

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

SPECIAL STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES

MONDAY April 7TH, 2025

The Highland Redevelopment Commission ("Commission", "RC") met in person at Town Hall on Monday April 7th, 2025. The Special Study Session scheduled study session was called to order at 6:30

P.M. by President, Alex Robertson.

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

Additional Officials Present: Attorney Reed ,Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director, Kendra Hernandez Redevelopment Commission Assistant

Also Present: Several people were present from the public including members from the Park Board.

Commissioner Robertson started the meeting by asking if everyone had a chance to look at the agenda and wanted their thoughts and stated that he thought it was important because this Commission and Council and last Council had a lot of things that were on the table and it is time to start hammering down on some things and following through.

Commissioner Robertson asked if any anybody wants to take ownership of a certain aspect, or we can delegate that out. Just wanted to get some thoughts on that, because I have several things listed kind of an order of importance for me.

Projects that are going to cost money and it would be the Ultra property and I know we went out for appraisals and asked Maria if we heard anything back yet .

Maria responded we're looking at 30 days from one of the appraisers, and maybe 45 days for the second but we did receive the quotes and they're going to start

Commissioner Robertson also stated that tied into the Ultra development there has also been talk about the Laporte extension. If that could help get things moving over there, or if we extend that after a developer is interested, but definitely need to keep that on the radar and figure out if that is a high important item, then how are we going to fund that.

Commissioner Black stated I think some of that is probably going to depend on the North South Kennedy project. I think that was part of the discussion of extending Laporte. Just give more access if you want to pick up property near that post office and where we were going to build one with bike trail, and we want to put it through. I think those 2 are going to be tied together.

Commissioner Robertson stated that was his second project of importance was the 1st metropolitan and wasn't sure what was happening with that.

Attorney Reed stated that there were a lot of moving parts in that and we may do an Executive Session because the developers have some different plans, very different plans and we want to see what their goals and ambitions are .But it looks like a total rearrange

Commissioner Robertson asked if there was a time frame .

Attorney Reed stated he would love to have that as soon as possible

Commissioner Georgeff stated he would like to see that Allocation district finished up there too, just from the discussions we have had.

Commissioner Robertson asked Maria if she could follow up with the developer and see when we can have an executive session.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated he has been getting a ton of calls about the gas station on 45th and It's vacant it's been left. I know IDEM is all over it, trying to find the owner to find them, because it's been vacant for so long. I think I don't know the exact rules, but I know those tanks either have to be remediated or serviced or tested, and I don't think that that's being done. My understanding is Ken Mika can't get ahold of the guy either and it's been they've issued citations, and they boarded it up, and we've consistently had to send people back to board it up because people break in it or they open it. It's a piece of property that we think about acquiring if it can be done at the right price, obviously.

Commissioner Robertson stated that there was some kind of shell game going on with the ownership

Commissioner Scheeringa stated Yes, they said that ,I mean if they're not doing anything with it, I don't know what the legal standing is on that. But this place is an eyesore. It's a pain.

Maria stated I have one update, actually because it was on the agenda today. I did speak to Lake County right now. that owner is delinquent for 2023,2024,2025. If those taxes aren't paid, which are \$4,065.00 it will be on the fall tax sale. If the town decides to buy it , it would go before the Commission and asked Attorney Reed if that was how it works

Attorney Reed answered if no one buys it, it goes to Commissioner Sale. And then local government entities usually get dibs to take those that we get like 100 plus a year parcels for anything touching a waterway. We just go get the certificates for 100 bucks each.

Commissioner Black stated that would be essentially how we picked up the theater property.

Attorney Reed then stated we got to know you got to be careful, you know, because if you if you bid on one of those things and then you file and you get the tax deed, and it's got a million dollars' worth of remediation and leaky storage tanks. Now you get a real problem. . They have to be removed and remediated or closed like filled with concrete.

Commissioner Georgeff stated yeah, with these tanks in the ground at that gas station if we take it, we have to get it tested. We should get it tested before we agree to take it

Attorney Reed stated normally you can. take a certificate until you got to get the old owner notice and then apply for a deed and commercial property. It's like it's about a 60-day process total for residential. It's a lot longer. It's a year. But we just have to make sure before we once we do once the deeds in our neighborhood responsible, even though nothing leaked on it while we owned it, we're still got to eat that. So, if we are going to do it we should get those . We should get a Phase 2 , we drill down there and see what's down there.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked what the cost would be to do that ?

