

CITY OF COUNTRYSIDE

*803 Joliet Road
Countryside, IL 60525
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Meeting Minutes

Regular Meeting of the Plan Commission

Zoning Board of Appeals

Tuesday, May 5, 2026

7:00 P.M.

City Hall

Board Members

**Chairman Robert Schwarz, Secretary Tina Grotzke,
Marco Gutierrez, Ronald Ward, Steve Kehr, Jack Benton,
Tom Geraghty, Danielle Edenfield, Jonathan Gertsmeier**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Chairman Schwarz.

Roll Call: Secretary Grotzke called the roll of members physically present:
Present: Robert Schwarz, Tom Geraghty, Marco Gutierrez, Tina Grotzke, Jon Gertsmeier, Ronald Ward, Jack Benton, Danielle Edenfield, Steve Kehr
Also Present: City Attorney Erik Peck, Planning Manager Richard Trent

Approval of Minutes – The regular meeting minutes of April 14, 2026, were previously distributed to Board members.

A motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Gertsmeier, that this matter be APPROVED as presented. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 9 Schwarz, Geraghty, Gertsmeier, Grotzke, Gutierrez, Ward, Benton, Edenfield, Kehr
Nay: 0

Chairman's Comments – There were no comments.

Action Items:

1. CASE #PSU26-0002: Consideration of a Special Use

- a. To consider and recommend a Special Use to permit a drive-through facility at the business (Dunkin' Restaurant) in the B-1 Zoning District at the subject property of 5500 South LaGrange Road.

Chairman Schwarz noted that Cases PSU26-0002 and PZV26-0002 would be heard together.

Ms. Grotzke moved to open the public hearing on both matters, seconded by Ms. Edenfield, and carried by unanimous voice vote. Planning Manager Trent confirmed that the required notices were sent.

The Petitioner would like to demolish the existing building on the approximately 14,418 square foot subject property and reconfigure the site. The property currently has four (4) access points, two (2) of which will be closed due to road improvements. The property would then have one (1) access point from 55th Street and one (1) from LaGrange Road. Mr. Trent shared photos of the elevations.

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan, updated as of March 2024, identifies the subject property as "Community Corridor Commercial". Although not identified in any of the three (3) Subarea Plans, the subject property is referenced under Chapter 5, which outlines one (1) goal and one (1) recommendation for "Commercial and Industrial Areas", as noted in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated May 5, 2026.

The proposed new building would be approximately 1,995 square feet with a drive-through facility. The new site configuration includes smaller landscaped islands and smaller perimeter landscape areas due to the size constraints of the property. A sidewalk connection to LaGrange Road is also being proposed. Mr. Trent shared the Preliminary Floor Plan, with a dining area comprising seven (7) tables. He shared proposed renderings and the Landscape Plan, noting that one (1) of the two (2) proposed landscaped

islands is two feet (2') and two inches (2'') wide, with an area of 39 square feet; landscaped islands are typically eight feet (8') wide and 180 square feet in area. The other landscaped island is proposed to be approximately eight feet (8') and two inches (2'') wide, with an area of 98 square feet. Typically, the perimeter landscape area should be at least five feet (5') wide. Mr. Trent listed the sizes of the proposed perimeter landscape areas, several of which were under five feet (5') wide.

The Petitioner is requesting seven (7) stacking spaces where 10 are typically required. The parking lot is proposed to contain 11 spaces, comprising of 10 standard spaces and 1 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant space; this complies with the minimum spaces required for the use.

The Building Commissioner reviewed the plans and noted that the proposed building requires indication of a fire department connection, the fire hydrant locations, a fire alarm, and a sprinkler system. The Staff Engineer reviewed the plans and noted that the proposed stormwater discharges must comply with the City Code.

