

**HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
TUESDAY, AUGUST 10, 2021**

The Highland Redevelopment Commission ("RC", "Commission") met in person at Town Hall on Tuesday, August 10, 2021. The Study Session was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Commission President Cy Huerter.

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

Roll Call: Commissioners Robyn Radford, Cyril Huerter, Sean Conley and Bill Leep were present in person at Town Hall. Commissioner George Georgeff was absent with notice. A quorum was established.

Additional Officials Present: Patrick Krull, School Town of Highland Liaison and non-voting member; and Kathy DeGuilio-Fox, Redevelopment Director were present in person.

Also Present: John Jurisa, Weichert Realtors.

General Substance of the Discussion

- 1. Disposition of 2811 and 2815 Jewett – Discussion:** Director DeGuilio-Fox advised that a public offering had been made on 2811 Jewett and 2821 Jewett over a year ago. However, when COVID hit the group interested in purchasing the properties was no longer able to. Having offered the properties publicly enables the Commission to list them and negotiate with a potential buyer at this time. However, because that same process has not been followed with the 2815 Jewett property the Commission must begin it by getting two appraisals and then move forward through the public offering process. That process will take until the end of the year to complete. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised she has estimates for services from two appraisers and once the Commissioners adopt resolutions at their August 24th meeting the process may begin. Commission Leep asked that we get on the appraisers calendars so they may begin their work as soon as possible after August 24th. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox reported that she met with Rhonda Bloch and Mary Ellis. Rhonda is interested in buying 2821 Jewett as well as the entire 2815 Jewett properties. She was advised of the public offering process and will be included in the Request for Proposals. Discussion ensued. Everyone agreed it would be ideal if one of the current tenants was able to purchase the properties. The Commissioners were further advised that Rhonda Bloch intends to make an offer on the 2821 Jewett property. Discussion ensued.
- 2. Disposition of 2821 Jewett – Report and Discussion:** Director DeGuilio-Fox asked Mr. Jurisa to report regarding the inquiries and offers he's received on the 2821 Jewett property. Mr. Jurisa reported he's shown the property eleven times and received two offers to date. There are agents who are holding back offers until closer to the 24th. Commissioners were advised that they may consider the offers during their study session during their August 24th meeting. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox reiterated the need to maintain the integrity of the downtown and continue to build it as a destination place for residents and visitors. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox recommended food service industry or retail destination businesses are those that the Commission should be interested in for this location. She also mentioned that the Highland Main Street organization hopes that the integrity of the mural alcove is maintained. Discussion ensued.
- 3. 2907 Jewett Street – Grant Extension:** Director DeGuilio-Fox introduced the request to extend until early 2022 the Commercial Property Improvement Grant previously awarded to the Belmonte Family for improvements of property located at 2907 Jewett Street. Currently there are several issues that continue to hold up the project: The State of Indiana Building Plan Review Department is requesting specific venting for some of the equipment such that the state required approvals are being held up. And, contractors are unable to get certain materials. Discussion ensued. The Commission agreed that

they want the project to go forward and are willing to extend the completion date. Action will be taken at the Commissions August 24th meeting to accomplish this.

4. **2540 45th Street Commercial Property Improvement Grant Application – Discussion:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox directed everyone's attention to the application materials in the packet. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox raised concerns in regard to the proposal that improvements only be applied to the north and west elevations. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox expressed her opinion that this approach is only a partial improvement and commented that the property is in an overlay district. Discussion ensued. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox was asked to contact the applicant and request that three of the four building elevations be included in the power wash, resealing and painting of the brick and to advise that the Commission would be willing to award \$20,000.00 for the project. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that if the applicant agrees to improvement of the three elevations and the reduced award she will prepare a resolution for adoption by the Commission at their August 24th meeting.