Attorney Reed stated he thought it would around \$15,000 to \$20,000 but he would have to get a quote

Commissioner Scheeringa I get public information requests about the tanks all over the city I work for, and it's every day. They're always doing phase twos, but I don't know what those cost.

Maria stated she can find out the cost

Attorney Reed stated he would be curious to find out , it's not a huge site but if there was a garage there , there might also be a waste oil tank there . I would think there would be at least 3 tanks there. There should be a filing cabinet listing what is there.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated We have some problem sites that I think need to be looked at.

Attorney Reed said he and Maria will look into the Gas station on 45th. I know we had all the citations filed, and we were important, any of the attorneys, Bob Golding, who was good property lawyer, and so this is great, except this, before. When these citations accrued, a deed was recorded in someone in another name of another entity. Well, it takes about a month for those to show up on the GIS or the assessors website, during that timeframe we issued a chunk of citation. They come up with it, I think next month or the 4th Tuesday of every month.

Commissioner Robertson brought up the next item and it was the bus station property. Mr. Patel who will be coming in to present what's he's got in mind to a future Study Session . Attorney Reed gave him a list of things we didn't want to see and seemed ok with that and speaking with him. He said he needed access to the street light and access to the property that redevelopment owns, where the bait shop used to be in order to make that marketable. Something to think about when he comes to

just a matter of granting him access, or if he wants the property outright.

Commissioner Georgeff stated we can't grant him access, because that belongs to the State Local River Basin Commission is being given that property.

Attorney Reed asked if Commissioner Georgeff meant the lots we own ?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated it's what would allow them to come out at the light. Oh, yeah, it's basically, I think he just wants to be able to put a drive out and come out at the light. I don't think he wants. He just wants that access.

Attorney Reed He bid technically. But I don't think he offered any money for the property. It was more. Here's the development I want to do give it to me.

Commissioner Turich stated Mr. Patel wants to come out at 81st ? So looking at the property, we'd have to give him right away South. And then this little horseshoe shaped period he'd have to have access to that. To get to the light is what he's asking for.

Attorney Reed stated I think we have 6 lots there, a few acres

Commissioner Turich had some concerns as to how they would get around the sign

Attorney Reed stated I don't know that any of it makes sense. If you don't develop the whole thing as one large parcel but we're going to get left with a scrap parcel that we can't do anything with. And that's always been. I mean, any other developers. Complaints have been the same as it's long and narrow, and it's not suited for retail type development.

Commissioner Turich stated when you make that comment to you. Would you like to see the old bus station plus this property, go together? Everything that we always see a lot who owns the sign right now we do, we do. The town does well, I mean we own the property correct, at least. so if we sold that removing the sign would be up to whoever is leasing from us. Correct?

Attorney Reed Yeah, I mean, I would normally, I suppose, we could grant the property with the sign, and they would. It would inherit the lease, but it's income for us.

Commissioner Turich I didn't know if there's a lease that we would have to break, or what how long the duration.

Commissioner Georgeff stated That sign will have to stay there. They gave us a property that's contingent upon them.

Maria interceded stating it's \$40,000 that the town receives every year with a little small parcel, so when we had it appraised the appraisers excluded that parcel, since it stands alone. The appraisals we have are for the 6 acres.

Commissioner Turich stated that's where it comes really challenging of trying to get out to your point, to that light and still be able to honor any agreements that we have, and then give him a right away to it. Right? There's a lot of compounding factors there.

Commissioner Robertson stated That sign hinders a potentially multi-million-dollar development. If maybe something could be worked out where. you know, they move the sign elsewhere somewhere on that property around the sign, you know, like you do some of these like around

Commissioner Robertson then went on to the next item on the agenda which was 7950 Kennedy Ave

Maria stated that we are insured. However, they don't want it to be vacant too long. they like to see that occupied. so it probably wouldn't be a bad idea to at least get the utilities on start working on getting the water or the electric the gas, whatever it needs to have those utilities on.

Commissioner Georgeff stated Mark Knesek said some of the people at the garage should be able to help with repairing the water line that broke, they'd be able to sweat it and repair that for us.

