

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION  
CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO  
February 7, 2023  
Council Caucus Room/Via Zoom**

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. February 7, 2023, and the following responded to Roll Call:

**PRESENT:** Mayor Gregory P. Kurtz  
Vice Mayor Dave Grendel, Chairman  
Cheryl Chase  
Joseph Moeller  
William Gutermuth

**OTHERS**

**PRESENT:** Michael Gero, Building Official  
Gregory J. O'Brien, Law Director  
Jessica Hyser, Economic Development Director  
Don Ramm, City Engineer  
Anne Lynch, City Planner  
Vern Blaze, Finance Director

**Old Business:**

**Approval of Minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on  
January 3, 2023.**

**New Business:**

1. **Cleveland Dance Project, PPN 561-02-023 & 561-01-010** – Requesting a special use variance for Cleveland Dance Project to operate a dance studio and wellness headquarters.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel welcomed everyone to the February 7, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.

I want to special welcome Amanda Sharrer, our Planning Commission Secretary. Amanda is easing into her role, and she's done BZA meetings and also Architectural Board, so this is her first Planning Commission. We welcome you and hopefully, you'll be here for many years and taking minutes for us and whoever's on this board.

The Chairman stated to get started let's call the role, please.

The first item, old business, is the approval of the minutes of The Planning Commission meeting that was held on January 3, 2023.

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**A motion was made by Joseph Moeller, seconded by Mayor Kurtz, to approve the Minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of January 3, 2023.**

**ROLL CALL:           Yeas: Moeller, Kurtz, Grendel, Chase**  
**Nays: None**  
**Abstain: Gutermuth**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

Ms. Chase stated there's a few that are 2022.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated well, we have under new business one item on the agenda: the Cleveland Dance Project. The Permanent Parcel Number is 561-02-023 and 561-01-010. I guess the address is 5505 Valley Belt Rd. and it's requesting a special use variance for Cleveland Dance Project to operate a dance studio and wellness headquarters. We have in attendance; will you please tell us your names?

Ms. Cerveny stated I'm Anna Cerveny, I'm the director and owner of the Cleveland Dance Project.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated welcome Anna.

Ms. Gauntner stated I'm Jenna Guantner, I'm with CBRE, and I'm representing Anna.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated very good and excellent job with the information we have, the documentation was wonderful. You really did provide us with a thorough background. Before we get into your presentation, Annie, I know you gave us the usual staff report, if you want to give us a brief summary of that. Either you or Jessica.

City Planner Lynch stated The Cleveland Dance Project was founded in 2017 by the owner, Anna. It's an adult-only dance program and also a wellness operation. Currently, they're renting various studio spaces and looking for a permanent home.

So, it's the largest adult dance group and so they are looking at the building at 5505 Valley Belt Road. The project will require a special conditional use permit, so they are looking to have the studio and wellness headquarters at this location. It's a multi-tenant building and from the information we received from the owner, the property owner, and the management doesn't seem to have any issues with any configuration of their proposed use and any parking that goes along with that.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I believe there's a number of tenants, I think we had a list of all the tenants that are in the complex. I think the only issue that was brought up in the report we received from Annie was regarding the parking, but I think Sunday is

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your main day and the evenings. By that time most of the other businesses are closed except for maybe on a Saturday, so there doesn't seem to be any conflict between your usage and the parking needs of the other tenants that are in the building. I guess if you want you can give us a little description of the programs, will they put on performances, just give us a little idea because it's very intriguing.

Ms. Cerveny stated I am happy to do so. I'm actually a full-time physical therapist, I work at University Hospitals in Independence and in 2017 I decided to found the Cleveland Dance Project. I grew up dancing, and I found that there weren't a lot of great adult dance opportunities in the area, so I formed it myself. We put on two shows a year and they are held at various schools. We've had ours at Independence Middle School before in the past.

Our dancers range in age from 18-65. I think we've had in the past and it is for all levels, so there are complete beginners who've never danced before all the way up to the professional who's looking for just a little bit of a side dance opportunity. Right now, we rent from various studios all around the greater Cleveland area, so we hold some classes, but it's been limiting to not be able to have my own space where I can hold the classes I want to in the time frames, I want to. Mostly our classes happen on nights and weekends because most of the adults work jobs, so during normal work hours, they're not available.

As a physical therapist, I thought it was really important to blend my background as a medical professional with dance because if you know any dancers or if you're an adult yourself you probably have pain, and I think it's important to provide that education to these adult dancers too, and how to maintain their bodies and keep themselves living the most well life that they can. So, providing some of that education to holding a group that has classes and things like that to help people to manage their injuries. We just had our dance or wellness workshop this past weekend where we brought in nutritionists and dieticians and Pilates instructors, so it's kind of a whole holistic thing, but our main focus is dance.

