

## HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

### STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES

**MONDAY March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

The Highland Redevelopment Commission ("Commission", "RC") met in person at Town Hall on Monday March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2026. The regular scheduled study session was called to order at 7:50pm by President, Alex Robertson.

**Roll Call:** Commissioners Phil Scheeringa, Commissioner Tom Black, Commissioner Alex Robertson, Commissioner Georgeff and Commissioner Doug Turich were present in person at Town Hall and Patrick Krull (non-voting) was excused.

**Additional Officials Present:** Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director and Attorney Reed

**Also Present:** 1 member of the audience

#### **Revision of the Commercial Grant :**

Commissioner Robertson stated the thinking on this We've been going over this, me and Maria and roped in our consultant Greg for some input as well.

Maybe I'm reading this wrong but we've talked about it before where it would be nice to see some turnover in downtown improvements to certain areas where we have maybe a different use activation. Mixed-use maybe some more restaurants, bars, rooftop sort of developments. I think in order to catalyze that sort of development.

We might need to change our grant program a bit to steer developers and business owners in that direction. So with that we got our standard projects, which would pretty much fall under a lot of the stuff that we've already approved under the current grant guidelines. Rooftop and use conversion projects, mixed-use vertical projects, and then, with the nonprofits allowing a nonprofit to apply for a grant but maybe making it a little more limited since we're not getting the tax generation off of it.

That could be determined by the Commission if it's a useful project it definitely would have to be forward-facing to the public we wouldn't want just internal investment in a nonprofit building if they're not you know if it's just an office and they're kind of operating on it you might want to see that, but these are just some ideas. There's a lot of the old structure of the grant program in here as far as the eligible interior and exterior improvements. They were slightly modified some things were added and moved around a little bit. Someone comes along they want to do a big rooftop conversion project or something vertical funding the demolition activities could help move that along.

One of the big things that was added to this there were a couple things but the project scoring. So what I've noticed over the past four years of being on redevelopment and dealing with this grant program. whatever's eligible, for the most part you're getting the max grant, you know every single time. So this, takes away some ambiguity and kind of could guide the Commission as far as scoring a project and determining how much an owner or a developer would be eligible for. And I played with the numbers a bit.

I had a few different equations that I used, and then what I did is I took the project at Fuzzy Line, just as a guide, you know, to see where would this line up in the current scoring, or the scoring that's in this proposal, basically, to see how it lines up. And it seemed to line up pretty well and then this also pushes away your really small, improvements something for a \$2,000 or \$3,000 grant but is that really activating what we want to see in downtown? Another thing to consider is this opened up the grant to the entire allocation area, which was consolidated recently.

We may want to look at it and say, okay let's incentivize these sorts of developments and improvements throughout the entire area, or we can whittle it down and be more targeted, let's just focus on downtown or a stretch of 45th Street or along Kennedy and another major change was near the end as far as a claw back on the grant funds.

We've had one grant in particular that went out They were awarded the grant funds and the building has sat vacant for quite a while .Should there be a claw back? How long should that claw back when would it go into effect? Should we give them a year or a year and a half moving forward? You don't want to hand someone you know, \$50,000, and then if someone improves it, there's no tenant, no use for it, then they could possibly sell the building, then someone else comes in and says, oh, I'm going to change it around, they apply for another grant, you know, does it ever end? So it's something to think about.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated he was in agreement with it.

Commissioner Robertson stated this would be double the amount of grant funds that would be available each year instead of \$100,000, I figured \$200,000, if we're going to be trying to activate and incentivize some of these bigger projects, but this is what it's more geared towards, you know, so we can get the turnover if we're going to be scoring these.

Commissioner Scheeringa suggested Do you think it would be wise to say. We want all applications submitted by end of April for the year unlike construction season would really start, and then they were approved by May.

Commissioner Robertson answered I suppose that just depends on timeframes. if someone picks up a building at a different part of the year They still have the opportunity to get their ducks in a row. it's still subject to a written agreement, if someone says I've got this project going, it's going to be 6 months before we can start. I know I'm applying now but could we go instead of 12 months to completion they want 18 months of completion and we can assess it on a case-by-case basis.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I know it's easier to distribute funds and technically, if somebody comes in September and we've already spent our funds it's kind of the same concept.

Commissioner Robertson I'm open to modifying this and trying it anyway since it's going to be fairly brand new with a lot of changes and we could roll it out however we see fit and then work on the fine details from there. If we discover that we shouldn't keep it open for the whole year, we tighten it up or vice versa. We say everything has to be in by April and if that doesn't seem to be working after a year or two then we can always change it. It should be a living document .

Commissioner Georgeff asked so you could maybe just take applications and during the month of April but let's say let's say we don't get enough applications to exhaust the funds.

Attorney Reed answered there's money left.

