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September 2, 2026

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

RE: Petition of Robert Baldin
1024 Pike Street, Peru, IL (PIN 17-17-409-012)

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, September 2, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in the City Municipal Building, 1901 Fourth Street, Peru, IL, to consider the Petition of Robert Baldin ("Petitioner") concerning property commonly known as 1024 Pike Street in the City of Peru, Illinois, legally described as follows:

Lot 1 and the East Half of Lot 2, except the North 74 feet of said Lot 1 and of the East Half of said Lot 2, all in Block 163 in Brewster's Addition to Ninewa, in the City of Peru, excepting underlying coal and mining rights as heretofore severed; together with an easement for roadway purposes only over and across the West 10 feet of the North 74 feet of the East Half of said Lot 2, which said driveway is to be maintained by grantee and his assigns, and which said driveway shall not be for the exclusive use of said grantee and his assigns, but he shall have the right to use it in common with the owners and occupants of the North 74 feet of said Lot 1 and the North 74 feet of the East Half of said Lot 2; also together with an easement to use and maintain the sewer and water lines now servicing the garage building on the premises herein granted and conveyed, as now located upon and running through the North 74 feet of said Lot 1, all of said easements as set forth in a certain deed from Martin J. Haas and Anna L. Haas, his wife, to Peru Coca-Cola Bottling Company, an Illinois Corporation, under date of October 13, 1942 and recorded in the Office of the Recorder of Deeds of LaSalle County, Illinois, in Book 806, page 336 as Doc. #325380; said real estate being situated in the City of Peru, in the County of LaSalle and State of Illinois.

PIN: 17-17-409-012 ("Property")

Petitioner, with permission of the Property owner, Jason Just, desires to utilize the existing non-conforming building situated on the Property for automotive service and repair and seeks the following relief under the Zoning Ordinance, to wit:

- (1) A text amendment to Section 10.04(c) to add “Automotive service and repair including painting, rebuilding, repairing and reconstructing vehicles when conducted wholly within a completely enclosed building provided, however, there shall be no vehicles, parts or equipment parked or stored overnight outside the main building on the premises” or other defined use as a special use available in R-3, Single and Two-Family Residence District;
- (2) Approval of the aforementioned special use at the Property;
- (3) Approval to continue the nonconforming building upon the Property, including the existing nonconforming minimum lot area, lot width, maximum floor area ratio, minimum building setbacks, screening, maximum garage door height, and other applicable requirements; and
- (4) For such other and further relief deemed necessary and appropriate.

The Property is zoned R-3, Single and Two-Family Residence District.

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

Petitioner, Robert Baldin, and Property owner, Jason Just, both appeared and were duly sworn.

Mr. Just testified that he is selling the Property and figured it was commercial and would be transferred commercial.

Petitioner Baldin testified that he is semi-retired and does not have a business like he used to have. He would not be hiring anyone, and all the vehicles that he would work on would be inside the building. No vehicles would be parked outside. There is enough space inside the building for 5 or 6 vehicles.

In response to questioning from Member Brady, Mr. Baldin stated that the garage door would be open during the warm, summer months. He would only be working three days per week, like he is doing at his current shop. He would rather pay for something he owns than continue paying rent.

Member Brady said the Property is in the middle of a residential neighborhood, but it has been used commercially for years and is located next to a parking lot for the funeral home. Brady noted further that the building was likely constructed prior to zoning ordinances adopted by the City. He said that he did not think it was the right place for the type of business being proposed and would not want to live next to it, but acknowledged the situation was unfair for the seller. Petitioner responded that it is what it is, and he did not want to be somewhere he wasn't wanted.

Member Brady stated that nobody wants to see cars outside the building but questioned whether it would be unavoidable and acknowledged the difficulty and practicality of enforcement by the City. Mr. Baldin responded that he did not want to create issues with the neighbors or City.

Member Brady noted that the Property is zoned R-3, and other acceptable uses are limited. City Corporation Counsel, Scott Schweickert, noted that the existing legal non-conforming use for storage could be continued.

Attorney Schweickert said that he and the City's Director of Engineering/Zoning met with Mr. Baldin and Mr. Just, noting they have been very upfront and forthright about the situation. They reviewed their options moving forward with the Property. It is a difficult situation given the building takes up the majority of the lot. Rezoning to a business district was not an option because it would result in illegal spot zoning. It was determined a text amendment for a new special use was the only path forward. Attorney Schweickert crafted the language of the proposed text based on other special uses found in the City's Zoning Ordinance and in recognition of identified concerns, like parking of vehicles.

