

HIGHLAND MAIN STREET MEETING
Highland Town Hall- Highland, Indiana 46322
January 12, 2022 MINUTES

The Highland Main Street Bureau met in a Public Meeting held in person in the Town Council Chambers at Highland Town Hall on January 12, 2022.

Call to Order

At 6:36 PM, the Highland Main Street (HMS) meeting was called to order by President Teri Yovkovich. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp introduced Town Councilman Tom Black, who is the new Town Council liaison for Highland Main Street. All present introduced themselves and their business affiliations, to Councilman Black.

Roll Call:

The following members were present: Teri Yovkovich, Renee Reinhart, Jim Roumbos, Diane Roumbos, Alex Robertson, Ben Reinhart, Mary Ellis, Liz Popovich, and Sandy McKnight. Also, present were Nan Higgins, Jacqui Herrera, Desi Biro, Town Council Liaison Tom Black and Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp. Members Renee Rosignol, Rhonda Bloch, Evi Lovin, Madison Owens and Elijah Aurand were absent. Minutes were taken by Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp.

Election of Officers:

President Yovkovich opened the floor for nominations for President of Highland Main Street for 2022. Liz Popovich nominated Teri Yovkovich to serve as President. No other nominations were presented. Teri Yovkovich was elected as President for 2022 unanimously by voice vote, 9-0.

President Yovkovich asked for nominations for Vice President for 2022. Renee Reinhart nominated Liz Popovich. No other nominations were presented. Liz Popovich was elected as Vice President for 2022 unanimously by voice vote, 9-0.

President Yovkovich asked for nominations for Secretary for 2022. Jim Roumbos nominated Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp. It was noted that per town ordinance, the HMS Secretary can be a non-Board member. No other nominations were presented. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp was elected as Secretary for 2022 unanimously by voice vote, 9-0.

Minutes:

The minutes of the November 10, 2021 Highland Main Street meeting were presented and reviewed by the members. Jim Roumbos made a motion, seconded by Liz Popovich, to approve the meeting minutes of November 10, 2021. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote, 9-0.

Essay Contest:

Jim Roumbos reported that there was a total of 50 essays submitted for the Downtown Essay Contest. He said the essays, broken down into four different age groups, were graded by the Highland Branch Head Librarian and a Highland English teacher, with first, second and third place prizes awarded in each category. He also reported that there will be a follow-up article in the February Gazebo Express newsletter.

Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that he would be sending The Idea Factory a list of the winners, their essays, and a list of the downtown businesses who donated prizes. Jim Roumbos suggested a picture be taken to be provided for the article as well.

A discussion ensued as to whether the contest would be held again in 2022. Jim Roumbos said that they should wait and see if the attention that the contest received translates into more foot traffic and sales in the downtown. He said perhaps some type of survey could be sent out to get feedback on the downtown.

2022 Event Calendar:

The members first reviewed the monthly Restaurant Crawl, and a discussion ensued about how the event could be made to be more beneficial for the retail and service businesses downtown. The consensus was to create a new, separate monthly event, Small Business Saturday, focused on the retail/service sector. The event will be held on the last Saturday of the month, beginning on February 26th, and downtown merchants would be encouraged to have special sales.

Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that downtown businesses would need to take a role in promoting not only their own sales, but the event itself. He stated that there have been times when some of the restaurants did not promote their own Restaurant Crawl specials, and if the members wanted to begin a larger monthly event for the other businesses there would need to be more promotion done by the retail businesses.

Jim Roumbos asked if Highland Main Street had designated funding in the town budget. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that there was funding, and he said he would get that information to the members for the February meeting. Jim Roumbos suggested that HMS advertise by using Facebook ads. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that use of Facebook ads, which are generally pre-paid using a credit card, would be problematic under the financing system the town has to use by law. He said that Redevelopment/ Highland Main Street does not have a town credit card. Jim Roumbos asked Councilman Black to ask Highland Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin if there were financing options that could be used for this. Alex Robertson said that perhaps businesses, like his, would consider funding some event Facebook ads.

