

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE MISHAWAKA COMMON COUNCIL**

**March 16, 2026**

Be it remembered that the Common Council of the City of Mishawaka, Indiana met in the Council Chambers of the New Mishawaka City Hall and via telephone on Monday March 16, 2026, at 6:00PM. The meeting was called to order by Council President Gregg Hixenbaugh. All were asked to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Clerk Debbie Ladyga-Block called roll.

**Present: Mrs. Hazen (P), Mrs. Voelker (P), Mr. Carroll (E), Mr. Banicki (P), Mr. Emmons (A), Ms. Hahn (P), Mr. Mammolenti (P), Mr. Violi (P), Mr. Hixenbaugh (P)**

**P: Present E: Electronically Participating A: Absent**

**Members attending virtually do so by WebEx. Public that attends can participate by WebEx or observe meetings by YouTube or Facebook live. The Council meetings are also streamed live on Michiana Access on Comcast/AT&T U-verse Channel 99.**

Minutes for the Regular Meeting on March 2, 2026, were approved as received from the Clerk's Office.

Clerk Block read a letter from the City Plan Commission regarding their recommendations from their March 10, 2026, meeting.

Clerk Block read the following proposed ordinances by title and assigned committee.

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-07**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 137 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AS FROM TIME TO TIME AMENDED, COMMONLY KNOWN AS 'THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF 1966' OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA.**

**Vacation of Right-of-Way North of property located at 209 Towle Avenue  
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)**

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-08**

**AN ORDINANCE ANNEXING CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY TO THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AND PROVIDING ZONING CLASSIFICATION THEREFORE**

**Annex Right-of-Way extending Veterans Parkway North to Cleveland Road  
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)**

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-09**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 137 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AS FROM TIME TO TIME AMENDED, COMMONLY KNOWN AS ‘THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF 1966’ OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA.**

**Rezone from C-1 General Commercial District to R-1 – 822 W. Fourth Street  
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)**

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-10**

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 137 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AS FROM TIME TO TIME AMENDED, COMMONLY KNOWN AS ‘THE ZONING ORDINANCE OF 1966’ OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA.**

**Vacate 2.65 Acres of Right-of-Way – East side of Fir Road, North of University Drive, and South of Cleveland Road  
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)**

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-11**

**AN ORDINANCE ANNEXING CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY TO THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AND PROVIDING ZONING CLASSIFICATION THEREFORE**

**Annex and Rezone to C-1 General Commercial – 15008 Grande Vista Drive  
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)**

Clerk Block read the following resolutions by title and opened the public hearing.

**RESOLUTION R2026-08**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, INTRODUCING AN ORDINANCE FOR ANNEXATION, ADOPTING A WRITTEN FISCAL PLAN, AND A DEFINITE POLICY FOR ANNEXATION FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT: 55981 AND 55993 NORTH FIR ROAD, WEST SIDE OF NORTH FIR ROAD, APPROXIMATELY 150 FEET NORTH OF MCKINLEY AVENUE  
Fiscal Plan for Annexation of 1550 E. McKinley**

Derek Spier, City Planner, spoke in favor of **RESOLUTION R2026-08**. Mr. Spier stated the fiscal plan in question was for an annexation that included an approximate 4.5-acre area and it was on the west side of North Fir Road, approximately 120 feet north of East McKinley. Mr. Spier stated the annexation parcels together with an acre to the south that fronted East McKinley were proposed to be redeveloped for the Granger Community Church Mission Ministry and

Faith Community Campus. Mr. Spier stated the area to be annexed was approximately 38.4% contiguous to the city limits, so this exceeded the requirement of 1/8 contiguity or 12.5%. Mr. Spier stated the property that was already in the city included a 10,000 square foot commercial building which was previously occupied by Hub Cap Annie, U-Haul, and Podium Sports. Mr. Spier stated prior to preparing a fiscal plan, copies of the proposed annexation were forwarded to city departments, and they were then asked to review if there were any expenditures or costs required to service the area and if it could be accommodated with the funds currently within the city budget. Mr. Spier stated in this case, the property was in a pocket of unincorporated area immediately adjacent to the existing city limits and the owner was responsible for extending utilities or connecting utilities to the city, so there were no additional expenditures anticipated at that time for the city. Mr. Spier stated he would be happy to answer any questions.

