

**WHITLEY COUNTY BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
STAFF REPORT**

25-W-SE-8 SPECIAL EXCEPTION
Darian & Rachel Allen
431 S. State Road 5

JULY 22, 2025
AGENDA ITEM: 3

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Current zoning: AG, Agricultural
Property area: 10 acres

The petitioner, owner of the subject property, is requesting special exception approval for a Machine Shop use in conjunction with their residence. The property is located at 431 South State Road 5 in Section 9 of Richland Township. The subject property is currently improved with a house and an outbuilding.

The proposed specific use is to operate a ceramic coating facility in the existing 32'x60' outbuilding. The operation would coat various automotive, home décor, firearms, and sporting goods parts with ceramic coating. Additionally, some light machining of parts would be done.

One non-resident employee is proposed. About three customers a week would be expected to do dropoff/pickup at this location, by appointment only. Most product though is transported by the petitioner.

The petitioner states that this location is not expected to be permanent, but this site is proposed as an expedient solution to remove the business from an unsuitable current location. Once savings allow, another site will be sought as a permanent location.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Indiana Code §36-7-4-918.2 and Section 10.9(A) of the Zoning Code authorize the Board to review special exceptions and state the criteria listed below upon which the Board must base its review. Staff's comments/proposed findings of fact under each criterion.

- 1. The special exception shall not involve any elements or cause any condition that may be dangerous, injurious, or noxious to any other property or persons, and shall comply with the performance standards;**

Machining and coatings can involve some elements (e.g., chemicals, coolant) that may be dangerous if substantially misused, but typically such uses would not be dangerous, injurious, or noxious.

Of the performance standards, noise, odor, and fire protection may be applicable to this proposal. Machining could involve cutting, grinding, and other noise-generating activities. Coatings can involve chemicals with strong odors. Being primarily within the structure should contain virtually all of the noise and odors. Compliance with fire codes and adequate safety practices will be necessary.

- 2. The special exception shall be sited, or oriented and landscaped to produce a harmonious relationship of building and grounds to adjacent buildings and properties;**

The proposed use would be enclosed within the existing outbuilding. Generally, the relationship of the building and grounds to the adjacent area would not change significantly from what is existing.

3. The special exception shall produce a total visual impression and environment that is consistent with the environment of the neighborhood;

The proposed use would be enclosed within the outbuilding. The operation of the business within the building would likely be consistent with the overall environment of the neighborhood, where various agricultural activities have similar characteristics.

4. The special exception shall organize vehicular access and parking to minimize traffic congestion in the neighborhood; and

The existing driveway would be utilized. There is sufficient space for maneuvering vehicles on-site, so there should be little cause of traffic congestion. However, at some point, increases in business could eventually cause congestion if it is not already relocated.

5. The special exception shall preserve the purpose of this Ordinance, as stated in Section 1.4.

The proposed machining use is a listed special exception use of the AG district. The coatings operation is administratively interpreted to be similar in nature to machining. Small-scale businesses are expected secondary uses of the Mixed Rural and Agricultural-Rural character types. It does not seem that the proposal would be out of the anticipated character for the area nor would it contravene the purposes of the zoning ordinance.

SUGGESTED CONDITIONS

If the Board moves to grant the special exception, the following are suggested conditions of the approval:

1. The Special Exception is granted for the applicant and is non-transferable without Board approval.
2. The Special Exception is granted as presented.
3. There will be no more than two non-resident employees.
4. Operations will be within a completely enclosed building. No materials or products will be stored outside.
5. Any outdoor lighting be oriented and shielded to prevent light spillage and/or glare onto surrounding properties.
6. Any signage will conform to the requirements of the code.

Date report prepared: 7/17/25

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS RECORD OF ACTION

Motion:

By:

Second by:

Approve

Approve w/conditions

Deny

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<i>Vote:</i>	Green	Sheiss	Wilkinson	Wolf	Wright
<i>Yes</i>					
<i>No</i>					
<i>Abstain</i>					

My name is Darian Allen. I am the owner of Chief Machine and Cerakote. We provide a ceramic-based coating that is applied in many different applications. We provide this service to the archery, automotive, firearm, and home decor industries. We also provide lite machining with manual machines to do things such as drill and tap receivers for optics. We have made quite a splash on the map, becoming Cerakotes customer preferred applicator for all northern Indiana. Our territory goes from Indianapolis up to grand rapids and even into Illinois and Ohio.

The Reason I am writing is that our building we are currently in is falling apart. We wish to move operations back to our property located at 431 S St Rd 5 Larwill IN 46764. We are not a super large company too where there will be a noticeable amount of traffic. We only have 1 employee. We do most of our business with companies doing production runs. To which we pick up and deliver products as part of the perks of working with up and supporting local Indiana Industry. With that being said we average about two to three customers a week to where we would have drop-offs at the location. We are not just open for anyone to walk in and are not now. We are by appointment only because we cannot stop in the middle of a run to take an order.

This is not where we plan to stay forever. In our current situation it is the only option that we have. By making this move we will be in a safer environment and able to grow to the point where we can save to purchase commercial property in Whitley County. We were born and raised here. I was Born in Kendallville and graduated from Central Noble and received my degree in Machine tool technology in Warsaw. My wife was born in Whitley county and Graduated from Whitko. Our children are currently enrolled in Columbia City Schools. We wish to make this move to be a part of the community and move back to the county we are from. This jump will make it possible for us to stay in business, grow and cement ourselves in the area.

Thank you for your consideration

Darian Allen

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