, and a sewer tap somewhere on the property. Electric is in the street.

President Gray asks if there is a way to locate the sewer tap.

Mr. Humphreys says they would start from the main line and track the branching pipe. President Gray asks if the tap would be metal and wonders if a metal detector could be used.

Mr. Williams says that they are not too concerned about utilities beyond electric right now, but mentions that they may add an office later, which may require water and sewer service for a restroom.

President Gray calls attention to the Town-owned property at the front of the subject property and identifies it as the site of a lift station. Mr. Humphreys asks if they have the lift station staked off.

Mr. Williams says that they have and notes that the box for the lift station is very close to the property line, so they will be sure to make sure there is enough clearance on their side of the property line that the box can still be accessed by Town staff.

Mr. Johnson then presents the staff report, and draws out four main points of contention: (1) the need for a bufferyard where the property abuts residential uses, (2) the widths of the drive aisles, (3) the use of gravel as a ground cover, particularly under the storage units, and (4) lighting and cameras.

Mr. Williams says they were thinking of the units themselves like a fence and wondered what the difference would be. President Gray asks how tall the units are, and Mr. Williams says he thinks they are about 8' tall. Mr. Johnson explains that the bufferyard would be to provide screening from the backs of the units themselves as neighbors may object to their appearance so close to their homes.

President Gray asks if there are any plans to construct a security fence, and Mr. Williams says there is no plan to do that.

Mr. Johnson explains that the concern about the drive aisle width is based on research conducted of storage facility layout best practices, which often cited 25'-wide parallel drives and 30'-wide cross aisles.

Mr. Williams says that he went out and measured the road outside and found it to be 18' wide, so he figured 24' would be a reasonable expanded width. President Gray agrees that 24' is wide enough to fit two standard box trucks side by side.

Mr. Smith emphasizes that the code requires all structures that are intended to be permanent to be fixed or anchored to the ground so that they do not move. There is some discussion of anchoring, and Mr. Williams asks if they could be considered temporary installations. Mr. Smith says they cannot. [Note for explanation: temporary structures are only permitted for a limited time, usually not longer than 6 months but often as short as 30 to 60 days during a single 12-month period, and cannot be renewed and/or extended indefinitely. It would be impossible to run a business long term where the structure was considered temporary unless that business was seasonal and was disassembled and taken off-site at the expiration of its temporary use permit.]

Mr. Smith agrees that the lighting is a concern both in terms of lighting for visibility and security purposes and lighting for any signage installed on the property. He says that the lights should use cutoffs and be angled to cast as little light up into the sky or towards adjacent properties as possible.

Mr. Williams says that he does not intend on using lights that are any brighter than the street lights on N Pearl Street, and he further suspects that they will not need much more lighting on the property as it is already fairly well-lit.

Mr. Smith asks if the units come painted and if they are all going to be the same color.

Mr. Williams says that they do come painted, but they likely won't all be the same color and that he will repaint them. He also mentioned that he has considered painting a mural on the side facing the street or adjacent properties. President Gray likes the idea and says that there are students at the school that would probably be interested in helping out with a project like that.

Mr. Smith asks how staff's recommendation of a 20' buffer would impact the proposed layout. Mr. Johnson explains that it would eliminate an area almost equivalent to one of the parallel drive aisles and thus likely result in the elimination of 1-2 proposed rows of storage units.

President Gray says that he would rather see the backs of units than a drive aisle and the fronts of units where people are loading/unloading, making noise, arguing, etc. Mr. Smith says that he thinks a berm would be ideal.

Mr. Williams says that they could still make a 10-foot bufferyard work as it would cost them fewer units.

President Gray also suggests that they could explore one-way circulation for the outside ring of drive aisles, which would save on the space required for them and minimize the loss due to the 20-foot bufferyard.

Mr. Smith asks where 20 feet comes from. Mr. Johnson explains that it is a common bufferyard width for separating commercial and residential uses and is the bufferyard called for by the draft UDO. He adds that self-storage is typically considered a light industrial use and that under the draft UDO, it would only be allowed in that zoning district, which requires a 50-foot buffer, so this is a deal already. The point of the bufferyard is to create physical separation through distance while also providing space to construct various kinds of screening including a fence or wall, rows of vegetation, and/or a berm.

