

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

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. March 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

**Old Business:**

**Approval of Minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on February 7, 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.

The Chairman stated the first item of business is the approval of the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting that was held on February 7<sup>th</sup>, and Amanda you did an excellent job with your first meeting, so thank you very much. Are there any corrections to the minutes?

**A motion was made by Joseph Moeller, seconded by William Gutermuth, to approve the Minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of February 7, 2023.**

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

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
**March 7, 2023**

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Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated we have 1 item of business, and of course, that was the subject of our Public Hearing, and it's the request of The Cleveland Dance Project requesting a special use variance for the operation of a dance studio and wellness headquarters at 5505 Valley Belt Rd. in Independence.

Again, I've referred to the staff report that Annie put together last month too, that kind of highlights the important areas of the request. Let me explain before, what we'll do is make a recommendation here.

Mayor Kurtz asked Don, is there anything that you want to say or add?

City Engineer Ramm stated no.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated Mike, I think you had something.

Building Official Gero stated I don't have any issue with it. I am anticipating construction drawings, and then ready for permit.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated he'll be ready for you when you present him with that, so I would like to make a motion to recommend to City Council that they accept the request of The Cleveland Dance Project for a special use variance.

Mayor Kurtz stated second.

**A motion was made by Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel, seconded by Mayor Kurtz, to recommend to City Council the acceptance of the request of The Cleveland Dance Project for a special conditional use permit.**

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

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked Greg, there's nothing else we need regarding this as far as approval?

Law Director O'Brien stated no, we'll make sure it's on the agenda.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated very good. So, it will be on the agenda next Tuesday, and once it gets approved, which I don't anticipate any problem. I think Council will embrace it as we have. So, we'll be waiting to see some of your programs, and hope to see you at Home Days and everything else.

Several people began speaking at once.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
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Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated best of luck.

Mayor Kurtz stated Jess, and team, thank you. Nice job.

Economic Developer Hyser asked you don't really want them back on Tuesday, do you?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated no, I think you will be in contact.

Mayor Kurtz stated we will articulate any issues.

Several people began speaking at once.

Ms. Cervený stated thank you guys so much.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked is there anything on the horizon that Planning Commission could be expecting? You mentioned about the potential church at the north end of town.

Mayor Kurtz stated we did finally meet with a representative from the Mormon Church, the Church of Latter-Day Saints, and they were very apologetic to the community. There was so much information, distorted information being out on the airwaves through social media that they came in to clarify. I think what they're grappling with is the structure they have is very controlled, and even people that are very high in their hierarchy are (inaudible) in advance until they actually move from Salt Lake City, right? Information comes out of the facility, so they were very apologetic, and they will be coming forward with comprehensive plans.

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Economic Developer Hyser stated it's the highest place of their church. This is like for us Catholics, like a Basilica, but very restrictive. The closest temple to us is in Columbus, and the next closest one would be in Pennsylvania.

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**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
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Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I would take that the construction; I think would be (inaudible). I don't think that they're going to just put together...

Mayor Kurtz stated it's not that big of a building, the facility is not that big.

Economic Developer Hyser stated it's about 10,000 sq. ft.

Mayor Kurtz stated 10,000 sq. ft., that's it, but the parking, the utilities, everything has to be manicured and represented in a certain way. So, it's not just coming in here; it's a very structured, very controlled, very monitored situation.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated sounds like it would be a good addition to the community.

Mayor Kurtz stated yeah, it's going to be (inaudible).

Economic Developer Hyser stated he's the stake leader of the area, so it's essentially, sorry I have to translate it into Catholic terms because that's what I understand best. It's kind of like the bishop of the area, it's a voluntary position, and he spends almost 40 hours a week managing this for their church.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I see.

Mayor Kurtz stated I'd have a hard time qualifying, the requirements that they adhere to are very strict. No alcohol, I mean very strict protocols that you have to adhere to. But he was very dynamic and very apologetic, and they're going to be very methodical before they come to the city with plans.

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Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated another thing would be, getting off that subject, but somewhere later this year is the project behind Concordia Lutheran. That'll be an important thing for the Planning Commission directly because it's something brand new as far as the city's concerned, as far as housing goes.

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**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
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That's on the horizon, and we have several other projects that we're working diligently to put our arms around the scope of some of these major projects that we hope to be able to be competitive about land and being in the city of Independence, so there will be a lot of discussion down the road.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated so, we should get ready then.

Mayor Kurtz stated yeah, we can't predict what's going on. After March, 3 years ago, I quit making predictions. Just when you get momentum and you get revved up and you have a vision to really go after something, then something bizarre happens. But it doesn't stifle you or stop you from having the momentum or energy to do something creative, and that's why we have a lot of these things taking place.

