

**PORTER COUNTY PLAN COMMISSION**  
**June 28, 2023**

**LOCATION:** County Administrative Center, Ste 205   **TIME:** 5:30 p.m.  
155 Indiana Avenue, Valparaiso IN

**MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE**

Barb Regnitz, Brian Damitz, Bob Gilliana, Greg Simms, Kevin Breitzke, Pam Mishler-Fish, Luther Williams and Rick Burns. Nikky Witkowski was absent. Also present were Robert Thompson, Kristy Marasco, and Attorney Scott McClure.

Rick Burns called the meeting to order and led the pledge of allegiance.

**Minutes**

**MOTION:** Kevin Breitzke moved to approve minutes from the March 22, April 5 and April 26, 2023 meetings. Pam Mishler-Fish seconded the motion and so approved with an 8-0 voice vote.

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**New Business**

**Bob Thompson read the Rules of Conduct for a Public Hearing**

**ZO-2023-0029**

**Applicant:** Project Ribeye, c/o Nelson R. Schoon

**Location:** Southeast corner of the crossroads of State Road 231 and State Road 2, Hebron, IN 46341 (Boone Township)

**Zoning:** A1, General Agriculture District

**Request:** To rezone a parcel of land from (A1) General Agriculture District to (I2) General Industrial District, for the proposed Project Ribeye, meat processing plant

Nelson Schoon and Sandy Schoon– Washington Township presented. They want to build a meat processing plant on the south east corner of the intersection of SR 231 and SR 2. This is going to be a state-of-the-art facility. It will have transparency so people can see what is taking place there. It will have a tremendous impact in Hebron and Northwest Indiana. Local farmers would love to go to custom processors but there is a 6 month wait. They will be processing 108 cattle per week and 20 hogs per week. He is committing for the month of July and first part of August to take care of every 4-H animal by giving them a processing slot. They are doing this for six surrounding counties. They are installing a sewer line and water line that is about 1.4 miles from Hebron’s wastewater facility. He is paying for that. They want to use public utilities because he wants to be good neighbors. No animals housed overnight. Pen area is enclosed and cleaned every night. It is a USDA inspected facility. This location is a 4 way stop. This makes it a safer area. The offal is barreled and removed daily. All of their packaging will be marked with what farm it came from and where it was processed. Harvesting floor will be off limits to public. They will be doing some smoking of meat. There is a temperature-controlled kiosk outside for those who cannot make it to pickup an order before the end of the work day. Wages will be over County average at \$25.00 to \$45. Employees also receive health benefits, disability insurance, he matches their retirement plan, they get a breakfast and lunch every day, and opportunity for overtime. His career is a financial planner. He has hired someone who knows the butchering process. He has received approximately 30 calls from various professionals who want to help with this project.

## **Public Hearing**

Marianne O'Connor – 663 W 1000 S. Concerns: If approved is there a time frame on water and sewer? Wants more information about biohazard safety. How will this impact the local environment? What measures will be taken to mitigate negative impact from the plant. If there is runoff what will be done to fix it? How will farmers be compensated if they have to use contaminated water? Are there plans for monitoring and reporting? If there is soil erosion what will be done about it? What will be done to prevent aquatic dead zones in Kankakee? Have environmental assessments been conducted? If so, what were the findings? Are there any plans in place to handle emergencies? Details of lease or sale of property. What will happen to property when they are no longer there? What if an animal does get out? Will animals see a veterinarian before slaughter? What happens if they get a sick animal? Will they receive any animals that are treated with antibiotics? She would like to know what will be done with particulate matter that is found near meat processing plants? Wants details about water usage for the plant. How can Hebron provide the water? Currently they have at least four boil orders per year. What ensures water is treated before moving into Hebron facility? What about increased traffic. Should entrance be on 231? She is concerned her property value will go down and read a report supporting that. Will property owners be compensated? What will County do about loss in tax revenue from lower property values? Are any benefits being considered to offset the environmental impact?

Janet Veach – 716 W 1014 S, Hebron. She presented a list of questions. The intersection where this is located is a dragstrip. It is very unsafe with speeders. She is worried about her property values. Will she be forced to hookup to City water? She cannot afford the high rate of Hebron water.

Alexandria Gust – 1024 Begonia Street, DeMotte. She grew up near this project and her parents are still there. Are there benefits going back into the community? Is there a percentage of the employees who will be residents of Hebron? What is considered a “local” farmer? The four-way stop is a nightmare. Have any studies been done regarding traffic flow? Are there plans for future expansion? Have plans already been drawn up? What is the square footage of this building? Why isn't Purdue here tonight for support? Have they looked at other locations? Have environmental studies been done? Are there any implications to drainage or anything that could cause more massive flooding? Who are other co-owners?

Bob Barker - 705 W State Road 2. Traffic will be a problem. He has a business there and it already is bad. Does water get treated before it goes back to the plant?

Alan O'Connor - 663W 1000 S, DeMotte. This was going on in DeMotte. Why did it shift to Hebron? Traffic will be bad. There are frost laws.

## **Rebuttal from Petitioner**

Nelson Schoon – He has been in discussions with Hebron and what levels of wastewater contaminants they can handle. He is below the levels. There will be a pre-treatment system at his facility. All blood will be barreled and taken away. He anticipates using about 10,000 gallons of water per day. He understands the traffic issues. He will not have semis coming in his facility. Approximately 5-6 trucks with trailers per day. He is trying to get the entrance off of CR1000. The pens are cleaned every day. This is a USDA inspected facility. They inspect every animal. If there is an issue it will not be processed. The building is 15,000 square feet and 2,500 square foot pen area. The pens have been designed so the animals will not be stressed. The DeMotte Town Council stonewalled them for nine months. They would not work with them and give them information they needed. He lost patience with them and looked at the spot in Hebron. It is much safer than the site in DeMotte. He is toying around with the idea of having a farmer's market on the grounds. Everything is contained inside. The only soil erosion would be at construction time and that will be controlled by the contractor. The area will be landscaped. Air quality should not be affected. Tie-ins to the water and sewer will be up to Hebron. Traffic will be the only noise. They will start receiving animals at 6:00 a.m. Some employees will be in at 7:00 and most will be 8-5:00 pm. The air quality will only be affected by the smoker. They expect to use a maximum of 10,000 gallons of water per day. They will hire local residents.