Attorney Schweickert stated he had also done some research into the history of the building. He discovered minutes of the City Council meeting held on August 14, 1967, where the petition of A&L Manufacturing, Inc. and JEME Investment Corporation seeking continuation of a non-conforming use was referred to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Schweickert also found minutes of a special meeting held on October 30, 1967, "for the purpose of discussing and considering the alleged violation of the Injunction entered by the Circuit Court of LaSalle County with regards to the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Peru and JEME Investment Corporation." Testimony of neighborhood witnesses was taken concerning JEME's operation of a machine shop at the Property contrary to the Zoning Ordinance and aforementioned injunction, and the City Council moved to direct the corporation counsel to take any and all necessary legal steps to enforce the terms of said injunction. He also found minutes of the December 1, 1980, City Council meeting discussing the property's use for storage and questioning whether it could be returned to commercial use. Attorney Schweickert was unable to obtain a copy of the injunction.

In response to questioning from Member Kalsto, Mr. Just testified that his father acquired the Property around 1994, and he later acquired obtained the Property by quitclaim deed in 2014.

In response to questioning from Member Grabowski, Mr. Just confirmed that Just Masonry has used the Property primarily for storage, but also to work on his trucks. In response to further questioning from Chairman Miller, Mr. Just confirmed it was for personal use only.

In response to questioning Chairman Miller, Petitioner said he would not be doing any automobile painting, just mechanical repair. Attorney Schweickert noted the language of the text amendment can be modified as desired.

Chairman Miller called for public comment.

Sue Johnson, a neighbor living adjacent to the Property, appeared and objected to the Petition. She stated the brick building was apparently constructed in the early 1900s, prior to the City's enactment of zoning, and was split from off from an adjoining parcel. The Property faces Pike Street. The dimensions are 51.5' x 90'. There are minimal setbacks between the building and adjoining parcels: approximately 1.5' to the south, 3'8" to the west, and 99" to the north. The Just family has been excellent neighbors for approximately 30 years. They have used the building for

storage for their masonry business with little effect on the neighboring residential properties. Mrs. Johnson said the proposed special use would be inappropriate and incompatible with the residential neighborhood. It would cause traffic and parking problems along Pike Street, noting there are four residences on half lots on the opposite side of Pike Street. She expressed concerns about environmental issues and health impacts to the neighborhood from the use of paints and fuels, as well as noise. She believes the proposed use would lower property values in the neighborhood. Mrs. Johnson further noted that the west wall of the building is in a state of disrepair, and the northwest corner of the building is at risk of collapsing onto their property.

Joseph Menne, a nearby resident living at 2024 7th Street, appeared and objected to the Petition. He stated he has lived at his home since he was two years old except during his time serving in Vietnam, and the garage was always used to store equipment. He would hate to see it change to a commercial establishment. When he was a child and the Property was owned by Coca-Cola, they'd have to stop playing ball in the street for the truck to backup into the garage. He reiterated that the Property was always used to store stuff, never to maintain equipment or as a body shop, and objected to it being changed.

Alderman Mike Sapienza appeared and objected to the Petition. Alderman Sapienza stated he had looked at the collapsing northwest corner of the building and said it needed to be addressed. Alderman Sapienza said he was there to speak on behalf of the Third Ward. The Third Ward is very difficult to maintain, and its changes like these being proposed that can cause it to go downhill quickly. Petitioner said he was only going to do car repair for a few more years, what happens after that? What use will it be? Alderman Sapienza said he looks at things from the lens of whether he would like that next to his house. He complimented the Planning/Zoning Commission, noting they do a fantastic job 99% of the time, but he has been getting a bit more involved to prevent a downward spiral in the Third Ward. Sapienza said he also speaks for the other Third Ward Alderman, Rick O'Sadnick, who was unable to attend the meeting.

There were no further public comments or objections.

In response to questioning from Members Kalsto and Brady, Attorney Schweickert said that the legal non-conforming building and use for storage could continue. Under the Zoning Ordinance, if the use is discontinued for 12 months, any future use would be required to come into conformance with the regulations of the R-3 or seek approval of a special use more compatible with R-3. Schweickert further noted that an ordinance approving a special use could be limited only to a specific person.

Member Brady inquired about what would happen if Mr. Just went beyond storage and started cutting blocks. Attorney Schweickert responded that if the City received complaints, the activity would be investigated and likely addressed under the nuisance ordinance.

In response to questioning from Member Grabowski, Attorney Schweickert noted there is some confusion regarding this Property being commercial. Since it is a large garage building on its own parcel, the County has classified it as commercial for tax purposes, but the City of Peru is the authority having jurisdiction over zoning and has it zoned R-3 residential.

Member Grabowski moved, and Chairman Miller seconded, to recommend that the City Council deny the Petition as prayed for. The motion passed unanimously: 4 aye, 0 nay, and 3 Members absent.

Respectfully submitted,

CARY MILLER, Chairman
Planning/Zoning Commission