

PLAN MINUTES
ELKHART COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
HELD ON THE 9TH DAY OF JULY 2026 AT 2:00 P.M. ST. MARK'S CHURCH,
502 N. MAIN ST., GOSHEN, INDIANA 46528

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 Jackson Beck, Attorney for the Board.

Roll Call:

Present: Phil Barker, Steve Edwards, Steve Warner, Lori Snyder, Steve Clark, Brad Rogers. Brian Dickerson, Roger Miller.

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

3. The application for a zone map change from A-1 & M-1 to DPUD M-1 and for primary approval of 2 lot minor subdivision to be known as BRISTOL INNOVATION PARK DPUD, for Ronald L. & Jane M. Kauffman Trustees Life Estate & Barbara Christine Trustee of the Barbara Christine Wilhelm Lifetime Family Trust represented by Jones Petrie Rafinski, on the several properties located on the north & south sides of CR 23 between S. Division St. (SR 15) & CR 19, north of CR 14, in Washington Township, zoned A-1 & M-1, was presented at this time.

Jason Auvil presented the Staff Report/Staff Analysis, which is attached for review as *Case #DPUD-0340-2026*.

Ken Jones, Jones Petrie Rafinski, 325 W. Lafayette, South Bend was present representing the petitioner.

Angela Smith, Jones Petrie Rafinski, 325 W. Lafayette, South Bend, was present representing the petitioner. Mrs. Smith presented a power point for the Bristol Innovation Park DPUD petition. She explained the adjacent property owners were notified via letter about this development and they held 4 different meetings with a question/answer portion. She stated Jones Petrie Rafinski launched a website the day of the filing to keep everyone up to date concerning this project with the ability for the public to ask questions, www.bristolinnovationpark.com. She stated Jones Petrie Rafinski was hired by the landowner, not the Town of Bristol for this development. She went on to say the design concept was designed with the residences concerns as their number one priority. She mentioned that a data center still can be built on the 400 acres that is already zoned M-1, but rezoning the rest of the parcels to DPUD M-1 will allow for better buffering/protection for the adjacent property owners.

Ken Jones came back on to explain the site plan in detail along with the impacts that will effect this area. He explained in depth regarding water ways and how they are all intertwined with this development.

Angela came back on to restate this development was designed to think about the neighbors first and development second. She explained in detail how the buffering will look in this development. She went on to talk about landscaping and berm that would be used, along with berms and their locations and appearance. She addressed the sound concerns with a study that was

done in St. Joseph County, along with the different decibel levels and their impacts. She went on to talk about the lighting that will be used on this development. She stated that Bristol just adopted a dark sky standard, which requires all light be shielded and the light will be casted down.

Ken Jones came back to discuss a “community friendly” plan. He explained to the Board that with the proposed standards the adjacent property owners would be protected. Mr. Jones explained a hydrogeological study, wetlands, storm water management, traffic impact study, and utility analysis are required and very specific to this development. He stated construction of the buffering will start at the same time as the start of construction. He noted any property owners impacted with private wells will be a part of the hydrogeological study.

Following is a list of those opposed to the petition who own property within 300 ft. of the subject property.

Andrew Archer & Kristin Archer, 55082 CR 19, Bristol.

Ryan Elliott, 54868 Leona Ct. Bristol.

Sherri Otto, 18686 CR 23, Bristol.

Lester Otto, 18686 CR 23, Bristol.

Ernie Yoder, 54873 CR 23, Bristol.

John Campbell, 18565 CR 14, Bristol.

Rikki Kain, 4000 E. Bristol St., Suite 3, Elkhart. He submitted [*Remonstrator Exhibit #1*].

Erica Simeri, 56099 CR 21, Bristol.

Timothy Stanley, 55585 Willowbend Blvd., Bristol.

The main concerns of the property owners closest to this development were environmental impacts with the main concerns regarding the aquifers and watersheds. They asked how this development would be beneficial to the community. Property owners expressed their distaste with having a data center adjacent to their property and asked what it would do to their property values. They also expressed the sound pollution that it would create and how that would effect their daily lives and overall health. In closing the property owners asked the Plan Commission to make a denial recommendation to the Bristol’s Town Council, citing concerns regarding data center impacts.

Jason Auvil submitted emails staff received in remonstrance prior to the hearing and a letter from Jeff Beachy, Bristol Town Council President in favor of the request. [*Staff Exhibit #1 and Staff Exhibit #2*].

Following is a list of those who spoke in opposition to the request who do not own property within 300 ft. of the subject property.

Thomas J. Wagler, 56271 CR 23, Bristol.

Pat Denlinger, 54203 Stone Way, Elkhart.

Kristen Vance, 52846 CR 7, Elkhart.

Tom Boomersshine, 16139 CR 20, Goshen.