Commissioner Turich asked what was the plan for the building ?

Commissioner Georgeff stated when I talk and it'll be coming to us pretty soon, too, is from the architect for the fire station in the Town Hall. He had recommended that we vacate the Town Hall during that construction period. If we got that officer. I'm wondering if the clerk treasurer's office can operate out of that area there. While we're redoing this, we can relocate Maria and Ken Mika maybe to the town garage.

Commissioner Turich asked I haven't walked through it. how is the condition.

Commissioner Georgeff stated It's an open space like they have right here. It's there's nothing in it.

Maria stated the furnace is fairly new. But the risk insurance person was out, and she was impressed with the furnace, the hot water tank.

Commissioner Turich stated can we publicly say, because I'm getting a lot of complaints about the discussion about the dog pound alright. Is that off the table right now?

Commissioner Georgeff stated I've had some discussions with Munster, with their council president, their police chief, our police chief. They would like to build a new facility in Homestead Park, and Munster tentatively has agreed to share that cost with us, and they'd like to do go out for contributions or donations. the fop will sponsor the police department end of it. And they're actually asking

Shawn Anderson emailed me and asked if they would if we would allow them to do a fundraiser at Lincoln Center for the animal facility.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated the whole idea was never to be a permanent location. That was just a temporary spot until we could get a new place built absolutely but even as Monster agreed to go in, I think it made it a little easier. The other reason the property was purchased is because we initially were told that we had to use that for sanitary.

Commissioner Turich stated that's something that we need the public to hear, because people don't understand that that's part of the reason why we bought it. We were told we needed that property.

Commissioner Georgeff stated that's where we're going to connect with him the engineering plan to connect with Hammond

Commissioner Turich stated I don't think that's ever been publicly stated, because people right now assume that we only bought that for a dog pound and that's where we're just trying to get the right information out to the public correctly, just to alleviate some of the rumors that are going on right now.

Maria stated There's a few developers that we're looking for land. And I did reach out to one that was not able to develop what they wanted to develop on Cline and Ridge, which is the old Fannie May and it's not a car dealership, but they're checking with their corporate offices in California. But they are interested. I did email them the survey of the lots that are there. They wouldn't necessarily keep the building that's there. But they are very interested in the actual location because the visitors bureau the hotels, I mean, it's walkable.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated South Shore Convention Center, the city of Hammond. They're doing a giant development on that Oxbow Lake. They're making a huge giant wedding venue. There. They're trail like bridges that go out into the middle of that, where they can have weddings on a big platform out in the middle. So, I mean, people are going to want that property? Absolutely. I mean it. Obviously, it's going to be a couple of years. But between little Cal River Basin, also South Shore Convention Center and the city of Hammond. They're already. They posted plans and everything all over. I mean I agree that could be something. I mean, there's a building connected to the one we're at. I mean, I have a feeling that guy's going to want to sell that soon, too.

Commissioner Robertson stated let's think about that alright. So long term, you know, it was already discussed about possible developer interest temporarily putting the Town Hall employees over there. what are we going to pursue? Do we not try to approach a developer or get that developed thinking that we're going to have to move some employees over there?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I think we would pursue the developer and that's income and tax base, right? You know if it if no one takes it instantly and that becomes an option when Town Hall needs to be built. I think a developer. 1st and foremost comes first

Commissioner Turich yeah, because a trailer with some offices in the back lot would be cheaper than moving them and losing out on that income that you create from that development.

Commissioner Robertson stated so then, do we keep looking further down, Kennedy?
Are we looking to try to get the building attached to it developed, or tear that down? We've got a lot of kind of strange buildings and businesses down. Kennedy. I mean, how far are we looking?

Commissioner Scheeringa said It's the first two right ?

Commissioner Georgeff I think we need to discuss that in an Executive session so we protect our interest.

Commissioner Turich talked about the softball fields and asked Commissioner Scheeringa what his thoughts were

Commissioner Scheeringa stated if managed, properly correct the amount of softball and baseball tournaments that are had in the area. Yeah, if you made those turf fields. You're having tournaments there every weekend. If you got, I mean, and that that's almost turns into a full-time job. Yes, that is a full-time position to create tournaments and bring them there because it could be done.

