

MINUTES CITY OF DARIEN

PLANNING, ZONING, AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Wednesday, July 1, 2026

PRESENT: Lou Mallers – Chairperson, Jonathan Christ, Shari Gillespie, Chris Jackson, Chris Green, Mark Kazich

ABSENT: Shari Gillespie, Jonathan Johnson

OTHERS: Ryan Murphy - City Planner

Chairperson Lou Mallers called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. (delayed due to technical issues) at the Darien City Hall, 1702 Plainfield Road, Darien, Illinois. Chairperson Mallers declared a quorum present, and swore in any audience member wishing to present public testimony.

Regular Meeting – New Business

- a. PZC-26-10 (Sign Variation) – Petition from DM Darien RF, LLC for a variation from Section 4-3-10-(B)-3 of the City’s Sign Code to permit an electronic messaging sign instead of a manual changeable copy sign for a remodeled Culver’s ground sign located in the B-2 Community Shopping Center Business District at 541 Plainfield Road, Darien IL 60561 (PIN 09-27-207-032).**

Mr. Ryan Murphy, City Planner, reported that the petition is a request for a variation to allow an electronic messaging center in place of the existing manual changeable copy sign on the Culver's ground sign at 541 Plainfield Road. He presented the location map and sign plans, and noted that the proposed sign would display only restaurant-related promotions and information. Mr. Murphy stated that the petitioner is seeking the variation to modernize the signage and meet Culver's branding standards. He explained that the Sign Code permits only manual changeable copy signs in business districts, requiring a variation to allow an electronic messaging center. Mr. Murphy also noted other variations for electronic message centers that had been approved in recent years and the conditions of approval required at that time.

Jim Diverde, owner of MD Restaurant Group, the owner of the Culver’s restaurant, stated that they plan to remodel the Culvers in the Fall and did not want to wait for remodeling the sign. He explained how important signage is to their business model. He stated it could drive sales by approximately five percent. He stated it would promote flavor of the day for shakes and other promotions. He stated they are open to providing community messaging. Mr. Diverde

confirmed that the sign would not be animated or have any motion because it was not effective.

Chairman Mallers asked if it was intended for longer messages or short messages.

Mr. Diverde said their average time is 8-10 seconds, and there are about three messages per day that change.

Commissioner Christ questioned if this style of sign was consistent across their other locations.

Mr. Diverde said it is typical to have the high resolution electronic sign, but that the size varies based on jurisdiction. He also said there are other towns that don't allow them.

Commissioner Jackson questioned if the lights were dimmable.

Mr. Diverde said that they are, but they typically just have regulated the hours that the sign is on.

Mr. Murphy asked if the petitioner was open to condition approval restricting hours of display.

Mr. Diverde said yes.

Commissioner Christ asked if there were any public comments.

Mr. Murphy confirmed that legal and mailing notice was provided, but no comments were received.

Commissioner Christ stated that he was concerned about the brightness near the residential areas.

Mr. Murphy discussed the positioning of the sign and existing regulations in the Sign Code concerning lighting, brightness, and static signage.

Mr. Diverde confirmed that dimming is possible and the brightness would comply.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the existing sign was backlit and discussed previous Commission actions/issues surrounding electronic message centers such as brightness, timing and traffic safety. He asked if the petitioner was open to 30-second minimum requirement.

Mr. Diverde said he wouldn't prefer 30 seconds, but would comply. He stated the most important issue was the hours of operation.

There was discussion about the effectiveness of advertisements and remodels.

Chairman Mallers discussed a past traffic study for Plainfield and Cass saying 8 and half seconds was a fast sign change. He also discussed the sign being at the intersection, which had different issues.

There was discussion about what would be on the sign.

Commissioner Kazich questioned the variation justification provided by the sign contractor.

Mr. Diverde described the nature of the request and the variation justification, being good for business.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the petitioner owned the St. Charles Culver's. He asked if they had a 30 second hold.

Mr. Diverde stated he recalled it being approximately 10-15 seconds.

Commissioner Jackson asked if there was a dip in sales from that restriction.

Mr. Diverde stated he wouldn't know because they had it from opening.

There was discussion about the subjective nature of sales data and the business activity at the Culver's in Darien.

Mr. Diverde stated that he thinks that he'll be competing with another possible Culver's going in on 75th Street in Woodridge.

Public comment was closed.

Commissioner Kazich made a motion, which did not receive a second, prompting further discussion.

The Commission deliberated possible conditions.

Commissioner Kazich again made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Christ to approve PZC-26-10 (Sign Variation) – Petition from DM Darien RF, LLC for a variation from Section 4-3-10-(B)-3 of the City's Sign Code to permit an electronic messaging sign instead of a manual changeable copy sign for a remodeled Culver's ground sign located in the B-2 Community Shopping Center Business District at 541 Plainfield Road, Darien IL 60561 (PIN 09-27-207-032), with the following conditions of approval:

- 1. Messages on the sign must be displayed for a minimum of 30 seconds.**
- 2. The sign is permitted to operate from 6AM to close.**
- 3. The sign must comply with all other provisions of the sign code.**

Upon roll call vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5-0.