Irian Hornblower, 10 Shore Manor Dr., Bristol.

Nic Wyse, 13551 CR 12, Middlebury.

Zach Grass, 55480 CR 19, Bristol.

Derek Sammut, 52779 Jackie Ln., Elkhart.

Anna Dorr, 10095 CR 16, Middlebury.

Sawyer Young, 20512 Matthew Dr., New Paris.

Ursula Nolte, 17505 CR 2, Bristol.

Jesse Wotrins, 25686 Lake Dr.

Linda Clark, 19620 CR 16, Bristol. [*Remonstrator Exhibit #2*].

Patrick Blakesley, 19620 CR 16, Bristol.

Christine Montano, 56760 CR 31, Goshen.

Michelle Walter, 1209 White Oak Dr., Goshen.

Rich Smucker, 215 W. Madison St. Goshen.

Steve Krallman, 17716 CR 112, Bristol.

Richard Streebel, 57453 Walden Ct., Goshen.

Steve Carlson, 3316 Bridgetown Rd., Bristol.

Elizabeth Hall, 54800 CR 27, Bristol.

Mikel Ropp, 207 Charles St., Bristol.

Susan Loomis, 541130 Eastview Dr., Bristol.

Greg Love, Bristol.

Linda Clark, 19620 CR 16, Bristol.

Quinn Grass, 55561 SR 15, Bristol.

Joshua Woods, 60773 SR 15, Goshen.

Bob Barnes, 205 Witmer Ave., Elkhart.

Alexandrea Taylor, 708 E. Jefferson, Goshen.

Grace Bickel, 96 Greenway Dr., Goshen.

Skylar Wotring, 25887 Lake Dr.

Kelly Smith, Middlebury.

Margaret Easton, Elkhart.

Michelle Milne, 215 W. Madison St., Goshen.

RJ Butler, 55931 Dana Dr., Bristol.

David Lung, 3311 Bridgetown Rd. Bristol.

Susan Loomis, 54130 Eastview Dr., Bristol.

Haddi Zentz, 1309 Fulton St., Elkhart.

Merle Baker, 245 The Willows, Goshen.

Audrey Nesbitt, 56100 Dana Dr., Bristol.

River Norton, 1410 Pembroke Cr., Goshen.

Monica Swartzentruber, P.O. Box 1110, Middlebury.

Dwight Fish, 1627 Elizabeth St., Goshen.

John Brewer, 1017 W. Hubbard Ave., Elkhart.

Cindy Hijacek, Goshen.

Pam Keiser, Middlebury.

Lynn Kauffman, Goshen.

Emily Yaw, 56921 Summit Park Dr., Elkhart.

Jean Borglum, 57453 Walden Ct., Goshen.

Nancy Hannah, 23577 Bel Ridge Dr., Elkhart.

John Stoltzfus, 706 S. 6th St., Goshen.

Jeanne Silver, 51144 CR 29, Bristol.

The main concerns of these property owners were data centers in general. They mentioned the negative impacts on nature and farmland for food production. They stated their concerns on the effects of drinkable water and the future contamination that a data center could have on the aquifers, water sheds, and the depletion of the water tables. They mentioned the overall quality of life and the

negative effects on the health of the residences of Elkhart County would be greatly impacted by a data center. They expressed concerns about property values going down in the Town of Bristol. Many people noted that no one has spoken of the benefits a data center would have on the community.

A motion was made and seconded (*Dickerson/Clark*) to close the public-comment portion of the hearing. The motion was carried with a unanimous vote. The applicant was then allowed rebuttal and closing comments.

Angela Smith came back up to speak in response to the remonstrators' concerns and closing statement. She discussed her experience as a City Planner and that experience has made her very knowledgeable about how the procedures work within the DPUD process. She stressed that with her years of experience, as well as the total experience of the team at JPR, their stringent conditions imposed are an example of them knowing what the public needs to ensure they do not feel or see an impact of any development on this site. She explained that all the work that has gone into this petition was done thoroughly and with extra care and thought put into the standards that were added to the conditions proposed for the end user to have to follow. She continued to say that the noise level of a data center, with their added buffering and setbacks, will not create decibel levels which will cause harm to the neighbors. She emphasized that she has extensive understanding of the State codes and laws regarding Planning procedure, public process, and that no violations occurred during any of the planning of the petition or during the application stages.

Ken Jones came back up to speak. He expressed his gratitude for the public coming out and stating their concerns and thanked them for being a part of this process. He stressed that without knowing the concerns, regardless of how the board votes, they, as developers, cannot fully understand the needs of the public for future developments. He went on to discuss the testing that is imposed in the conditions for end users who purchase the property including hydrotesting, soil testing, traffic studies, and the impact to utilities. He explained that the aquifers will not be depleted and that further studies can show how much water a data center uses compared to other entities. He stressed that no matter what kind of industry is proposed to be built, traffic impact studies will be needed prior to any further petitions or building permits to ensure that they have adequate infrastructure and ingress and egress that will be approved by the Elkhart County Highway Department. He continued to go into detail about how the end user would need to do a SWPPP for Stormwater and show adequate retention areas for the size of building and paved areas.