Mayor Kurtz stated so, it's not a learning dance.

Ms. Cerveny asked what was that?

Mayor Kurtz stated a learn to dance.

Ms. Cerveny stated it is a learn to dance too, and we do have beginner classes.

Mayor Kurtz asked like ballroom dancing?

Ms. Cerveny stated I'd love to get more in ballroom dancing. We're doing some of that, but if you're ever interested.

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Several people began speaking at once.

Ms. Cerveny stated we'll teach you; it'll be fun.

Ms. Chase asked where was this recent event that you had?

Ms. Cerveny stated it was at Inlet Dance Center.

Ms. Chase asked when did you have that?

Ms. Cerveny stated Sunday.

Ms. Chase asked what was the attendance?

Ms. Cerveny stated we had about 35 people.

Ms. Chase stated wonderful. Now, do you sell products?

Ms. Cerveny stated we just sell some merchandise like shirts, hats, and water bottles.

Ms. Chase stated but not supplements, remedies, stuff like that.

Ms. Cerveny stated no.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked how many employees are there of yours?

Ms. Cerveny stated currently, there's 4 of us basically that do the majority of the work. We have teachers that come and go. We don't have any regular teachers that teach frequently because it is kind of an ever-changing business model with available times for us to hold classes being different depending on what studios are available for us to rent from.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I noticed that you also formed a charitable; is that part of your...

Ms. Cerveny stated yes.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked can they survive entertainment maybe for nursing homes?

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah, I have a 501c3 that's very closely related where that's kind of more the wellness arm of things, and we provide mindfulness, movement, and outreach to different community groups. So, we work very closely with The Gathering Place which is

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a cancer support organization. We also work with Laura's Home, which is a women's home crisis shelter, so we go there, and we provide wellness and movement-type education in classes for them. We've been starting to do some retirement homes as well, but they seem to just like to watch us dance rather than dance with us.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated in the 7 years my mom was in a nursing home, that was a big entertainment; it's when they had ballroom dancing, they had different entertainers come there, and I know that provided a lot of the enjoyment for the residents.

Ms. Chase stated so, special needs population, and I'm just thinking in terms of parking space size and such. Parkinson's patients, things like that, have you subbed group populations?

Ms. Cerveny stated we haven't done much of that. I would love someday for that to be a part of what we do, I see it a lot at work as a therapist.

Ms. Chase stated I'm part of the non-profit that brings tennis to populations that don't otherwise have tennis, and we've got wheelchair, veterans, amputees, Parkinson's, and things like that, and the spaces that we need, need to be bigger and wider. I just wanted to make sure that you have what you need to accommodate those populations if that was a regular thing. Maybe (inaudible).

Ms. Cerveny stated not yet maybe someday.

Ms. Chase stated and it's small. We may end up with 3 or 4 people for an 8-week session, so you wouldn't need a lot.

Ms. Cerveny stated that's a good thought.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked what is the tryout on the lease? How many years would that be?

Ms. Cerveny stated 5 years.

Mayor Kurtz asked what percentage of the building are you taking going to occupy?

Economic Developer Hyser stated about 4,800 sq. ft.

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah, it's 4,880 sq. ft. and the total (inaudible) is 6,000.

Mayor Kurtz asked what's that?

Several people began speaking at once.

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Ms. Chase stated about 5 over 25-ish.

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah 18.5%.

Mayor Kurtz stated I think we received information from the owner. He had no problem committing this space. The question from my perspective is if he commits to this space and it doesn't get compromised with respect to parking with his other tenants, he owns responsibility and not the City for (inaudible). Fair?

Ms. Cerveny stated sounds fair to me.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked will they be fully occupied then with this? Are there any other...

Ms. Gauntner stated there is one 4,800 sq. ft. vacancy in the other building, also on the (inaudible) they have a few (inaudible). Even with the tenants currently that are there, on a busy day during work hours, we still have adequate parking. There's 28 parking spaces that are just dedicated to CBP during work hours, and after work hours, which is the majority of the business, there's 78.

Ms. Cerveny stated and typically our classes pull like 15-20, maybe 25.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked, and they come from as far as like Columbus?

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah, I've had dancers from Sandusky, Columbus, Detroit; it really is a unique business model, so it's hard to find that kind of thing anywhere in the surrounding areas.

Mayor Kurtz asked so if the Planning Commission came into your studio, what would you do, laugh?

Ms. Cerveny stated no, I would jump for joy.