Heather O'Connell, 210 Gernhart Avenue Mishawaka, IN 46544, spoke in opposition to **RESOLUTION R2026-08**. Mrs. O'Connell stated she was skeptical of this plan, and she was speaking from her own personal experience regarding Granger Community Church and its desire for community outreach. Mrs. O'Connell stated over fifteen years ago, GCC opened a community center in South Bend called Monroe Circle Community Center, also known as MC3. Mrs. O'Connell stated she participated in supporting that mission with both her finances and her sweat equity. Mrs. O'Connell stated when it began, it was regularly active in the community, offering financial courses, a food bank, after-school student support, tutoring, and more. Mrs. O'Connell stated along the way, GCC decided to abandon that mission and their website, as few as a couple of weeks ago, still had MC3 listed as an outreach location, but GCC had not been active there for quite some time. Mrs. O'Connell stated the most she could find that had been recent activity was that they had a food pantry twice a month. Mrs. O'Connell stated when she looked up the website again earlier that day, it had changed stating that they would be moving out of South Bend and into Mishawaka. Mrs. O'Connell stated in addition, ten to twelve years ago they stated there was a large need for community preschools and through a big push from their church, they began offering a high-quality childcare program called the Early Learning Center, which was its own separate program, but also in partnership with GCC. Mrs. O'Connell stated it was touted to be for the community, but it was expensive for the majority of the community. Mrs. O'Connell stated the Early Learning Center quickly became successful and sought after, but then one day God told them it was time for them to part ways, kicking the Early Learning Center out and GCC abandoned yet another community outreach. Mrs. O'Connell stated the last experience she had regarding GCC making decisions and them saying it was for the community was when they had a building campaign more than fifteen years ago. Mrs. O'Connell stated part of the campaign was for a chapel as it was so hard to have weddings and events during the weekends at GCC due to their services being on Saturdays and Sundays and the chapel was supposed to be a place for weddings and funerals as well as being available to the community to use for various events. Mrs. O'Connell stated she personally gave to the building campaign, however several years later there was never a building or a chapel of any kind and instead, they announced to their community that the roof needed to be replaced and to be good stewards of their resources, they used the money that was given to the building campaign and instead replaced the roof and to that day, there was no chapel. Mrs. O'Connell stated she was

present that evening out of skepticism based on her own lived experiences and Mishawaka needed a good community partner who would follow through on what they said they would do and not just go where the wind blew. Mrs. O'Connell stated she believed it was in the best interest of the City of Mishawaka to do their due diligence, so they did not end up with another building like MC3.

Mr. Hixenbaugh stated technically, the matter in front of them at that time was the fiscal plan which when boiled down talked about whether the city had the capacity to provide services to the property within the confine of their existing budget. Mr. Hixenbaugh suggested instead of asking for questions at that time, he would call her to the podium when they got to the appropriate point and then they would see if any council members had any questions they wanted to ask to follow up. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated they appreciated her remarks.

Question was called for at 6:12PM for **RESOLUTION R2026-08 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The resolution passed 8-0.

### **RESOLUTION R2026-09**

#### **A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, INTRODUCING AN ORDINANCE FOR ANNEXATION ADOPTING A WRITTEN FISCAL PLAN AND A DEFINITE POLICY FOR ANNEXATION FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT: 55660 AND 55614 FIR ROAD, EAST SIDE OF FIR ROAD APPROXIMATELY 2100 FEET NORTH OF MCKINLEY AVENUE Fiscal Plan for Annexation of 55660 Fir Road**

Christa Hill, Senior Planner, spoke in favor of **RESOLUTION R2026-09**. Mrs. Hill stated the 10.5 acres were on the east side of Fir Road, approximately 2100 feet north of McKinley and back in 2024, they annexed the property to the south of it for a single-family home development and this would be added to that with the addition of 41 new lots and would connect into that subdivision. Mrs. Hill stated the contiguity was 32%, which exceeded the 12.5% required by state law. Mrs. Hill stated as part of the fiscal plan, they distributed it to all city departments who could serve it without additional capital improvements. Mrs. Hill stated she was happy to take any questions the Council had.

Mr. Violi asked for clarification regarding what year she said was the year of the south part of the property being annexed. Mrs. Hill stated that was in 2024 and that annexation was larger than the annexation before them that evening.

Question was called for at 6:15PM for **RESOLUTION R2026-09 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The resolution passed 8-0.

Clerk Block read the following proposed ordinances by title and opened the public hearing.

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-04**

**AN ORDINANCE ANNEXING CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY TO THE CITY OF  
MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AND PROVIDING ZONING CLASSIFICATION  
THEREFORE**

**Annex and Establish Zoning as R-1 Single Family District – 55660 Fir Road  
Vote Only**

Mr. Mammolenti reported the Land Use Planning Committee recommended that this proposed ordinance be adopted. Upon a second by Mr. Banicki, the motion carried. Clerk Block polled the Council on the committee report.

**Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The committee report passed 8-0.

The record reflected that the Council held a public hearing on the proposed ordinance at their regularly scheduled meeting of March 10<sup>th</sup> pursuant to Indiana law. Mr. Hixenbaugh opened up the floor for questions and comments from the Council.

Mr. Hixenbaugh asked Mrs. O’Connell to approach the podium. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated her patience with them and what she shared with the Council and the heartfelt feelings that were evident in that. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated it was difficult when they dealt with land use issues because they as a community were not necessarily vetting the business model of whomever came to them for this type of approval. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated they had some statutory criterion that they had to look at to decide whether the annexation was appropriate, but it was really beyond their scope to be able to dig into the nitty-gritty of a nonprofit business that came to them, so he did not want to come across as being dismissive of her concerns but he struggled with the legality or rather the lack of legal ability for them to be able to get to the issues that she cited. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he did appreciate the comments that she shared and the passion behind her words.

