

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE COMMON COUNCIL
VALPARAISO, INDIANA
October 13, 2025**

Minutes are not verbatim. To Hear Full Comments, Please refer to the – Watch City Meetings Section of the City of Valparaiso's Website (WWW.CI.VALPARAISO.IN.US)

The Common Council of the City of Valparaiso, Indiana, met on Monday, October 13, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. in City Hall. Mayor Costas called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was said. Present were Councilmembers Reed, Cotton, Domer, Pupillo, Anderson, Hunt, and Kapitan.

MINUTES

MOTION: Councilmember Kapitan moved to adopt September 22, 2025 minutes. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 voice vote.

RESOLUTION NO, 12, 2025

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO, INDIANA
GRANTING NACHO BUSINESS LLC, AN ASSESSED VALUATION DEDUCTION (TAX
ABATEMENT) FOR TANGIBLE REAL PROPERTY UNDER INDIANA CODE 6-1.1-12.1**

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Resolution No. 12, 2025 be read and considered for adoption. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Resolution No. 12, 2025.

George Douglas – He had with him Drew Peuquet of Chester Inc. and is a member of Nacho Business LLC. Also Steve Fullenkamp, the CFO of Sensit. Nacho owns a 12 acre site in Eastport Centre. They are proposing to do a design build through Chester Inc for their architectural and construction services to build an 80,000 sq ft building. The building will be owned by Nacho Business. It will be leased as a sole tenant to Sensit. They have a ten year lease with an option to renew it for an additional ten years.

Steve Fullenkamp- They have had a partnership with the City for over 23 years. Initially they had 30 employees. Today they have 112. They have fulfilled the jobs promised in their last three abatements and then some. Sensit was formed in 1980. They worked out of the owner's house in Union Township. They manufacture gas detection products and environmental monitors. He showed pictures of their assembly operations. There is a lot of hand assembly on the product line.

George Douglas - Sensit's current payroll is over \$6.7 in payroll taxes. That does not include benefits that come along with the job. Currently they are housed in two buildings and they are maxed out. Being under one roof and being able to continue to grow is important. This is a seven year property tax abatement for Nacho Business LLC. They are proposing the construction of a new 80,000 sq ft office and manufacturing facility to accommodate the expansion and relocation of Sensit Technologies. The 12 acres this is going to be built on will pay \$680 in property taxes this year. After it is built and fully assessed in 2028 it roughly will pay \$170,425 per year. Sensit has agreed to hire 12 additional employees. Four will be in engineering, marketing and sales categories. The remaining eight will be production or direct hires. This will result in an increase in payroll of \$720,000. It averages out to \$60,000 a year salary. Nacho Business has agreed to the 15% fee that will be passed through and paid ultimately by the tenant which is Sensit. The accumulated property taxes and fee over the life of the seven years is roughly \$742,000. The City Council has the ability to grant tax abatement. They also have the ability to withdraw. So if for any reason the things he is telling the Council do not materialize they have the ability to withdraw the abatement, There is a lot of demand for the two buildings that will be vacant. Vacant or not they will still be paying property taxes.

Questions Comments from the Council

Councilmember Kapitan - She is impressed with their operation. She is happy to see they use VU interns. She is glad about their disposal of products. They do it in a responsible way. This is the first abatement under Ordinance No. 6, 2025. She asked George to talk about how this abatement has been able to reach those requirements.

George Douglas – When they started they knew this project would hit the \$350,00 threshold. He asked Nacho Business and Chester Inc to go through the requirements. There was time before the abatement to ask for any changes. They are working closely with the local building trades and everybody else. They are very familiar and comfortable with Chesters who has done projects all over northwest Indiana. Ordinance No. 6, 2025 says the Council will be the ones to manage and do the tracking and verify. He does not have that so he will be asking how to handle it. This will all start with the building permit process.

Councilmember Domer – One of the requirements in Ordinance No. 6 is that there be a written statement confirming the recipient reviewed the Indiana Department of Administration Directory of Certified Veterans, Minority and Women owned business to assess the capabilities of these qualified local subcontractors for the project. What kind of opportunities does this project offer to potential subcontractors?

Drew Peuquet – They will be subcontracting all the work. They are a construction management firm. They will work with all the local unions. They will hire as many local people as they possibly can. They will look at minority contractors and women owned businesses.

Councilmember Domer – In regard to the 12 new jobs, is there medical, dental and vision insurance offered to all of the positions?