City Planner Lynch stated she would turn the music on.

Ms. Cerveny asked should we start now?

Mayor Kurtz asked would we sit and watch, or could we participate?

Ms. Cerveny stated you could watch if you wanted to or you could join us. You could participate. As long as you're 18 or over. Are you?

Mayor Kurtz stated well looking around the room Dale may not qualify.

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Ms. Chase asked what attracted you to Independence?

Ms. Cerveny stated I think it's a very central location. Obviously, you guys know that it's a highly desirable location. Because we have people that come from everywhere it's a very nice central spot as far as the Cleveland community and the Akron community and we are split between the two. I've always wanted to live in Independence but couldn't find a spot that worked.

Mayor Kurtz stated you can't live there by the way.

Ms. Cerveny stated I can't live there. I won't be living at my studio, hopefully. Not for too long, not for too many hours of the day.

Ms. Chase stated I'm very excited. I think this is great.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel we look forward to having a program or show at maybe a high school again.

Mayor Kurtz stated well, Dave I think you're going to participate.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I'll be an emcee, but that's it.

Ms. Chase stated marching at Home Days.

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah.

Ms. Chase stated I think it's a great idea, and I think that people will bring to the city. Our people that we welcome to share the community with. So, thank you for considering Independence.

Ms. Cerveny stated thank you for having us.

Mayor Kurtz stated so, we have to set the Public Hearing I believe, correct?

Economic Developer Hyser stated yes, there needs to be a Public Hearing. We had talked to Jenna and kind of explained that process to them, and they understand the process. So, that would be scheduled for next month and then the process would then be for Council to approve the special conditional use.

Mayor Kurtz asked the Public Hearing would be before the Planning Commission?

Economic Developer Hyser stated correct.

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Mayor Kurtz stated then we could vote to make a recommendation to City Council in the following week, so Council can then entertain the recommendation.

Economic Developer Hyser stated correct. If I misspoke Greg O'Brien can correct me.

Mayor Kurtz stated yes.

Law Director O'Brien stated no you're correct. The only thing is traditionally we have for special use or conditional use permits Mayor, Vice Mayor as you know, and the Planning Commission knows, sometimes we held it for 30 days to allow public comment, but there's certainly exceptions that we've allowed for that as well.

Mayor Kurtz stated I think one thing we can do is see what type of questions are asked or concerns people bring to the Public Hearing. So, I'd say the best case is March approval, and the worst case is April approval. Or worst case it'd be we don't approve it, but you'd know that in March. I think you'd have a good flavor of that in March.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated yeah.

Mayor Kurtz stated we wouldn't have to waste your time, but if it's good then we'd give you more clarity as to what you can anticipate so you can start planning. Is that fair?

Ms. Cerveny stated yes. Is there anything else we can do in the meantime?

Mayor Kurtz stated no, I'm just curious. I'm trying to get a picture of what you actually do other than entertainment.

Ms. Chase stated you and you dance. Take a dance class.

Economic Developer Hyser stated so, when you look at dance class, you can stop me if I speak out of turn. It's mostly geared towards youth, and so the idea is now that what happened when you're passed 18, and so now this kind of gives you that opportunity if that's something you want to do. I'll relate to swimming since that's my background, it's like okay you can join a swim team when you were young, but what do you do when you're older? You join a master's group, and so this is that type of thing.

Mayor Kurtz stated, or you got to the Civic Center.

Economic Developer Hyser stated, or you go to the Civic Center.

Mayor Kurtz stated for free.

Economic Developer Hyser stated correct you can do that.



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Ms. Chase stated tennis is the same way. So, I play about 4-5 times a week, and the same thing if you play competitively, then you get out of any sort of established educational system and you're hoping to find people to play with. This is a great opportunity, plus there's so many health benefits just in terms of stretching, joint mobility, or balance. So many adult injuries are related to balance, which is related to a lack of mobility in the ankles and knees. It's going to make the community healthier, hopefully, people in the city will use it.

Mayor Kurtz stated in talking about community, think about it if we do some sharing with information to support you, in communities sometimes you can give people a community discount or a resident discount.

Ms. Cerveny stated sure can.

Mayor Kurtz stated you have to take care of the residents.

Ms. Chase stated love that.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked are there many alterations you have to make to the building itself?

Ms. Cerveny stated not many. There's a little demo on that side, just to open up that studio space, but we're leaving the drop ceiling on that side for heating and cooling purposes. Then, the big thing as far as installation goes is the flooring for dancers, especially adult dancers. We have to install what's called a sprung floor, so it's a wood system that kind of crisscrosses to allow for some cushioning for joints that are repetitively jumping and running up and down. So, it really does make a big difference which I never noticed as a kid, but once I started dancing as an adult in studios, it's like ooh this floor's not sprung.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated well like the Mayor mentioned you could put on a program once you get established up at the Civic Center. Invite the public there for a demonstration.

