



SPECIAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

JULY 9, 2025 – 6:00 PM

1843 BRISTOW DRIVE

UNION, KY 41091

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Solomon called the Special Commission Meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Solomon led all attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

A quorum was present, and a roll call was taken. Mayor Larry Solomon, Commissioner John Mefford, Commissioner Doug Bine, Commissioner George Eldridge, and Commissioner Kimberly Tuyn.

DISCUSSION

Mayor Solomon announced the purpose of the meeting was for discussion of the proposed Allora Wedding Event Center. He explained that the City of Union Commission will listen to public comments in support of and against the proposed development. There will be a brief presentation from the developer prior to public comments. There will not be a vote taken at tonight's meeting. The Union Commission has until August 5, 2025, to take action. The city can take one of three options.

1. Vote in favor of the Boone County Planning Commission (BCPC) recommendation for denial of the zoning map amendment and change of an approved concept plan development request, which means voting against the Allora development project.
2. Voting against the BCPC, which means voting to approve the Allora development project.
3. Voting against the recommendations in favor of the Allora development project with conditions. The city can add conditions if approved by the City Commission.

Mayor Solomon explained the legislation procedures the Union Commission would take if either for or against the project. He stated the Union City Commission will vote on this issue at the beginning of the July 21, 2025, Caucus Meeting. If the Commission votes to approve the project forward, there will be a first reading of an ordinance prepared by Attorney Greg Voss. The second reading of the ordinance will take place at the Regular Commission Meeting on August 4, 2025. If the Union Commission votes in agreement with the BCPC turning down the project, there will be a reading of a Municipal Order

prepared by Attorney Voss stating the Union City Commission denied the developers application and the issue will be closed.

Developer Presentation

Dale McPherson, one of the developers of the Allora Wedding Event Center gave a review, answered questions, and addressed some opposition comments that have been received. He explained the development is owned by two Boone County families; the land is being purchased from Arlinghaus Builders. He explained the project was very well researched, with various studies conducted showing there is a market need for the proposed development. The current population of Boone County is approximately 144,000. Statistics taken during Covid show that the lowest number of people who got married in Boone County for one year was over 800.

Mr. McPherson explained the plan for the new event center will be to provide an upscale venue for weddings and other events which are lacking in Boone County.

Mr. McPherson discussed the challenge with trying to get a Planned Development (PD) overlay is that the Boone County Master Plan was written in 2018, and 2019, published in 2020. The current Master Plan delegates these types of venues to an industrial park or on a rural road. He does not feel this type of venue would work in those areas.

Mr. McPherson mentioned the biggest complaints they are receiving are concerns of traffic and noise, and that there will be a septic system on the property. He explained that the development is not going to be in the middle of a community. There are only four adjoining future homes that will not be built for eight to ten years.

Mr. McPherson mentioned the landscape design buffer will exceed Boone County requirements. The building will be 600 feet off the road, approximately 250 feet on average on the property lines.

Mr. McPherson mentioned they have addressed sound concerns. They will be installing several extra features such as wood construction, sound panels, sound installation, sound fabric, sound drywall, sound absorbent paint, sound absorbent windows, sound absorbent curtains, and fully landscaped with pine trees at every exit. They also hired sound engineers using two separate firms to conduct a test for sound.

He also addressed traffic concerns stating a registered, licensed traffic engineer was hired and submitted his report to Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC). The developers were told by KYTC the venue will produce less cars per week than the homes they are replacing. Most of the traffic will be during weekends after peak hours. The event center will be installing a turn lane even though it is not a requirement from KYTC. Mr. McPherson mentioned the venue will have 750 feet of leach line installed for the septic sewer system. He explained that even if homes were built on the property, they would also require the use of a septic system. The developers have agreed to connect to public sewer when it is available.

The venue will have energy-efficient appliances which will result in the water consumption being the same or less what a family of four uses.

In closing Mr. McPherson explained there will only be one wedding or event at a time. They plan to have community events during the week or during slow times. The venue is not located in the middle of a community. Even though KYTC does not require it the venue will be hiring one deputy from the Boone County Sheriff's Department for every 100 people attending an event to assist with traffic.

