

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

STUDY SESSION MINUTES

TUESDAY, JULY 11TH, 2023

Members of the Highland Redevelopment Commission (RC Commission) met in person at Town Hall on Tuesday, July 11th, 2023.

The Study session was called to order at 6:30 pm by President Sean Conley.

Present: Commissioners Sean Conley, Alex Robertson, and George Georgeff were present in person at Town Hall.

Commissioners Bill Leep and Tom Black were excused.

Additional Officials Present: Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director; Susan Hale, Assistant Redevelopment Director; Pat Krull, Non-Voting Advisor & School Town Representative

Attorney John Reed was excused.

Also Present: None

General Substance and Discussion

1. **Wayfinding Signs** – Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra gave the Commission an update on the Wayfinding Signs. The Commission was informed that there are nearly 50 business panels that have been submitted, and the large sign with map was installed at the Municipal Parking Lot. Commissioner George Georgeff asked that staff reach out to Diane, the manager at Traditions, to see if we can get a response from her about including them on the Wayfinding Signs. Director Maria Becerra also explained to the commission that staff met with Dale from Zandstra's Store for Men, and briefly spoke with him about possibly doing a short video for the social media to feature his business that has been in highland for 60 years. Commissioner George Georgeff also asked about another business being included on the signs, but staff let him know that there have been multiple failed attempts to reach anyone at that business.
2. **Commercial Grant** – Commission President Sean Conley said he would reach out to Attorney Reed to ask about progress with the Commercial Property Improvement Grant Revisions. The Commission went on to discuss the Belmonte Commercial Grant Application, as they were provided with the cost estimates for the work he plans to do. The Commission asked staff to reach out to Mr. Belmonte and figure out if he is planning to start the work within this year, as that would be a requirement for them to consider a resolution at the next meeting. Director Maria Becerra told the Commission that NWI Parkinson's Commercial Grant appropriations public hearing will be August 14th.
3. **Electrical in the Municipal Lot** – The Commission was presented with two quotes to install outlets throughout the parking lot. Director Maria Becerra explained some details about the project proposals, and the Commission asked that she speak with Clerk-Treasurer Mark Herak about whether CEDIT or TIF money could potentially fund this project. Director Maria Becerra also informed the Commission of the Electrical Inspector's comments regarding it being better to do this project quickly rather than waiting, because of possible complications that come with waiting too long.
4. **Budget** – Director Maria Becerra explained to the Commission that this past week, Mark Herak sent all of the department heads the documents they need for preparing their 2024 budgets. Commissioner George Georgeff advised the Commission that they need to budget for potential

town-wide salary increases, and President Sean Conley said to ensure the \$100,000 for Commercial Grants is included in this budget.

5. **Parcel Discussions** – Director Maria Becerra explained to the Commission that a developer who owns some property on Indianapolis has expressed interest in purchasing the parcels that Redevelopment owns at **8100 Indianapolis**. She explained that the developer requested the parcel numbers and that she relayed them to Attorney Reed, asking him to connect with the developer. Commissioner George Georgeff asked Director Becerra if Attorney Reed had sent her the covenants regarding the billboard sign on one of these parcels, and she responded that she was able to find information about this in old files, and that the developer said that he was fine with the sign being there. Sean said he will follow up with the Attorney on this. President Sean Conley told the Commission about a meeting he had with Matt Wells, who mentioned to Sean that Purdue is interested in the property at **8401 Indianapolis** for a potential technology center. The Commission discussed pros and cons to this potential use for the property, including ROI, taxes, property value impacts, and more. President Sean Conley brought up getting appraisals on **8600 Kennedy**, and asked Director Maria Becerra about if she had looked into funding these appraisals. She informed the Commission that the funds are available and the Commission instructed her to move forward with obtaining these appraisals. The Commission then moved on to discussing the medical group that is interested in **9001-9011 Indianapolis**, and the meeting that Director Maria Becerra, Assistant Director Susan Hale, and Building Commissioner Ken Mika had with the potential developer. Director Maria Becerra explained to the Commission what concerns arose during that meeting, regarding drainage and rebuilding. The Commission also discussed the current state of the property maintenance. The Commission was presented with an email from a woman named Ethel Sorisantos, the owner of **9039 Kennedy**. Assistant Redevelopment Director Susan Hale explained to the Commission that Ms. Sorisantos purchased this property in 2009 on a tax auction, but when she went to resell it, her real estate agent informed her that it was not accessible, nor is it a buildable property, as it is Cady Marsh Ditch. Ms. Sorisantos is asking that she be able to donate this property to the town as she owes about \$8,000 in back taxes, and it is impacting her ability to buy other properties. Commissioner George Georgeff instructed Assistant Director Susan Hale to let Ms. Sorisantos know that she should reach out to the Lake County Drainage Board to see if they are interested in having this property donated to them.
6. **Town Council Presentations** – The Commission was informed that there are two presentations that should take place at the Town Council Study Session on July 17th, one from Dan Botich of SEH, regarding the potential TIF merging, and the other being SolSmart from Cathy Perrin of Highland Neighbors for Sustainability.
7. **Commissioner Comments** – Non-Voting Advisor Pat Krull mentioned the islands at the Municipal Parking Lot, and the weeds/grass that is not being watered due to no water spigot being available. The Commission discussed potentially rocking, bricking, or mulching in those islands, to make them easier to maintain. They also discussed combining this potential project with the proposed project for the side of the hill between the parking lot and Ridge Road. The Commission encouraged Director Maria Becerra to reach out to Alex Brown regarding the islands.

The meeting was adjourned by President Sean Conley at 7:26 pm.