They hope to have an apprentice program with the High School to learn the butcher trade. He and his wife and daughters are the majority owners. They have a few investors.

## **Public**

Janet Veach - 716 W 1014 S, Hebron. If this is zoned to Industrial and this business does not make it, will it revert to Ag. If this is a USDA facility, do they have a holding time for the animals?

Alan O'Connor - 663W 1000 S, DeMotte. Everyone near here is going to have property value loss. How will they reimburse him for his loss?

## **Rebuttal from Petitioner**

Nelson Schoon – The sale of the property is contingent on receiving the re-zoning to Industrial. If that does not happen it stays Ag.

Attorney Scott McClure – Staff recommendations are that the permitted uses will be scaled down for Industrial. They are required to be on City sewer and water.

Nelson Schoon – People think of a meat processing facility as a slaughter house. That would be detrimental to property values. This is not a slaughter house. It is a state-of-the-art facility. He does not believe this will affect property values.

Diedra Deslich – 10696 Georgetown, DeMotte. As far as the USDA holding, you are correct. If you do not do a humane holding, then it is 18 hours. Our holding is 6 hours. The pen area will be reinforced so animals cannot get out. In a USDA facility animals have to be 14-day antibiotic free. USDA will test. If it is a problem, they will send the animal back to the farmer.

John Spinks – 108 Fairlane Drive, Hebron. The town of Hebron wants this facility because of the jobs it will provide. They have the capability to provide water and sewer. The full Council in Hebron will have to approve this. They have had engineers look at the project and they say it is something the Town can handle. They are hoping the success of this project will encourage others to move to Hebron. Every community has boil orders. Hebron is improving that. New business will help cover costs of making repairs. Residents will not be forced to tie-in to the sewer and water.

Nelson Schoon – They want to be transparent. People can email him at [info@projectribeye.com](mailto:info@projectribeye.com). He will respond to any questions or comments.

Seeing no one else wishing to address the Board, Rick Burns declared the Public Hearing closed.

## **Questions/Comments from the Board**

Kevin Breitzke – Are the hours going to be 8-5 or will there be a second shift.

Nelson Schoon – There might be a second shift but for customer hours it will be 8-5.

Kevin Breitzke – You are paying for the sewer and water extension?

Nelson Schoon – Yes. There will be about 25 cattle per day.

Kevin Breitzke - Traffic is always a concern. The State has to have proof of needing traffic signals. He knows other type of animal slaughter or feeding facilities can affect property values but he does not see that happening with this facility.

Greg Simms – He hopes this would help slow people down with trucks going in and out. This is an opportunity for the people. He thinks we have the number one county in the State. He thinks this will help. They have been looking for things that will bring people to the south part of the County.

Pam Mishler-Fish – Will the solids be in a 55-gallon drum or will there be a tank?

Nelson Schoon – It goes into barrels on the spot. They are picked up every day. The water filtration is designed to make solids float to the top. The solids will be scraped off the top.

Pam Mishler-Fish – Will there be any hazardous cleaning solvents?

Diedra Deslich – It will be water and vinegar.

Pam Mishler-Fish – Will you have scrubbers on the smokers?

Diedra Deslich – They will be self clean. There will be very little particulate matter that comes out.

Brian Damitz – There is an advantage to the sewer and water extension. He encouraged the City to think about making it bigger for anyone that might want to tie-in.

John Spinks – They have talked about this and met with engineers.

Brian Damitz – This infrastructure is going to be very expensive.

Nelson Schoon – This is where his years of being a financial planner have paid off. He has looked at the project to see what the weaknesses and threats are. Then he looked for people to handle those. That is why he has 30 people on board to help. He has revised his business model about six times. Interest rates and material costs have gone up. Every time he runs the model it still makes money.

Brian Damitz – The infrastructure is beneficial to the neighbors. A significant amount of tax revenue will help possibly update some of the utilities.

John Spinks – He explained the funds for improvements will come from the sale of the utilities not property taxes. This is a Porter County Project. The town of Hebron is on the service side of water and sewer.

Brian Damitz – He likes the concept of advertising local farmers. This is important. Hog farms and chicken farms smell. It does not appear this is an issue with this project. He does not think this is going to affect property values negatively.

Barb Regnitz – Are the cattle that come in by reservation?

Nelson Schoon - Yes.

Barb Regnitz – The retail hours are 8-5. A lot of people cannot get there by 5.

Nelson Schoon – That is why we will have the kiosk outside.

**MOTION: Kevin Breitzke moved to give a favorable recommendation to the Commissioners with Written Commitments specific to food production and processing and that sewer and water be built in place with agreements with the Town of Hebron. Sale of agriculture products only. Barb Regnitz seconded the motion and so approved with an 8-0 ballot vote.**

Luther Williams – Can they offer classes on butchering?

Nelson Schoon – We want to educate people. We want to have chefs come in and do classes. Those are visions. Just need to get it built first.

Bob Thompson – This is a recommendation. It will be heard before the Commissioners on July 11, 2023 at 10:00 a.m.

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There being no further business, the June 28, 2023 meeting of the Plan Commission was adjourned.

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Rick Burns, President

Attest:

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Robert W. Thompson, AICP  
Director