Mr. Murphy explained the next steps to the petitioner.

b. PZC-26-12 (Final Plat of Subdivision) – Petition from Richard Grant for approval of a final plat of subdivision and final site plan approval for a previously-approved 16-unit condominium development. The project is located in the R-3 Multi-Family Residence District at the southeast corner of Plainfield Road and Lester Lane at 1225 Plainfield Road, Darien IL 60561 (PINs 09-28-410-001 and 09-28-410-043).

Mr. Ryan Murphy, City Planner, reported that the petition is for final plat of subdivision and final site plan approval for the previously approved 16-unit condominium development at 1225 Plainfield Road. He stated that the project received preliminary approvals in 2025, and that the final plans have been revised to address City Council direction and engineering requirements, including stormwater management and driveway design. Mr. Murphy presented the final plat and site plan, and reported that Planning staff and the City Engineer found the plans to substantially conform to the previously approved development, with only minor engineering comments remaining. He also noted that the proposed building exterior has been revised to a modern design in place of the previously approved brick exterior.

Mr. Richard Grant detailed the struggles they faced to get the final plat ready, including Lester Lane neighborhood negotiation.

Mr. Murphy provided additional detail on the infrastructure design that was previously proposed.

Mr. Grant explained the new design of the infrastructure and stormwater drainage.

Commissioner Green questioned if the drainage easement would improve the drainage problems raised during last year's public hearing.

Mr. Grant confirmed it would and also mentioned they would be tying in the downspouts to the new stormwater easement to Wildwood Lane.

Commissioner Jackson asked what would happen with the overhead electrical and if the easement would need to be vacated.

Mr. Grant detailed problems reaching Commonwealth Edison and new electrical design requirements and confirmed it would be vacated.

Commissioner Green asked what the EV Charging requirements were.

There was discussion about EV Charger requirements in the building code.

Commissioner Jackson discussed the change in architecture.

Chairman Mallers asked what the anticipated price was.

A question was asked about where the condominium plat was in the packet.

Mr. Murphy stated that it was due to be prepared before filing of the CC&Rs.

Commissioner Jackson questioned the references to apartments in the engineering review letter and engineers documents.

Mr. Murphy stated that the City Council ordinances all approve the project as condominiums, so it was a reference to the building form.

Commissioner Jackson asked what variations were approved last year.

Mr. Murphy stated that it was related to parking and drive aisle placement and that the movement of the garages was a response to verbal agreements with City Council.

The petitioner's engineer, Jiun-Guang Lin, provided information on the detention requirements from DuPage County and requirements by the City Engineer after all of the approvals were obtained.

Mr. Murphy described the stormwater design.

Commissioner Green asked what the fee payments described in the engineering letter were.

Mr. Murphy stated the requirements of the subdivision ordinance for posting of fees.

There was discussion on required signatures for the plat.

There was discussion regarding an incorrect setback shown on the plat on the west side of the property, which was referenced in the engineering review letter.

Mr. Murphy confirmed that the project complied with all other setbacks except those where a variation was granted, and indicated the Lester Lane setback shown on the plat was not a current City requirement and was incorrect.

Commissioner Jackson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Green to approve PZC-26-12 (Final Plat of Subdivision) – Petition from Richard Grant for approval of a final plat of subdivision and final site plan approval for a previously-approved 16-unit condominium development. The project is located in the R-3 Multi-Family Residence District at the southeast corner of Plainfield Road and Lester Lane at 1225 Plainfield Road, Darien IL 60561 (PINs 09-28-410-001 and 09-28-410-043).

Upon roll call vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5-0.

Mr. Murphy explained the next steps to the petitioner.

Regular Meeting – Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

Staff Updates & Correspondence

Chairman Mallers said he had a conversation with someone from the church that said there was a plan to tear down the White House, and expand the offices.

Staff indicated they had not heard from the church about that and that at previous meetings before the Commission and the City Council, the Society of Mt. Carmel had not confirmed any demolition plans for the structure, but did say that repairing it to meet current building code requirements was unfeasible due to being several million dollars.

Chairman Mallers asked what the status of the TGI Fridays demolition was.

Mr. Murphy stated that the final plat for the project would be presented at the next meeting, and that they had recently received all their approvals for the construction but had not pulled permits.

Mr. Murphy talked about the agenda items for the next meeting.

Chairman Mallers asked the status of the approved billiards hall.

Mr. Murphy detailed private negotiations between the billiards hall, ownership, and other tenants.

Approval of Minutes

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

Commissioner Jackson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kazich to approve the May 6, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY 5-0.

Next Meeting

Mr. Murphy announced that the next meeting would be scheduled for July 15, 2026.

Public Comments (On Any Topic Related to Planning and Zoning)

There was no one in the audience wishing to present public comment.

The Commission discussed the City's regulations for electronic messaging centers and expressed interest in reviewing how comparable municipalities regulate such signs. Following discussion, the Commission requested that staff research the regulations of neighboring communities and prepare information regarding potential amendments to allow electronic messaging centers by right under certain circumstances. No formal action was taken.

Adjournment

With no further business before the Commission, Commissioner Jackson made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Kazich to adjourn. Upon voice vote, the MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY, and the meeting adjourned at 8:19 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Approved:

X

Jessica Plzak
Secretary

X

Lou Mallers
Chairperson