If we land some of them it will be great, meanwhile, we still have to stick to the knitting and make sure that we watch what's going on in terms of the foundation of the community. Spring cleaning is around the corner, and we've got to monitor our financial situation. There's a lot of different dynamics, but the glue is intact, and we have to keep it there. It's an exciting time.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated Don, we are going to have some legislation regarding Kleber.

Mayor Kurtz stated we'll be taking those bids tomorrow.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated so, there will be something on the agenda.

Mayor Kurtz stated we'll take those bids tomorrow, we had at least 4 bidders and people were asking a lot of questions.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I'm excited.

Mayor Kurtz stated that's your territory.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated yeah, so I'm excited for those folks. I was delivering some legal work to Maple Heights, and I was appalled at the street. I forget the name of the street, but it's off of Dunham, but it was in such bad condition.

Mayor Kurtz stated you know 50 years ago that was a premier community.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated oh yeah.

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Mayor Kurtz stated that was the premier community, but now they've become a village. It'll be interesting to see these bids come in, and hopefully, we can get that moving. We've had one meeting with the residents, and then as soon as we take the bids and Council approves it, we'll have another meeting with them. We'll find out the timetable goal to get this project done, it's about 700-800 ft.

City Engineer Ramm stated about 800 ft.

Mayor Kurtz stated about 800 ft., it's extensive, it's a lot of moving parts, but nothing that needs 4 contractors incapable of managing.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated, and the residents seem to really be excited.

Mayor Kurtz states yeah, it was a great (inaudible). It's good, it's time.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated yeah.

Mayor Kurtz stated that section of the road is done on Brecksville Rd., and it'll blend right into that. We're still working on plans further south, and then that'll match up with the church, with Longano Drive, with Cornerstone of Hope, and a lot of these different things are molding and blending together. So, there's a lot of things that are taking place right now.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated it's probably a great idea that the Longano project will be next year because of the church, and (inaudible) it's a little more of a project because of the longer road, and I think the entrance to Longano might be a little more.

Mayor Kurtz stated that's going to be changed. If in fact we're prepared, this contractor's finished, if he has a good experience, he'll be more competitive for that one anyways. So, we'll still have the same protocol, we'll get the people engaged before we finish our plans so that we can deal with some of these unique situations to each of the residents, then we'll publicly bid.

We'll have time to deal with the entrance, we'll time to deal with the church, we'll have time to deal with right-of-way we have to acquire because the lanes are only 11' wide, and the state minimum is 12'. We had such success with the first section we did there's no reason we shouldn't try to expand, and make it safer as we go further south to Rockside. Annie did a phenomenal job on putting together the cemetery expansion, and so we're looking at taking that project and putting some infrastructure together on that.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated well, the columbarium should be installed this year.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
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City Planner Lynch stated it should be delivered late April, so site prep started on the existing island.

Economic Developer Hyser stated we'll tour some of the local cemeteries where these are placed, so that we can take a look at how they're placed, and we can make sure that what our vision is and how it works in real life are aligned.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I see. Then, are the plans for the expansion of the cemetery coming along too?

Mayor Kurtz asked when do you think we're going to put that road in?

City Engineer Ramm stated I have to circle back with Jacob on that.

Mayor Kurtz stated that should bump up because people are still moving into the cemetery.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated yeah, that's not going to stop.

City Engineer Ramm stated they're not moving out.

Mayor Kurtz stated no, they're not moving out, but we do have to do some things, we have to (inaudible) infrastructure, so it should all come together this summer.

Law Director O'Brien stated Mayor, I mentioned before, and I know you know this, but I represent the Catholic Diocese and the Cemetery Association, so Aaron Poklar over at the cemetery, they know columbariums. So, if any of your people want to set up a meeting I'm sure they would do that as a courtesy because they really are experts in the field.

Mayor Kurtz stated they're a great group too, they share information. So, I think it'd be appropriate to engage them in the process. If you could create that introduction Greg, that'd be great.

Law Director O'Brien stated I'll do it.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated thank you, Greg.

Mr. Gutermuth stated for strictly Planning Commission purposes, out of all these projects, really we're looking at the Concordia Lutheran Church project; will that be it out of all these? Well, we have the Mormon Church, but the rest of these weren't requiring Planning approval, right?

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
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---

Mayor Kurtz stated some of these commercial properties would also be engaged, if we had to do some right-of-way work installation, so obviously that would be a part of Planning Commission. If we get to that threshold, we have to open that gate.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated and DiGeronimo, I know you said that they're going to be clearing that property off of Brecksville Rd.

