

**PLAN COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION NOTES
OCTOBER 20, 2025**

I. Call To Order

The Plan Commission Study Session was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by President Tom Anderson at the Schererville Town Hall, 10 E. Joliet St.

A. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. Roll Call

Roll Call was taken with the following members present: President Tom Anderson, Vice-President William Jarvis, Secretary Gary Immig, Mr. Robert Kocon, Mr. Chris Rak, and Mr. Tom Kouros. Staff present: Planning & Building Administrator Denise Sulek, Recording Secretary Megan Schiltz, and Mr. Neil Simstad from Nies Engineering. Absent were Town Manager James Gorman and Director of Operations Andrew Hansen.

Mr. Myles Long arrived immediately following roll call at 6:02 P.M.

II. Commission Business

A. Resubdivision of Lot 1 Von Tobel Addition, Lot 3

General Location: 751 Lincoln Hwy. – Resubd. of Lot 1 Von Tobel Addition, Lot 3

Petitioner(s): Family Express Corp. – Pete Andreou, Vice President of Development and Patrick Lyp, General Counsel

Represented by: Wieser & Wyllie, LLP – Attorney, James L. Wieser and DVG Team, Inc. – James Hus, Jr., P.E.

Request: U.S. 30 Commercial Corridor Overlay District Development Plan Review

Family Express General Counsel Patrick Lyp represented on behalf of Attorney James Wieser. Attorney Lyp stated that the Family Express team is looking to subdivide the former Von Tobel property into a 3-Lot subdivision; and then to receive Site Plan approval to proceed with the plans for a convenience store and fueling station. Attorney Lyp went on to say that the proposed Family Express would take over Lot 1 and there are no current plans as to what Lot 2 and Lot 3 would be; in the future either Family Express or a potential developer would come before the board with a proposed use for development on both the west and south lots. Attorney Lyp said that the Family Express team has been meeting with Town staff to receive their input concerning this property particularly the use of the convenience store and fueling station; and there have been discussions regarding the existing traffic challenges on Cline Ave. Attorney Lyp stated that it was recommended to do two things, the first being to donate a right-of-way to allow for a future Cline Ave. expansion; secondly, for Family Express to take on the responsibility and obligation directed from the Town to expand Cline Ave. Attorney Lyp added that they were willing to do so.

Mr. James Hus P.E. from DVG Engineering stated that the current Von Tobel building has a substantial amount of infrastructure that is still usable on the property. Mr. Hus said that the building was constructed in pieces, and that the building that connected the front and the rear was not functional and could not be retrofitted; the intent is to do a partial demolition to remove that building and put in a shared parking lot between the east and west building. Mr. Hus went on to say that Family Express would only be taking over the first 9,000 sq. ft. of the east building for the convenience store/gas station; and the back half of the building would go to a future user that the Town of Schererville would want for this location; and the goal would be to first get Family Express up and operating and then to market those properties. Mr. Hus added that not only would they be installing a fuel canopy and underground storage tanks for the fuel, they would also be installing a single bay carwash. Mr. Hus stated that one of the first

