

**HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 2022**

Members of the Highland Redevelopment Commission (RC Commission) met in person at Town Hall on Tuesday, September 13, 2022. The Study session was called to order at 6:38 by President, Sean Conley. Attorney John Reed called to make a roll call

**Roll Call:** Commissioners Sean Conley, George Georgeff, Cy Huerter, Bill Leep and Alex Robertson were present in person at Town Hall. All present a quorum was established.

**Additional Officials Present:** Pat Krull, School Town of Highland Representative and non-voting member to the Redevelopment Commission. Commission Attorney John Reed. Councilman Tom Black – Council Liaison for the Redevelopment Commission.

Also Present: Maria Becerra, Jesse Becerra

**General Substance and Discussion**

1. **Redevelopment Assistant Discussion** – Commissioner Georgeff mentioned changing the title of the position and what we need to do to change it. Commissioner Conley agrees that the title would make an impression. And especially if someone is going to make a lateral move from where they are, they want to feel like they are stepping up. Commissioner Huerter said to Maria you would have an active part in the selection of the assistant. Commissioner Conley asked Attorney Reed if this is something that would need to go to the Council. Attorney Reed said he will certainly ask and see the way it is listed in the Salary Ordinance. We would request just changing the Title in the Salary Ordinance. Commissioner Conley, so as long as the other aspects of the job don't change it should be pretty easy. Attorney Reed, I would think. Comm. Conley asked the Attorney to talk to Mark about that, we will get that taken care of. Comm. Conley asked Comm. Georgeff if he had seen any emails about the job or anyone else? Comm. Georgeff stated we probably have to advertise that.
2. **Move to Indiana Discussion** - Platinum \$10,000 per year, the entire town can take part in that, the Council, the parks department. We pick up the tab, everybody can participate. Comm. Huerter asked Tom Black if he received one of the handouts. Mr. Black said yes. Comm. Conley, we are leaning towards the platinum so we get the full scope of what they have to offer. Comm. Georgeff stated he talked with the Clerk Treasurer in Dyer and they are happy with the program. It should be a good thing for the Town to promote each one of the departments. Attorney Reed stated with the Commission's permission, he would take the packet and scan it in and take it to the Council, and let them know what we are thinking. Comm. Georgeff says yes and bring back any feedback, if there is any negative feedback to us.
3. **Council request** Councilman Tom Black did state that the Council would like to meet the New Director and any Redevelopment Commissioners who would like to join our next

study session. That would be the coming Monday. Comm. Conley requested if we can get a copy of our budget prior to. Councilman Black responded, yes. Comm. Conley, stated that he would be available and asked Maria Becerra if she would be available. Attorney Reed stated the session starts at 7:00. Comm. Conley stated anyone can go. Councilman Black asked if they would be worried about having a quorum. Attorney stated it doesn't matter because they are in a public you are not consorting.

4. **Town website and the Moving to Indiana** Commissioner Robertson spoke about the Town's website and how with this new marketing, it would be tying back to the current Town website, that we are not happy with or doesn't flow easy for people going to it, it could be time wasted. We need to focus on the Town's website and then go back to these people on this new marketing. Commissioner Huerter stated, that he understood, that they would lend their expertise to help us in that regard. Conversation held on looking at the other cities and town who may have the Moving to Indiana, to see how it is. And then looking at the Town's website to see what needs to be cleaned up. The Moving to Indiana group would help us with the video and help us change any links we have on their site, but they would not help us with the town website. Commissioner Huerta, said overall it is for the Redevelopment. Commissioner Georgeff, said that this the Council also to see what they think. Comm. Huerta stated that the video would be what would be set for that term of the contract. Comm. Conley stated that they are willing to change whatever links we want on their site. But they are not necessarily going to help us with the Town site. I think what Alex is saying that its great it leads to the Town site, but the Town site does not really deliver anything of value to the people that are looking at it. It's an opportunity to tweak the Town's site as well. Comm. Huerter stated we should not lose the focus that this is for Redevelopment, just like the parking lot or even the suggestion that we had for the bike racks. The park dept took over, but originally that was our idea. Comm. Conley stated that if a couple of us can look at some of the websites and see what the other towns are doing.
5. **Town Theatre items** – Comm. Conley stated he had lots of emails from Mr. Jackson, which in the last couple of days have seemed to stop. I am not sure as to why. He was supposed to go take a look at the items on Friday or over the weekend. But he wanted to choose which one of the items, before the Art House, which I thought was fair, since he was taking the rest of the items. I am not sure why he is not communicating with me. I will try to reach out. I would really like those items out of the storage space by Friday. Rhonda wants that stuff out for storage space.
6. **LED Town Sign** – Comm Huerta asked Maria Becerra if she was familiar with the new sign here on Ridge and Indianapolis Blvd.? Part of the LED on the lower level has not been working. Maria was asked to follow up on this.
7. **Circuit Breakers** Comm Huerta brought up the Circuit Breaker article in the Gazebo. Obviously, all the work that we have been doing here these past 2 ½ years Redevelopment, particularly the business redevelopment is going to be the best way to solve this problem and these budgets. Attorney said yes developing and redeveloping is the only way you will increase your AV.