Steve Fullenkamp – Yes. We offer medical, dental and vision insurance and 401K plan.

Councilmember Cotton – He wants to know more about the ownership of Sensit. He understands they are an asset of a private equity company.

George Douglas – He clarified that the abatement is actually through Nacho Business which is made up of Peuquet family members. They own the property and they will own the building. It will be leased to Sensit. They will enter a ten year lease with an option for another ten years.

Councilmember Cotton – The option to lease versus the commitment to own is what concerns him. That is the difference between the prior subsequent abatements.

Steve Fullenkamp – They are owned by Halma PLC. They are a London based holding company.

Councilmember Cotton – He is concerned about the taxpayers of Valparaiso and extending that type of a bonus relative to a longer term commitment. It seems to him like there is usually a larger commitment of jobs. Twelve does not seem like a lot. Will the jobs be immediate?

Steve Fullenkamp– They have it listed as 12 employees over a four year period, as business allows. They have far exceeded what was indicated in the past and they would expect to do so in the future.

Councilmember Cotton – Can you talk about the growth in the context of your existing markets.

Steve Fullenkamp– They continue to grow. They pride themselves on servicing their customers and that is what brings customers back. The environmental market is a new business for them.

Councilmember Kapitan – She was impressed with the research and prototypes they have been making.

Councilmember Cotton - The building permit has not been applied for. They are granting an abatement that would be contingent upon the successful permit by virtue of all the different circumstances that are listed in the Ordinance being met.

George Douglas – That is what they are agreeing to in the Abatement Agreement.

Councilmember Cotton – Will there be a process wherein those items are assessed. He wants to make sure they get it right the first time.

George Douglas – Some of this we are going to be working on and developing. That was on the Council to develop a process to manage, track and verify. So we are going to do that and bring it to the Council before the permit is issued.

Councilmember Cotton - He thinks the Ordinance is pretty straight forward. There are 11 items in it.

Mayor Costas – In addition to the jobs they are paying additional property taxes of \$179,000 per year. We just went through the budgeting process. We saw how important growth and assessed value is to keep our tax rate low.

Councilmember Reed – She is impressed with the Company and the product they make for the first responders. She is impressed with the longevity of their business. She is looking forward to seeing how this works with Ordinance No. 6, 2025.

Councilmember Pupillo - This is a prime example of what they want to see more of in the City of Valparaiso. Thank you for the continued investment. It is important to note that the expanded AV also helps lower the rate for individual property taxpayers too.

Councilmember Cotton – This investment is Chester ?

George Douglas – Yes. There is an empty lot there today. If this abatement is not approved or there is not a project, there is still an empty lot there. It only moves forward if the project moves forward.

Drew Peuquet – For Chesters, we want them here in Valpo. We want to support the community. We have been in this community. It is key to keeping them here. Retain them here. Retain the talent here. We want to develop our own property too.

Councilmember Reed – She is looking forward to seeing what other business will move into the vacant buildings. That will bring in other business.

Councilmember Cotton – To be perfectly clear his vote is predicated on the commitment that Chester brings to the table and the credibility and ownership.

Councilmember Anderson – He was impressed with the tour of the facility. He appreciates their willingness to invest in Valparaiso.

Attorney Patrick Lyp – If there is a motion to approve Resolution 12, 2025 he would suggest that it include the approval of the Tax Abatement Agreement as part of the motion.

MOTION: Councilmember Kapitan moved to approve Resolution No. 12, 2025 with the Tax Abatement Agreement. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Upon roll call vote the Motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

**ORDINANCE NO. 17, 2025
VALPARAISO COMMUNITY SCHOOL 2026 BUDGET**

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 17, 2025 be read a third time by title and be considered for adoption with the opportunity for the offering of amendments. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Resolution No. 17, 2025.

Councilmember Domer – Is there a final number on the enrollment?

Dr. McCall – 70 down from the previous year.

Councilmember Hunt – She had asked for confirmation of the impact of SB 1. Mr. McCall had answered her that they are working on a parcel by parcel analysis similar to what the City is doing. He also told her there would not be any impact on the 2026 budget. She also had asked him for clarification on a potential third taxpayer referendum. He had indicated to her that if a third referendum did not pass or if they did not have the current referendum, it would impact his budget by 10%.