Ms. Cerveny stated once we have our own space it'll be easier to actually host community events in time frames that make sense. Right now, we do a lot of rentals at like 8 at night or Sundays. If you're not super committed to dance like some of these dancers are, it's like well I have things to do. So, it'll be nice to have a space where I can host my own hours.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked Mike, do you have any comments regarding this application?

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Building Official Gero stated no, I just feel that this could be a good use for the space and the property, their parking situation does not challenge some of the other businesses there because of their off-hours parking. As long as they follow the parking code I don't see any issue with this.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated thank you, Mike.

Mr. Moeller stated I was just going to say, the Mayor mentioned ballroom dancing, what are the other types of dances that you're actively doing with this group of individuals today?

Ms. Cerveny stated we do a lot of contemporary, jazz, hip-hop, ballet, tap, and musical theatre, and we have done some ballroom. To answer your question a little bit further of what we actually do is we hold adult classes that are open to the public, but then we also put on 2 showcases a year and in that showcase, we open up applications for choreographers from the community and they can apply to any style they want.

So, our show is kind of contingent upon who applies with what, so there are seasons where we have Bollywood, heels pieces, we had like a Japanese dance one year. Then, there are seasons where it's a little bit more like contemporary jazz, hip-hop, your usual styles of dance, and not so much of the cultural stuff. We've had salsa, we've had swing, but it's not as big of a component as I'd like it to be.

Mayor Kurtz asked is it a fitness/dance combination?

Ms. Cerveny stated right now it's mostly dance, but like I said once I have my own space, I'd like to incorporate more wellness and fitness into it and do more Pilates, yoga, and all those things that as adults just give us the opportunity to move.

Mayor Kurtz asked so, if we walked in for a session, we'd just join you?

Ms. Cerveny stated sure, just schedule that online and come on down. They're divided by level and style, so you don't walk into a class you shouldn't be in. Make sure you do your research ahead of time, but if you came into an advanced ballet class and you wanted to stay, I wouldn't stop you.

Several people began speaking at once.

Mayor Kurtz stated that's a scary thought, me trying to do ballet.

Economic Developer Hyser stated I think you can do it.

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Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked you foresee that if this gets really popular that you might make this your profession and get out of physical therapy?

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah, I work a lot right now because I am full-time at UH, and this is becoming a very full-time occupation as well as my role as the executive director of the non-profit too, so I do work a lot and I would like to step back a little bit from the physical therapy and do more of a part-time role. I feel like I have a lot of medical knowledge that can be really helpful in this capacity.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated sure. I relate this back in the '70s, one of my (inaudible), he was the first trained out of the incorporated gymnastics world. They start off with, Joan and Ryan (inaudible), they start off just as part-time. They were teachers at Brecksville and as you know now, they're so popular and so successful with the Brecksville High School Gymnastics program and also from all ages. He started off as a schoolteacher mainly, and part-time gymnastics instructor and how he grew to provide employment to their children and grandchildren too, they've been highly successful, so that's something I can foresee, I look down the road and you'll have a successful program like that too.

Mayor Kurtz stated I can see how you could at some point when you're prepared and organized coming to our Civic Center and put on classes or do things for our population and to expand your population. It could be something exciting.

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah, I'd love to.

Ms. Chase stated it's a really great avenue to be healthier.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I think they're going to have a dance program for the youngsters starting up very soon, I think that was presented to Emily.

Ms. Chase stated to your point, my son started with a rinky-dink karate class at a neighboring city's rec center because it was affordable and it was a good time, and he's now a Cleveland Police officer with a second-degree black belt at Strong Style because we could afford to try it. And because that seed was planted, then it was seeking where do you teach regularly, and you got to those places and just think about that opportunity.

Economic Developer Hyser stated one thing I want to point out about this project too, is that this property and the adjoining property are owned by the same owners, so I think that also should soothe any sort of issues in terms of the parking.

Mayor Kurtz stated it needs to go on the record saying that he would be responsible for any deficiencies or any challenges relative to his client base and it's not the City's.

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Ms. Cerveny stated one other thing that I wanted to point out to you because I think it was brought up in our last meeting, that there are dance studios in Independence already, but I think mine serves a very unique and (inaudible) purpose.

Mayor Kurtz stated I think you touched on one of the reasons that you're here because we're easy access to everything. You don't have to be right here, you can be eastside, westside, or downtown, and it fits their need.

