

**Memorandum of the Meeting
Regular Study Session/Meeting
Twenty-Sixth Town Council of Highland
Monday, September 19, 2011**

The regular study session of the Twenty-Sixth Town Council of the Town of Highland was convened at the regular place, the Highland Municipal, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland, Indiana, in the plenary meeting chambers on **Monday, September 19, 2011** at the time of 7:05 o'clock p.m.

Silent Roll Call: Councilors Dan Vassar, Bernie Zemen, Mark Herak, Konnie Kuiper and Brian Novak were present. A quorum was attained. The Clerk-Treasurer Michael W. Griffin was present to memorialize the proceedings.

Others present:

Kenneth J. Mika, Building Commissioner; Keith Magiera, Chair of the *Please Have a Seat* Program and Keith Speaks of Neighborhoods, Inc.; Shawn Petit of Lamar Advertising; Larry Vassar, Highland School Board and Park & Recreation Board; Vicki L. Crowel, Park and Recreation Board; and Alex M. Brown, CPRP, Superintendent of Parks and Recreation were also present.

General Substance of Matters Discussed

1. Keith Magiera and Keith Speaks of Neighborhoods, Inc., offered a report to the Town Council regarding Neighborhoods, Incorporated and the *Have a Seat Program*, recently introduced in Highland. It was noted that there had been some concerns expressed to the Mr. Magiera and Mr. Speaks about the program and its aesthetic. Mr. Magiera indicated that some changes to the design of the bench seat, which is placed on private property proximate to the sidewalk, to encourage neighborhood interaction and conversation. Magiera invited the Town Council to see the prototype at his home on George Street. The program was initiated in East Chicago. Highland and Miller Beach are the next places in which the program is being advanced.

It was further explained that the initial funding came from a public safety grant. In the second round, funding was provided by Legacy Foundation and others. It was noted that owing to the subsidies in place, the cost of the bench is only \$100 to Highland residents. It was further noted that there are five in Highland already. Most are in the style of the prototype located at Mr. Magiera's house. It was noted that early versions in Highland had a wooden platform beneath the bench. The version at Mr. Magiera's house eliminated the platform.

The Town Council inquired about requirements of maintenance on the resident who has the bench. It was noted that each recipient of the bench, signs a 12-point agreement, which includes a requirement to maintain the bench.

The Building Commissioner explained how his office was involved. He noted that he believed that the project would not require permits, but offered some guidelines. He further noted that the initial examples he saw were in the wrought iron style and not the wooden ones now being installed. He further noted that he began receiving complaints from residents, from Cottage Grove in particular, complaining that the benches were "ugly".

There was an inquiry about the nature of enforcement of the agreement between Neighborhoods, Inc., and the resident who accepts a bench for any violation of its terms. It was further noted that there was no graffiti or damage in the East Chicago initiative.

With leave from the Town Council, Rick Volbrecht, 9221 Parkway Drive, Highland, expressed his concern about any future agreement with Neighborhoods, Inc. and the potential for liability.

Mr. Magiera and Mr. Speaks departed at this time.

2. Mr. Shawn Petit from *Lamar Advertising* noted that the electronic sign was already installed and was so successful, and wished to seek an additional electronic sign side. Presently, the sign has an electronic side for the north side. He was now seeking the south side view and for that would wish to add an additional \$10,000 per year to the existing license agreement, which presently has an added \$15,000 per year licensing fee. The Town Council and Mr. Petit discussed whether the existing license agreement required amendment to accommodate the change. It was noted that the Building Commissioner would follow-up. It was noted that Lamar would still require application for a use variance before the ABZA.

The discussion included a concern raised about any expectations of competitors regarding installation of LED signs too, so any expansion should be considered carefully.

It was further noted that Lamar was discussing with a private owner on the west side of Indianapolis Boulevard near the Little Calumet River, noting that a use variance would be needed there as well. The property site is zoned B-3, Stan's Bait Shop. The Town Council explored with Mr. Petit his returning to further discuss the matter at the October 3rd study session. After discussion, it was determined that the Town Council would be open if the added fee was at \$15,000 additional.

The Building Commissioner and Mr. Shawn Petit departed at this time.

3. The Parks Board representatives presented a list of capital items totaling \$1,987,900 for which it hoped to be permitted to employ bond financing to support the projects listed. The list included resurfacing the Crosstown bike trail. The discussion included what length or maturity any bond issue would extend. It was noted that any issue would be timed to align with the useful life of the assets financed.