Dr. McCall – The people and programs aspect of it. They have education and then the tax supported funds. The referendum is a tax reported supplement to the Education fund which is their people and programs. He described it as an above and beyond educational experience and wraparound services for the students. If they have a 10% reduction they need to make sure the expenditures are matching the reduction in revenue as well.

Councilmember Hunt – A portion of those referendum dollars are used for teacher compensation – Right?

Dr. McCall - Teacher positions. There is a small portion that goes to support a retention stipend which is 1% for all employees not just teachers.

Councilmember Pupillo – He would like to confirm that there is room for the fifth SRO in this budget.

UPON ROLL CALL VOTE the motion to approve Ordinance No. 17, 2025 passed with a 7-0 vote.

**ORDINANCE NO. 18, 2025
CITY OF VALPARAISO 2026 BUDGET**

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 18, 2025 be read a first time and considered on first reading. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Ordinance No. 18, 2025.

Mayor Costas – We will take Public Comments at tonight’s meeting. This Friday, October 17th is the Public Hearing on the Budget.

Bill Oeding and Holly Taylor gave a brief version of the presentation made at the last Council meeting. A copy of the presentation is online at www.ci.valparaiso.in.us Watch City Meetings. Tonight’s discussion starts at 53:20 on the video.

Questions/Comments from the Council

Councilmember Domer – The State Legislature sets the 4% rate for the growth quotient. That gives the City the ability to increase the tax levy by 4% from last year. The assessed valuation growth from 2025 projected to

2026 is 7.2%. So we are able to levy more dollars. We have a higher assessed valuation from 2025 to 2026 but we are losing \$800,000 due to property tax caps. With those three components that is how we are able to have a lower adopted tax rate in 2026.

Bill Oeding – We have the cash carryover also. Conservative spending is a big part of our budget.

Councilmember Domer – She asked Holly for a recap on the funds that have budgeted dollars for 2026 related to paving. And if she could just briefly say the source of that revenue.

Clerk-Treasurer Holly Taylor – The General Fund is a tax rated fund. They budget \$1.6 Million Dollars. That is based off the trash fees that they collect. That comes out of BOW but it is General Fund. MVH Restricted is a sub fund of MVH. Years ago the State legislation said if you are going to be pulling in MVH money you need to split it 50/50 between your General MVH and MVH Restricted with MVH Restricted solely being used for repairs and maintenance of roadways. MVH Restricted for next year we have \$244,000 going towards paving. Those are the tax ones. We have money coming out of Local Road and Streets. That is gas taxes and vehicle registration fees that come from the comptroller of the State. The excise surtax and wheel tax; those are wheel tax fees that we collect on a daily basis. That is what creates the bulk of the paving budget for next year. We also have the Community Crossing Grant match of \$1 Million Dollars.

Councilmember Domer – Assuming we get approved for the Community Crossing Grant, we will have \$3.7 Million Dollars. We have some other funds that will be able to boost the paving amount.

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – She did a true up of the General Fund as far as what was used versus what we received. She went back to 2020 and came up with \$642,000 that has been left over during the course of those years.

Councilmember Cotton – He wanted clarification of what the City receives from the State for gas taxes and then the excise and wheel tax.

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – Local Road and Streets she has appropriated \$175,000 for next year. She has appropriated \$650,000 out of Surtax dollars. Wheel tax there is \$50,000 appropriated for next year. The General Fund, Local Road and Streets, MVH Restricted, Surtax and Wheel tax Funds add up to about \$2.7 Million Dollars. There also should be \$1 Million Dollars from Community Crossings.

Councilmember Domer – She has in her notes that the Council will get a deferred maintenance list. Is that part of the budget submission process? Or do they get that at a later date? This is for things other than paving. For example the irrigation system at the Park Department.

Bill Oeding – The Departments typically maintain their own list and monitor that themselves. Some have Capital Development Funds so they can replace equipment, trucks, roofs, air conditioning units and other big ticket items. He tracks them.

Councilmember Domer – She would like to see that list.

Councilmember Cotton – He is surprised to see the health insurance cost go down.

Bill Oeding – The medical Trust did very well last year. A portion of the Trust is based on claims from different Cities. They look at the last 12 months of claims and see if they were high or low based on expectations. Then they look at how well the trust has done in that year and assign guardrails to it. It is either 5% above or 5% below the midpoint of where they think they should be for a year. This past year it was 3%. That is assigned to 80 municipalities. That is a big reason why the premiums have dropped. The risk is spread out. The month of November the Trust is giving the City and employees a break by not paying a premium.