Ms. Cerveny stated adults won't come if it's not easy.

Several people began speaking at once.

Ms. Gauntner stated Anna's been looking for 3 years, so I just want to point that out. This is her dream space.

Ms. Cerveny stated I've been looking for 3 years because I've been very picky about it. Poor Jenna and (inaudible), my two realtors.

Mayor Kurtz asked what's the average age?

Ms. Cerveny stated I think on average, most of our dancers fall between ages 20 and 40, late 30s.

Mayor Kurtz stated we all fall fit into that.

Ms. Chase stated my joints might not fit in that.

Ms. Cerveny stated we do have a lot of other people, like older people and some of the babies too, like ages 18-21. It's been really neat because sometimes kids will bring their parents and they'll dance together or parents will bring their children and dance together, so it's been fun.

Mayor Kurtz stated that's exciting. I can see being dragged into something like that.

Ms. Cerveny stated you don't have to tell them if you don't want to.

Mayor Kurtz stated they'll be telling me, I'm sure. They read the minutes.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated so, Mayor I guess the next step is that this will be a Public Hearing before our March meeting.

Mayor Kurtz stated we'll just do a motion for a Public Hearing at 5:15 pm. Or we can do a 5 o'clock with the Planning Commission immediately following. Either one.

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Ms. Chase asked are we looking at the first Tuesday of the month?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated the first Tuesday in March would be March 7<sup>th</sup>, at 5:15 pm.

Mayor Kurtz stated at 5:15 pm.

Ms. Cerveny asked should I plan to be here for that too?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated definitely.

Mayor Kurtz stated with Planning Commission immediately following.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I'll make that motion.

Mr. Moeller stated second.

**A motion was made by Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel, seconded by Joseph Moeller, to schedule a Public Hearing for the Cleveland Dance Project for a special conditional use permit on March 7, 2023, at 5:15 pm.**

**ROLL CALL:           Yeas: Grendel, Moeller, Kurtz, Chase, Gutermuth  
                              Nays: None  
                              MOTION CARRIED**

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked are there any other questions before we leave our guests here? We wish you a lot of luck and we will see you next month. Hopefully, we can expedite it, but the very latest would be April, but hopefully maybe next month.

Ms. Chase stated I wonder if the space would be rentable for the Cav's dancers?

Ms. Cerveny stated I know some of them.

Ms. Chase stated the Cavaliers are right here and a lot of them are the different ballet/workout places (inaudible).

Ms. Cerveny stated yeah, a lot of them have danced with us.

Mayor Kurtz stated it is Cleveland Clinic Courts.

Ms. Cerveny asked do I need to bring anything to the hearing?

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Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I don't believe so unless something new comes to light, but what you provided was so thorough.

Mayor Kurtz stated something that you want to show if you have any marketing information you want to embellish upon, feel free, but other than that it'll be more just questions. You'll have a chance to make a presentation, and then it will be open to the public for any questions or if Planning Commission members have a question, then we'll close the public hearing and go on to the business.

Ms. Chase stated maybe a class schedule just to give a sense.

Mayor Kurtz stated yeah, that would be good. Can you send that over?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated thank you very much, we'll see you next time. Anything for the betterment of the group?

Mayor Kurtz stated I'd like to just leave this comment. There are a lot of different moving parts going on relative to projects or potential zonings, too vague to say here's an issue, but at some point, in the near future I would hope we can have a meeting or a workshop. This would be driven by some of the opportunities that we should throw on the wall, but not necessarily put on the table.

I just want to get the Planning Commission the knowledge base and get some feedback or input. I think it'd be important as we become more, based on our meeting this morning if we can put ourselves in a position to throw things on the wall rather than just waiting until we have something that's on the table. If we do something like that we'll prepare an agenda or at least get some information out to you to be able to think about.

Mr. Moeller stated sounds good.

Ms. Chase stated I do travel a lot for work, but if it's a time I can't be in (inaudible), I'll just conference in.

Mayor Kurtz stated zoom in. It works really well for the gentlemen that are zooming in today.

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**A motion was made by Mayor Kurtz, seconded by Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel, to adjourn the February 7, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.**

**ROLL CALL:           Yeas: Kurtz, Grendel, Chase, Gutermuth, Moeller**  
**Nays: None**  
**MOTION CARRIED**

**There being no further business, the Planning Commission meeting of February 7, 2023, was adjourned at 5:57 p.m.**

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**Chairman Vice Mayor Dave Grendel**

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**Amanda Sharrer, Planning Commission Clerk**  
Minutes Unapproved at Time of Release 02/10/23