

**HIGHLAND MAIN STREET MEETING**  
**Highland Town Hall/ Via Zoom- Highland, Indiana 46322**  
**May 12, 2021 MINUTES**

The Highland Main Street Bureau met in a Public Meeting held electronically, via the Zoom platform, and in person in the Town Council Chambers at Highland Town Hall on May 12, 2021. This meeting will be convened pursuant to Governor Holcomb's Executive Orders 20-04, 20-09 and 20-25 and now extended by Executive Order 21-11 through May 31, 2021 allowing such meetings, pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-3.6 for the duration of the emergency. All persons were meeting in person and remotely using the Zoom platform that allowed for real time interaction, and supported the public's ability to observe and record the proceedings.

**Call to Order**

At 6:36 PM, the Highland Main Street (HMS) meeting was called to order by Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp

**Roll Call:**

The following were present in-person in the Town Council Chamber at Highland Town Hall: Teri Yovkovich, Rhonda Bloch, Jim Roumbos, Diane Roumbos, Elijah Aurand, Liz Popovich, Renee Reinhart, Renee Rosignol, Karyn Vaught and Aaron Vaught. Also, present in-person were Nan Higgins (YaYa Sisters), Redevelopment Director Kathy DeGuilio-Fox, Town Council Liaison Roger Sheeman, Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp and Ed Dabrowski, Highland's IT Director. Also, the following were present electronically, via the Zoom platform: Members Evi Lovin, Madison Owens and Alex Robertson. Also present via Zoom were Gary Miller (Fagen-Miller) and Robin Carlascio (The Idea Factory). Members Absent: Mary Ellis and Alec Rosario. Minutes were taken by Redevelopment Commission Assistant Lance Ryskamp.

**Election of Officers:** Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp opened the floor for nominations for President of Highland Main Street for 2021. Rhonda Bloch nominated Teri Yovkovich to serve as President. No other nominations were presented. Teri Yovkovich was elected as President for 2021 unanimously by voice vote.

President Yovkovich assumed the Chair and asked for nominations for Vice President for 2021. Jim Roumbos nominated Elijah Aurand. No other nominations were presented. Elijah Aurand was elected as Vice President for 2021 unanimously by voice vote.

President Yovkovich asked for nominations for Secretary for 2021. Rhonda Bloch nominated Karyn Vaught. No other nominations were presented. Karyn Vaught was elected as Secretary for 2021 unanimously by voice vote.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the December 3, 2020 Highland Main Street meeting were presented and reviewed by the Members. Jim Roumbos asked about Highland Main Street's current status with Indiana Main Street. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp reported that with several 2020 Board members not seeking re-appointment, no agreement with the Indiana Office of Community and Rural Affairs (OCRA), who oversees the Indiana Main Street program, was executed. He further explained that at the end of 2020, OCRA placed all Indiana Main Street organizations into one of three categories. Highland's organization was placed into the lowest-tier Affiliate status.

Jim Roumbos asked for the members to be provided those Affiliate documents to review. He also raised the issue of possible grant eligibility for Highland, based on remaining part of the Indiana Main Street program. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp stated that based on OCRA's explanation of the new categories, the Affiliate status organizations are not eligible for most state financial assistance, which is available for those in the two higher tier categories. He said those documents would be provided to the members, who will ultimately decide whether to continue to remain part of the state organization.

At the end of the discussion, Rhonda Bloch made a motion, seconded by Karyn Vaught, to approve the meeting minutes of December 3, 2020. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote. The members were also presented with the meeting notes from the April 8, 2021 reorganization meeting, for informational purposes. No action was required, as there had been no 2021 appointments made by the Town Council when that meeting took place.

**2021 Planning/Reports:**

**Community Garden:**

President Yovkovich recognized Renee Reinhart and Madison Owens for a report on the Community Garden preparations. Renee Reinhart brought and provided a written report that was distributed to the members, which included proposed bed layouts, the number and projected cost of the plants and projected expenses. She also indicated that the Tri-Kappa sorority and a local Girl Scout troop would provide volunteer assistance with the garden. She suggested a clean-up day at the garden on May 15<sup>th</sup>, with planting to take place the following Saturday.