Highland is completed built. Anything to really crank it is to redeveloped what's depressed. Even if you have to pay a 15 or 20-year TIF on doing it. When those things roll off, its bananas.

8. **Downtown businesses and discussion - Distillery & Pizza Place Jewett Library parking lot Main Square** - Comm. Conley asked Comm. Georgeff if we had heard anything more on the Distillery and the Pizza place for Jewett? Comm. Georgeff said Zorn? You know I haven't talked to him in a while. I will see, I can reach out. Comm. Huerta said he saw some development going on in that pizza restaurant right there on Jewett, by the copy machine place.

There is a little bit of work going on there. Then I saw a red tag on the Webber building that's on Highway Ave. Comments on the lot by the Library being worked on. Pat Krull commented on Valparaiso Library and their downtown. Comm. Huerta was asking about the lighting in Main Square, what's going on. Councilman Tom Black said at Main square they have to do some maintenance work. They are putting in plants its going to be very visually attractive. The park dept and the inspector are well aware of the issues there. Comm Conley asked if Seimers Business sold? Commissioner Georgeff stated that he understood the building sold. I think an investment company is advertising the space for lease. Bible Vision signed a 3-year lease and it looks like, I talked to the sisters that run it and they are looking for another spot, they feel they have outgrown that space. Comm. Conley said the pizzeria guy was not happy with the size of that space, maybe he's be willing to lease it. Comm. Huerter asked where the Bible people are thinking about going. Comm. Georgeff said, somewhere on the Ridge Road Corridor. Actually, they were looking out towards Gary. They want at least 10,000 square feet. They are willing to build they have quiet an organization that will back it financially. They have a following, I guess. Someone asked are they paying taxes? Commissioner Georgeff said, they are paying sales tax and the owner pays taxes. So, we reap some benefit. Attorney Reed stated that if they built a building. Comm Conley update on the gas station? Yes, its being built, costs went up. Car Wash on the Blvd is moving forward, its being demolished. Comm. Conley asked Alex, what about your neighbor there. Comm. Robertson said they just closed on their loan they are getting permits. They have already done most of the demo. Comm Huerta commented that the old Oil property is looking good all cleaned up. It's back on the tax rolls. Councilman Black commented that they presented to the Council renderings, its going to look nice, plans for multiple buildings

9. **Olive Business Downtown – Sign Standards Final BZA variance to Council – Tom our Liaison**  
Comm. Robertson discussed the newer business downtown, the Olive it's nice. They moved from 45<sup>th</sup> to downtown, they are having issues on getting their sign approved. Ken Mika told them that it was our design standards that was the issue. I suggested that they go to the Town Council and waive the design standards for that sign and allow them to put it up. Attorney Reed stated that what would need to happen, is if Ken says its outside the parameters, people sometimes take that as I give up. But you can ask for a variance, even if the BZA votes it down, you can go before the Council and ask to change. But because it's a Developmental variance and not a use variance it does not automatically come to the Council. Comm. Georgeff explained that the sign came from their business in Porte De Leau and they wanted to put it here. Atty Reed that the maximum is 100 sq. ft linage based on the front of the building. Comm. Georgeff stated that it is a narrow building and you can't see. Atty Reed, said, the final call would be from the BZA but I imagine if some of the Council would email or go the BZA. Comm. Comm. Georgeff

asked if it can be brought up to the Council for support. Comm. Huerter explained to Ms. Becerra that Councilman Black is our representative and that she should work with him on some of these types of issues. So, It can go at least for consideration to the Council. Explain why it's important for the marketing.

10. **Restaurant Crawl**– Comm. Robertson commented that Main Street has to go to the Council to get a permit to shut down Highway avenue. Its in 2 weeks, it's the big one. Picnic table on Highway & the car show. Council Black stated he did not think there would be a problem for the permit. Comm. Robertson, said this event is ongoing, this is just the big one, it's the anniversary. Even in the winter time. Comm. Robertson said this is their one year that they started.

11. **Comm. Conley asked if there were any other comments?** None

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 7:19 P.M.