Ken Prince, Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Mishawaka, spoke in favor of **RESOLUTION R2026-04**. Mr. Prince stated he just wanted to note for the record that the proposed ordinance numbers from the fiscal plan to their action had been reversed, so the first, 2026-04, was actually the residential project and not the other one. Mr. Prince stated he wanted to make sure that the record was reflected correctly. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Prince and stated his comments were duly noted, so Mrs. O’Connell’s comments would be incorporated into the record for the next proposed ordinance that was in front of them rather than **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-04**.

Question was called for at 6:19PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-04 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The proposed ordinance passed 8-0, thus it became **ORDINANCE NO. 5975.**

**PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-05**

**AN ORDINANCE ANNEXING CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY TO THE CITY OF  
MISHAWAKA, INDIANA AND PROVIDING ZONING CLASSIFICATION  
THEREFORE**

**Annex and Establish Zoning as C-1 General Commercial and Rezone from C-4  
Automobile-Oriented Commercial to C-1 General Commercial – NW corner of McKinley  
& Fir Rd – 1550 E. McKinley  
Vote Only**

Mr. Mammolenti reported the Land Use Planning Committee recommended that this proposed ordinance be adopted. Upon a second by Mr. Banicki, the motion carried. Clerk Block polled the Council on the committee report.

**Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The committee report passed 8-0.

The record reflected that the Council held a public hearing on the proposed ordinance at their regularly scheduled meeting of March 10<sup>th</sup> pursuant to Indiana law. Mr. Hixenbaugh opened up the floor for questions and comments from the Council.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Prince for his procedural clarification and Mrs. O'Connell's comments were applicable to this proposed ordinance.

Question was called for at 6:22PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-05 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The proposed ordinance passed 8-0, thus it became **ORDINANCE NO. 5976.**

**PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**

Joshua Lange, 607 East Lowell Avenue, Mishawaka, IN 46545, spoke under **PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR.** Mr. Lange stated he was present that evening to speak about a historical matter in regard to Mishawaka that he believed would be important for the City of Mishawaka to consider for that year. Mr. Lange stated with it being the semi quincentennial of the United States that year, the 250<sup>th</sup> year of the US, he believed that celebrating their nation's birth and nation's history was important. Mr. Lange stated the St. Joseph County had only one dozen Revolutionary War veterans that were buried there and only one of them was buried in the city limits of Mishawaka and that was Mead Hurd. Mr. Lange stated Mead Hurd was born in 1754 and he was the grandfather of their city's founder, Alanson Hurd. Mr. Lange stated he served in the revolution from 1775 to 1780, he had six enlistments, and he was an early adopter of

American independence. Mr. Lange stated in 1775, there was no Declaration of Independence, and it was not looking good for the colonies, and he decided to take up arms to fight for freedom against the tyranny of the British Empire. Mr. Lange stated Mead Hurd moved all the way from New York to Mishawaka in 1834, less than a year after the city's founding. Mr. Lange stated the city was nothing more than a few dozen households and barren in a lot of ways. Mr. Lange stated Mead Hurd moved to Mishawaka, because he believed in his grandson Alanson's vision that the St. Joseph Iron Works would become a prosperous town at the age of 80 years old. Mr. Lange stated he sadly did not live long after that as he passed on July 19, 1834, at the age of 80. Mr. Lange stated he was originally buried in the first city cemetery; however, all of the bodies were moved to the current city cemetery near John Young. Mr. Lange stated with that being said, he believed his recommendation to the City of Mishawaka was that on 4<sup>th</sup> of July or July 19<sup>th</sup> that the City of Mishawaka, the Mayor, and the Common Council make a proclamation making it Mead Hurd Day or something of that sort to honor him as their city's first veteran. Mr. Lange stated veterans meant a lot to him as he knew basically every single member of the Council had veterans in their families. Mr. Lange stated two years ago he wrote an article on Mead Hurd, and he purchased a brick for him that was at the Veterans Plaza, and he thought that was a very wonderful project that the city had done in conjunction with Troop Town and he completely supported that. Mr. Lange stated if there were any other ideas or suggestions the Council had he would be happy to take them and it would be neat to honor their city's history and do something for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their nation. Mr. Lange thanked the Council for their time.

Mrs. Voelker asked where the original city cemetery was located. Mr. Lange stated the original city cemetery was on the south side of the river and just beyond the city limits. Mr. Lange stated Pete DeKeever knew exactly where it was located and all he knew was that it was at the literal end of the city limits, which back then was only a few blocks from where they were. Mrs. Voelker thanked for his presentation and the great idea to honor their city's history.

Mr. Violi asked for clarification if July 19<sup>th</sup> was the day Mead Hurd passed away. Mr. Lange stated yes, July 19, 1834, was the day of his death and he was born on March 7, 1754. Mr. Violi stated July 19<sup>th</sup> seemed to fit better than on July 4<sup>th</sup> and thanked Mr. Lange for the information. Mr. Lange stated if there was any other info he wanted or needed, he could send it to him at a later date.

Ms. Hahn thanked Josh for coming that evening and being such a good steward of Mishawaka's history and memories and appreciated his information for those who may not have heard of Mead Hurd before, and she hoped they could do something to celebrate. Mr. Lange thanked Ms. Hahn.

