

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

STUDY SESSION MINUTES

MONDAY DECEMBER 2nd, 2024
6:00 P.M.

The Highland Redevelopment Commission ("Commission", "RC") met in Highland Town Hall on Monday December 2nd, 2024. The Study Session was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by President George Georgeff.

Commissioners Phil Scheeringa, Commissioner Tom Black, Commissioner George Georgeff, Commissioner Alex Robertson were present in person at Town Hall. Commissioner Turich and Pat Krull, Non-Voting Member/School Board Representative were absent.

Other Officials present: Attorney Reed. Redevelopment Director Maria Becerra, Public Works Director Mark Knesek, Sanitary Board Member Richard Garcia, NIES Engineer Derek Snyder, Highland Body Shop Attorney Nathan Vis and Highland Body Shop Owner Dan Erik's

OLD BUSINESS -1st Street Sewer Extension. Highland Body Shop Attorney Nathan Vis made the following statements We are here tonight just to present a little bit of the conundrum that we're facing at Highland Auto Body and a lack of some public infrastructure that's missing down 1st street, and then to have a dialogue with you as to what it would take to run infrastructure down that street and get a sewer extension, and possibly we can talk about some water as well.

Highland Auto body has been at this location at the corner of Garfield and 1st for almost 3 decades and it's grown substantially. It's a very valued part of the town. We've got 16 full time employees. We have 4 part time employees that are coming to work Monday through Friday, and a couple on Saturdays.

In addition to that, what's fascinating is that just in the last November 2023 to November 2024 alone, I had my client run the number of cars that they have taken care of in this 365-day cycle. It's over 1,300 cars that have been brought there to be repaired, and that doesn't include then the second car that has to come and follow and bring people home as well as the adjusters that are constantly coming in and out, and that just stands for the significant volume of people that we're bringing into the community that are then stopping at our gas stations, stopping at our restaurants.

All of that that are contributing to the community. Now, the difficult part, though, is that we're tucked away. We are a uniquely shaped parcel tucked back there behind the kind of the main drag there in town, and what that probably meant, and none of us are a part of it. But as public infrastructure got developed over the past couple of decades you have to allocate dollars, and I sure that if you can service 10 businesses versus one that was down that street, those dollars got apportioned to that in addition to that, there was the vacant lot 2605 Condit that for many years existed as a blight in the community up until the last 2 years.

It was overgrown with trees and, as we all know, that was a blighted area. Those trees were planted there a couple of decades ago to help clean up the property. My clients have taken that on, and they've spent over a \$100,000 in the last couple of years alone, just to clean up that property, improve the existing buildings that are on that site and fast forward to today, We've

had a lot of improvements behind my clients property with the Lackawanna trail. But what's happening is that from very inception from the sixties, this property was always serviced by a septic field and that septic field area back there. The water table has risen over time. It's gotten saturated, and when we have a really heavy rain, it provides great difficulty and done everything we can. There might be some areas that we can maybe stretch it. but candidly for my clients to continue and have that many employees, and to continue servicing out there.

We need a change. In order to stick around, we need to be able to flush toilets for all of our employees and our visitors. It's critical. So that's why we've come knocking on your door, saying, we know that you know it's going to be expensive to run the septic line there. The sewer line down 1st Avenue. But I think we're a valued part of the community, and we'd appreciate, if we can partner in a manner to get that water line run down there. I think it's going to really enhance the community. A couple of different fronts.

Number 1 is, we're going to take a commercial piece of property off of a septic field and have them contributing on a monthly basis into our sewer fund.

Number 2 is, we're going to take that out of the leeching field of the system that's in the area. Not that's contributing negatively. But there's always that possibility.

Number 3 is Now, we don't have a sewer line that's run down 1st Avenue that can feed 2605 Condit, which is the property that we've cleaned up.

In order for us to build on that property which is our intention, we're going to need that sewer log to come down 1st and intertwined in this conversation last year. It was earlier this year. Dan can correct me on the timing of it but we did have a significant water leak from one of the town's lines. It's right outside our property. I know. There was some dialogue with some of the water officials in town as to whether or not it was a really old line or not.