City Administrator Amy Safran mentioned the city received eight emails showing support for the project addressing the need for this type of venue in the community. The city received three emails in opposition to the project with the main concerns being noise and traffic flow. She mentioned the Commission has received all the email correspondence to read and take into consideration with any comments made at the current meeting.

Public Comments in Favor of Development

Rick Hayden mentioned he was in favor of the event center. He thinks the event center is a positive addition to the Union community. The attention to detail goes beyond the beauty of the building to the planned landscaping and surrounding grounds. The upscale facility fits perfectly at the edge of the Westbrook housing development. Mr. Hayden feels the Allora Event Center will be a great neighbor.

Bob Schroder, Vice President of Arlinghaus Builders, LLC is in favor of the project. Arlinghaus Builders LLC is the current owner of the proposed development. He feels the development would be a good asset to the community. He mentioned the proposed homes adjacent to the property will not be built for at least ten years.

Chuck Holbrook is in support of the Allora project because he feels it could bring immense value to the community. He mentioned the venue will create jobs, generate tax revenue, attract visitors who will spend money at local businesses. He understands concerns about noise and traffic, but it sounds like every issue raised by Commissioners or residents has been addressed with clear solutions. Mr. Holbrook would like the Union Commission to consider the benefits of this project and allow it to move forward.

Lisa Brandenburg mentioned she has never had an issue in her neighborhood of Harmony where there are a lot of events that take place. She feels the venue will be a huge asset to the community and will not negatively affect property values.

Akayla Smeltzer, a wedding photographer mentioned most weddings she photographs are in Cincinnati. She stated growth is coming to our area and it would be great if there were more venues in Kentucky to serve the 1.8-billion-dollar wedding industry. If the Commission passes the zone change it would help a lot of small businesses.

Deputy Brandon Smeltzer is in favor of the event center and does not think noise and traffic will be an issue at the proposed event center. He mentioned noise could come from a resident the same as it could the venue.

Martha Ferguson, who lives near the event center, is in favor of the project. She mentioned it is a beautiful facility that is needed in Union. The event center will be good for small businesses. She feels if there is a concern she will be able to call the developer to have the issue taken care of, unlike if there were forty different homes on the property who would you contact.

Trisha Rector addressed the concern of other events being held at the event center. She explained as a brand marketing professional they would not do anything to harm their brand. They will be hosting first-class events for the community.

Public Comments Opposed to Development

Dustin Diciara lives across from the proposed development. He mentioned his family chose to live in the area because the location gives you the best of both worlds, close enough to everything a young family needs yet far enough away to provide the tranquil rural atmosphere they were seeking. He feels the proposed development will drastically impact his family's quality of life because of the hours of operation. He addressed parking at the venue, loud noise and headlights shining through the windows of homes across from the property. He addressed the zone change amendment, asking if a private commercial business would be a better use of the property than the original zoning which allowed residential homes. He stated marriages in Boone County are lower because that is part of a national trend and not the lack of venues. He asked the Commission to affirm the BCPC vote to deny the zone change request. He said it is a beautiful design and would be a tremendous addition in Boone County in the right location.

Jill Charles mentioned the applicant was told changing the current zoning to Planned Development (PD) from Suburban Residential 1 (SR1) would allow prohibited use to be in the middle of a low-density residential neighborhood. She stated that development is a clear violation of the current zoning regulations to approve a planned development district for use that is specifically prohibited in the underlying zone. A change to the zoning regulations occurred in December 2022 that specifically listed prohibited uses for each district for the first time. She stated this is the first request to change a residential zone with prohibited use to PD since the change. She said this concept plan does not meet requirements for mixed-use development. She is asking the Commission to deny the zone change request.

Dr. Amy Diciara mentioned she lives across from the proposed development and that she and other neighbors were not consulted about the project. She discussed the traffic study submitted by the applicant stating it was suspicious for the following reasons: First, the MOQ and XL file, which are the basis for the study, were not included in the public record. She feels for that reason it is impossible to know if the scope is appropriate and if the chosen methodology is reasonable. Second, the engineer chose to conduct the traffic counts on a Friday. Friday counts underestimate traffic for several reasons, people leaving work early for events, leaving town, or just getting a head start on a weekend trip. She also addressed noise as a major concern. She feels the event center would fundamentally change the soundscape of her peaceful neighborhood, where evening ambient noise typically measures around 35 A-weighting decibels (DBA). She explained they simulated Disc Jockey (DJ) music six hundred feet away, which is what the proposed event building would be. The measured DBA was about 45- 50, and every word of the lyrics could be heard. Unlike occasional school or church events, this could happen daily.