Staff recommended approval of the Special Use, as submitted, subject to the fourteen (14) conditions as presented in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated May 5, 2026. If the Special Use is approved, then staff also recommended approval of the Variance regarding stacking spaces, the Variance regarding landscaped islands, and the Variance regarding perimeter parking lot landscaping, with each Variance subject to four (4) conditions as presented in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated May 5, 2026.

Chairman Schwarz clarified that, while one (1) of the Variances was to waive the requirement for perimeter parking lot landscaping, the Petitioner has proposed landscaping.

Mr. Ward inquired whether the access via 55th Street was large enough to allow both ingress and egress. Mr. Trent responded that he believes the intention is to provide right-in, right-out access. Left turns will not be possible due to a median.

Ms. Grotzke inquired whether the three foot (3') wide portion of perimeter landscaping along the alley would contain more than grass and regarding the age of the existing building. Mr. Trent responded that it would likely contain bushes and plantings such as decorative grasses. Staff will ensure that recommended species pursuant to Section 10-15-3-6 of the Code are included. The building has been in existence since at least the 1990s.

Mr. Gutierrez acknowledged that the subject site is small and expressed understanding of the Variance requests. Mr. Trent responded that the proposed new building would be smaller than the existing building to allow for the drive-through facility. Restaurants without drive-through facilities experienced a disadvantage during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ms. Edenfield noted that the Petitioner had included as much landscaping as possible in the small subject site and that the area near the alley may need to be addressed.

Mr. Gertsmeier requested confirmation of whether ingress and egress would be possible at both access points and whether all parking was moved to the north side. Mr. Trent responded that both were correct.

Mr. Geraghty inquired whether the proposed sidewalk along 55th Street aligned with the long-term plans for the pathway along the street. He noted that the area is flood-prone and inquired whether the applicant would consider incorporating permeable pavers in the parking area. Mr. Trent responded that he believes the layout for the sidewalk was taken from the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) plan. Per the Staff Engineer, some of the stormwater will flow to 55th Street, and some to LaGrange Road.

Mario Valentini, Jacob Mathiasen, and Asif Nathani were sworn in by Chairman Schwarz. Mr. Mathiasen, MRV Architects, shared a brief presentation. The Petitioners believe that the removal of the two (2) access points near the intersection has eliminated any concern of the drive-through queue backing up onto the road. Further, Dunkin' Donuts has a brief service time.

Mr. Nathani, the owner, noted that he has wanted to implement a drive-through facility since before the COVID-19 pandemic. After the pandemic and after IDOT decided to add a median to the road, it became more urgent to install a drive-through in order to remain relevant.

Mr. Valentini, MRV Architects, noted that, under the Ordinance, stormwater management is not required for a site of this size; however, the Petitioners intend to add whatever form of stormwater management IDOT recommends. Permeable pavers carry significant maintenance issues, but they will be considered if IDOT recommends them.

Mr. Gutierrez inquired regarding the material of the proposed parking lot. Mr. Valentini responded that it would be asphalt with a concrete drive-through lane.

Mr. Gertsmeier inquired whether the owner had drive-throughs at his other restaurant locations and regarding the service time. Mr. Nathani responded that approximately twenty (20) of his restaurant locations currently have drive-throughs. The service time at his restaurants is typically under 100 seconds. The proposed internal enhancements would also reduce the service time, and customers are increasingly ordering via mobile phone. Dunkin' currently requires five (5) stacking spaces. Dunkin' restaurants are busiest from 6:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. daily.

Ms. Grotzke inquired whether Dunkin' restaurants were busy at other times. Mr. Nathani responded that many customers typically visit around 2:00 p.m., but that time is not as busy as the morning hours.

Mr. Benton inquired whether IDOT's improvements to 55th Street and LaGrange Road would benefit the restaurant. Mr. Valentini responded that the drive-through was proposed largely due to the road improvements. Right-in, right-out access is efficient, and regular customers would find a path to the restaurant. Drivers on their way to work would also be likely to visit.