Director DeGuilio-Fox said that the two free-standing planters were in disrepair. A discussion ensued as to the items needed and projected costs for each. When asked, Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp estimated that projected water usage costs would be approximately \$140.00 to \$145.00 for 2021, and that there should be available funds from the original 2019 garden donations of \$1,145.39 available. Renee Reinhart asked about the past policy that a Main Street member had to be present at the garden, while volunteers worked. President Yovkovich said she did not feel there was a need for someone to supervise a volunteer. Director DeGuilio-Fox suggested that in the beginning, it would be good to have a member present, when new volunteers were working. It was also discussed about having laminated cards illustrating the bed layouts and what is planted in each bed to aid volunteers working at the garden.

Nan Higgins said that YaYa Sisters would donate the \$126.25 expense to purchase the plants. Alex Robertson said that Fuzzyline Brewery would be brewing a tomato basil beer in the summer, and there was discussion that perhaps some of the tomatoes could come from the garden produce.

Karyn Vaught asked how the garden produce would be used. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that he had discussions with a representative of the St. James Food Pantry, who would be happy to accept the grown produce as part of the weekly distributions to needy families in Highland. Renee Reinhart and Madison Owens advised the members that the clean-up day would be on May 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am, and the planting day would be on May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00 pm.

Rhonda Bloch said that Sip Coffee 2 would donate the fertilizer and dirt required for the garden.

**Event Calendar:**

President Yovkovich opened the floor to the members and asked for possible event ideas for the months of June, July and August.

Jim Roumbos suggested a Farmer's Market in downtown. A discussion ensued as to whether the Highland Parks and Recreation Department was continuing to sponsor a market this year. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp was asked to contact the Park Department and find out.

Robin Carlascio reported to the members that the July issue of The Gazebo monthly newsletter would be featuring the downtown and downtown businesses. A discussion ensued as to whether a flyer insert could be added to the newsletter and the possible cost of such an insert. Nan Higgins said that had been suggested in the past and the businesses were told it was not permissible for them to advertise in the town newsletter. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that in the past he was told that an insert in the newsletter that is sent to every water bill customer cost additional postage, and that it was town policy not to permit advertisements in the newsletter. Robin Carlascio said that changes by the Post Office allow more sheets in the newsletter now, which can be used to promote the downtown. However, she said it has been the position of the Town Council not to permit ads, because if they were allowed for some, it would have to be made available for everyone. Councilman Sheeman said an insert or something similar would likely not be totally free to businesses, but he was looking for money in the budget for these types of promotions.

Renee Reinhart suggested a family-friendly downtown scavenger hunt, as well as events at the Community Garden, such as what was done in the past with Cheryl Dornberg, of Mrs. Dornberg's Culinary Experience. Director DeGuilio-Fox mentioned the Highland High School Camerata Orchestra, which was scheduled to perform in the garden during the May 25<sup>th</sup> Restaurant Crawl. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said that the orchestra might be interested in a summer performance as well.

President Yovkovich suggested having a downtown-wide sidewalk sale sometime in June, July or August.

Councilman Sheeman asked about possibly having another Car Cruise. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp explained that the past event management company used by the town, Thunder Road, closed their business. President Yovkovich asked about the classic cars that come to Blue Top regularly. Evi Lovin said her boyfriend was part of the Chi-Town Classics that have met at Blue Top and other locations, and she said she would find out if they would be interested in coming to downtown Highland for an event. It was suggested that the event could be held either on Highway Avenue, or in the municipal parking lot at the southwest corner of Highway and Kennedy.

Karyn Vaught suggested a "business crawl" for the retail businesses. President Yovkovich said that with the current Restaurant Crawl event, people coming to downtown are more focused on getting food, rather than shopping at the stores. She said perhaps the event name should be changed. Renee Rosignol asked about how the date for the Restaurant Crawl was chosen. She cited Michigan City's "First Friday" event as a good example of an event which is inclusive with all of the downtown businesses, food and retail. She said that Hoosier Highlander has worked hard to use the "food" theme of the restaurant crawl to try and bring people to downtown. She expressed concern that not all of the retail businesses scheduled to stay open during the crawl were open the entire time.

A discussion ensued about the history of the restaurant crawl and it was pointed out that the Tuesday date was chosen after consultation with the participating restaurants. The advantages of keeping the event limited to the downtown, as well as the need to enhance the town's social media, were also discussed.

President Yovkovich stated that she would like to see an outdoor craft show take place downtown. Councilman Sheeman said that the Council of Community Events asked for and received a list of craft vendors from the Park Department. Director DeGuilio-Fox suggested looking to late summer to allow vendors time to fit it into their schedules. President Yovkovich said

that many participants at a recent craft show in another community she attended told her that with the disruption in shows and events due to COVID, they still had a lot availability for 2021.