She explained studies show residents in quiet neighborhoods do not adapt to unwanted noise, it raises stress, disrupts sleep, and harms health. For these reasons Dr. Dichiara is urging the Commission to deny the zone-change request.

Amy Dichiara mentioned Receptions Event Center on Donaldson Road in Erlanger is a good comparison when considering traffic issues that can occur at an event center. Receptions Event Center is not located in the middle of a community and traffic backs up during and after events.

Katie Clendenin does not feel the event center will help the community grow. She feels the event center will be loud and noisy. She feels it would benefit the community economically; however, the property could be used in a way to better fit the community morally.

Eva Wojcik-Davis presented a list of signatures received from thirty-one residents on Hathaway Road who opposed the project.

Gerry Dichiara is against the proposed project. He is concerned if weddings are not successful at the event the developers will bring in other events to stay profitable. He is concerned there could be events going on at the development every day of the week.

Rachel Clendenin is against the project. She explained when she moved to Westbrook, she did not anticipate an event center attached to her development.

Matt Hills mentioned that traffic on Hathaway Road is fast. He feels there would be a lot of traffic accidents if the event center were to be approved.

Evalyn Dichiara is against the event center for multiple reasons. She stated most people who are in favor of the development do not live near it and therefore would not be negatively impacted.

Developer Rebuttal

Attorney Gerry Dusing mentioned fifty-percent of the market wants outdoor weddings with an indoor reception. The Allora Wedding Event Center will provide those amenities. He stated everyone agrees the facility is beautiful and has a lot of demand. The venue will be eighteen acres with ten acres of green space purposely designed to reduce noise from Westbrook neighborhood.

Mr. Dusing mentioned the City of Union has a population of 8,000 and there were four people at the BCPC meeting who spoke against the event and not all of them were city residents. He mentioned fourteen people spoke against the venue at the current meeting.

Mr. Dusing explained that the venue is not illegal, nor does it violate zoning as mentioned by a resident during the meeting. He explained BCPC imposed twelve zone changes on the development. One of the conditions states there will be no amplified music allowed outdoors. There have been many measures put in place to keep indoor music from being heard outside. He mentioned the nearest home from the venue to Westbrook is 2,000 feet. He mentioned another condition is the event center will connect to

sanitary sewer when it is available. Northern Kentucky Health Department inspected the property, wrote the specs for the septic system, and issued a permit.

In closing Mr. Dusing stated the venue would be a great asset for the City of Union.

Jill Charles expressed that she went to the Northern Kentucky Health Department to obtain a copy of the sewer septic permit because the one in the packet from BCPC was not legible. She was given an evaluation and told that it was not a permit.

After hearing public comments for and against the development Mayor Solomon thanked everyone in attendance for being courteous and respectful to each other. He stated this says a lot for the community and the City of Union.

Commissioner Bine asked the developers to clarify if there was a permit issued for the septic system or if there was a study.

Mr. McPherson explained the document in the packet is what you receive for a permit. You do not get an official building permit from the Health Department.

Mr. Rector explained the evaluation is what identifies that a septic system can be installed. He explained the Health Department designs the septic system.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

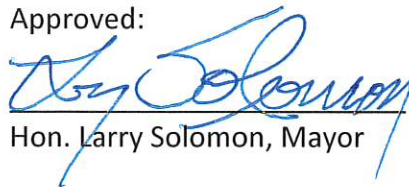
Mayor Solomon mentioned the Commission will decide on Allora Wedding Event Center at the Caucus Meeting on Monday July 21, 2025, at 6:00 PM. The next Regular Commission Meeting will be held on Monday August 4, 2025, at 6:00 PM. Both meetings will be at the Union City Building 1843 Bristow Drive Union, Kentucky.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Solomon asked for a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Bine made a motion and Commissioner Mefford seconded that motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:59 PM.

Motion approved 5-0.

Approved:



Hon. Larry Solomon, Mayor

Attest:



Tammy Wilhoite, City Clerk