Councilmember Pupillo – Police Personal Services there is 64 total officers. Is that including the additional SRO.

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – Yes. They are currently at 63.

Public Hearing

No one was present that wished to address the Council on this matter. Mayor Costas declared the Public Hearing closed. There will be another Public Hearing this coming Friday at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

MOTION: Councilmember Kapitan moved to carry Ordinance No. 18, 2025 to the next meeting. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

ORDINANCE NO 19, 2025 CITY OF VALPARAISO 2026 SALARY ORDINANCE

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 19, 2025 be read a first time and considered on first reading. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Ordinance No. 19, 2025.

Bill Oeding – The Salary Ordinance from this year to 2026 has not changed that much. There have been some changes for the Police and Fire. Even the pay increases are within the ranges that are shown in the Salary Ordinance.

Clerk-Treasurer Taylor – The Agenda said Public Hearing. She is happy to accept public comments, but legally they are not required to have a Public Hearing on the Salary Ordinance. Currently Department Heads are looking over the Ordinance section by section. There might be some minor changes on the 27th.

Councilmember Cotton – We haven't added any new classifications? Is everyone consistently hitting the mid-point?

Bill Oeding – No new classifications. We are well above the mid-point. Last year we went mid-point plus 2%. This year we went mid-point plus 3%.

Councilmember Domer – She asked about the time frame for a new compensation study.

Bill Oeding – They anticipate that to be done in 2027 for the 2028 budget year.

Public Comment

No one was present that wished to address the Council on this matter. Mayor Costas declared the Public Hearing closed. There will be another Public Hearing this coming Friday at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

MOTION: Councilmember Kapitan moved to carry Ordinance No. 19, 2025 to the next meeting. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

ORDINANCE NO. 20, 2025

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO, INDIANA, CREATING THE VALPARAISO CITIZENS REDISTRICTING ADVISORY COMMISSION WITHIN THE CITY OF VALPARAISO, INDIANA

Councilmember Kapitan moved that Ordinance No. 20, 2025 be read a first time and considered on first reading. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Clerk-Treasurer Taylor read Ordinance No. 20, 2025.

Councilmember Domer – She read a prepared statement discussing the re-districting issues. The redistricting is the drawing of City Council district boundary maps. This Ordinance creates a Citizen Redistricting Advisory Commission to redraw the Districts upon the completion of the 2030 census and beyond. This serves as a mechanism for checks and balances between the people and their government. In early 2025 discussions began with the League of Women Voters of Porter County and Common Cause Indiana on the feasibility of proposing a citizen led redistricting advisory commission to draw the Valparaiso Council District maps upon completion of the 2030 census. They have been sharing information on local redistricting to be able to gauge the community's interest in a citizen led initiative. Ordinances from other Indiana municipalities were studied. They drafted a Valparaiso ordinance. Attorney Adam Mendel has reviewed the document. Resolution 16, 2016 supports comprehensive redistricting reform calling for the State of Indiana to establish a citizen led redistricting commission to draw the US Federal Congressional maps, the State senate and State house of representative maps.

Councilmember Kapitan – She said job well done to Councilmember Domer. The Ordinance contains a lot of checks and balances and a lot of safeguards. Thae City Council has the ultimate authority per Sate statute to approve the maps.

Councilmember Reed – She served alongside of Councilmember Casey Schmidt when they went through this most recent process of redistricting. They worked with an outside consultant. They also opened it up to the community members to participate in drawing the lines. The map they adopted was the one that came from work with the outside consultant. In every map considered a district lost a precinct and gained a precinct. The citizens used a tool to calculate their changes. There were mistakes. She is not sure where the problem was. She is pointing this out because she wants to make certain that whatever tool is utilized is fully vetted to ensure they have accurate information to make certain whatever map is selected that it is able to pass at the County and State level.

Councilmember Cotton – He has always been impressed with League of Women Voters and Common Cause with their bipartisan advocacy. This is not what he is reading on social media. There is a lot of misinformation going on.

Councilmember Domer -The Mission Statement for League of Women Voters is “It is a nonpartisan organization whose mission is empowering voters and defending democracy.” Common Cause Indiana is a grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. She sees nothing with either that has to do with party.