5. **Bult Oil Property – Update and Discussion:** Mr. Jurisa was asked to provide an update on the former Bult Oil Property. Mr. Jurisa reported to the Commissioners that on Friday, August 6th the offer to purchase the property was rescinded with the "buyer" advising he had gone online and read minutes that led him to understand he would have to make greater improvements and spend more money than he intended to. Mr. Jurisa also reported that the individual is "scared" by the environmental issues and what the Plan Commission would require. Lengthy discussion ensued. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox was asked why Mr. Siemer was no longer interested in the Bult Oil Property. She explained that he felt he did not have time to do his due diligence and the environmental issues concerned him. Commissioner Huerter suggested the Highland Body Shop be approached again and asked if they remain interested. Mr. Jurisa was asked to reach out the Highland Body Shop attorney in the hopes of "breaking even" on the property. Commissioner Leep suggested that with the environmental issues, such as they are, he wondered if the property is worth anything at all and if they would consider paying someone to take the property. He wondered if there is any value at all. He suggested the Town owes it to the businesses in that area to install sewers. Discussion ensued regarding the letter of intent from the Highland Body Shop. Commissioner Conley suggested selling the property for a nominal price with the requirement that they fully develop the property, including installing sewers. The question arose as to whether a development agreement could be prepared requiring full development of the property and sewers within a five-year period of time. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised she is unable to answer the questions. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox was asked to contact attorney Reed in this regard. Mr. Jurisa was asked to contact the Highland Auto Body Shop attorney.

6. **Wayfinding Signs – Town Code Information and Discussion:** Ms. DeGuilio-Fox explained to the Commissioners that the hinged sign that they've been considering does not meet code and is not allowed for numerous reasons. Director DeGuilio-Fox suggested the Commissioners use a sign similar to the "corner" sign recommended by VIA Marketing. The design concepts would be the same although it would include a map rather than the individual sign plaques. Commissioner Huerter asked what had been learned about the electrical capacity in the parking lot next to Growlers. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox explained she'd spoken with the Public Works Director and the existing electrical box is not adequate. A new electrical panel could be installed if the commissioners wished to invest that type of money. Another issue is that the sign may not be installed in the easement. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox suggested solar lighting be used to illuminate the sign. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox also asked if the commissioners wanted to install a sign in the lot and reduce their opportunity to sell the property to a future developer. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Huerter asked that Ken Mika be contacted in regard to a variance so that the sign could be install in the parking lot on the SE corner of Highway and Kennedy. Discussion ensued. Discussion continued. Commissioner Leep commented that he felt that the wayfinding map was more than what is needed and felt that using a QR code to a maintained website could include the map and everyone could navigate from the signage location to the restaurant or business of interest.

The others agreed. Discussion ensued about management of the website. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised she'd spoke with the IT director and that he will create a website. Lance will manage the information on the website. Numerous ideas were discussed. Questions were asked as to where in the municipal parking lot the sign could be installed. Commissioner Huerter suggested that one could go near the depot and one in the area where the future trolley stop is planned. The Commissioners agreed that wayfinding should proceed as discussed. Commissioner Huerter suggested others drive over to the SW corner of Ridge Road and Broad to look at the wayfinding sign Griffith has installed.

7. Redevelopment Commission Comments:

- a. Commissioner Huerter asked for an update on the property at the corner of Highway & 5th. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that the owner, Chip Whitley, is trying to sell it. She has heard of some interest but nothing that has moved forward. Discussion ensued.
- b. Commissioner Conley asked what is happening with 2933 Highway. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that the party interested in purchasing it has been told that it is not for sale. However, Ms. DeGuilio-Fox had spoken to the Lake County Auditor and there are back taxes due. The property was supposed to go on an August tax sale. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox informed the interested party of this in June and advised they call the Lake County Auditor to register for the sale so they could purchase the property.
- c. Commissioner Huerter asked what is going on with the Speedway property. He commented that numerous of the properties have been sold to EXXON and questioned what is happening with the Kennedy Avenue property.
- d. Commissioner Huerter asked if the car wash proposed for the property at 8955 Indianapolis Blvd was on the Council agenda Monday August 9th. Ms. DeGuilio-Fox advised that the Council approved the proposal to advance to the Plan Commission for consideration.
- e. Commissioner Huerter asked what the status is of the former Holsum Bread building on 45th Street. Commissioner Huerter was advised that an ambulance service owns it and parks/stores their vehicles there.

There being no further discussion the Redevelopment Commission study session was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kathy DeGuilio-Fox, Recording Secretary.