Mr. Hixenbaugh appreciated Mr. Lange's passion for all things historical in Mishawaka and in particular the articles he wrote for the Enterprise, and he thought those were all very well done. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated every time he spoke with Josh, he learned something new, including that evening, so he appreciated the information. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated his inclination would be for them to consider passing a resolution, which was the way that they typically honored various ceremonial events and people from a Council standpoint. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated they would typically do that if they were so inclined to move forward with it and he sensed that there was strong support on the part of the Council to do so at one of their regularly scheduled council

meetings in July, so it might be right around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated his suggestion with respect to how they moved forward and it harkened back to the comment that he just made, if he could provide additional detail to Mr. Violi, who he knew he had spoken to on the matter prior, between Mr. Violi and himself they would be happy to work with Mr. Lange on putting together the resolution and then they could circulate that amongst the rest of the Council and bring it to the floor for Council action in July. Mr. Lange stated that sounded good.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

### **RESOLUTION R2026-05**

#### **A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, MAKING A FINAL DETERMINATION AND CONFIRMING THE DESIGNATION OF AREAS WITHIN THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, KNOWN AS 1121 AND 1025 WEST 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET AS AN ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION AREA FOR PURPOSES OF REAL PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT**

##### **Confirming Real Property Tax Abatement for United Petfood Producers**

Derek Spier, City Planner, spoke in favor of **RESOLUTION R2026-05**. Mr. Spier stated the two resolutions being discussed were for a real and personal property tax abatement for United Petfood Producers USA. Mr. Spier stated they were proposing to expand their facility to include a new building addition for a new drying tower and installation of other manufacturing equipment. Mr. Spier stated the total plan investment was over \$30 million and two abatements had been filed, one for real property improvements and one for personal property improvements. Mr. Spier stated the real property improvements were for an \$11 million expansion, adding a drying tower addition to the south side of the building and the personal property request included \$19 million for equipment and automation improvements for packaging, bulking, receiving, and other machinery. Mr. Spier stated the company did receive a personal property tax abatement in June of 2025 for a new warehouse facility located just north of their building at 919 Cleveland Street and after it was approved, they immediately started construction and the project was nearing completion. Mr. Spier stated with the request they had that evening, the company would retain 105 employees while adding 31 jobs as a result of the investment. Mr. Spier stated the hourly wages for the 30 semi-skilled new positions, excluding benefits, were approximately \$24. Mr. Spier stated the annual salaries for the new jobs were estimated at just over \$2 million. Mr. Spier stated similar to their other approved abatements, they were recommending a five-year abatement for both the real and personal property tax abatement requests. Mr. Spier stated attached to the packet provided to the Council, there was a tax impact estimate for the five-year phase-in if the abatements were approved. Mr. Spier stated during one of the last council meetings a question was asked on how the recent tax legislation would approve the personal property tax benefit and it would not have an impact on the specific tax abatement in front of them that evening because the state increased the de minimis exemption from \$80,000 to \$2 million. Mr. Spier stated in doing that, the company already had almost \$6.5 million in personal property, so moving forward they were already at that threshold. Mr. Spier stated for the real property improvements, the company had projected an assessed valuation of \$7.7 million, and this was equivalent to 70% of the total capital investment. Mr. Spier stated they felt it was a little

high, but they used it as a best guess in moving forward with the tax impact analysis and the same was the case with personal property. Mr. Spier stated the personal property had an anticipated assessed valuation of \$13.3 million for the \$19 million investment. Mr. Spier stated what they did with this was like the other abatements as approved and the Department of Local Government Finance had an online calculator that they used, and they put in the assessed value and then it would give them the approximate corresponding tax bill. Mr. Spier stated if they used the assessed values that were given, the estimated tax bill for the real property was approximately \$267,000 a year and then for personal property it was approximately \$444,000. Mr. Spier stated if this were approved for five years, over the next five years for the abatement, the real property taxes would be approximately \$1.3 million, and the owner would have approximately \$770,000 abated and they would pay approximately \$500,000. Mr. Spier stated for the real property taxes, the taxes paid would be \$2.2 million and they would have \$1.3 million abated and would pay approximately \$900,000. Mr. Spier stated if approved that evening, this was an economic revitalization area for a four-year period, so the company, when they did the project, the five-year starting point would be when the full assessed valuation occurred for either the real property or the personal property. Mr. Spier stated if it was not fully assessed for another two or three years, then it moved forward to five years out from that point in time. Mr. Spier stated he was happy to answer any questions the Council had.

Mr. Violi thanked Mr. Spier for taking time out a couple of weeks ago to discuss the matter with him and stated they had discussed the economic revitalization area, and it was a different type of abatement. Mr. Violi asked Mr. Spier if he could elaborate on that point for the Council. Mr. Spier stated it was essentially done so that when they did either a real or personal property abatement, there was usually a one to three to four year window in which they had the ability to make that investment, so if they did not make that investment for another three years, then that would be when the starting time began for the five-year abatement. Mr. Spier stated when that assessment came in for the new building that they were building or the new equipment from that point moving forward that was the trigger point for the five-year abatement. Mr. Spier stated it would not be five years since the approval that evening.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Spier for the information he provided as it was extremely helpful, and he appreciated the clarification on the personal property tax element of the two abatements, and it was beneficial to him. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated with regard to the dialogue between Mr. Spier and Mr. Violi, with respect to the four-year period that was connected to the economic revitalization area, he talked about what would happen if it took three years for the company to break ground and complete their planned project, Mr. Hixenbaugh asked what happened if they did not complete the project or even start the project within the four-year time span. Mr. Spier stated they would not get the benefit of the abatement. Mr. Spier stated it was the increase from that point forward for the real property, so it would be any increase in the assessment based on the construction that they did or the personal property that they purchased so if they did not move forward, then the abatement essentially would go away. Mr. Spier stated if they only partially completed the project within the four-year period, then it would lock the four years and it would simply end and then anything that was invested after that four-year period would not be a benefit of the abatement for the company. Mr. Spier stated if they only partially did 50% of the purchase of the equipment within those four years, which was what they would get in regard to the abatement. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated that and he always thought of that as being