A discussion ensued about other possible ideas, including: “Christmas In July”; pet blessings; musical events at the Mural Alcove; yoga in the Community Garden; a wine festival; a burgers and beer festival; pet adoptions; an essay contest; a Light Festival; chalk art; a downtown scavenger hunt and, a “Character Day”.

President Yovkovich said that she would like to start put together committees to research some of the topics to see if some of the events are feasible.

Members who said they would research specific topics include:

- Rhonda Bloch- Farmers Market, Wine Festival/Burgers and Beer fest
- Renee Reinhart- Community Garden event with Cheryl Dornberg
- Evi Lovin- Downtown Car Cruise, yoga in the Community Garden, & music in the Mural Alcove
- Teri Yovkovich- Craft Show
- Teri Yovkovich & Renee Rosignol- Christmas in July
- Jim Roumbos- Essay contest
- Renee Rosignol- Kid’s chalk art contest
- Elijah Aurand- Character Day

Diane Roumbos suggested that a joint newspaper ad in The Times be considered for around the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. She said she would research the possible cost and who might be interested in participating.

A discussion ensued concerning what events should be looked at during the June to August time frame, such as “Christmas in July”. Elijah Aurand reported that on June 18<sup>th</sup> a new Pokémon movie was being released and the consensus was to have the Character Day on June 19<sup>th</sup>, to tie in with the movie release. Elijah Aurand said he would work on that project, and President Yovkovich advised if he needed additional assistance or had information to share, it could be done through group email to the other members.

**Signage Update:**

Director DeGuilio-Fox reported that the Highland Redevelopment Commission is continuing to work on wayfinding signs for the downtown. She said the current focus in on a mall-style sign for the parking lot that a marketing consultant will be providing a quote on a possible design. She said she has been in contact with Park Superintendent Alex Brown about possible signage on the bike trail. However, she strongly cautioned that when working on the bike trail, there are many rules and restrictions imposed by NIPSCO and Homeland Security, due to the pipelines that run through that area. She also said the Redevelopment Commission will be considering additional signage in the downtown itself.

Nan Higgins asked about the use of “wave” flags in front of businesses. She said that some businesses use them, but in past discussions at Main Street, she was told that they could not be used. Both the Redevelopment Director and the Redevelopment Commission Assistant advised the group that they were told in the past it was a code issue. Councilman Sheeman said that the Building Department would have to be consulted.

**Downtown Restaurant Crawl:**

Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp reported that over the last month or two there has been feedback that some restaurants run out of food or stop serving earlier than 9pm. He proposed consideration of either shifting the crawl

hours earlier to 4pm to 8pm, or shortening the hours to 5pm to 8pm. A discussion ensued and the consensus was, including two of the restaurant crawl participants that shifting the hours from 5pm to 9pm to 4pm to 8pm would work best. Redevelopment Commission Assistant Ryskamp said he would notify the restaurants of the change, which would begin during the May 25<sup>th</sup> Restaurant Crawl.

**Discussion:**

Diane Roumbos asked the business owners present how many thought they might be willing to participate in a joint ad. Rhonda Bloch suggested inviting reporters to the Main Street meetings.

Citing a recent issue that came up involving a downtown business, Director DeGuilio-Fox asked the business owners not to stick promotional flyers up in downtown, especially on the light poles. She said doing so is against town code, and in the most recent incident, some of the downtown light poles were damaged. She reminded the members that the Redevelopment Department is happy to advertise and promote downtown events through social media or the town newsletter.

Director DeGuilio-Fox also asked for input on an item under consideration by Highland’s Traffic Safety Committee to possibly make the intersection of Jewett Street and Kennedy Avenue right-turn only. Jim Roumbos said it would impact half of his business. Diane Roumbos said it would make it difficult for customers to leave Jewett Street, heading south. Councilman Sheeman said he is opposed to the change. Director DeGuilio-Fox said she was asked to get feedback from Highland Main Street by the Traffic Safety Committee, and she would relay the concerns expressed.

Councilman Sheeman advised the members that the Traffic Safety Committee was also considering installing a “Hawk” signal on Kennedy Avenue, just south of Jewett Street, to facilitate crossing of Kennedy Avenue on the bike trail by stopping traffic. He said that he is opposed to that also. Diane Roumbos said that the Traffic Safety Committee should be aware that some cars traveling north on Kennedy Avenue block the intersection at Jewett Street, despite signage prohibiting that.

**Adjournment**

At the conclusion of discussion, Renee Reinhart made a motion, seconded by Diane Roumbos, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:29 PM.