Commissioner Robertson stated I would also propose having these funds in some sort of a non-reverting fund so if they do carry if there's something left over from one year and it carries over to the next year in case we get a larger project .

Commissioner Scheeringa asked Attorney Reed if that was legal ?

Attorney Reed answered yes and you might be a marked question to say is there an upper limit on that. you're limited on rainy day bonds and carryovers, but I think for a program like that, because it's through RDC it might not be as limited.

Commissioner Robertson stated It's a little more robust of an application form. The performance agreement which this was pulled partially from another municipality. It kind of made it fit this program . I don't know if it's legal. I don't know if it would need to be notarized, all that jazz and then one final thing Affidavit of compliance, I guess in Indiana If a municipality gives a grant of more than \$1,000, you have to sign this affidavit of compliance with legal immigration laws using this E-Verify system So, no matter what, if we don't do this, this document just has to or some form of this document has to make it into our Grant Program.

Attorney Reed added it should as a town body and the contractors who work in town have to acknowledge it too

Commissioner Scheeringa added that he thought it looked pretty good to be honest. I didn't notice anything that stood out with me. I was just thinking about the timeline thing.

Commissioner Robertson stated you know we could roll with that. That's a thoughtful suggestion for sure. I can make that change you know help me out with the wording you'd like to see.

Commissioner Georgeff added maybe you put \$150,000 out there in April and you got a \$50,000 reserve that could be used sometime during the year after that.

Commissioner Robertson stated that's the newer program. We'll keep working on it and I think something good to do would be to maybe mock up a few projects and see how they would land with the scoring just so that we can make sure that it's scored appropriately or the you know the way it's laid out in here seems to make sense.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I was told that there was another business on Highway that wanted to kind of do like Langels did and coming out maybe we talk to that business to see how we would score with them if that's what's something they were truly interested in.

Commissioner Robertson stated let's give it a try here first before we roll it out definitely. Don't want to look and see a project that we think is really great, and we score it like oh man, it would only get them, they wouldn't even be eligible because there's a lower limit and I think it was a score of 40, which is basically 40% of the max grant total. In order to get 100%, I mean it's almost impossible. I don't know if that's a good thing but really have to be worth it and then at the end of the day it's still subject to some of our opinion. we have some flexibility, some wiggle room as we should.

Give me your feed back , your thoughts and revisions and Maria and I will work at getting it dialed in

Next Current and anticipated cost of development

Maria put together a bunch of numbers and stated The TIF that we have available is 8,479,828 and the capital funds is \$1,613 for a total of \$10,092,838.00 These are some of the things that the Commission is, working towards and just some of the dollars that are involved just kind of an FYI.

The purchase of 2655 Garfield that's in the works and the gas station demo quote that we have currently for 8436 Kennedy Ave and there are a few other acquisitions that we are working on . Basically the bottom line for the things we are looking at doing without some of the other costs like Phase 1s, surveys, demo costs just the upfront costs.

Maria asked Commissioner Robertson if wanted to explain 8600 Indianapolis as far as the service road or I didn't know if you wanted to get into that but it would be \$5,601,000.00

Commissioner Robertson stated I had Derek put together an estimated cost for that road, because I think the direction it's going right now is the developer would build in that road as far as their development, and then seek a reimbursement Since it's a public improvement. He's not asking for TIFs so we just asked Derek to put together the numbers that way we know round about what it would cost. It should be cheaper since he's already going to be out there building and doing stuff with his own people. Yeah, the equipment out there. It would be more expensive for us to just do a ourselves separate from the developer but at least we have We have a number that way if it comes in crazy high we can look at it a little closer.

Maria let Commissioner Georgeff that the 1<sup>st</sup> Street forced main here and it's going to be \$125,510.00 Estimate for that forced main and these are just some of the anticipated costs that we are looking at

Commissioner Georgeff stated the way I envisioned that was that we would pay for it and then be reimbursed and we'll build it and be reimbursed a share of it from the from the businesses. I think he gave us 2 different ways .

Maria answered the other one was on private property so yes 2 different ways.

Commissioner Georgeff stated they'll do any private property will be done by the business but the rest of the construction, there'll still be a contribution from the business to that.

Maria stated just to give you an idea I know we wanted him to do that.

Commissioner Robertson stated It's just a visual to get a look at the numbers we've been pretty aggressive with property acquisition just knowing after all these costs roughly about 4.4 left?

Commissioner Scheeringa asked when was the next deposit coming in ?

Commissioner Georgeff responded the next tax draws come in May so another 1.5 coming in May

Commissioner Robertson stated we've been in discussion with a CPA who's got some really slick software that scores these larger projects, so we can input all the knowns that we get from developers going forward and it'll spit out a score and give us thumbs up this is a recommended project. No, it's not. It was one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen.

Commissioner Georgeff asked if it was an application process ?