their guard against plans and reality. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated clearly there was a plan to move forward as soon as possible at that point in time on the part of the business owner in question, but they had experiences where people had not been able to proceed under their original time frame. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if Mr. Spier would agree with him that this was one of their safeguards against the possibility of the abatement being out there indefinitely and it was an incentive for a business owner who came before them to move as quickly as possible to enact their plan. Mr. Spier stated that was correct and with some of the larger projects that are similar to this they usually gave them a three-to-four-year window. Mr. Spier stated if it was a company like Jamil Packaging who had come in regarding tax abatements before and they had ordered one piece of equipment; they usually gave them a year. Mr. Spier stated if they said they would do it within a year, they would give them a year, and it was also based on the time frame of what the business thought they were going to do. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated if memory served, in the past couple times he had been before them with regard to presenting on an abatement request, it seemed as though they were in an era where the number of abatements that they had active at that point in time was less than historically had been the case. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if Mr. Spier knew how many abatements, they had active at that point in time. Mr. Spier stated they had four active abatements at that time and there were from the prior year two or three abatements that had expired, so there were usually at least six or seven active abatements and when he started working there seven years ago, they had nine or ten. Mr. Spier stated since he had been working there, the number of active abatements had decreased. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he agreed and he particularly appreciated the tax impact information that he and his staff provided in support of the abatement requests. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated harkening back to the figures that he cited earlier with regard to the amount of the taxes that were going to be abated with regard to both personal property and real property. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated by his calculation, the split between taxes abated and taxes paid over the five-year period was that 60% of the taxes would be abated and 40% of the taxes would be paid and asked if that was correct. Mr. Spier stated that was accurate. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated that was a pretty standard schedule that they had put in place and when there had been an investment of any scope and scale, that five-year abatement starting at 100% then stair stepping down had been a standard recommendation and asked if it had been. Mr. Spier stated it had been and it was all based on the amount of investment and then the employment numbers. Mr. Spier stated the standard was always if it was a five-year abatement, it was 100% the first year and then decreasing 20% over the five-year abatement annually, but if it was a larger project the Council had the ability to approve higher percentages over the course of the abatement. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated with regard to the abatement that was in place on the warehouse facility and then the other abatements that they had approved for this corporate entity and its predecessor corporate entities, his general sense of it was that they had hit the mark with regard to investment that they promised, the payroll that they generated, and the employment numbers that were retained and then expanded upon historically with the abatements and asked if that was correct. Mr. Spier stated yes, that was correct. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Spier.

Mr. Violi stated with a project like this at \$30 million, it sounded like a big number to him for the City of Mishawaka and asked if that would be accurate and especially the \$19 million in personal property given the state bill and like he had said earlier, the company had already met the threshold so to add \$19 million on top of that over the future and even past the five-year abatement, there were going to be some serious taxes collected on that. Mr. Spier stated that was correct and even if the assessment came in lower, they used 70% and that was usually quite high.

Mr. Spier stated a lot of times when the real property or personal property was assessed, sometimes it came in anywhere from 60% to 40%. Mr. Spier stated it was kind of a dart board kind of thing where they were estimating what that true assessed valuation was going to be based on what the improvement dollars were going to be as far as the investment was concerned. Mr. Violi thanked Mr. Spier.