things brought up when meeting with Town staff was that the southbound traffic on Cline Ave. was unacceptable particularly in the evenings coming from the north, and thought Cline should have two lanes southbound. Mr. Hus went on to say that the Family Express team has been working with Mr. Simstad to identify some "leeway" because there is a finite distance between the front of the building to the center of Cline Ave. which is already a challenge to begin with. Mr. Hus stated that as part of the development Family Express would perform the work to slightly shift the median and "skinny it up"; and would include a 5 ft. right-of-way dedication which would be reflected on the subdivision plat. Mr. Hus went on to say that they are going to carry two thru-lanes through the intersection with the expectation that the Town would take on the same improvements to the north leg of the intersection, all coinciding with Family Express construction. Mr. Hus said that once those improvements are put into place there would be twice as many motorists to cross U.S. 30 with every green light. Mr. Hus then added that with the right-of-way dedication, the collaboration with staff, and the willingness to perform half of improvements, it will go a long way in solving the problem at this intersection. Mr. Hus stated that they made some slight site adjustments by bringing the curb line back to the west and has a masterplan for the site for subdivision approval; but ideally Family Express is the first priority. Mr. Hus then said that what was discussed with Mr. Simstad, the Cline Ave. plan does meet the recommendations of the State of Indiana when it comes to road design. Mr. Hus stated that the 3-Lot Subdivision will bisect the west half of the property where the storm sewer line is located. Mr. Hus went on to say that the south building will be Lot 3 and Lot 2 would be the building to the northwest. Mr. Hus added that the lot line before Lots 2 and 1 is intended to be about 10 ft. east of the northwest building because the parking between the buildings would need to be assigned to the west half of the main Von Tobel building. Mr. Hus said that because of the uniqueness of the site, the subdivision site plan would have several cross parking and utility easements. Mr. Hus then stated that the subdivision process is important and although it won't happen overnight, it gives Family Express the confidence to market the property; and the faster the property goes to market, the faster the corner transforms into something very different from today. Mr. Hus concluded that with having two buildings that face U.S. 30 that are radically different and better uses would be beneficial for both Family Express and the Town of Schererville.

Mr. Anderson verified that heading east on U.S. 30 and turning right would go up to where this property begins. Mr. Hus confirmed. Mr. Anderson asked that if they were to dedicate property to put in a second southbound lane on Cline it would run up to the end of the property. Mr. Hus replied that was correct, and showed on the site plan that there will be two lanes and that with the intersection it is necessary to carry the through lanes to be safe, and then there is also a distance where the merge would have to happen. Mr. Hus went on to say that it would need to go back to one lane before the roundabout so they would carry the two lanes all the way to the end of the right turn lane where it would start to merge back; the distance where the merge takes place is over 300 ft. long which is an appropriate distance to merge based upon the speed limit of Cline Ave. Mr. Anderson then asked if they were considering the convenience store/gas station one lot and then cutting the building into two. Mr. Hus replied that Lot 1 would include the entirety of the building and the back half of that building would be leased out to another user, but Family Express would still have ownership of Lot 1. Mr. Anderson then verified that with removing the connector of the building would give more parking. Mr. Hus stated that was correct, and that Von Tobel was unique with it being a large building with a lot of material storage and not much traffic. Mr. Hus added that when transforming the use, and not knowing what the user is, creating parking for any future use is almost a higher need than Von Tobel. Mr. Jarvis stated that this plan was far superior to what had been presented before and believes adding a lane would really help with emergency services. Mr. Anderson asked if the area between building one and building two was wetland. Mr. Hus replied no that it was a 500 year floodplain, and to the west of the northwest building was a 100 year floodplain; there are no buildings in the floodplain. Mr. Hus went on to say that there are still steps in permitting associated with that down the line; but are confident that they will not have any filling in the floodplain and will be reshaping in the back. Mr. Anderson said that Lot 1 would avoid that area. Mr. Hus responded that was correct and that there would be permitting steps for construction that take place on Lot 2 and Lot 3 but not on Lot 1 because it is entirely out of everything. Mr. Kouros asked if there was a similar building in the area with a similar concept because some of the other locations have a different color scheme. Family Express Representative, Pete Andreou, stated that this building would be a larger store, the typical building size is around 4,500 - 4,800 sq. ft. and the new prototype is 5,800 sq. ft. for the building alone; and the inside would mimic the prototype. Mr. Andreou went on to say that the reason the building is much bigger would be because the only way to subdivide the space would be to go through column lines. Mr. Andreou continued to say that this would be a much wider building at 170 ft. long when the prototype is half that amount, so they are using the space to create a more inviting atmosphere for eating. Mr. Andreou said that Family Express does not have anything this size wise, but the interior offerings would be identical to other stores. Mr. Kouros asked if the majority of business traffic be in the mornings. Mr. Andreou responded