I've heard that perhaps it's not, but my client was told that it was, we almost lost a car in the parking lot. The sinkhole was that big. You can appreciate the concern that my client has if it makes sense while we're running a sewer line to also run a revised water line. We don't have to deal with that again.

That's really why we're here before you this evening is to say, your redevelopment commission your task with redeveloping quote blighted areas in town. There's no doubt that 1st Avenue is an area that could definitely use some enhancement. We appreciate that you've been charged with public dollars. And I think, as we kind of outlined in this presentation and putting those dollars to work to run that sewer line down. Perhaps revitalizing surface coat is really going to enhance that section of town which is a very well used portion of town on a daily basis. It fuels a lot of persons and their employment.

What you've got in a packet before you are just a couple of pictures just to give an idea as to where my clients thought processes are at right now. If you open it up just at the very top you can see a picture of the sinkhole that was in my clients parking lot and the size of it what they dealt with, and that's what gives them the cause for concern, and they're seeking some assurance that we're not dealing with a very aged water line where this will happen again.

Then the pictures beyond that you've got a rendering one you've got rendering 2, that is, and are some renderings that my client has had created, which is kind of a vision for what they would like to put on 2605 Condit. It's something. I'm an active participant within Cedar Lake. I've helped a lot of developments there, said a redevelopment commission there for 10 years. This is the style development that we're seeing that a lot of contractors are appreciating. There's office space, there's drive in ability, and these sorts of spaces are highly sought after. The size and style of what you see here, which is approximately 8,000 to 10,000 square feet the cost to build one of those is right around 1.5 million dollars. And then, just by way of seeing what I'm seeing in Cedar Lake. That's adding roughly in your property taxes, and once that finally hits somewhere between \$40,000 to \$50,000 a year of your property tax bill, which is significant. I also understand you have a Tif district.

You can very much swallow up a lot of that for your tip district to contribute back into the system. This is Maryville, Indiana, at the top. This is a sample of what my client, where they got their idea from. And then, just at the very last page last year, my client was kind of so desperate in terms of seeking what are options that we have, or do we have to stay? Do we have to move? It reached out to our local Congressman to see if there were even funds available through Congressman Mrvan's office, and that was a reply that we got from the Congressman back then as to request of where monies could come from for improvements to water and sewer infrastructure.

So that's kind of an overview, as to where we're at right now. We're eager for a dialogue with the Redevelopment Commission. It's my understanding, I think, the last time that we met that you're maybe going to task nice engineering, I think, potentially with some designs or drawings, and see what some costs might look like, and that could be a catalyst to the next step of what a portion of cost might look like.

Commissioner Georgeff stated Phil and I met with you last summer out there at the site and looked at it. I've spoken with the Sanitary Board. I think they have a small project that they're working work on down there. Is that correct Mark on Condit Street?

Mark Knesek stated we were going to do a lining project, but they'd probably be better off just to redo the line to reduce and lower it, and they mentioned the water line. Actually, that water main is not in that bad a condition. There's a blowout probably due to a system hammer. It ended up being there. I had the guys check it the last time they took pictures. It's not in that bad a condition I know it happened a couple of times. That is a utility easement. It's not just the parking lot I know cars are parked there, but as a utility easement.

That currently is not on a list of replacement. We have many other ones that are a lot older. I'm looking more at water mains now, lead services attached that the EPA is going to mandate recently. Yeah, changing out. So, I'm kind of lean in my direction towards that. And instead of you know Main, that it's you know it has broken a couple of times in the last. you know, year and a half they were blowouts. Not sure what happened. But usually when they start going bad, you get a lot of cracks in it. and we're it's a blowout, probably a system hammer.

But that is not currently on a list for replacement. And I would hope, after no last thing I want to do is repave a road and have it blow out against the road. But we take that chance with every road we pave in town.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that you guys purchased the property in 2021 and do you guys have a copy of that agreement with you. I didn't know if Maria gave you guys a copy of the agreement as well. My concern is because I'm not speaking, for or against but I want to help. I want to keep a great business in our town but it also sounded like we knew that the sewer issue was a problem with that one, right? That portion agreed upon that we do up to 75% to a maximum of \$20,000, just to get you sewer to that portion. We knew that there were some sewer issues. What changed since then? So, we're just trying to help the other.