Mr. Johnson reads staff's findings and recommendation, which are reproduced from the report below:

Staff recommends **approval** (sending a favorable recommendation to the Town Council) of application REZ-01-2025 because:

1. The proposed business zoning district meets the community vision goal of attracting economic activity to Thorntown and using existing properties (infill) for it;
2. The proposed business zoning district meets the community vision goal of promoting self-sufficiency by providing for the development of a business offering services useful to and desired by Town residents;
3. With some modifications, the proposed business use is compatible with the surrounding uses, current conditions, and overall character of existing development in its immediate vicinity;
4. The proposed business zoning district is the preferred designation of the property due to its proximity to a municipal utility and the old cemetery;
5. Without evidence of the contrary, it is assumed that the proposed amendment will have no adverse effect on the value of properties throughout the jurisdiction;

6. The proposed business zoning district reflects responsible standards for development and growth in utilization of undeveloped property for infill.

Staff recommends that approval come with the following conditions/commitments:

1. Parallel drive aisles shall be at least 25' wide and cross drive aisles shall be at least 30' wide.
2. Storage units shall be placed on concrete pads.
3. A screened bufferyard at least 20' wide meeting standards provided by the Planning Administrator shall be provided along all property boundaries abutting residential uses, including when such uses are separated from the subject property by a road or other ROW.

The Commissioners continue to discuss staff's recommended conditions:

There is little desire to take up the recommendation about the drive aisles.

President Gray points to the ceiling tiles as a way of estimating the bufferyard width as a standard tile ACT is 2'x4'. Mr. Williams wonders if he got Nick's [Nick Schiery of 428 N Pearl St] approval if the bufferyard was needed at all. President Gray says that with a 10'-wide buffer, he would think you'd almost have to provide a berm. Mr. Williams says that the berm would introduce issues with maintaining the grass and drainage.

Mr. Smith asks if the companies selling these storage units also sell anchors or anchoring systems.

Mr. Williams says there are all sorts of bracketing and rod systems, and they can be bolted or welded together. He says that the manufacturers recommend compacted gravel because it still allows water to drain from underneath the units.

Mrs. Williams asks how wide would a drive aisle need to be if it's one way. Mr. Johnson says it would just be half of whatever the 2-way requirement is. There is discussion about how safe and easy it might be going around the corners. Mr. Humphreys asks about putting in bollards at the corners. Mr. Williams says that he thinks the steel storage units will hold up to hits better than a concrete bollard would.

Mr. Smith points out that state law requires that plans for Class 1 structures be submitted to the state for approval before construction.

Mr. Johnson reminds the commissioners that the purpose of these conditions is to provide development standards against which the building inspector will review the site plans submitted when a building permit is applied for. Without conditions, there are no development standards and thus no ability to deny a building permit for a project that meets all other local, county, or state standards. While it is good to consider what comes next and what challenges the applicants may face in the process of actually developing the property, this hearing is only about rezoning the property and is thus the first step in the process.

Motion by Mr. Smith, second by VP Doctor, to forward a favorable recommendation to the Town Council for the rezoning of the property with the following conditions:

1. The storage units (“structures”) shall be permanently affixed to the ground with an approved anchoring system.
2. There shall be a screened bufferyard of 10 feet where the property is adjacent to a property with a residential use.
3. The structures shall be painted in a unified color scheme.
4. All outdoor lighting shall be designed to reduce light pollution and include shields or cut-off luminaires.

AYES: Don Gray, Erick Smith, Gene Doctor, Dalton Humphreys, Frank Clark, Nancy Durkin. NAYS: Zero. ABSTAIN: Zero. Motion carries 6, 0, 0.

Mr. Johnson says that the staff report will be revised to reflect tonight’s proceedings and then Town Council will hear this case at their meeting on December 1, 2025.

OLD BUSINESS

There are none.

OTHER BUSINESS

Item #3. Boone County APC

President Gray says that a gentleman from the Boone County Area Plan Commission [note that Thorntown Advisory Plan Commission uses the same acronym: APC] came to speak at the last Town Council meeting, and to invite Thorntown to join the APC.

Mr. Johnson offers [interim Boone County APC Executive Director] Debbie Luzier as a resource for answering any questions from the commissioners or the council members about what joining the APC would mean for planning processes in Thorntown. He explains that joining the Boone County APC would not totally eliminate Thorntown’s independence on planning matters. The Town would still maintain its own ordinances, Town Council would retain final decision making power in relevant planning matters (such as rezonings), and there are ways for the Town to express its thoughts and concerns about planning activities under the County APC’s jurisdiction that are occurring within town limits.

Mr. Humphreys says that the man had mentioned that there could still be a Thorntown APC, but that their decisions would not be final, and would serve as advice to the Thorntown representative on the County APC.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jon Rikken was appointed the new council member to replace Sara Fairfield.

Plan Commission is seeking one more citizen member. If you are interested, talk to Town Council President Grumpy Williams.

ADJOURNMENT

President Gray adjourns the meeting at 7:30 PM.

Donald Gray

President

Marcellus Johnson

Secretary