



Post Office Box 299
Peru, Illinois 61354

July 24, 2025

Mayor Ken Kolowski,
Peru City Clerk, and
Aldermen of the City of Peru

RE: Petition of Illinois Valley Food Pantry, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation
4133 Progress Boulevard, Peru, IL (PIN: 17-04-314-022)

Gentlemen:

Pursuant to legal notice published in the News Tribune in the manner provided by law, the Planning/Zoning Commission of the City of Peru convened for a public hearing on Wednesday, July 23, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. in the City Municipal Building, 1901 Fourth Street, Peru, IL, as a continuance of the public hearing held on July 9th, to consider the Petition of Illinois Valley Food Pantry, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation ("Petitioner"), concerning property commonly known as 4133 Progress Boulevard in the City of Peru, Illinois, legally described as follows:

The North 16 feet of Lot Twenty-Two (22) and all of Lot Twenty-Three (23) and Lot Twenty-Four (24) in Progress Park Second Addition to the City of Peru, according to the plat thereof recorded May 23, 1979 as Document No. 671113 in Plat Cabinet "A", Page 80, all situated in LaSalle County, Illinois.

PIN: 17-04-314-022 ("Property")

Petitioner desires to relocate the Illinois Valley Food Pantry to the Property and requests the following relief under the City's Zoning Ordinance, to wit:

1. A text amendment to Section 11.05(d) to add "not-for-profit food distribution center and food pantry" as a Special Use available in B-4 Highway Business Districts;
2. Granting Petitioner a Special Use to operate a not-for-profit food distribution center and food pantry at the Property; and
3. For such other and further relief as may be reasonable and appropriate.

The Property is zoned B-4 Highway Business District.

Planning/Zoning Commission Members Miller, Kalsto, Jones, Grabowski, Brady, and Becker were all present at the hearing. Member Lucas was absent.

Mary Jo Credi and Peter Lawniczak, Executive Director and President of the Illinois Valley Food Pantry, respectively, along with Petitioner's attorneys, Walt Zukowski and Michael Zywicki from Zukowski Law Offices, appeared on behalf of the Petitioner and were duly sworn.

Attorney Zukowski thanked the Planning/Zoning Commission for the opportunity to return and provide an update addressing the concerns raised at the July 9th meeting, which he noted was the potential for traffic backups on Progress Boulevard. Petitioner discussed the issue with its architect and the architect estimated there would be space for 19 cars to queue if the site was laid out in a drive-through configuration. The letter prepared by Kmetz Architects, Inc., a copy of which is attached hereto, was reviewed and received into the record. The 19 cars would be in addition to the 20+ parking stalls available on site. Attorney Zukowski said that Petitioner would be seeking grant funding for the purpose of constructing the drive-through. Zukowski spoke with the City's engineer and attorney, both of whom indicated they would be happy to assist with seeking a grant. If they are unable to obtain a grant, Petitioner would engage in additional fundraising efforts for that purpose. Petitioner is currently fundraising to recoup costs associated with the purchase and ongoing renovations of the Property.

Attorney Zukowski testified further that in his conversations with the City engineer and City attorney, they explored creative ways of dealing with traffic, including potentially including multiple drive lanes, staggering pickup times, lengthening business hours, or adding additional days of operation. Zukowski noted that Attorney Schweickert had prepared a draft ordinance addressing some of these solutions.

City Corporation Counsel, Scott Schweickert, stated he had drafted a proposed ordinance after reviewing the minutes of the July 9th hearing and having conversations with Chairman Miller and Engineer Carls, and had reviewed it with Attorney Zukowski the day prior. Attorney Schweickert said that the Planning/Zoning Commission is facing unique circumstances. He noted that Petitioner is seeking a Special Use, which fall into two categories under the Zoning Ordinance: "(1) uses either municipally operated or operated by publicly regulated utilities or uses traditionally affected by public interest" and "(2) Uses entirely private in character which, on account of their peculiar location need, the nature of the service they offer to the public, and their possible damaging influence on the neighborhood, may have to be established in a district or districts in which they cannot reasonably be allowed as an unrestricted allowed use under the regulations of this Ordinance." Unlike variances, there are no explicit standards outlined in the Zoning Ordinance for Special Uses. It does not address concerns like traffic flow and backups; those are just potential issues that the City has identified. However, given the fact that Petitioner is a non-profit that has already purchased the Property, the nature of the service they offer, and the considerable benefit of that service to the public, Schweickert said attention should be directed to preventing and managing these potential issues to avoid negative impacts to traffic on Progress Boulevard and surrounding businesses.

Attorney Schweickert said it was his recommendation to conditionally approve the Special Use subject to certain conditions to obviate and eliminate any traffic issues resulting from Petitioner's operations that may disturb traffic flow or negatively impact surrounding businesses. Schweickert

proposed that Petitioner be required to pursue grant funding for the construction of the drive-through; post suitable signage and required by the City; modify Petitioner's operations to increase delivery services or require scheduled pick-up times. Given traffic issues are most likely to arise during the holidays, Schweickert said Petitioner should consider working with the Peru Mall or some other suitable location to host special off-site pickup events.