Highland Body Shop Owner Dan Erik's said I guess it wouldn't make sense to do one without the other. We're kind of looking as a holistic thing. I see the road is in really bad shape, which we know we've known. That was in bad shape. We were kind of waiting to see. What are we going to do with the sewer, we knew that we had to attach from something from there, and it's a lot closer that wasn't as big of a deal. But then, all the way down to the end of the street. You know, is the shop which you know. This the septic just keeps getting worse and worse and worse all the time. So, it's like, well, we got to start somewhere. We're servicing one of them to me it would make sense to service the whole street, so we can attach everything to it. We're ready to go. I guess I look at it as all one thing. I see what you're saying. We knew that they had no sewer.

Commissioner Georgeff asked you didn't know that your septic system was failing?

Mr. Erik's answered It was not great, but it's gotten worse. And I don't know if that's the water table rising. If it's just more usage, I know there's other options besides running the sewer down the whole street. But you know, I think we had talked before and that probably the preferable option is a gravity feed. If I'm mistaken, you can do a forced sewer, I believe, but you know, I think that comes with issues, too.

Commissioner Georgeff stated I know we had discussed it, and it was a separate redevelopment commission. At that time there were some other options for providing sort to that Bolts fuel property coming from another direction, I believe. Because we at that time we had explored the cost of running the sewer, and it was it was. It's quite high, right? I asked Derek to run some numbers for us on the construction, and Derek, correct me if I'm I know the initial ones were to run it to their building, but the ones we have in our packet right now is just to run it to the property line, and then you would have to extend that if we did it, and I don't think I think I got the 1st ones that, and I don't know how far down that went. But that's pretty old.

Derek Snyder with NIES Eng. Spoke Yeah. I mean, we've looked at this since 2015 or something. I mean, this looked at this so many times, and looking at going off of you know the other side of the bike trail bringing over. But you've got Nipsco has a 22-inch diameter gas line through there. There're other pipeline utilities so trying to cross all those by gravity is virtually impossible. Renovation wise and trying to do a force main thing crossing all those utilities. They're probably not going to permit those just as they all want that crossing the infrastructure.

So, going down 1st street is the logical option. We do prefer gravity over pump situations, because, you know, pump is like the last resort, because that's something that's going to be an ongoing maintenance. It's technically going to be, I mean, to the town. It might actually be

upfront, less expensive

because the town's not going to pay for your grinder pump station, your electricity, but you're going to have to maintain that pump, that pumps going to fail. You have to replace that. What if you don't replace it in time. What happens if there's a break in the forcing? We're having people boar fiber optic all the time. We just had them bore through possibly a storm tour on Kennedy and the old waterline. Yeah, so things like that happen. And with force you could be totally out. Gravity is deeper.

There was existing sanitary sewer by gravity from highway to the alley by the bank.

But and that was all originally combined. Sewer back when it's 1st installed. Then in the late seventies, early eighties, they did a separation project, and that's why in Highway Avenue there's a 10-inch PVC. But it's about 3 feet lower than the 15-inch clay pipe and looking at something that we want to ultimately replace long term. But looking at this, if you held that same elevation extended all the way back. It wouldn't make it to your property, right? So that's why we're looking at this holistically starting at Highway Avenue, getting it down to the bottom elevation of the PVC. That they put in the eighties. Replace this 1st section of clay, pipe and kind, but put it as 10-inch PVC. And then from the alley north run 8-inch PVC. Because it's just, you know, essentially these 2 businesses that would connect to it.

I put the estimated cost for just basically having a trench that's probably about 8 foot wide. Dig all the way down, put in the pipe, backfill it, and just patch the asphalt.

The cost from estimated cost to go from highway to Garfield was about \$256,000, based on my estimate.