Commissioner Robertson answered yes put in all the numbers and then it based on you know how it's built out in collaboration with us it spits out a number and then we can gauge whether or not we want to move forward with it which he had already input the numbers from the most recent development and it gave a thumbs down.

Commissioner Scheeringa added so that's what made the right call.

Commissioner Robertson stated it'll tell you, you know, how much, you know, the anticipated TIF generation, stuff like that it was pretty cool but we're going to be talking with him next week to learn more about it see if it makes sense what the pricing is. It's an invite-only sort of software. He only works with municipalities and he doesn't share it out to everybody. It's not just something anybody can sign up for and buy.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked if there was a cost to it and is it a subscription or do you just buy it

Commissioner Robertson stated he'll find out more next and he wasn't sure if it was a subscription.

Commissioner Robertson stated looking at that gas station and entertaining the demolition just to see a direction, you know, things to keep in mind if we wanted to have that space be developed privately maybe we don't do the full scope of demolition that we're looking at.

I don't know if it would be cost prohibitive later for a business, since we're getting rid of the skirts and access there, you know, we don't want to tear down too much, and then, you know, have to pay a bunch of money to rebuild over there, but just a consideration, because as it stands now everything's going to be restored to turf. So you know the drives and the curbs everything's going to be restored. It'll just be grass with sidewalk.

Commissioner Scheeringa gave his opinion and stated Our park's got a lot of stuff to take care of as it is I'd rather see it at least put it out for someone to try to put something there. I mean It's was large enough for a gas station before. That's my opinion. I mean, I'd rather at least leave the curb cuts and everything.

Commissioner Turich stated So the curb cuts looking at the picture turf everything up to the sidewalk and then leave the aprons, the curb cuts here on the parkway part and just leave the aprons.

Commissioner Robertson added so with that, since it was a bit out, including, getting rid of the aprons.

Commissioner Georgeff asked would that include installing new sidewalks because you take the apron out you're going to destroy the sidewalk.

Commissioner Robertson stated Sidewalk should be maintained . I think they were going to take the concrete out where you could drive in and then restore that. So the sidewalk should remain. So, I don't know if this would be something if we wanted to keep those elements then we may have to reject all the quotes and try again.

Commissioner Turich responded my vision was just the inside sidewalk

Commissioner Georgeff agreed

Commissioner Robertson stated we put this together with Ken and Derek based on their recommendations for restoring the site. They said to get rid of it and restore the curbs.

Which maybe we still do that because who knows how long it could sit there, you know, it might be a couple years before we find an interested party to develop it and it doesn't turn into a weird drive in grass parking lot you know?

I sent over that kind of rough proposal just to show what a green space would look like. I know that we're asking for input from the community. I just wanted to give a visualization on how things could kind of lay out and how it would look.

Commissioner Georgeff stated we've already got some green space on 5th and 45th there. Is that a little park?

Commissioner Scheeringa answered well it was donated but then now our parks are required to maintain it which is very difficult.

Commissioner Georgeff stated that he would hate to see our parks have to take care of these little individual plots.

Commissioner Robertson stated this would be something more low maintenance you know some permeable surfaces, pavers, maybe a covered structure. I've got some feedback a little bit from sustainability. I talked with one person from the Tree Board. We had a discussion with Main Street so there are other ideas.

Commissioner Turich stated that he liked that visual it's a little more upscale but having a covered area for people to congregate would be nice and asked if it was all brick .

Commissioner Robertson answered yes

Commissioner Turich added the challenge with this, adding everything that you have here it's going to be more time consuming for the parks to maintain it, right? If it's just an open field with one covered area then the time to cut would be less and but it looks really good.

Commissioner Robertson added I think if we went in the direction of using it more as a community space instead of something privately owned then we could get a actual architect in there to figure all that out and vision of the frost responders.

Everyone thought it was a typo

Commissioner Robertson went on to explain Bloomington has the Snow Buddies pretty much the same thing, volunteer-based, their public works supplies some shovels and some salt and match up with volunteers in the neighborhood someone in need of some assistance helping out getting rid of snow on their driveway and sidewalks and they're just matched up.

The municipality's pretty much out of it, you know, help with the matching, provide some tools, and then it's up to them to take care of there but maybe have an accessible storage shed but they could always just go to Public Works and get that too if we ever did.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:14pm

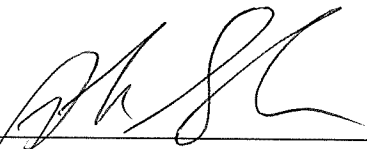
DULY PASSED AND RESOLVED by the Highland Redevelopment Commission, Highland, Lake County, Indiana, this 23rd day of March 2026, having passed by a vote 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

Highland Redevelopment Commission



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President

ATTEST:



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Secretary