Amanda Turnwald, representative of United Petfood Producers at 1011 West 11<sup>th</sup> Street, spoke in favor of **RESOLUTION R2026-05**. Mrs. Turnwald stated United Petfood Producers USA was the first located facility in Mishawaka and the only one currently. Mrs. Turnwald stated they had been operating the facility since June of 2024 and recently completed the \$5 million warehouse that they put in place after the abatement was approved in 2025. Mrs. Turnwald stated they actually had started supporting their operations out of the warehouse and were able to ship and their pad would be completed that week. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were actively hiring an additional 27 positions at that time, which meant over five years they would have over exceeded the 30 that were in the abatement requests that they had. Mrs. Turnwald stated a large portion of their employees, as they knew from the previous meetings, came from within a 15-mile radius of their facility, so they were part of a large portion of Mishawaka's workforce infrastructure and working with the pro-business aspect of the Council who had made their improvements and expansions possible for United Petfood. Mrs. Turnwald stated to meet the demand and remain competitive, they were making a substantial new investment in Mishawaka as the pet food industry was growing. Mrs. Turnwald stated as a real property investment, they were planning to put \$1 million into real property constructing a new dryer tower which would expand and modernize their existing manufacturing facility. Mrs. Turnwald, the investment significantly increased the assessed value of the property as Mr. Spier discussed, which would expand their tax base in the future. Mrs. Turnwald stated this was a permanent immovable infrastructure that would be tied to their facility. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were also looking to do \$19 million in new manufacturing equipment which included extruders, dryers, coders, boilers, robotics, automation, and packaging really making their jobs easier for their facility. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were also going to do a bulk receiving upgrade, which would be a significant improvement in their operational sustainability, stability, and efficiency for unloading trucks. Mrs. Turnwald stated the investment alone was important, but jobs are what truly anchored their project in the community. Mrs. Turnwald stated they currently had over 100 existing full-time jobs which they retained when they moved from the previous owners to United Petfood. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were currently recruiting an additional 30 new full-time jobs to be created, and they were actively hiring their average blended hourly wages for existing employees, being roughly \$31 per hour and their new employees were looking at \$35 per hour. Mrs. Turnwald stated they had a comprehensive benefits package for their employees that was not included in those numbers. Mrs. Turnwald stated United Petfood provided stable and skilled manufacturing jobs within the community with wages and benefits that were supporting their families. Mrs. Turnwald stated as far as their current project was concerned, it was projected five-year direct tax revenue of \$1.64 million for real property taxes and personal property and income at \$1.15 million and total new and local state revenue at \$2.79 million assessment of 60% rate over the five years. Mrs. Turnwald stated as far as their impacts were concerned, they had increased local purchasing and vendor spending and she knew Mr. Spier mentioned Jamil and Jamil was one of their vendors. Mrs. Turnwald stated they worked with them and they were part of the driving force of their packaging machine that they put in. Mrs. Turnwald stated they also had indirect and induced job

creation as a result of some of the work that they were doing. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were revitalizing their industrial site, and she knew that some of them remembered the 919 Cleveland Street warehouse before they knocked it down and it was an ugly building. Mrs. Turnwald stated their new building was a modern warehouse that looked good no matter where you were standing. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were looking at making their facility one of the manufacturing food production hubs for United Petfood and currently it was their US headquarters. Mrs. Turnwald stated they brought a lot of vendors in and customers in to show them around and took them out into the city to show off the lovely City of Mishawaka that they worked and lived in. Mrs. Turnwald stated they appreciated all of the long-term partnerships that they saw with the City Council as well as the economic and city planning team as well. Mrs. Turnwald stated they believed the investment would further strengthen Mishawaka's economy while creating lasting opportunities for decades to come. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were sincerely grateful for the city and the community's support to date and respectfully requested the Council's consideration and approval of their abatements.

Ms. Hahn congratulated Mrs. Turnwald on the warehouse being near completion and stated it did look really good and as a pretty immediate neighbor, she could almost see it from her backyard. Ms. Hahn asked with the new project if it would mirror the warehouse and be similar to the warehouse aesthetically and otherwise. Mrs. Turnwald stated gray and blue was their aesthetic within the company, so the tower that they were looking into would be the same type of gray building with navy blue on it with the United Petfood logo. Ms. Hahn asked if there were any other plans for the rest of that block as there were older buildings in that area that she knew they had discussed and if that was in the future blueprint to make those buildings gray and blue as well. Mrs. Turnwald stated she would love to make more of the block gray and blue, but at that time they had little to no success on those. Ms. Hahn thanked Mrs. Turnwald and United Petfood for being such a good community partner.

Mrs. Voelker asked from the abatement that was provided last year what the job requirement was. Mrs. Turnwald stated she thought the previous abatement was focused more on the building from a real property perspective, but she did not have that information that evening. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were creating jobs as a result of the warehouse. Mrs. Voelker asked regarding the open jobs, if the jobs they were adding were with the proposed new abatement. Mrs. Turnwald stated they intended to increase more than what they had currently posted. Mrs. Turnwald stated they had a lot of business at that time, and they needed more employees as they were looking to staff up for some of the new equipment they were bringing in. Mrs. Turnwald stated some of it was for the abatement they were discussing that evening and some of it was in relation to the warehouse that already existed. Mrs. Turnwald stated she believed they were going from 14 warehouse workers to 28, so she had 14 of those positions that were actively posted that were related to warehousing. Mrs. Voelker asked if she had any idea when the new signage was going to go up. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were waiting for the ground to thaw and before the weather was an issue, they could not install the signage because the padding was not done, so they could not direct people to go around and pull in because they did not have all of the concrete poured, but now that concrete was poured. Mrs. Turnwald stated once the ground thawed out, they could put some concrete down to drill into it and put the signage up, because the signage was ready.

