

**HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2020**

Members of the Highland Redevelopment Commission (“RC”, “Commission”) met in an electronically convened meeting using the Zoom platform on Tuesday, October 13, 2020. The meeting was convened as an electronic meeting pursuant to Governor Eric Holcomb’s Executive Order 20-04, 20-09 and 20-25 now extended by Executive Order 20-44 through 01 November 2020 allowing such meetings pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-3.6 for the duration of the COVID-19 emergency. The Study Session was called to order at 7:05.

Minutes were prepared by Kathy DeGuilio-Fox, Redevelopment Director and Recording Secretary.

**Roll Call:** Commissioners present included Cy Huerter, Robyn Radford, Renee Reinhart and Tony Washick. Commissioner Jack Havlin was excused due to illness. A quorum was established.

**Additional Officials Present:** Pat Krull, School Town of Highland liaison and non-voting member; Roger Sheeman, Town Council Liaison; Ed Dabrowski, IT Consultant; and Kathy DeGuilio-Fox, Redevelopment Director.

*Also Present:* There were no additional attendees identified.

**General Substance of the Discussion**

**1. Parking Lot Project Highway & Kennedy – Update:**

- a. **Construction:** Director DeGuilio-Fox provided a brief update including reporting to the Commissioners that construction is moving forward. Masonry materials for the Depot have arrived and construction will begin immediately. Grading and fill has been completed on the rain gardens and Dean’s Landscaping will begin planting on Monday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. Change orders have been approved for the new curbing, sidewalk and ADA compliant components of the east entrance to the parking lot. Three additional change orders have been approved by the project manager and will be presented for approval to the Redevelopment Commissioners at their October 27<sup>th</sup> meeting. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox also reported that while the project budget is now slightly over the Grimmer contract amount it remains far below what was approved by the Commission and the Council for the project.
- b. **EV Charging Stations:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised the Commissioners that the design for new 500 amp service is expected on or about October 21<sup>st</sup>. Rodney Golson, from NIPSCO, is preparing the design. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox also advised that the grant application has been submitted and awards should be announced by the end of November.
- c. **Khatra Petro:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised there were no new updates to report.

2. **Downtown Streetlight Retrofit – Update:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that she has spoken to South Shore Clean Cities (SSCC) staff and there is a grant available thorough IDEM for funding that is earmarked for projects such as downtown lighting. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox will work with the

SSCC staff who will prepare the grant application, due October 14<sup>th</sup>, and submit it on behalf of the Highland Redevelopment Commission. The maximum award is \$40,000. The fee for SSCC services is \$1,500. Commissioners expressed interest in pursuing the grant in spite of the very small window of opportunity.

3. **Container Market:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox reported she had spoken to Mr. Jay Lieser, developer of the Munster Maple Leaf Crossing container market. He expressed interest, promised to take a look at the Highland downtown properties and will get back in touch. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox also shared traffic count numbers with the commissioners that were received from DVG in Crown Point. She explained this is the group that provides traffic counts and other information to Highland Public Works and the PD's Traffic Safety Committee. Brief discussion ensued.
4. **Bult Oil Property – Update:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that she had very little new to report except that EnviroForensics had reached out to Chief Timmer for reports that had been provided back in the early 1990's. He had not responded to EnviroForensics. Ms. Murday advised that IFA is concerned that this historical investigation information is necessary in order for them to provide a Site Status Letter otherwise, they may only provide a Comment Letter. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised she will follow up with Chief Timmer.
5. **Highland Main Street Restaurant Crawl:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that by all accounts, including her own participation, the inaugural Restaurant Crawl was a huge success. She reported comments and feedback that had been received from the restaurants that participated in the event. Feedback ranged from comments such as increasing their Tuesday evening revenues by 30% to those restaurants who would bring in additional staff for the October Crawl because they were so busy. Everyone agreed that the food was outstanding. The only negative was that the wait time at some restaurants was a little long. The restaurants admitted they'd had no idea how the turnout would be and promised to be better prepared in the future. Commissioners, as well as Councilman Sheeman, provided their thoughts and agreed that the event was a success. Brief discussion ensued.
6. **Commercial Property Improvement Grant Application Extension Request:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that Tony Belmonte had requested a second completion extension primarily due to materials delivery. Director DeGuilio-Fox also advised that Mr. Belmonte is unsure as to whether he will move forward with the restaurant concept of renovate the building so that he could lease it as business office space. He had explained that as a restaurateur he is acutely aware of all the restaurants that are closing their doors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While he has not decided yet he is very concerned about the economic environment for restaurants. Discussion ensued. Councilman Sheeman expressed his dissatisfaction with this and said they'd approved the grant to renovate in preparation for a new restaurant. Others disagreed that the project was still viable since it is renovating a much needed building in the downtown. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox reminded the commissioners that in the past a higher number of Commercial Property Improvement grants had been awarded to retail and service industry businesses than restaurants and food service businesses so there was no specific program requirement in that respect. Discussion ensued and Ms. DeGuilio-Fox was instructed to contact Mr. Belmonte in regard to his decision.
7. **Business Development – Miscellaneous:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised the commissioners that:

- a. Lots on the north end of the Highland Plaza were set to be auctioned and that she'd received numerous calls from interested parties. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox reported there are 3-4 businesses that she felt could be serious contenders during the auction. Discussion ensued. Several of the commissioners asked if Director DeGuilio-Fox could provide a site rendering or GIS photo of the Highland Plaza property so they could better understand which parcels will be auctioned.
- b. The property located at 8100 Indianapolis Blvd, the former site of the Coach USA bus service, is for sale. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised she has had numerous calls regarding that property as well however, numerous of those interested were not appropriate for the location or difficulties with the property could get in the way. She advised that the best candidate at this time is Gas N Wash, a service station chain out of Illinois who hopes to expand their market with the first expansion in Highland. Discussion ensued. The Commissioners are in favor of pursuing the Gas N Wash development for the 8100 Indianapolis Blvd site.
- c. The Shell station proposed for the corner of Hart Road and Indianapolis Blvd continues to move forward through the Plan Commission. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that this location is in the Commercial Corridor Redevelopment Area and the commissioners may be interested in attending a Plan Commission meeting. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox will forward meeting notices and agendas as she receives them.

8. **Redevelopment Commissioner Comments:** As a side note Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that she had researched the debt report for the bond held on the Jewett Street properties as asked to do during the previous meeting. The final bond payment will be February 2024. Commissioner Huerter asked that the 2020 goals be included on the October 27<sup>th</sup> study session agenda. He'd like to review those and have an additional discussion in that regard prior to the end of the year.

There being no further business the October 13, 2020 study session of the Highland Redevelopment Commission was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted by Kathy DeGuilio-Fox, Recording Secretary.