Following the applicant's rebuttal, a motion was made and seconded (*Dickerson/Clark*) that the public hearing be closed, and the motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

Brad Rogers stated he has concerns with this DPUD in the detail that is missing, and it is more of a GPUD instead of a DPUD. He stated he has concerns that the Tech Committee was not able to sign off of this petition for road impacts and storm water. He went on to say he has concerns about the noise limits. He explained there is an existing factory in Elkhart that is too loud, and it is unenforced in the county, because the source is in Elkhart City, not the County. He mentioned the generators for this location will be a problem. He explained he was irritated that any new building

will be an amendment to the existing DPUD and will have to go through this process all over again. He stated he is not in favor of this petition.

Roger Miller stated he has no issues moving this project forward as M-1. However he explained it is clear to him that it will be a data center if the zone is changed. He expressed there is not enough data showing what could happen to data centers in the next 5-6 years. He also stated his concerns about ground water pollution. He expressed if something happens, like making too much noise or using too much water, once the data center starts there is no shutting it off. He went on to say he is not in favor of a data center. He stated this petition should have been presented as a GPUD, not a DPUD.

Steve Clark stated the largest benefit of this project would be the property tax revenue. He went on to say it would lower property taxes. He stated the 60 decibels is compared to being next to a road, however the difference is a data center would be a constant noise, it will never stop. Mr. Clark is not in favor of this project.

Lori Snyder questioned if this is the right time to bring up a moratorium for data centers. She expressed she has no issues with M-1 and this decision is not being made lightly. She stated she is not in favor of a data center.

Steve Edwards mentioned there is a concern with the unknown. He stated he is not in favor of this petition.

Phil Barker stated he had a problem from the beginning with this project was being called a DPUD because it did not meet the requirements for it. He stated his concerns are for the wetlands. He mentioned JPR did an excellent job with a water management system. Mr. Barker expressed he will vote against this petition.

Brian Dickerson thanked the public for coming out. He reminded them there is already a parcel that has been rezoned as M-1 and is large enough for data center use. He stated he is hopeful that the property will be developed in some way with the standards that JPR has provided today. He mentioned concerns the generators will create a lot of noise.

Steve Warner commended JPR on the fine job they did in presenting the facts on key points, NIPSCO, water use-the lack there of, the noise issues, and the buffering. He mentioned the Plan Commission has been educated on data centers, however that is not specifically what is going to happen on this site. He stated there is an increased need for data centers with AI and autonomous driving, along with many other things. He reminded the crowd that the Boards job is only to make a recommendation to the Bristol Town Council.

The Board examined said request, and after due consideration and deliberation:

Motion: Action: Deny, **Moved by** Steve Clark, **Seconded by** Brad Rogers that the Advisory Plan Commission recommend to the Town Council of the Town of Bristol, Indiana that this request for a zone map change from A-1 & M-1 to DPUD M-1 and for primary approval of 2 lot minor subdivision to be known as BRISTOL INNOVATION PARK DPUD be denied based on the findings and conclusions of the Board.

Vote: Motion carried by roll call vote (**summary:** Yes = 6, No = 2)

Yes: Phil Barker, Steven Edwards, Lori Snyder, Steve Clark, Brad Rogers, Roger Miller.

No: Steve Warner, Brian Dickerson.

Findings: The Commission recommended that the Bristol Town Council not adopt the proposed

DPUD M-1 zone map change as submitted. In support of this recommendation, the Commission finds that the proposal, as submitted, did not sufficiently demonstrate consistency with the applicable comprehensive plan and Town planning policies; compatibility with current conditions and the character of surrounding residential, agricultural, and industrial uses; conservation of property values; or responsible development and growth. The Commission further finds that unresolved concerns remained regarding the level of detail provided for DPUD review, including final building and operational details, road and traffic impacts, stormwater and drainage, groundwater and wetland impacts, utility and water-use questions, and noise impacts, including generator noise.

The Commission further denied primary approval of the proposed 2-lot minor subdivision based on the deficiencies identified in the record, including unresolved issues regarding access and road impacts, stormwater and drainage, utility service, and other technical requirements necessary to determine compliance with applicable subdivision-control standards.

5. A motion was made and seconded (*Clark/Dickerson*) that the meeting be adjourned. The motion was carried with a unanimous vote, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Amber Weiss, Recording Secretary

Steve Warner, Chairman