Mr. Violi asked if local labor and local companies would be used on this as it was used on the last building by them. Mrs. Turnwald stated yes and the idea was to have as many local companies support them as possible. Mrs. Turnwald stated they had bid out with a number of the local construction companies on the drying tower, and they continued to use local electricians and plumbers for different things that got installed or something along those lines and they always went to local companies for that. Mr. Violi asked if the actual construction would be local as well. Mrs. Turnwald stated yes and they had bid it out to a number of local builders and even if they had a firm that was over, they were also still trying to bid with the local unions to support their building. Mr. Violi asked if the odor control was better now as that was an issue with the prior company with the equipment that was supposed to be installed. Mrs. Turnwald stated they did not manufacture the same material, and they did install odor mitigation under Wellness as the Council was aware and it was not installed the way that the original people made it sound and did not accomplish the tasks that they said it would in prior meetings. Mrs. Turnwald stated they had limited issues related to odor and as soon as they were notified, they resolved it in a timely manner. Mr. Violi asked if there would be anything new in the personal property. Mrs. Turnwald stated they were upgrading dryers as their dryers were outdated but she did not know what that was going to translate to for the odor discussion, but she expected that a more efficient dryer with better cooling and changes would make an impact, but she did not want to make any promises regarding that. Mr. Violi asked how many vehicles would be able to be docked at the current building that was being finished. Mrs. Turnwald stated they would be able to have 18 trucks at the dock, and they also had a truck pad behind the building that even with it unfinished, they had been housing about 10 trucks there. Mr. Violi stated he had a little bit of feedback from people saying that some of the traffic in the morning, especially on Logan and 11<sup>th</sup> Street, had been backed up and if the future expansion was going to alleviate that and if she was aware of that. Mrs. Turnwald stated her and Vic Kasznia talked frequently about that especially when they had weather issues where they had some backups, but the new warehouse had alleviated a lot of the problem. Mrs. Turnwald stated they had additional lanes over along the side of their warehouse, but the traffic, to reference the signs that Mrs. Voelker mentioned, those were supposed to direct the truck drivers to the back of their building. Mrs. Turnwald stated they came down 11<sup>th</sup>, turned down onto Cleveland, and entered off of Cleveland which would make it so that it was easier for truck drivers. Mrs. Turnwald stated it was a one way in, one way out traffic pattern that would allow them to have them turning left onto Cleveland instead of trying to turn left into their building off of 11<sup>th</sup>. Mrs. Turnwald stated they also had an additional pad that just got poured plus 18 dock doors so that was alleviating at least the ship out traffic that they had. Mrs. Turnwald stated they would also have 12 dock doors on the 1025 11<sup>th</sup> Street building. Mrs. Turnwald stated the part of the current abatement that they were discussing that evening that would help was that the bulk receiving upgrades and this would allow them to turn the bottom hopper trucks that ended up sitting outside parked along the fence line quicker, because at that time their capacity to unload was lower. Mrs. Turnwald stated they had a convoy of trucks that showed up when they were not scheduled to arrive. Mrs. Turnwald stated sometimes it took a little while to unload a truck as they could only unload one truck at a time, so with the new upgrades that they were doing in relation to bulk receiving would help with that as well, so she was hoping that in the long term it would be able to turn those trucks out as quickly as they were able to do the shipping side also. Mr. Violi thanked Mrs. Turnwald.

Mr. Hixenbaugh stated it was always good to see Mrs. Turnwald, and he also appreciated the work that she did to help make United Petfood a good corporate citizen and the community outreach they had done since the change in ownership did not go unnoticed. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he struggled a little bit with the traffic, and he felt better about that component having heard her explanation. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he thought it was fair for them when they were being presented with the requests to look at the totality of the impact that a business had on the community and while that may not be the worst problem that they were confronting in the City of Mishawaka, he did think it was an opportunity for them to advocate for those type of issues to be improved, so he appreciated the explanation on that. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated from his standpoint, if this was approved as they moved forward, he believed it was fair game for them to consider an ongoing review of how the traffic as their business thrived impacted the surrounding neighborhood as they went through the compliance process if approved. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated the bigger issue he struggled with was odor control and he took at face value her explanation and he always found her to be a very trustworthy person and appreciated that. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated what he struggled with was how in 2021 when the prior corporate entity was in front of them, that was such a big point of emphasis and now it became less of a point of emphasis. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he thought that was an additional benefit that was really important to him and he suspected really important to the Council as well and he was pleased to hear there was improvement on that issues. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated Ms. Hahn lived in close proximity to their facility and Mr. Emmons lived in close proximity as well and he was confident they would let all of the Council know if the odor problems were what they had been in the past, so that was the good news component. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated what he worried about was that decisions that were made beyond the local level with regard to the product line and what they were doing to address the odor, if those decisions changed then they were faced with the specter of granting a tax abatement and then having the odor problem rear its ugly head. Mrs. Turnwald stated she thought to allay some of those concerns was that this was not Wellness where decisions were not made locally and while they had 26 facilities and were part of a large European entity, the decisions that were being made for the Mishawaka facility were being made by herself and Elodie Fleury locally on site all day long every day. Mrs. Turnwald stated this was not something where they did not know the face of the people making the decision about what was best for their facility, what was best for their community, and what was best for their customers. Mrs. Turnwald stated everything that was being made from a decision perspective was being made locally and that was how it was done at all United Petfood facilities, not just for the United States facilities. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated that and that gave him an enhanced sense of confidence that the traffic issue would continue to be addressed and the odor issue would not rear its ugly head to the extent that it could not be controlled. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated just as he mentioned with regard to traffic, if in fact this was approved, that odor component also in his mind was going to be a big factor that he would be interested in hearing about as they went through the compliance review process and see how things were going, but he wanted to congratulate Mrs. Turnwald and the local management of the Mishawaka facility for exceeding their targets with regard to investment, payroll, jobs, and the things that they had committed to doing. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated the odor control component was a bump in the road and very uncharacteristic with regard to the long-term relationship that the City of Mishawaka had with various companies that owned that facility and he gave her a lot of credit for that. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated she had been the constant during periods of change and in his mind that was a good thing, so he appreciated the information. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated moving forward, as

important as the dollars and cents were going to be, continuing to provide them with additional information on the traffic control and on the odor control hopefully he and the rest of the Council would hear from her or her representatives that all was well. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mrs. Turnwald.