Councilmember Anderson – At any point in this process have any different organization been approached to shepherd this map drawing? Were the only two League of Women Voters and Common Cause?

Councilmember Domer – Those were the only two.

Councilmember Pupillo – We all support fair maps and transparent government. When you talk about an organization that says they are nonpartisan and then supports traditionally very progressive left things like voter ID law, abortion rights; then it starts to conflate the issue of fair maps and representation. That is where the confusion comes from and some of the perception that these organizations might have a skewed understanding of what a fair map might be. We owe residents a little bit of extra scrutiny. This is an important process. He asked if the current map is considered unfair.

Councilmember Domer -This has nothing to do with the current maps. It is for maps drawn in the future.

Councilmember Pupillo – He keeps hearing about they wasted \$50,000 on a consultant. This Council picked the consultant.

Councilmember Domer – She is saying her proposal would save taxpayer money.

Councilmember Pupillo – We are saying that we will not hire a consultant at all?

Councilmember Domer - It does not say that.

Mayor Costas – The Council at that time can always hire some form of consultant to get information. This doesn't preclude that. It just ensures civic engagement. The Council should talk about whether or not to pay them a stipend. His recommendation is to have it as a volunteer Board.

Councilmember Hunt – She thanked Councilmember Domer for how well prepared this Ordinance is. She appreciates the point that the Council has the ultimate authority to approve the map. This Ordinance is a reflection of 2016 legislation passed by the then City Council. She shares the concerns about some of the propaganda that is going on and the politicization of these groups that are nonpartisan in their very nature. She suggested that because someone may not agree with them or they may support one issue that does not make them a political party. You just disagree with them and that is ok too.

Councilmember Anderson – You made a statement that is categorically false. There is not a person in this room that believes the League of Women Voters is nonpartisan.

Councilmember Cotton – It is a good question – what other organizations are out there that are notably nonpartisan that engage in this type of activity.

Councilmember Anderson – There are several. He did not give that suggestion to Councilmember Domer while she was working on this project.

MOTION: Councilmember Kapitan moved to carry Ordinance No. 20, 2025 to the next meeting. Councilmember Hunt seconded the motion. Upon voice vote the motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

Environmental Advisory Board Student Appointment

Councilmember Kapitan – Each year the Board has two student members. They are to be appointed each academic year. They received two applications. One is Naia Nikitaris. She currently serves on the Board. The other was Zoe Jackson. She recommended appointing both of these applicants to the Environmental Advisory Board as non-voting members.

MOTION: Councilmember Cotton moved to appoint Naia Nikitaris and Zoe Jackson as non-voting members of the Environmental Advisory Board. Councilmember Hunt seconded the Motion. Upon voice vote the Motion passed with a 7-0 vote.

Proposed Unified Zoning Ordinance Discussion

Councilmember Cotton – This is introduced to begin a conversation about a proliferation of gas stations. There are municipalities in the State that have passed laws that rationalizes some of the ways the gas station market is expanding the number of units to offset the national trend of fuel efficient cars. There is a national mandate saying we will use 40% to 50% less gasoline. We should take a look at our code. We are 37% greater in density per citizen for the number of gas stations that we have. Nationally there is one gas station for every 2,700 people. In Valparaiso we have one gas station for every 1,700 residents. We are overserved. There are

more that are talking of coming here. He would like the Council to direct the Plan Commission to review a draft ordinance and see if there is any room for us to create standards.

Mayor Costas – We are getting ready to embark on a new Comprehensive Plan and an update of our UDO. This is significant work and important work that is done on a regular basis. Having a new Comprehensive Plan will address these issues in a more holistic fashion. This can be one of those issues that can be part of that discussion. He does not favor piecemealing it. He does favor this being part of the UDO and a Comprehensive Plan review. Valparaiso is a community where people come to do business. To some degree that impacts the numbers presented as opposed to being in a rural community. The general premise of zoning is to have particular uses in the right place and leave it up to the market. Apparently people like convenience stores because they keep building them and they seem to be busy. They sell a lot more products than just gas. When we redo the zoning we want to realize the market will decide where the investment is and the market is a collective voice of all consumers. This is a discussion worthy of having but we are about to embark upon this whole process and he would rather it be included in that process.