Commissioner Turich then stated If you then move to the east and absorb homestead into that and make it. Now, softball and baseball. Right? There's just so much if you turf them, right?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated yeah. Well, if you turf them, they can be adjusted to any size field. It could be the 40 60 which is between 8 and 10 years old. Then you can go to 50, 70, which is 11 to 12, and then you can go 60, 90, and above, you know, for all the ages above and usually when they're turfed, the mounds are movable. So those are just options. You don't have to turf everything just the infield, you know and then they're easier to maintain and Those are just options right like, I would love to see that.

Commissioner Turich stated it's always been a kind of a hurdle for the council and for because everybody kept on. Oh, we're going to sell the town garage. We're going to consolidate when we and then we don't want to do anything with Sac, because there's that potential. But I don't know. We just wonder what the vision is of our group

Commissioner Scheeringa stated yeah, I think the struggle there is finding a place that Town Garage can go in town, and it's almost impossible.

Commissioner Turich stated Is it worthwhile adding that to Alex's list?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated he thought it was more a Park's board matter

Attorney Reed also stated he thought it was a Parks Board matter

Commissioner Georgeff then added that the food and beverage tax could help fund it and continued I was out at Sheffield's because I'm selling or leasing their property in Dyer. I was out at the Sheffield's in Marigold, talked to the, to the owner out there, and mentioned the fact that they may be subject to a food and beverage tax there, and Dyer soon and he said, it doesn't bother him one bit and it hasn't affected his business or anything there, and that's something that people that aren't even Highland residents are going to come and fund it, and it goes directly to the parks.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated That's how it has to be. Yeah, it has to be something done with recreation like, that's how the Y.M.C.A. And Hammond was built all through the food and beverage tax

Commissioner Georgeff stated Yeah, because I got that in Hammond and you look at it. The \$30 bill is going to cost somebody 30 cents.

Commissioner Turich stated It's a tough conversation to have.

Commissioner Georgeff stated Yeah. The food and beverage tax, though, is not all Highland residents absolutely. Everybody coming to pay for our parks.

Commissioner Robertson maybe that discussions better at the council level.

Commissioner Georgeff agreed

Commissioner Robertson stated can redevelopment funds be used to support some of that I don't know. Probably should they be you know things to think about just like we said, increasing the tax bases, using our funds from redevelopment, going to increase the tax base?

Attorney Reed stated do they make the town a more attractive place?

Commissioner Black stated If we commit to a project like that. we need to think about committing to rehabilitating the public works. That's pretty rough over there, I mean, especially the Parks area. They don't have a working toilet .

Commissioner Scheeringa stated could redevelop and help with that. I probably, too, like I mean the park building. There is terrible. There's no heat. I don't think there's no bathrooms for those guys over there, no safety wash station, nothing So I mean, that's something that's going to be looked at. But I mean, that's also we need to get parks to get bids on what it would be to get that up to date. And that's the other issue. Right? We're talking about stuff helping the Parks department. we're also in the process of getting a new park director like they may have creative ways of creating revenue to do those things like getting those fields done, and then having more tournaments that create money.

Attorney Reed stated don't spend too much money on scoreboards is my only the Munster community park, and those scoreboards are a million dollars, and they're almost never, you know. So even the tournaments they don't even yeah.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I'm not opposed to that either. I mean, we have a lot of great parks. I have. No. I, as a redevelopment, would have no issue of trying to assist in bettering those locations, because that's going to attract people here. Those things attract people to use our businesses over there. You have a tournament, a nicer field there for a tournament. People going into Plaza Lanes. That's more people eating downtown. We travel the country for these baseball tournaments. And yeah, it attracts new business. You already got a Dunkin down there. That's huge. I don't know if people realize that. But having that, Dunkin, that close to downtown is a big deal.

Attorney Reed stated Yeah, I think my kids, last year of softball, the all-star tournament, was in Highland. Yeah, I think my kids, last year of softball, the all-star tournament, was in Highland. and it was. You know. It's a long tournament. It was a couple of weekends and a few weekdays. and every restaurant was packed. I mean, everyone goes to BW3s and you couldn't park. By the way, same thing like it was just you had to move on down the line. But yeah, it's amazing how many people really do turn out and it was. You know. It's a long tournament. It was a couple of weekends and a few weekdays and every restaurant was packed. I mean, everyone goes to BW3s, and you couldn't park, Byway, same thing like it was just you had to move on down the line. But yeah, it's amazing how many people really do turn out.

