

**MINUTES OF THE VILLAGE OF JOHNSBURG  
AUGUST 13, 2025 MEETING OF THE  
SPECIAL ZONING COMMISSION MEETING**

**CALL TO ORDER** – Chairman Larsen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Commission Members Present**

James Barrett  
Steve Dixon  
Daniel Loud  
Roger Block  
Ken Calhoun  
Tom Benck

**Staff Present:**

Village Administrator Claudett Sofiakis  
Assistant Administrator Vinny Lamontagna  
Village Attorney Michael Smoron

**PUBLIC COMMENT** – Mike Maretich of 10705 Chukar Ct, Richmond, Illinois attended to express support for having a gym in the Village. He stated that he does not live in the Village but his grandchildren frequent the gym and he feels there is little risk in adding gyms as an allowable use in the Industrial zoning district. He asked Commission Member Dixon to comment on his tour of the facility following his visit after the previous meeting and remarked that it appeared the request was well received at the June hearing with only Commission Members Dixon and Calhoun raising questions. Commission Member Calhoun clarified that his questions were related to why the petitioner is requesting a text change in the I-1 district when the request provided to the petitioner by the Village Board was to consider pursuing B-1 zoning, which can accommodate the gym and bring his property into conformance. He added that the property is currently non-conforming and adding the gym in the I-1 zoning district will further the nonconformance of the property.

Chairman Larsen expressed that he supports the gym but has concerns with blending B-1 uses with I-1 uses. He added that there are violations on the property and it has been non-conforming since April of 2024 and it was recommended by the Village Board that the petitioner come before the Commission to pursue B-1 zoning in June of 2024. The petitioner, Jeffrey Elser, questioned the determination that the property is non-conforming, expressing that it is his property and therefore should be his determination and he finds the I-1 zoning appropriate for the property. He added that if the Village didn't want it to be zoned I-1 they should have bought it. Mr. Elser stated that he recently purchased a pallet manufacturing company in Wisconsin and would rather have the gym on the property but if the Village won't allow the gym use in the I-1 district, he will bring in stock piles of lumber and other materials and begin manufacturing pallets on the property that will result in a lot of noise emanating from the property from the constant use of nail guns which will not be liked by the neighbors.

Mr. Maretich summarized that the request focuses on the addition of gyms in the industrial district. Mr. Elser stated that he wasn't pursuing manufacturing a year ago but now he is. He questioned if the neighbors would rather have a gym or a pallet manufacturing company which will be loud and disruptive. He restated that if it is necessary to take the gym off the table, he will use his property in a manufacturing capacity as he will not change the zoning. Mr. Elser again emphasized that the pallet company will be loud and no one will like it.

Dréa Shanahan of 2510 Winterberry Trail, Wonder Lake explained that she moved her gym into the building last May and has had good experience with membership. She added that she made an investment in the building and she is pleased with the space she has. Mr. Shanahan stated that CrossFit is different from other gyms and she has many people come from other towns to work out at her gym.

Kristin Seabert expressed her support for the gym stating that it is not only a place to work out, but also a place where people can come together to be a part of the community.

**COMMISSION DELIBERATION**

Commission Member Barrett questioned if the request includes any change to the I-2 zoning district. Mr. Elser explained that he only needs the use to be included in the I-1 district and is no longer seeking the use in the I-2 zoning district.

Commission Member Barrett explained that the Village is pro-business but the Commission needs to consider the impact their decisions have now and in the future. He added that he likes the business idea and understands that it appears to be a low risk, but the commission has to consider how the decision can affect other scenarios that set precedents. He questioned if the reverse was requested, changing the zoning from B-1 to I-1, could it be considered. Attorney Smoron explained that anyone has the right to petition for a zoning change and a precedent can always be argued but the question is whether the argument is persuasive. Commission Member Barrett explained that the Village inherited the property and its zoning from McHenry County and everyone agrees that the property should not be zoned industrial. He added that nobody likes the circumstances that led up to the problem and stated that the question is how to make it work for everyone. Commission Member Benck stated that he does not see a negative impact to the request. Commission Member Barrett stated that he is concerned with the implications to undeveloped areas in the future seeking I-1 zoning.

Commission Member Calhoun stated that Mr. Elser has remarked several times that he does not wish to pursue manufacturing on the property therefore why the unwillingness to change the property to B-1 which can accommodate all of his current uses. Mr. Elser replied that if the gym fails, he wants to be able to build pallets on the property.

Commission Member Barrett questioned if the use could be added as a conditional use in the I-1 zoning district. Attorney Smoron stated that it could, but that is not what the petitioner published for. Commission Member Barrett questioned if a conditional use were to be pursued is the procedure to table the matter to allow the petitioner time to pursue a public notice. Mr. Elser stated that he is not required to notify the public. Attorney Smoron emphasized that a public notice is required for a text amendment and questioned who told him he did not need to notify the public. Mr. Elser did not respond. Commission Member Barrett stated that he would be supportive of the use as a conditional use so that conditions could be incorporated into the approval. Attorney Smoron stated that conditions can be added that are reasonable to the request. Mr. Elser stated that if he could keep the property zoned I-1, he is willing to republish. Attorney Smoron explained that it would involve a request for a text amendment to add the use as a conditional use and then request the use for the property which would require the surrounding property owners to be notified. He added that a conditional use is a legislative action that runs with the land and reasonable conditions can be placed upon the property.

Commission Member Benck reiterated that he does not see a negative impact in allowing the use. Commission Member Block agreed. In response to the question previously raised by Mr. Maretich, Commission Member Dixon stated that he visited the facility and confirmed that improvements were made and two separate bathrooms are in the facility. He referenced previous statements made by Mr. Elser regarding his communications with the health department and questioned if there is documentation regarding those discussions. Additional questions were raised about the facility's compliance with ADA requirements and if an inspection had been done. Commission Member Barrett questioned if the use is added do they need to show that the building and property were inspected and are in compliance with health department, ADA and other requirements. Attorney Smoron confirmed that they do.

**MOTION** - Commission Member Loud moved to recommend approval of the requested text amendment adding Health Club; Gymnasium or Athletic Club as permitted uses in the I-1 zoning district. Commission Member Block seconded the motion. Commission Member Benck, Barrett, Loud, Dixon and Block voted aye. Commission Member Calhoun voted no. Motion carried.

**ADJOURNMENT** - Commission Member Barrett moved to adjourn. Commission Member Loud seconded the motion. All Commission Members present voted aye. Motion carried at 8:22 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Claudett Sofiakis*  
*Village Administrator*