Councilmember Cotton – Piecemeal is what the Mayor's formula was for dealing with the Code as the new Council started. What we have now is a gas station war upon us. If this was something that is not of immediate concern he would say let's do the comprehensive thing. But at the same time they might negotiate a better price for the Comprehensive Plan if this segment of the Code is already dealt with. This is necessary to do right now. Gas stations are more dynamic with the impact they leave as opposed to restaurants. The four businesses looking to come here are not willing to wait for us to see what happens with the Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Kapitan – This is a great time to talk about gas stations. But she knows the comprehensive updates are coming. In the last Plan Commission there was another gas station proposal under Commercial General zoning. Then a few days later the BZA is looking at another gas station on Calumet where Kmart used to be. She echoes the urgency. She thinks it is too important to wait. In the draft ordinance that was presented there are some valid things to consider. It doesn't ban gas stations but it says they will be so many feet away from residential. It also says how many feet gas stations have to be away from each other. It is important to talk about the decommission plan. This will not ban gas stations but it adds safeguards to a growing population. We don't determine the market but we do determine the zoning and how we see growth happening. This is a worthwhile conversation about how we want to direct our City. She has toured Family Express and learned about tanks and how much better these are now.

Councilmember Anderson – Has the Environmental Council looked at this?

Councilmember Kapitan – They have not but they will have it on the future agenda.

Councilmember Reed – She appreciates having this conversation as opposed to looking at an ordinance. There are merits in the draft ordinance. She concurs with the consultant being hired to redo the Comprehensive Plan and UDO. She would like to see that happen sooner rather than later so they are not constantly looking at different ordinances to mitigate a problem as they see it happening. Anything brought forward as an ordinance needs to be fully vetted first to ensure they are not having to go back and fix it. The conversations need to be with the Planning Department right now.

Councilmember Cotton – This was only brought forward as a discussion point. The City's design standards are probably more stringent than what is listed in the sample ordinance.

Councilmember Reed – What is the timeline for the Comprehensive Plan and UDO?

Bob Thompson – He hopes to have a kick-off this week. They will first work on the Comprehensive Plan and then the UDO. He expects this to take 21-22 months.

Councilmember Cotton - In 21-22 months three of the four looking to come here could already be here. One is from Pennsylvania and one is from Oklahoma. These guys are needing to expand their footprint. They don't care who they wipe out in places where they can come in easily. He would envision the Plan Commission, with the direction of the City Council, taking a critical look and replace it by incorporating some of the sensitivities that the Council expresses towards the proliferation of gas stations.

Councilmember Pupillo – Has anybody reached out to the gas station owners to see what their market research shows? Something tells him they are not putting gas stations where they know they won't be profitable. The gas stations they are putting in will serve people in the Valparaiso area. He thinks government tipping the scale on the free market is a little out of line. What are the numbers presented based on?

Mayor Costas – That is where professional help can come in and look specifically at our market and say what is reasonable for the type of market we have. We can't say there is a gas war going on. These four companies are coming after our market. What does that mean? The City is hiring a consultant. This is an issue worthy of discussion. We want to give room for the market. The market is the collective voice of all consumers.

Councilmember Cotton – You can look at the map and there is one station proposed that will be 500' from a residential area. There are places on the map that are a little bit less dense. He is not advocating for a complete stop of gas stations. But a reasonable distance between stations is something we do not need a consultant to determine. He appreciates the desire to kick this can down the road.

Mayor Costas – He is not saying to kick the can down the road. He is saying let's do this in a holistic manner. We got this in process rather than jump to conclusions.

Discussion ensued regarding the threat and what it exactly is. Figuring calculations. Determining how to move forward.

Councilmember Kapitan – She would like to see at the next Council meeting a formal recommendation to the Plan Commission with any of the languages, whether special use permit or so any feet from residential, then we can clean that up formally. It can be a resolution or a motion to direct the Plan Commission with that.

Councilmember Anderson – What about the Environmental Council?

Councilmember Kapitan – They will meet before Plan Commission.

Councilmember Anderson – That will give them time to do a complete study on this issue?

Councilmember Kapitan – She will send this now for their opinions.

Councilmember Hunt- She thinks the Environmental Council is a great suggestion. What better use than to have them take a look at this and help the Council make a decision.

Mayor Costas – It seems to be some concern that it poses dangers. Maybe they could dig down on that and see if there is some evidence based studies on that. That is an issue that needs to be resolved.

Councilmember Domer – Definitely they want to look at the distance between a gas station and residence. The gas station that is on Lincolnway, the homes are directly behind that gas station. If she was living in one of those homes she would not be too happy.