Renee Reinhart asked if there are methods that Highland Main Street could consider to try and boost their social media content to positively influence Facebook's algorithms. Jacqui Herrera, of the Highland Council of Community Events, said that it is difficult to influence those algorithms. She suggested that CCE and Highland Main Street consider pooling their resources toward creation of an Events Page on the town website.

The members then discussed possible 2022 car show events. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said through use of the downtown parking lot that there could be multiple shows during the summer months. The members supported coordinating dates for the car shows around the dates for the Small Business Saturday or the Restaurant Crawl events. Renee Reinhart and Nan Mason supported the idea of once again having the car shows in the street along Highway Avenue. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp discussed the various logistical issues involved with closing Highway Avenue versus having the events in the downtown parking lot, as well as using the parking lot location as an attraction connecting point bridging Highway Avenue, both east and west of Kennedy. The consensus was to defer a decision on car shows to a future meeting.

Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp was asked about the property, formerly owned by the Highland Redevelopment Commission, located at 2821 Jewett. He replied that the property was purchased by Zorn Brew Works to be used as a tasting room.

Jim Roubos asked Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp if he could contact the North Township Trustee's office to see if one of their senior citizen buses could be used during a Small Business Saturday to stop up and down Highway Avenue. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp stated that he would need to check with the Police Department about the traffic and pedestrian safety aspect of having a bus stop along parts of Highway Avenue.

The members next discussed the Makers' Market event, and establishing a date for the 2022 event. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that the first Saturday in October, was October 1st. He further stated that Fire Prevention Week this year was from October 9th through the 15th, which meant that the annual Fire Department Open House would likely not be on October 1st. It was noted by the members that last year's event was successful even though the Open House did not occur that weekend.

Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that Google searches of other possible Northwest Indiana events found that no event dates had been set as far in advance as October 1st. After further discussion, the members approved setting October 1st as the date for the 2022 Highland Makers' Market. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said he would establish a Facebook Event page and begin notifying 2021 vendors to save the date.

Community Garden:

Renee Reinhart said she would contact Madison Owens and the two of them would coordinate planning for this year's garden. The consensus of the members was to once again donate the garden's produce to the St. James Food Pantry. Renee Reinhart said that for continued donation to the church, the plantings should be kept simple and not include such things as kale, or low yielding items such as corn.

A discussion ensued as to possible uses of the garden to assist some local restaurants and its possible use as a venue for cooking/recipe demonstrations with downtown restaurants. Ben Reinhart said that Adam Kern, from Leep's Supply, approached him after the November meeting, and offered to donate supplies and installation of a new water spigot on the garden-side, outside wall of the Fire Station. He said he would send information on this to both Director Kathy DeGuilio-Fox and Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp, for follow-up with Mr. Kern and the Fire Department.

Discussion:

Jim Roubos said that there should be a regular Farmer's Market downtown in the downtown parking lot. Alex Robertson said there is a need for a larger scale market, perhaps once a month. A discussion ensued concerning possibly competing against established area markets, such as Zandstra's, and the fact that the Park Department will be having monthly markets on Sundays at Main Square.

Other possible events discussed included: a water balloon toss; a "Bike and Brew", or scavenger hunt event along the bike trail; and, pet blessing events. President Yovkovich suggested that Renee Reinhart and Alex Robertson discuss some of these ideas in greater detail and bring them back at the next meeting.

Councilman Black said that in addition to event ideas discussed at this meeting, other ideas such as possible "mid-week mixer" events, are also being considered for 2022.

The members also discussed the need to recruit new Highland Main Street members. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp noted that the current members are serving the second year of two-year terms, but there still additional appointments available. He stated that there are a couple of current members that have not been regularly attending

meetings that should be contacted as to their continued interest in serving. He also said that he was made aware that an active member of the Highland Griffith Chamber of Commerce, who recently moved to Highland, has applied for appointment to Highland Main Street.

Jacqui Herrera reported that the Highland Council of Community Events was meeting on January 13th, and she would keep Highland Main Street informed as to CCE's 2022 activities.

Adjournment

President Yovkovich announced that the next meeting of Highland Main Street will be on Wednesday, February 9th at 6:30 pm. With no further business before the members, Diane Roumbos made a motion, seconded by Ben Reinhart, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote, 9-0. The meeting adjourned at 7:59 PM.