PLAN MINUTES
ELKHART COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON THE 12TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026 AT 9:30 A.M. IN THE MEETING ROOM OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE BUILDING
4230 ELKHART RD., GOSHEN, INDIANA

1. The regular meeting of the Elkhart County Plan Commission was called to order by the Chairman, Steve Warner. The following staff members were present: Mae Kratzer, Plan Director; Jason Auvil, Planning Manager; Danny Dean, Planner; Danielle Richards, Planner; Laura Gilbert, Administrative Coordinator; and Don Shuler, Attorney for the Board.

Roll Call.

Present: Philip Barker, Steven Edwards, Steve Warner, Lori Snyder, Steve Clark, Brad Rogers, Roger Miller, Angie Brenneman.

Absent: Brian Dickerson.

2. A motion was made and seconded *(Edwards/Barker)* that the minutes of the last regular meeting of the Elkhart County Plan Commission, held on the 8th day of January 2026, be approved as submitted. The motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

3. A motion was made and seconded *(Miller/Edwards)* that the Elkhart County Development Ordinance be accepted as evidence for today's hearings. The motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

4. The application for a Development Ordinance (Section 158.04) -. Text Amendment: Addition of Bristol Development Overlay District. The proposed text amendment would establish special development standards within three (3) overlay districts within Bristol - Bristol Downtown Corridor District, Bristol Transitional Corridor District, and Bristol South Division Corridor District. The amendment includes regulations addressing permitted and prohibited uses, including restrictions on agricultural uses, tattoo parlors, and smoke shops in certain districts; building placement and form standards; accessory uses and structures; parking standards; landscaping and buffering standards; lighting standards; and sign regulations for the Town of Bristol on property located with in the incorporated Town of Bristol limits, was presented at this time.

Mae Hope, Planning presented the Town of Bristol Development Ordinance Amendment. She noted that the Town of Bristol will be the first Town to take advantage since the overlay was put in place back in 2023. She explained that this will be for a down town area.

Angela Smith, Jones Petrie Rafinski, 325 S. Lafayette Blvd., South Bend, was present representing the petitioner. She explained to the board that her career background has been with municipal planning in St. Joseph County. She further stated she has worked on other town ordinances such as: North Liberty, Lakeville, Osceola, and the City of South Bend. She stated when she joined the JPR team she was told that the Town of Bristol had been wanting to do something specific with the downtown area. She added she has been working with Bristol and the Town Manager for 7 months, going over their concerns and how to codify something for the town specifically. Mrs. Smith clarified the proposed amendment would only apply to new development. She further stated anything that is already existing is grandfathered in per zoning standards. She presented a slide show that would showed standards specifically for the core downtown which would include reduced setbacks. She

explained that the proposed buildings setbacks are right at the property line. She stated this would allow new buildings to be at the property line and not thirty feet from the property line which would be uncharacteristic of their historic downtown. She mentioned the State Road 15 corridor has new industrial buildings coming to the area, and she stressed if there are not a set of standards for a small town it tends to lead to development that's not conducive to a nice corridor to the community. She indicated on the map what areas this standard will apply to. She mentioned they held a couple of public meetings, one which was open to the general public and the other where local business owners along the State Road 15 corridor were invited. She mentioned the owner of Thor expressed to them how this may impact future development. She explained their main goal is moving building towards the street with enough room to have a row of parking in the front of the building with additional screening. She went on to say with having some maximum setbacks encourages parking behind the building to ensure screening for outdoor storage. She mentioned the public's concerns have been that there has not been proper screening. She expressed these standards are not any different from most other communities. She stated they want to keep a softened view entering the community. She also stated another standard is the elimination of minimum parking standards in the downtown districts that has become a trend in smaller communities, so businesses can utilize this area without having to meet a 30 parking space minimum requirement. She stressed that standard to the downtown core. She mentioned not allowing A-1 zoning in the future that Bristol does not want to annex a large agricultural area that isn't intended for manufacturing. She went on to say having chickens downtown has also been an issue. She stated there will be dark sky lighting requirements that will benefit neighboring landowners. Mr. Rogers asked if there were any remonstrators at these meetings. Mr. Clark asked what was the biggest concern that the businesses gave them. Mrs. Smith responded, they did not express any concerns, and businesses were excited about the parking elimination. Mr. Rogers asked if a standard billboard is not allowed in the Town. Mrs. Smith stated Bristol has its own sign ordinance. Mrs. Smith stated there would be no signs allowed over 150 sq.ft. Mr. Rogers asked about existing billboard signs. Mrs. Smith stated they would be grandfathered in. Mr. Miller asked if a bike path would be addressed in the overlay. Mrs. Smith stated no there is nothing in the ordinance in regard to transportation, as it only applies to the non-right-of-way portions of property. Mrs. Brenneman asked if anyone representing agriculture in remonstrance was present at the meetings. Mrs. Smith stated no one was present in remonstrance at the meeting. Mrs. Snyder noted new standards along SR 15 will be huge for the future. Mrs. Smith mentioned they were hearing complaints about, what the entrance of the Town looks like. Mr. Clark asked if the Town wanted to loosen County wide standards or only go more restrictive. Mrs. Smith stated it goes both ways. She mentioned setbacks and parking is a loosening. Ms. Hope explained the density in Town makes less restrictive standards appropriate from county standards.