Julie Skokna, 5446 South Madison Avenue, was sworn in by Chairman Schwarz. She identified herself as a frequent Dunkin' customer and expressed concern that the drive-through facility would result in back-ups onto the road and that noise from the drive-through intercom would carry to the nearby residential areas. She also inquired regarding workers' wages and raises. Mr. Trent responded that, while staff believes the noise will not carry due to the distance and existence of barriers, if noise complaints are received, a noise study would be conducted by a third-party contractor (to be paid for by the property owner). Mr. Nathani responded that employees receive steady wages and performance-based raises.

Chairman Schwarz asked whether the Petitioner had any objection to the petition being "Exhibit 1" of the hearing, or to Mr. Trent's presentation being "Exhibit 2." The Petitioners responded that they did not.

Mr. Geraghty moved to close the evidentiary portion of the public hearing, seconded by Mr. Ward, and carried by unanimous voice vote.

A motion was made by Ms. Grotzke, seconded by Mr. Gutierrez, to approve CASE #PSU26-0002, Consideration of a Special Use, subject to the fourteen (14) conditions as presented in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated May 5, 2026. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 9 Schwarz, Geraghty, Gertsmeier, Grotzke, Gutierrez, Ward, Benton, Edenfield, Kehr

Nay: 0

2. CASE #PZV26-0002: Consideration of a Variance

- a. To consider and recommend a Variance to reduce the number of stacking spaces per customer service window from 10 to 7 spaces in the B-1 Zoning District;
- b. To consider and recommend a Variance to waive the size and configuration requirements for landscaped islands of 180 square feet in area and 8 feet in width, as measured from back of curb to back of curb in the B-1 Zoning District; and
- c. To consider and recommend a Variance to waive the requirement for perimeter parking lot landscaping consisting of a 5-foot-wide landscape area around that part of the perimeter of all parking lots which abut another parcel or right of way for the proposed redeveloped business site (Dunkin' Restaurant) in the B-1 Zoning District at the subject property of 5500 S. LaGrange Road.

The presentation and discussion for this case were conducted in conjunction with those of CASE #PSU26-0002.

A motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Ms. Edenfield, to approve Variances A, B, and C, subject to the four (4) conditions for each as presented in the Planning & Zoning Memorandum dated May 5, 2026. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: 9 Schwarz, Geraghty, Gertsmeier, Grotzke, Gutierrez, Ward, Benton, Edenfield, Kehr

Nay: 0

Chairman Schwarz stated that these recommendations will be presented to the City Council at its regular meeting on May 27, 2026. Mr. Trent added that, if City Council approves these cases, the Petitioners would have twelve (12) months from that date to implement the Special Use and six (6) months to implement the Variances.

3. CASE #PTA26-0002: Consideration of a Text Amendment - CONTINUED

- a. To consider and recommend amending Zoning Code Section 10-5A-5 (Yard Areas) to amend the front yard setback language in the R-1 Zoning District; and
- b. To consider and recommend amending Zoning Code Section 10-5B-5 (Yard Areas) to amend the front yard setback language in the R-2 Zoning District.

Mr. Trent presented the background of the case, noting that the concerns expressed by the Board were outlined in the staff report. He shared the language of the proposed Text Amendment as presented on April 14, 2026, and the *revised* language, which removes any reference to the average between the two (2) neighboring dwellings and instead stipulates that homes shall not be located farther back than the farthest principal dwelling on either side of the subject property.

Ms. Grotzke noted that the new language reflected the previous discussions and would not add to homebuilder costs.

Mr. Peck noted that the City Council wished to avoid a scenario where a homebuilder chooses to construct a home 30 feet (30') back even though the two (2) neighboring homes are set 50 feet (50') back; however, the Board expressed more concern with new homes being built further back such that the privacy of existing backyards is compromised.

Mr. Gertsmeier noted that his concern was with offset setbacks in a neighborhood.

Mr. Gutierrez noted that the new language provides homebuilders the freedom to build within a larger envelope and that the required rear setback would prevent homebuilders from building at the back of a lot.