Commissioner Turich stated I think the challenging part for me. That North Kennedy section right there, especially from Duluth, north of the expressway is you've got. You've got a couple pieces of property along Kennedy Avenue that are. They're residential, like people are living there, not running a business out of there. Right? The this, this piece of property, right there is residential. It's not a commercial property. And now you've got that intermix, and that's challenging.

Commissioner Georgeff stated that area where we have our building. The they got that florist. That was for sale just recently. I don't think it sold. Next to that, you're going to have Highland glass.

Commissioner Scheeringa commented that it looks great

Commissioner Georgeff then went on next to that, that doctor I can't think of. his name owns that lot.

Commissioner Robertson brought up about the old gas station on Kennedy Ave

Attorney Reed stated whenever somebody sells the company and that owns that it goes with it and it just keeps changing names.

Commissioner Robertson mentioned the other vacant gas station that's been vacant for what? The last 30 years. 25 years.

Attorney Reed mentioned the owners Harjit Sahib he thinks he goes by the name Sonny.

Maria stated that one's remediated according to Ken.

Attorney Reed answered I think I think those tanks were closed in place.

Commissioner Robertson mentioned I think that's a prime property for redevelopment, for the to look at, either incentivizing, or whatever we can do to try to get something going over there, because it's doing nothing right

Commissioner Turich asked if it was for sale right now ?

Maria mentioned I do have the contact number. Do we want to pursue that as a commission? Is that something to me it's approved.

Attorney Reed We were looking into it years ago and the ownership changed so many times

Commissioner Georgeff They had the wells for a long-time monitoring wells and stuff on the property there

Commissioner Turich what do we plan to do with it? Once we buy , we have to have a plan to to develop them.

Attorney Reed mentioned This one might be a liability. It had to be purchased along with some other properties like where you got to if you're buying these, you're going to have to buy this, too kind of thing.

Commissioner Turich mentioned having a conversation with Ken Mika with it being vacant that long, at what point do we require them to at least take that down to black dirt, and then plant grass on top of it, like we did with the old town theater with what's being discussed? if traditions do not move forward right, when do we kind of force that issue with that piece of property, at least to make it a green space

Attorney Reed stated technically, because the fence is there. It's not necessarily non-code compliant. But you can't leave it like that forever. I mean, it depends on. Is there a time limit? Not really. The issue was at the Plan Commission meeting last week. That foundation is from 1897, believe it or not, and they spent, like \$15,000 or \$20,000 on a study to determine whether they could still use it, and the whole new foundation is like \$60,000 and they should have just caved it in. Ken says they have already gone out. They spent a lot of money, so they're serious. They're not going to take the insurance check and run because they've got they've been it out to multiple Gcs to build what they want to build. And they're waiting for. They're bidding. You know the subs against each other trying to get the price right. There's every indication is they're going to do it but it would be nice to have something to say, you know. Yeah, if something lies fallow for 10 years, you've got a flattened landscape, but it was got to do something.

Commissioner Turich asked about the Kennedy And Norman St. gas station When do we enforce? tear the concrete up, or the asphalt, and put some grass down?

Commissioner Robertson stated So we can do a bind where we can't really enforce anything over there, for whatever reason. Obviously, we have to follow up with Ken I mean.

Commissioner Turich said he thought Ken made it seem like it was enforceable

anything. Yeah, or it has to be a hazard we'd be. We'd be hitting for 100 \$200 a day.

Commissioner Georgeff mentioned maybe we can have Ken send a letter telling them it needs to be cleaned up and

Commissioner Turich said at least engage in conversation.

Commissioner Scheeringa mentioned about having a Phase 2 done .

Commissioner Georgeff stated that there was a Phase 2 done because they well monitored

Attorney Reed said it should be in the filing cabinet

Commissioner Scheeringa I like how they got that item vault. You can go in there, and they got involved with all the properties.