Mayor Kurtz stated that's another potential project that Planning Commission may have to weigh in on because there's some potential infrastructure movement, and we have to decide the full scope of that project and to what extent the City wants to participate. That would be another one that we'd have to be a part of the direction we give. We're not ready to have that full blown discussion, but if it gets close enough we have to engage the Planning Commission. I think the brain power at this table could play a very important role.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated yeah, it used to be the forgotten end, but now it's really in the forefront as far as the next 5-10 years.

Mayor Kurtz stated I agree.

Mr. Gutermuth stated it's been a few years since anyone has tried to purchase that hotel by Cozumel, so we're about due for another buyer on that one.

Economic Developer Hyser stated that one is actually owned by the Cozumel (inaudible).

Mr. Gutermuth asked do they own it? It's been listed for sale, then taken down, and listed again.

Mayor Kurtz stated everyone's trying to figure out what to do with it, the best thing is take it down.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I think so.

Mayor Kurtz stated we were close to go on with legislation, but then they asked for support in reprove, so we did. Maybe it's time to at least look at that.

Economic Developer Hyser stated we just got a quote on what it would be to take it down, so it's a conversation that we can have.

Mayor Kurtz stated let's have a meeting with them. Let's get them back engaged because they've had plenty of time.



**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
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---

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated historically speaking, that was the first hotel in Independence, and of course the old timers, we have memories of Howard Johnsons, and going there back in the day.

Mayor Kurtz stated oh yeah, it was a great place to eat back then.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated you go to breakfast there on Sunday morning, and their Friday meals during lent.

Several people began speaking at once.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated it was one of my favorite restaurants for a while.

Mayor Kurtz stated a lot of people went to Howard Johnsons.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated people that lived on the top of the hill worked down there too.

Mayor Kurtz stated there was a woman that I just saw her today, she works at L.A. Pete's, and I used to see her walking to Kleber. Now, she just moved in with her father to help him, he's on (inaudible), but it's easy; you could walk right to work.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated of course, Harry's used to be Brown Derby, and before that it was a furniture store. Of course, Broglio's was (inaudible).

Mayor Kurtz stated (inaudible) they knocked down a school house, but the Skinner family donated it.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated so, there's a lot of historical significance.

Mayor Kurtz stated the brick yard was right there on the corner.

Mr. Gutermuth stated I haven't heard that one referenced before.

Mayor Kurtz stated the brick yard, it was right where Brown Derby; right there on the corner. Between Broglio's and Brown Derby. Then there's Rockside, we could have a whole discussion on Rockside, but we're not going to do that.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated bottom line is hopefully Planning Commission is going to be busy. It's getting busier, a lot of things on the horizon, and the City's

administration is working on the Concordia development. So, we just have to be ready to move and spend the time.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
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---

**A motion was made by William Gutermuth, seconded by Mayor Kurtz, to adjourn the March 7, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.**

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

**There being no further business, the Planning Commission meeting of March 7, 2023, was adjourned at 5:48 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 03/10/23

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**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

**Old Business:**

**Approval of Minutes of the Planning Commission meeting held on February 7, 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.

The Chairman stated the first item of business is the approval of the minutes of the Planning Commission meeting that was held on February 7<sup>th</sup>, and Amanda you did an excellent job with your first meeting, so thank you very much. Are there any corrections to the minutes?

**A motion was made by Joseph Moeller, seconded by William Gutermuth, to approve the Minutes of the Planning Commission Meeting Minutes of February 7, 2023.**

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

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Again, I've referred to the staff report that Annie put together last month too, that kind of highlights the important areas of the request. Let me explain before, what we'll do is make a recommendation here.

Mayor Kurtz asked Don, is there anything that you want to say or add?

City Engineer Ramm stated no.

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

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel asked Greg, there's nothing else we need regarding this as far as approval?

Law Director O'Brien stated no, we'll make sure it's on the agenda.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated very good. So, it will be on the agenda next Tuesday, and once it gets approved, which I don't anticipate any problem. I think Council will embrace it as we have. So, we'll be waiting to see some of your programs, and hope to see you at Home Days and everything else.

Several people began speaking at once.

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Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated best of luck.

Mayor Kurtz stated Jess, and team, thank you. Nice job.

Economic Developer Hyser asked you don't really want them back on Tuesday, do you?

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated no, I think you will be in contact.

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City Planner Lynch stated it should be delivered late April, so site prep started on the existing island.

Economic Developer Hyser stated we'll tour some of the local cemeteries where these are placed, so that we can take a look at how they're placed, and we can make sure that what our vision is and how it works in real life are aligned.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I see. Then, are the plans for the expansion of the cemetery coming along too?