Attorney Zukowski said Petitioner wants very much to cooperate with the City and be a good member of the community. The closing on Petitioner's purchase of the Property was the result of some unusual logistics that all came together at once and had to be acted upon very quickly, or Petitioner would lose some potential funding. The transaction had to happen when it did, and Attorney Zukowski apologized. Zukowski said he had reviewed the draft ordinance with Petitioner's board, and they are all in agreement.

In response to Chairman Miller, Engineer Carls stated he concurred with Attorney Schweickert's statements and when Petitioner does the drive-through, plans would be submitted for review and approval through his office.

In response to questioning from Member Grabowski, Mr. Lawniczak said Petitioner is busiest around the holidays, which is only 3 times per year. Attorney Zukowski said, other than the holidays, the on-site parking is more than enough to accommodate normal demand.

In response to further questions from Member Grabowski, Ms. Credi said they would be more than willing to have employees act as traffic control if it becomes a problem and to direct people to come back in 15 minutes.

In response to questioning from Member Kalsto, Mr. Lawniczak said Petitioner's busiest day is Wednesday. The most cars Petitioner has had queued in the alley at the former location was 12. The Property has 25 parking spaces, so Petitioner does not perceive any issues during normal operations without the drive through. Customers would just park, come inside, and pick up food.

In response to questioning from Member Grabowski, Mr. Lawniczak said the food baskets are prepared in advance based on a family size, and the pickup process only takes about 5 minutes. Ms. Credi said they want to operate like they did before COVID, where people would come inside to pick up groceries. Since COVID, they have not had the space for people to come inside. They will still assist with carrying groceries out to the individual's vehicle if needed. The boxes are pre-packaged, but additional items like bread and produce will be available in the common area.

Attorney Zukowski referenced the internal building diagram presented at the July 9th meeting, noting that there will be a new client sign-up station inside separate from the food pick-up line so operations will not be slowed by people completing paperwork.

Member Grabowski asked if they could have a designated day for new clients to sign up. Ms. Credi noted that when a client signs up, they receive food that day. If they are coming for Petitioner's services, she'd hate for them to waste gas to come back again. However, they have been exploring other options for signing up on certain days or certain times. At the former location, people signing up held up the pick-up drive through. This will no longer be a problem at the new location. Attorney Zukowski added that if there is something the City thinks Petitioner should do at some

point, Petitioner is open to trying it to accommodate the City. Ms. Credi said they want to work smarter, not harder, and are open to any suggestions.

Member Grabowski said it's sad that the community has as many people in need as it does and commended Petitioner for the work they do.

Attorney Zukowski testified that Petitioner's new location is twice the square footage of the former location and has the space to accommodate more storage and walk-in coolers. Petitioner is excited to purchase at lower bulk pricing and offer fresher and healthier foods of greater variety.

Alderman Ballard was in attendance and did not have any questions. There were no public comments or objections.

The Planning/Zoning Commission found the requested relief will not alter the essential character of the locality; will not be detrimental or injurious to other properties in the area; will not impair an adequate supply of light or air to adjacent properties, or increase the danger of fire, or endanger the public safety, or diminish or impair property values and will not increase street congestion and, therefore, favorably recommended that the City Council approve the requested text amendment and conditionally approve the Special Use subject to the conditions outline by the City's Corporation Counsel.

Chairman Miller said he appreciates the service Petitioner provides and Petitioner's willingness to cooperate with the City.

Member Grabowski moved, and Member Kalsto seconded, to recommend that the City Council approve the text amendment and conditionally approve the requested Special Use. The motion passed unanimously: 6 aye, 0 nay, and 1 Member absent.

Respectfully submitted,

CARY MILLER, Chairman
Planning/Zoning Commission

July 16, 2025

Illinois Valley Food Pantry
122 Wright St.
LaSalle, IL 61301

Attn: Mary Jo Credi

Re: 4133 Progress Blvd. Parking Study
Architect's Project No. 2025.28

Dear Mary Jo,

Pursuant to your request I have reviewed the site of the proposed new Illinois Valley Food Pantry at 4133 Progress Boulevard, Peru, IL and specifically the plan for a new pick-up lane, and calculated the amount of vehicles that could stack while waiting for pick-up.

From our conversation I understand your plan is for Clients to enter the site at the south parking lot entrance off of Progress Boulevard and proceed to a new drive between the south end of the building and the south property line, the drive would wrap around the southeast corner of the building and extend north to the north end of the building where vehicles would then turn west and enter the building through a new overhead door, food pick-up would occur inside the building. When the pick-up is complete vehicles will exit the building through the overhead door at the northwest corner of the building and proceed to the existing parking lot north entry/exit and then turn either left or right onto Progress Boulevard. In order to provide ample turning space into the building and maximize stacking space I suggest the new drive be located as close to the east property line as possible.

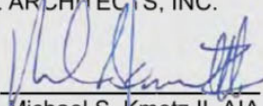
Based on the proposed traffic flow and suggested drive arrangement I have calculated there is space for approximately 19 vehicles, which includes 2 vehicles being loaded inside the building, before waiting vehicles would overflow into the parking lot.

Feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

KMETZ ARCHITECTS, INC.

BY


Michael S. Kmetz II, AIA
President