It's not guaranteed. Is that the old number or the newer number, the newer? Okay? Yeah. Cause we looked at different iterations, one costing it all the way through the building. There are other ones where we were stopping right at the corner of Condit, just to serve the bolt oil property that you purchased. I put the estimated cost for just basically having a trench that's probably about 8 foot wide. Dig all the way down, put in the pipe, backfill it, and just patch the asphalt.

The cost from estimated cost to go from highway to Garfield was about \$256,000, based on my estimate. It's not guaranteed

Mr. Erik's asked if that was the old numbers or the newer ones

Derek Snyder From NIES Eng. answered It was the new number and because we looked at different iterations, one costing it all the way through the building. There are other ones where we were stopping right at the corner of Condit, just to serve the Bolt oil property that you purchased. We looked at multiple ways. But the current iteration is going from highway up to Garfield and stopping, and roughly \$256,000 to do that. But then from Garfield into the property would be your guys responsibility, right? And one of the 1st things that I've said way back about this is, there's a Bp also has a 22-inch diameter pipeline, and that actually runs like kind of within that buffalo property. And so, your service and the service to the property. 2605 Condit would have to cross it. But you basically got this 2foot window. You can't put a pipe through, and you got to have usually 2 feet of clearance above or below. You can't go above, because you'll be out of the ground, most likely, or with very minimal cover. So, we have to go below. But I'm thinking, and that's I wanted a pothole. And because you guys hired Garcia back last year and a half ago it was July 2023. Is they done a plan? So, because they knew that they needed to extend it. So, you had them look into that. I reviewed it, made some comments to revise it. They made some revisions, but then it kind of stopped.

Yeah, and you had cellular out there to look at how you would connect your septic to that pipe. But I still said, we still need to know what the elevation of the pipelines are. Just to make sure.

The owner from Highland Body shop Mr. Erik's I remember John had, for whatever reason he

thought it didn't need to be pothole, and I know you said, No, it needs to be yeah. And then I don't remember whatever happened after that I think we just kind of think back to that.

Derek Snyder from NIES Eng. in the meantime, since that happened, fiber optic came through. And the plan that Garcia presented. So, on highway there's 2 manholes and so the one to the east is the existing clay pipe. The one to the west was where everything goes down and head south. But he's proposing from that one running, you just leave the old one in place and then you switch over. Yeah. Well, anyway. Fiber optic people came in. They put their fiber optic table right through that whole length. There's a fiber optic handle right for their plan. So that plan is not going to work and you have to be removed and replace kind of like, what I had been thinking about. But we'd still want to double check the elevation of that pipeline just to make sure that you can still connect to each property with a gravity lateral. You could. Still, you know, if there's not a window that you can slide the pipe through that Bp. Would allow you to be close to their pipeline. Then the only option would be a pump to pump up and over the pipeline into the gravity sewer. But for the public infrastructure, gravity sewer is preferred just because there's minimal maintenance on that compared to force main.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked Mark Knesek If there were funds already earmarked for this project? Since you already had a sanitary project going on there? Did you already have funds earmarked for this?

Commissioner Georgeff stated that he spoke to the Sanitary Board. There they were, intending on doing a lining of the sewer that's there.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked if those funds already earmarked is what I'm just for the lining, just for the lining. So that's a portion of funds that would then but the lot just lining. It's not going to work for them, because we're not going to get right. I understand that. So, what I'm saying is, those funds then could be used for this project. Those funds then could be used for this project to help assist. That is what I'm asking, and that would also, because you don't need it for the lining.

Derek Snyder responded We didn't include this on the lining report for this year, so it hasn't actually been allocated for that particular segment. But the Board does intend to do lining every year as long as they have money for it. So, let's issue aligning work order next year.

That could be. But I mean, I've got cost estimates, so you know, price per foot for 50-inch pipe. You could see how many dollars that would be to line if that's what you're asking for. Yeah. So how much that's sending?

Commissioner Scheeringa asked how much would that go towards that project with the lining?

The owner of Highland Auto Body wanted to know if it would be replaced with new pipe and how many square feet it would be.

Attorney Reed clarified stating What's the delta between what you're going to spend anyway? Lining and just doing this. And that's the number we're really talking

Commissioner Georgeff then commented I see your letter that we have here your concern about expending redevelopment commission funds on a project like this.