Mayor Costas – We deal with residents all the time who do not want anything next to them. Is there indeed any kind of a risk associated with fumes? There could be. It would be good to see what Best Practices are and what evidence based data there is.

Councilmember Reed - Where she teaches they encourage parents to not leave their vehicles running when picking up their kids because of the exhaust. As the Council is looking at the number of gas stations that are in close proximity to residences she sees it in the same vein.

Councilmember Pupillo - A review should take a look at IDEM and the State to see what they do. He knows IDEM has a decommissioning plan already. Does adding another layer of bureaucracy at the local level accomplish what they want to do?

Mayor Costas – The other issue is if we have the right to do it. Typically the State takes on a duty and has a code.

Councilmember Cotton – We will take a look at this and bring it back to the Council in a few weeks.

COUNCIL LIAISON REPORTS

Councilmember Anderson – The Marsh Street lift station project is being done at the request of the RDC. It will serve the new hotel commercial development area. Grimmer Construction will do the work. There are 1,576 fire hydrants in the City. The Utility accepted bids for painting the hydrants. The next Utility Board meeting is October 14th.

Councilmember Pupillo – VPD and VFD are partnering next year to put on the Emergency Medical Responder class in January.

Councilmember Domer– The BOW recommended the Park Department move forward with Tonn & Blank to determine how the project will unfold and costs going forward. The design-build process helps control costs. There was a Public Hearing on the DASH reducing routes. They are losing some of their funding. Ridership has not come back to the full extent as before COVID. The RDC presented their budget proposal.

Councilmember Kapitan – At Plan Commission they discussed rezoning at 250 W and Hwy 130 for a residential and gas station. There was a subdivision of land near Meijer for a hotel. The rezone for the Banta Center is going forward with a private buyer. It was rezoned from Public Space to Urban Residential. There will be park space on the north end and residential on the south end. They also approved an amendment to the Brooks. The Environmental Advisory Board meets November 3rd at 5:00.

Councilmember Cotton – The Fire Territory Board meet and approved their budget. They are working on a collective bargaining agreement. They closed on the property for the new fire station.

Councilmember Reed – Discovery Day Camp added a new art room. They will have extended care for parents. They anticipate extra camps next year. The handprint wall at Valplayso was restored. At Creekside a 22 acre expansion agreement has been made with the US Fish and Wildlife nature habitat. This is at no cost. The Park just needs to do the maintenance on it. The Park Department has increased fees for the golf simulators. Golf irrigation at Forest Park will begin in February and the pump renovation will begin this year. The dog park parking lot was resurfaced. The University of Chicago Medical and VU gave a grant that was used at Will park to resurface and install new poles and hoops for the basketball courts. At Tower Park they had a Grand Opening. Rogers Lakewood has resurfaced pathways and an aquatic weed treatment has been applied to maintain fishing and shore access. Next meeting is October 28th at 6:00. The November meeting will be on the 18th due to the holiday schedule.

Councilmember Hunt – The school board approved an MOU with the Porter County Sheriff for camera accessibility. The fifth SRO was not on the Agenda. The school board has looked at the Master Teacher contract.

PUBLIC COMMENTS
TO HEAR CITIZENS' FULL COMMENTS, PLEASE REFER TO THE WATCH CITY MEETINGS
SECTION OF THE CITY OF VALPARAISO'S WEBSITE (WWW.CI.VALPARAISO.IN.US)

Walt Breitingner – 608 Academy. He thanked those that are riding their bikes for transportation. The most dangerous and expensive half hour the average American spends is in the automobile.

Martha Ray - 911 Jefferson. She has a gas station in her front yard. The BZA gave 11 variances to the gas station to go in there. There is a national trend for gas stations to offer food services. This is found in financial magazines. She wonders if they will recover any costs from the calculation error on the redistricting map. Frame any conversations as a learning experience.

Holly Taylor – Just a clarification – The mistake was not made by the vendor. It was a calculation from free software that citizens were using.

Martha Ray - There is a difference between advocacy and lobbying. The IRS makes sure the League of Women Voters and Common Cause are bipartisan.

Kenard Taylor – 306 Napoleon Street. We use consultants because they offer a level of expertise that the Council does not have. To not hire a consultant is a mistake.

The Next Council Meeting will be October 17, 2025

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

/s/ Holly Taylor, Clerk-Treasurer