

HIGHLAND PLAN COMMISSION

Minutes of the Meeting of
Wednesday, September 18, 2024

The Highland Plan Commission met in regular session on September 18, 2024. The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Kissee. The meeting opened at 6:40 P.M. led by Commissioner Kissee.

ROLL CALL: Present on roll call: Commissioners Kissee, Neal, Smith, Wright & Zemen. Also present Ken Mika, Building Commissioner/Zoning Administrator, Plan Commission Attorney John Reed and Town Engineer Derek Snyder. Commissioner Severson & Turich were absent.

MINUTES: Are there any deletions, additions, or corrections to the minutes of August 21, 2024 regular meeting? There was an omission of Commissioner Neal from roll call from the August 21, 2024 Meeting Agenda. That error was amended.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The next study session will be held on October 2, 2024 at 6:30 P.M. The next business meeting will be held on October 16, 2024 at 6:30 P.M., with the Business Meeting immediately following the Study Session.

COMMUNICATION: Letter from The Town Council for Ordinance No. 1659-1797 Repealing and Replacing the Highland Municipal Zoning Code for Sign Types and Obsolete & Abandoned Signs.

NEW BUSINESS: Docket #2024-02 Public Hearing to consider the Developmental Plan for a proposed building/rebuild of Traditions Restaurant & Bar at 2739 Highway Ave. Property is in a B/2 Central Business District/Downtown Overlay District. The petitioner is Ibarra Hart Properties, 1521 E. Valley Pl., Dyer, In., 46311 being represented by Paul Whitener of Modern Building Contractors, 137 E. Joliet St., Schererville, In., 46322

Commissioner Kissee asked if the Proofs of Publications were in order. Attorney Reed replied yes, and that the sign was posted in a timely manner.

Paul Whitener of Modern Building Contractors & Brad Zditosky, 402 167th, Lowell, In., of Modern Building Contractors, were present on behalf of petitioner Ibarra Hart Properties, 1521 E. Valley Pl., Dyer, In., 46311 to discuss the proposed Developmental Plan for the rebuild of Traditions Restaurant at 2739 Highway Ave.

Mr. Zditosky discussed the plans that were in front of the Commissioners. He said the building would be (2) two stories and the second story would be for private parties. Mr. Whitener relayed that parking would be (20) twenty spots on property and (2) two handicap spots., he said they probably lost (6) parking spots from the original plan. They continued originally by code there were (29) spots required, but there were only able to get (20) spots, however they didn't believe this would be an issue due to the availability of the parking lot across the street.

Commissioner Kisse asked if there was a code for handicap parking. Mr. Zditosky replied they have two handicap spots as close to the building as possible, and those two handicap spots will be positioned at the end of the handicap ramp.

Mr. Whitener said they did design an enclosure for the dumpster and the grease container. He said they left an A/C pad there with hopes of placing the A/C Unit there.

Commissioner Kisse asked if there would be seating on the second floor. Mr. Whitener replied yes, if the dollars didn't run out. He continued that the upstairs would be drywalled and sprinkled but may not be decorated. The area would be brought up to code but may not be used. It would be unusable, and a permit would have to be applied for to complete the space.

Mr. Mika said that would depend on if the build out was more than 100 linear feet, they would have to submit another plan to the State for the Construction Design Release. Mr. Whitener relayed all the electric and mechanical's would be in place, it may just require to be drywalled. So it would just be basically wall, floor & ceiling finishings that would be needed. He said the ceiling would be open with no tiles, just cylinder ductwork.

Commissioner Wright asked what the ADA requirements are for the second floor. Mr. Whitener said there is no elevator plan and Mr. Zditosky said they would have to look into that. Mr. Reed said it should meet ADA requirements, unless the second floor was a different Use. Mr. Mika said that as long as they were providing ADA access on the first floor, it would cover the second floor.

Commissioner Kisse inquired about the parking code again regarding the lot and how many spots were required, but did receive clarification as it was brought back to the parking lot across the street meeting the parking requirements.

Commissioner Kisse inquired about the existing foundation, if it would be secure enough to use for the rebuild. Mr. Whitener responded that the architect, Enspect in Merrillville, will design what is needed to fit in with the old foundation. Mr. Whitener said the foundation area next to Apex will have to be doubly enforced. He said the piers are good. He reiterated that the architect will be the one to design all that. There was the question of whether there will be a basement and Mr. Whitener replied yes, but the basement would have to be raised up to the minimum of 6'8". He also said there was no damage in the basement from the fire.

Commissioner Wright asked about the sprinkler system & pump. It was not in the drawings, but that would be in the next phase of plan(s) from the architect, which would be part of the final phase for the mechanicals, etc., to go down state.

There was a question regarding how many entrances there would be. There would be a side entrance (on the east side of the building), that would be a fire exit and through the kitchen and the main entrance. It was also mentioned that there would not be any entrance from the front to access the patio. The patio is enclosed, and the windows would slide open.

One of the Commissioners asked Mr. Mika if there was any fire code regarding having more than one way down from upstairs, like an emergency type window. He replied not on the second floor besides having the minimum amount of exits required for square footage of floor space. He said the windows would not have to be escapable.

There was a discussion between Mr. Snyder and Mr. Whitener regarding the aesthetics of the front of the building.

There was confirmation that a separate sign permit would need to be obtained.

Commissioner Kissee opened the Public Meeting.

Resident Mark Kogut of 8738 Parrish Ave. commented he was curious about the restaurant as he moved to Town about a year and half ago and not long after that one of his favorite restaurants (Traditions) burned to the ground. He was just wondering what the future of the restaurant would be. It was mentioned that the target date for the restaurant to reopen would be approximately March of 2026.

Hearing no more remonstrations, the Public Meeting was closed.

Commissioner Kissee asked if someone would like to make a motion.

Commissioner Wright motioned to approve the Developmental Plan for a proposed building/rebuild of Traditions Restaurant & Bar at 2739 Highway Ave. Commissioner Smith seconded and the motion unanimously passed with a roll call vote of 5 – 0.

Commissioner Kissee asked for a motion for the approval of the Findings of Fact for the Zoning Ordinance Sign Section(s) modification as requested by the Town Council.

Commissioner Zemen motioned to approve the Findings of Fact for the Zoning Ordinance Sign Section(s) modification as requested by the Town Council. Commissioner Neal seconded and the Findings unanimously passed with a roll call vote of 5 – 0.

BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR: None

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Board, Commissioner Zemen moved to adjourn. Commissioner Wright seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 P.M.