Chairman Schwarz opened the floor to public comment.

Tammy Petrovich, who lives in an R-1 District, expressed concern that allowing homes to be built significantly forward of neighboring homes would cause water runoff issues and block the line of sight from existing homes. She suggested that new homes not be offset from existing homes by greater than five feet (5'). Mr. Trent clarified that ensuring proper grading and drainage is the responsibility of the Staff Engineer.

Pat Schwartz noted that a neighbor wished to build a new, larger house set significantly closer to the property line than hers such that she would not be able to see down the street; the neighbor, who was

on friendly terms with her, agreed to set the house further back to avoid this issue. She noted that existing homeowners would likely not be on such terms with newer neighbors and developers.

Angela Kepley, 10630, 67th Street, suggested that the Board consider limiting how far new homes can be built forward of existing neighboring houses, noting that homeowners would like to be able to see their children down the street and at bus stops.

Mark Kuehn, 6811 Sunset Avenue, noted that he has built several houses and was always told they must be in line with neighboring houses. He noted that, in a neighborhood in which he owns a house, all of the houses are set far back aside from two: one set approximately 30 feet (30') back and one set approximately 20 feet (20') back, creating an unsightly scenario. Mr. Peck clarified that a house cannot be set back 20 feet (20') without an approved Variance.

Ms. Grotzke suggested that, in addition to the stipulation that homes shall not be located farther back than the farthest principal dwelling on either side of the subject property, language be **added** to stipulate that homes shall not be located farther forward than the closest neighboring dwelling.

Mr. Gutierrez noted that the proposed language would be sufficient for the R-2 and R-3 Zoning Districts; however, the R-1 and R-7 Zoning Districts may require more specific language such as that suggested by Ms. Grotzke due to the larger lot sizes. Mr. Trent responded that the R-7 Zoning District currently requires a 30 foot (30') front yard setback and a 50 foot (50') rear yard setback.

Mr. Gertsmeier noted that, if the language suggested by Ms. Grotzke were accepted, builders would still be able to build homes closer to the lot line if a Variance request were granted. Neighbors would then have the opportunity to share their opinions in a public hearing.

Chairman Schwarz clarified that individual notifications were not provided for the current case, as it was for a Text Amendment; however, notifications would be sent directly to neighbors in the case of individual Variance requests.

Mr. Trent noted that the language suggested by Ms. Grotzke could potentially nullify the existing 30 foot (30') setback requirement and suggested it remain as a minimum.

Mr. Peck noted that he and Mr. Trent could revise the language for the R-1 Zoning District. He inquired whether they should address how far back a home could be built as well as how far forward. Mr. Benton suggested that **both** be addressed.

A motion was made by Mr. Schwarz, seconded by Ms. Grotzke, that discussion of CASE #PTA26-0002, Consideration of a Text Amendment, be CONTINUED to the June 2, 2026, PC/ZBA meeting. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Public Comments – There were no public comments.

Other Business

Ticket Statistics (for April 2026) – In April, 26 tickets were issued in total, compared to 8 in April 2025. Twenty (20) tickets were issued for parking and storing tractors and trailers compared with three (3) in 2025; and five (5) tickets were issued for trucks parked on property not registered to the business compared to three (3) in 2025. The year-to-date total was 87 tickets, compared to 33 for the same time period in 2025.

2018-26 Zoning Cases – The list of past cases was updated.

Next Meeting – The next meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2026. The agenda will include the continuation of CASE #PTA26-0002 as well as a Concept Plan pitch for a “Car Wash” facility at 9850 Joliet Road under Other Business.

ADJOURNMENT:

A motion was made by Mr. Geraghty that this meeting be ADJOURNED; motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Chairman Schwarz declared the meeting adjourned at 9:45 p.m.

APPROVED:

Respectfully Submitted,



ROBERT SCHWARZ, CHAIRMAN

/ms