Mayor Kurtz asked when do you think we're going to put that road in?

City Engineer Ramm stated I have to circle back with Jacob on that.

Mayor Kurtz stated that should bump up because people are still moving into the cemetery.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated yeah, that's not going to stop.

City Engineer Ramm stated they're not moving out.

Mayor Kurtz stated no, they're not moving out, but we do have to do some things, we have to (inaudible) infrastructure, so it should all come together this summer.

Law Director O'Brien stated Mayor, I mentioned before, and I know you know this, but I represent the Catholic Diocese and the Cemetery Association, so Aaron Poklar over at the cemetery, they know columbariums. So, if any of your people want to set up a meeting I'm sure they would do that as a courtesy because they really are experts in the field.

Mayor Kurtz stated they're a great group too, they share information. So, I think it'd be appropriate to engage them in the process. If you could create that introduction Greg, that'd be great.

Law Director O'Brien stated I'll do it.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated thank you, Greg.

Mr. Gutermuth stated for strictly Planning Commission purposes, out of all these projects, really we're looking at the Concordia Lutheran Church project; will that be it out of all these? Well, we have the Mormon Church, but the rest of these weren't requiring Planning approval, right?

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
**March 7, 2023**

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Mayor Kurtz stated some of these commercial properties would also be engaged, if we had to do some right-of-way work installation, so obviously that would be a part of Planning Commission. If we get to that threshold, we have to open that gate.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated and DiGeronimo, I know you said that they're going to be clearing that property off of Brecksville Rd.

Mayor Kurtz stated that's another potential project that Planning Commission may have to weigh in on because there's some potential infrastructure movement, and we have to decide the full scope of that project and to what extent the City wants to participate. That would be another one that we'd have to be a part of the direction we give. We're not ready to have that full blown discussion, but if it gets close enough we have to engage the Planning Commission. I think the brain power at this table could play a very important role.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated yeah, it used to be the forgotten end, but now it's really in the forefront as far as the next 5-10 years.

Mayor Kurtz stated I agree.

Mr. Gutermuth stated it's been a few years since anyone has tried to purchase that hotel by Cozumel, so we're about due for another buyer on that one.

Economic Developer Hyser stated that one is actually owned by the Cozumel (inaudible).

Mr. Gutermuth asked do they own it? It's been listed for sale, then taken down, and listed again.

Mayor Kurtz stated everyone's trying to figure out what to do with it, the best thing is take it down.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated I think so.

Mayor Kurtz stated we were close to go on with legislation, but then they asked for support in reprove, so we did. Maybe it's time to at least look at that.

Economic Developer Hyser stated we just got a quote on what it would be to take it down, so it's a conversation that we can have.

Mayor Kurtz stated let's have a meeting with them. Let's get them back engaged because they've had plenty of time.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
**March 7, 2023**

---

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated historically speaking, that was the first hotel in Independence, and of course the old timers, we have memories of Howard Johnsons, and going there back in the day.

Mayor Kurtz stated oh yeah, it was a great place to eat back then.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated you go to breakfast there on Sunday morning, and their Friday meals during lent.

Several people began speaking at once.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated it was one of my favorite restaurants for a while.

Mayor Kurtz stated a lot of people went to Howard Johnsons.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated people that lived on the top of the hill worked down there too.

Mayor Kurtz stated there was a woman that I just saw her today, she works at L.A. Pete's, and I used to see her walking to Kleber. Now, she just moved in with her father to help him, he's on (inaudible), but it's easy; you could walk right to work.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated of course, Harry's used to be Brown Derby, and before that it was a furniture store. Of course, Broglio's was (inaudible).

Mayor Kurtz stated (inaudible) they knocked down a school house, but the Skinner family donated it.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated so, there's a lot of historical significance.

Mayor Kurtz stated the brick yard was right there on the corner.

Mr. Gutermuth stated I haven't heard that one referenced before.

Mayor Kurtz stated the brick yard, it was right where Brown Derby; right there on the corner. Between Broglio's and Brown Derby. Then there's Rockside, we could have a whole discussion on Rockside, but we're not going to do that.

Chairman Vice Mayor Grendel stated bottom line is hopefully Planning Commission is going to be busy. It's getting busier, a lot of things on the horizon, and the City's

administration is working on the Concordia development. So, we just have to be ready to move and spend the time.

**PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES – CITY OF INDEPENDENCE, OHIO**  
**March 7, 2023**

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**A motion was made by William Gutermuth, seconded by Mayor Kurtz, to adjourn the March 7, 2023, Planning Commission meeting.**

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

**There being no further business, the Planning Commission meeting of March 7, 2023, was adjourned at 5:48 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 03/10/23