Attorney Reed answered we have to have redevelopment commission funds. Obviously there has to be a public benefit. And we can benefit the business community, which then increases taxes and benefits the public.

My mandate in writing, that was to determine, do we have an obligation to do so when the answer is, No

Derek Snyder from NIES Eng. stated the cost for lining that section would be about \$13,300, \$70 a foot and a hundred 90 feet.

Commissioner Robertson then stated There are obviously a lot of challenges to getting this sewer ran down that way. And it's going to service potentially 2 properties. Is there a risk if it does get ran down there with the other challenges that you pointed out with them actually being able to tie in once it's down there, could it? We run into a situation where you get into it. And you're like, Oh, crap like it's going to be and way more money.

Derek Snyder stated We need someone to pop over the pipeline and get an actual elevation like we recommended from several years ago.

Commissioner Robertson commented. So, would it make sense to maybe assist with upgrading the septic system.

The owner of Highland Autobody asked is it even a possibility? You know would the Town even approve it?

Derek Snyder answered the sanitary district can compel you to connect to our sanitary sewer. If you're within 300 feet of a current sanitary sewer and doesn't even mean matter if it's actually feasible to get to it, you could have like. Here's another big cavern and cliff 300 feet. They can compel you. You're more than 300 feet, so they can't compare. But we prefer to connect to a Sanitary sewer versus septic, because you all know this discharging effluent into the ground water. Eventually it's going to become a public health. And I mean, whatever else is getting rinse down there. I mean, you got toilets and things, but you know some of the water, whatever else can go down with it.

Mr. Erik's owner of Highland Bodyshop said So, you're saying the town probably wouldn't even approve us like a septic would.

Derek Snyder answered the town doesn't approve septic's. That would have to go to the county health. I can't predict what they're going to do

Mr. Erik's owner of Highland Bodyshop said is there a situation in which the grinder pump and

force system is the only option, you know, because I know you mentioned maintenance and stuff. But that. And I guess I as I understand it, wouldn't be the town's problem that's really more on us.

Derek Snyder stated so there's 2 things. One is for your lateral. So, from your building to the main. Now, if the pipeline is the issue where you can't go above or below with by gravity, then you'd have a grinder would have to be necessary just to get it to there. But then, on the public side. There're the 2 things, gravity or a force.

Highland Body Shop Attorney Nathan Vis stated I think the reality is. And I like, I said, I said on the Redevelopment Commission, Cedar Lake from 2012 to 2022. My equation that I always use is the public going to benefit from this? And there's no doubt that anytime you spend public dollars, that it may both more benefit one versus another, but that's just the reality of geographic spacing, distancing. You name it and the reality is that Redevelopment Commission dollars are to be used to enhance and improve areas that don't have public infrastructure and we've got clearly an area here that with intentionality we haven't run public infrastructure down to it because of the high cost. And now there's a desperate need for this public infrastructure to be there, and we've got in the future a funding mechanism to very quickly pay the town back for this, notwithstanding the tap in fees, notwithstanding the ongoing monthly contributions that are going to be made there definitely is an investment. But it's a long-term investment to keep this business here, to enable the enhancement of an adjacent property, and to make additional revenue flow for the town. So, I think that's where we need to see your conversation. What what's the timeframe for that building that would generate the text.

Commissioner Georgeff asked What the time frame would be?

Mr. Erik's owner of Highland Bodyshop said we hadn't really put any timeframe on that. We were kind of focused on, the project number 1 set you know, fix the sewer situation, knowing full well it's going to cost a lot of money on our end, for the shops portion. That's really the 1st thing we have to do. and I'm hesitant to put too short of a timeline on it, and be wrong, I would say 3 to 5 years. I would hate to say one to 3 years. just because there's a lot of unknowns there, too, you know, I when we had it. Touring, you know, did a survey on it. And there's going to be a lot of stuff where we can't put a building because you need a lot of drainage, you know, it's going to require pretty big retention, or whatever you want to call it, detention area. So, there was just a lot of question marks there, too, when we had these drawings done, and stuff like that, we have, you know, a survey that touring it did. And so, there was a lot of question marks with that yet, too, that we're going to have to explore, and I have a good idea on that. A real definitive idea. I don't.