Mr. Violi asked about robotics that would make United Petfood's employees' job easier and if they would replace people. Mrs. Turnwald stated no and they currently had a very highly automated facility and they were replacing old equipment, so they had robots that were aging and needed to be replaced. Mrs. Turnwald stated all of the equipment that they were including in the abatement request was to upgrade the equipment they already had, not to create new equipment. Mrs. Turnwald stated there would always be people at United Petfood and that was not something where they would be upgrading to remove. Mrs. Turnwald stated quality was really important to them and robots were great, but they could not tell you whether something was good or not. Mr. Violi thanked Mrs. Turnwald.

Question was called for at 7:03PM for **RESOLUTION R2026-05 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The resolution passed 8-0.

#### **RESOLUTION R2026-06**

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, MAKING A FINAL DETERMINATION AND CONFIRMING THE DESIGNATION OF AREAS WITHIN THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, KNOWN AS 1121 & 1025 WEST 11<sup>TH</sup> STREET AS AN ECONOMIC REVITALIZATION AREA FOR PURPOSES OF PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT  
Confirming Personal Property Abatement for United Petfood Producers**

Mr. Spier's comments and Mrs. Turnwald's earlier comments were applicable to the public hearing on **RESOLUTION R2026-06** as well.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mrs. Turnwald for her participation that evening and the information that she shared and Mr. Spier along with his staff for the information that they provided. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he was inclined to support the matter and his concerns that he expressed earlier aside, he did find United Petfood to be a good corporate citizen, however he did think that moving forward, in light of the discussions that they had in the chamber in recent months, perhaps a year, with regard to the unprecedented financial challenges that they were facing as a community, he thought it was an opportunity for the Council and the Administration to engage in a review of their tax abatement processes and the way they handled the abatement requests in the past. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated that was not an indication that he thought there was anything wrong with what had been proposed that evening or what they had done in the past, but he thought it was an opportunity for them to look at whether in light of those unprecedented financial challenges that the five-year abatement cycle with the percentages that they talked about perhaps needed an adjustment. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated rhetorically, rather than a 60-40 percent split

between taxes and taxes paid, a 50-50 percent split would be more appropriate in the era of unprecedented financial challenges. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated that was a rhetorical question, but he thought it was a good opportunity for them to engage in an internal and interactive process to see whether they were still all comfortable with the path that they had gone down for some time now or whether there was some adjustment that they should make. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated the work that went into this and again, he was in favor of the matter and looked forward to voting in favor of it that evening.

Question was called for at 7:09PM for **RESOLUTION R2026-06 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The resolution passed 8-0.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Mr. Hixenbaugh stated due to the impending resignation of Joel Dendiu who had been the Council appointee to the Board of Zoning Appeals for many years and had done an admirable job on their behalf, it was incumbent upon the Council to make another appointment to the BZA. The chair entertained a motion for nomination. Mr. Violi nominated Carly Chelminiak for the BZA position on the Council's behalf and with a second from Mr. Mammolenti, a roll call vote was held on the motion in light of Mr. Carroll's participation remotely. Clerk Block polled the Council.

**Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**

**Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh.** The motion passed 8-0 and Mrs. Chelminiak was appointed to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Ms. Hahn invited everybody to the 1<sup>st</sup> District meeting Thursday March 19<sup>th</sup> at St. Bavo's Church at 7PM. Ms. Hahn stated the guest speaker would be State Senator David Niezgodski and all were welcome. Ms. Hahn stated as always, they would have free West End doughnuts and refreshments.

Mr. Mammolenti announced the Twin Branch Neighborhood Watch meeting would take place Wednesday March 18<sup>th</sup> at 7PM at Fire Station #4 located on Harrison Road near Hums Elementary School and their guest speaker would be Matt Lentsch, Executive Director of Development and Governmental Affairs for the City of Mishawaka, speaking on many topics but more specifically the utilities side of things and he would give any details and answer any questions the residents may have. Mr. Mammolenti stated all residents were welcome.

ADJOURNMENT 7:10PM

Deborah S. Block /s/  
Deborah S. Block, IAMC, MMC, City Clerk

Gregg A. Hixenbaugh /s/  
Gregg A. Hixenbaugh, President

These minutes are a summary of actions taken at the Mishawaka Common Council meeting. The full video archive of the meeting is available for viewing at [www.youtube.com/@cityofmishawaka635](http://www.youtube.com/@cityofmishawaka635) for as long as this media is supported.