Mike Yoder, Town Manager of Bristol, 303 Vistula St., Bristol, was present. He expressed their has been conflict in regard to past billboard signs. He stated to this day one is still held up in legalities. He said they focused a lot on standards for the Town entrance at SR 15 since new businesses are coming in to the area. Mr. Clark asked what the new businesses thought about the new ordinance. Mr. Yoder stated Cross Trailers is the newest business, and they already have plans to meet the standards.

There were no remonstrators present.

A motion was made and seconded *(Miller/Rogers)* that the public hearing be closed, and the

motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

Mr. Clark stated he always gets nervous when property rights are limited. He went on to say that he also agrees with local control and has no issues with this.

The Board examined said request, and after due consideration and deliberation:
Motion: Action: Approve, **Moved by** Steve Clark, **Seconded by** Lori Snyder that the Advisory Plan Commission recommend to the Board of County Commissioners and Town Council of Bristol that this request for an Elkhart County Development Ordinance Amendment for the Town of Bristol Overlay be approved.
Vote: motion carried by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8)
Yes: Philip Barker, Steven Edwards, Steve Warner, Lori Snyder, Steve Clark, Brad Rogers, Roger Miller, Angie Brenneman.

5. ***Board of County Commissioners Approvals Following Plan Commission Recommendations***

Jason Auvil reported on the January 20, 2026 County Commissioners Meeting approvals. He added at the January 15, 2026 Town of Bristol Meeting the development known as ***BRISTOL COMMONS DPUD R-3*** was denied. Lori Snyder asked for further details concerning the denial at the Bristol Town Council. Mr. Auvil stated his belief was the Bristol Town Council thought the density of this project was too much for this area. Mrs. Snyder stated it did follow all the County parameters. Mr. Auvil stated that was correct. He expanded the density with Town utilities have been supported. He went on to say the Town Council took surrounding neighbors in opposition to this project into consideration. Mrs. Snyder asked if they were considering reducing the amount of units. Mr. Auvil stated he did not believe so. Mr. Miller asked if they had scaled back from their original number of units. Mr. Auvil stated no; they had offered more screening and buffering.

6. Mae Hope presented the South Benton TIF Expansion.
She explained this is to add the NIPSCO project that was approved earlier this year into the TIF to capture the tax dollars.

The Board examined said request, and after due consideration and deliberation:
Motion: Action: Approve, **Moved by** Steve Clark, **Seconded by** Brad Rogers that the South Benton TIF expansion be approved, and the motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

7. Mae Hope presented the appointment of Jim Kolbus as Hearing Officer Alternate.

The Board examined said request, and after due consideration and deliberation:
Motion: Action: Approve, **Moved by** Roger Miller, **Seconded by** Steve Miller that Jim Kolbus be appointed as Hearing officer Alternate be approved, and the motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

8. A motion was made and seconded *(Miller/Warner)* that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was carried with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:57 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Amber Weiss, Recording Secretary

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Steve Warner, Chairman