that typically the mornings and after work are peak hours. Mr. Kouros then asked if this location would be open 24 hrs. Mr. Andreou replied that this would probably be 5:00 A.M – 11:00 P.M. Mr. Kouros asked Mr. Simstad if there was a way to put an entrance in the back off of 77th Ave. Mr. Simstad replied that there is a bike trail that goes through that area so there are limitations and the connection of this property are contiguous. Mr. Kouros stated the major remonstrance was about the activities at the other buildings, so that is why he was asking about another entrance/exit onto 77th Ave. that would help with the back buildings instead of coming off onto Cline Ave. Mr. Andreou responded that 77th Ave. was more than 500 ft. away and the area further south is owned by another developer. Mr. Jarvis stated that with the demo of the connection building it will open up another exit at U.S. 30, especially with another lane being added that would really help with traffic as well.

Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Simstad if he had any concerns to add. Mr. Simstad replied that he believes that working with staff on lane configurations resulted in a much more beneficial opportunity to the Town and the developer on moving traffic through there at a higher rate. Mr. Simstad added that with Mr. Hansen working with INDOT on the area north of U.S 30 and with some traffic signal mitigations; and with the Town doing those improvements to continue the southbound lanes through the intersection, it is a better situation then when the project first started. Mr. Jarvis asked Mr. Anderson if they would need to apply for any variances regarding the landscaping because he does not believe it would be met. Mr. Hus stated that they have been in contact with Ms. Sulek and the next step would be to identify any variances that would be associated with the 3-Lot subdivision. Mr. Hus added that with this project being a retrofit it does not give much green space for landscaping but they would provide the best plan possible. Mr. Hus went on to say that obviously variances would be the next step but wanted to see what the Plan Commission thought about this proposal so far; adding that with it being a retrofit it would still be better than what it was. Mr. Anderson stated that he likes the plan, especially with adding the area on Cline Ave. because when this goes to a public hearing the remonstrators' biggest concern would be about traffic; the fact that doubling the number of lanes and cutting the center section to make more movement on the property will go a long way. Mr. Hus said that with the improvements it will be a noticeable difference in a positive direction. Mr. Simstad stated that they are in the early stages of coordinating with the developers and INDOT to make sure that everything has been completed on both sides of U.S. 30 that would be better than what it currently is by a significant margin.

Mr. Immig asked what the thought was on the three lanes going into one. Mr. Hus replied that it is two lanes going into one and that the third lane is the existing right turn lane that will be bumped out wider; that lane would only be used by traffic entering Family Express or the gym, they cannot go further. Mr. Anderson asked Mr. Simstad if there was enough distance where it converges back to one lane safely. Mr. Simstad replied that it met all the generally accepted practices and what was being provided is making the best out of a challenging situation to provide a long-term improvement for the Town. Mr. Rak asked if the truck traffic that goes along Cline taken into consideration to avoid collision when a semi stays in the left lane and a vehicle speeds past to avoid the truck, not noticing a car in the front. Mr. Rak added that from working on the roads one thing he has noticed is driver's impatience with all the trucks on U.S. 30. Mr. Anderson stated that having two lanes is much better than having one. Mr. Hus stated that he cannot speak to impatient drivers but does know that with every green light for Cline Ave. it would double the amount of vehicles can go through. Mr. Long asked if the Town would need to purchase additional property on the north side of Cline. Mr. Simstad replied they would not because there is a sufficient right-of-way on the north side of Cline Ave. to move over the right turn westbound lane and add that additional southbound lane through the entirety of the area just directly north of 75th to the right-of-way of U.S. 30. Mr. Anderson said to get with Ms. Sulek for subdivision and a list of variances and recommended they come back for another study session; adding that he likes the concept and layout and believes they are doing the best with a bad situation for a great addition.

III. Correspondence

A. There was no correspondence

IV. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:44 P.M.