Derek Snyder from NIES Eng. stated that even brings up another thing for stormwater management. And this whole area is lacking. We just had a request by the dairy to put in some truck docks and need to handle the water generated from the truck docks. But there's no storm sewer to connect to. and I mean there are some catch basins out there, but it's catches basin inlets or catch basin going across 1st street and then goes out into the railroad ditch. But it's crossing over at least 4 pipelines. And you get the same thing where you got to see can you fit your pipe over the top of all of them, and the pipelines are not

going to keep allowing more and more pipes crossing. They want it few as possible, and with the most clearance possible. But for our sanctuary sewer discussion, so that you know that one goes up 1st street and then turns under the alley that clay pipe crosses underneath the Bp pipeline currently. We know it crosses without a problem. we know it crosses without a problem. So, if we have this new pipe lower, and we go further up. If the pipeline stays at the same elevation. I'd be highly confident that we would miss it. It's just that before you go through the detailed stuff and actually put a shovel on the ground. It's just a quick little, you know. 2 h exercise verify double check the elevation.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked Mark and Derek, you see this as if this project went through, we help some way, somehow, that this is a benefit to the town and to that area and to the district.

Derek Snyder from NIES Eng. stated Yes, I mean, if the septic is causing issues, that's definitely benefit for public health reasons and having it taken the sewage and treated, and especially with it being a business and auto parts autobody shop. There are other things that go down the drain beside flushing waste. Yeah. Yeah. So, I mean, I mean, most of the stuff you probably handle throw away. But there's probably you're rinsing up your tools and things at the end of the day. There can be some more chemicals. And that'd be preferred to be taken to a public treatment facility versus just discharging to the ground or into the ground. But this will require a capacity certification from Hammond. Because this would be a new user. And you know, for the past projects we had for the car wash we had for the gas station, both on 41 especially the gas station. That was, they were on septic, that those 2 houses that were there for they had to have a capacity certification for that as well. So, it's basically just a form. But you know, families. We have to approve it. You're at their mercy for that. But it does provide the benefit of its own, you know, takes those any sewage and any chemicals. Now they're handled properly and you can actually serve a property that can be developed versus currently right now, you wouldn't probably wouldn't be able to put a septic there and factor. If you need to meet our stormwater regulations, trying to do stormwater management antiseptic, and a building that has enough square footage and parking isn't realistic.

Commissioner Black asked Do we know are there any other buildings in that whole Garfield Condit area, similar situations where they're on septic.

Derek Snyder from NIES Eng. stated I think all the buildings you guys just recently bought on Garfield. Now, that's all handled together so that could all be taken in to with this. And then the dairy, they're all handled. Currently. They tie into the clay pipe that's in the alley before it goes down 1st Street. So, they're all currently served on sanitary sewer. So, these are this vacant property. And then the auto body shop are the only ones that are on set that are not currently served.

Highland Body Shop Attorney Nathan Vis stated Yeah, if we were to look at it from the GIS, there's a triangle. We're in the tip of the triangle with the Lackawanna trail on the one side. we're at downloads right on the tip. Basically, that's leeching right up against the bike trail.

Commissioner Black asked f a project that you know, like that other project that's been brought to us. It was beyond the movie theater lot and all that. If that were to extend with this help, that with extending this sewer, help any projects that were further down.

Derek Snyder from NIES Eng. answered No, it ends at the bike trails.

Everyone agreed something needs to get done.

No further comments.

The meeting ended at 6:32pm

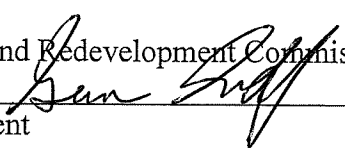
DULY PASSED AND RESOLVED by the Highland Redevelopment Commission, Highland, Lake County, Indiana, this 16 day of December 2024, having passed by a vote 3 in favor and 0 opposed.

ATTEST:


Secretary

VP

Highland Redevelopment Commission


President