It was noted that the list included repairs to School Town Back stops. It was noted that any debt of the park district could not be spent on the school town without some interlocal cooperation agreement in place for some extended duration.

There was some discussion about the appropriateness of including tree removal being in the bond issue. The discussion included the merits of including the installation of a playground at Sharp Athletic Complex for the use of the children of participants. It was further noted that the park is locked during the day and 70% of the participants are non-residents. Mr. Larry Vassar of the Park Board and Ms. Crowel advocated for the favor of moving forward with the bond financing. Mr. Larry Vassar also noted that the ballfield backstops at the School Town property were not particularly desired by the School Board but it would be willing to provide the property for use by the Youth Baseball and Youth Softball leagues that presently use the fields with the existing backstops.

With leave from the Town Council, Rick Volbrecht, 9221 Parkway Drive, Highland, inquired about the current requirements related to debt financing and whether or not a referendum would be required for the bond issue. It was noted that no referendum was required for an issue as described in the current instance, which is under the two million dollar threshold and does not go to the automatic trigger for one as required in the related statutes.

The Town Clerk-Treasurer reminded all that this would be subject to the tax caps at that the Town Council and the Park and Recreation Board should be mindful of the possible impacts.

4. The Parks and Recreation representatives discussed the issue of allowing municipal workers to enjoy the fitness center with either a discounted or free membership. The discussion included treatment of full-time versus part-time and comparing it to other instances. No consensus emerged regarding any policy choice at this time.

The Parks and Recreation Superintendent and Mr. Larry Vassar departed at this time.

5. The Town Council and the Clerk-Treasurer discussed the proposal to review and restate the Capital Assets Record for the Town as presented by Government Fixed Assets Consultants. It was noted that the last time the asset record was comprehensively reviewed was in 1988 and an added addition of the Parks and Recreation assets in 1993. The Clerk-Treasurer recommended that the proposal be authorized at the plenary business meeting of the Town Council on September 26. It was further noted that it was hoped that this step would allow the Office of the Clerk- Treasurer to bring the task of updating the record in-house, and abandon the current process and cost of outsourcing the updating.
6. The Clerk-Treasurer inquired of the Town Council what its policy inclination was regarding the effective date to permit an increase of 9.75% in the pensions of the beneficiaries of the 1925 Police Pension Fund, as set forth in proposed Ordinance No. 1497.1375-R. The Clerk-Treasurer indicated that a sustainable funding stream was identified for an effective date of January 1, 2012, but had not been explored for a sooner implementation. It was suggested that the Clerk-Treasurer would meet with the Police Chief and identify the areas in which an earlier effective date of October 1, 2011 would be possible for the Metropolitan Police Department of the General Fund. It was suggested that an October start date was desirable.
7. Councilor Kuiper inquired whether the current language in the compensation and benefits ordinance, prohibiting overtime or compensatory pay as an entitlement for exempt salaried workers without Town Council approval, could be removed or modified. It was noted that the Clerk-Treasurer would try to have some basic language for the Town Council at its next formal study session in October at which time the policy could be more fully discussed.
8. The Town Council discussed the most recent proposed version of an Interlocal Cooperation Agreement prepared and sent by the Lake County Sheriff's Office, forming an interlocal body to administer and implement the compliance with the state mandated Public Safety Access Point (PSAP) Consolidation. It was noted that in a recent news account, the Lake County Sheriff had expressed concerned about sustainable funding and whether any cost savings would ensue. It was determined that the attorney who prepared the proposed agreement, Mr. John Bushemi, be contacted for a possible meeting with the Town Council to discuss the proposal.
9. Ms. Vicki Crowel, 10132 White Oak Lane, Highland, with leave from the Town Council, inquired whether or not the current RBA Easy-Go Bus routes could include bus stops without a formal bus stop designation or being identified. Ms. Crowel noted that she and other drivers encountered these stops, one being near 45th Avenue and Indianapolis Boulevard, at the site of the currently closed Oil Change facility, and there was a possible accident hazard. It was suggested that the Police Chief follow-up.
10. Ms. Vicki Crowel, 10132 White Oak Lane, Highland, with leave from the Town Council, inquired whether or not the Town Council could regulate certain businesses from coming into town, particularly in vacant properties. Ms. Crowel indicated her belief that the Town of Dyer had barred certain businesses such as pawnshops and adult bookstores.

There being no further business to be discussed by the Town Council, the regular study session of the Town Council, of **Monday, September 19, 2011**, was adjourned at 8:50 o'clock p.m.

Michael W. Griffin, IAMC/MMC/CPFA
Clerk-Treasurer