Commissioner Robertson mentioned do we incentivize? We've got the property improvement Grant that we expand it to take care of activities like this when there's things on our main drag

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I think that's the whole point of the redevelopment funds. Is we incentivize a developer to do something with it, or you know. because if in 5 years say they had to be retied into the sewer like, say that cost them \$50,000 is that something we can handle to help them, because that could be a cost they didn't have. I'm just throwing things out there, right? But that's something you can incentivize to help attract a business, because right now, what is that bringing in tax wise? Probably next to nothing. Right? You know. You get it to where it's \$750,000 building. Now, we're getting that money in taxes every year.

Commissioner Robertson then brought up the SSFA Grant and what we wish to improve. they did spell out a timeframe where it was. I think it was between 2025 and 2030, and then tier 2 went the next 5 years. now that we have completed that plan, we're into the implementation phase, and we can get some grant money to assist with that yeah. Because now that we have completed that plan, we're into the implementation phase, and we can get some grant money to assist with that correct?

Maria asked so I'd like to know if anyone from the Commission would like to be part of that. The grant is due. June 26.th. I checked with Chief Potesta and John, and we'll be presenting the recommendations to the Traffic Commission at their 1st meeting in May, but once the grant is already out, so we already know what is required in the grant. But we need input and then voting by the Council as to what which items will be prioritized. I know the chief brought up Spring and 45th. But we'll need at least 3 things. You know what? What one, what to do, where to do it, and kind of a cost but June 26.th So we have some time.

But I'd like to know who would be working with us.

Commissioner Black stated I'll work on that with you.

Commissioner Turich asked so is there any data. Part of that's part of that study that helps prioritize for us already. So, wouldn't we just kind of work off of that prioritization list or do we want to reprioritize ourselves?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated Yeah, I mean, well, there were certain things that we all I mean, I know when we discussed it when he was here we talked about prairie, South and prairie north, like those things that I mean. We're hearing that from the community nonstop. Those are some hot areas, but they may not have from the data they collected that may not have been at the top But I think that's something that we hear about constantly.

Commissioner Robertson stated I think part of the rating them on the different tiers was the community. Input. I think that was that was a percentage of how they waited the overall score for each one.

Maria stated so, we'll probably be working on it from this point until probably mid-June, if we could put it together and then bring it for the Council for final approval, to submit the grant.

Commissioner Robertson stated so, this would require. so, we have to find at least 3 things to work on and get quotes for those activities, because in each of those tiers they had short term and long term. So also need to figure out, you know, are we going to go after the short-term stuff, long term stuff, mix of stuff.

Commissioner Black stated maybe figure out a staggered plan because they're going to do this grant for the next couple of years. Right? So, we, you know, maybe pick the low hanging fruit the 1st time we. You know, come up with. In the meantime, while that's being worked on, we come up with something for, say year 3.

Commissioner Turich stated So are they going to, or is the House Bill down in Indianapolis right now going to prevent some of that? Will they continue funding that?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I think this grant is already allocated.

Commissioner Turich stated It's at a Federal level. Doesn't mean it's guaranteed either. Right?

Commissioner Scheeringa again reiterated it's already allocated.

Commissioner Black said he will work with Maria on that.

Commissioner Robertson brought up the next item on the agenda it is a redevelopment project from the past. The municipal lot. I think something fairly quick and easy and maybe not too crop cost prohibitive would be cleaning up that municipal lot. So, we have those health strips down there. I know sustainability has been trying to figure out something to do with the grass in the parking area. I think that's a maintenance issue. I believe Parks has been taken care of it. But you can't get a lawn mower onto that grass. You have to hack it up with a weed whacker.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked is this is to me an issue quite around more than just the municipal lot. Right? Like we have this in front of the police station, like with the weeds and stuff like that, and public works and parks can't be everywhere all the time. There's already so much property. But, like I watch the police commissioners pull weeds out of the lots and come out here on their own. Is that something redevelopment can do? maybe cause we've done in the past. You know we've hired landscapers just to kind of maintain these things.

Commissioner Georgeff stated I don't think we can spend redevelopment commission funds on maintenance. That was one of the restrictions.

Maria stated as long as it's an improvement

Commissioner Scheeringa stated like what we're doing now I thought we had to cut the trees the one time, and so clean up the embankment. Or is that a 1-time thing?

Attorney Reed stated It's a one time thing. It's a slap in the face. You could say, okay, let's make the town more attractive for development. Let's build a hundred planters. you can do that with redevelopment, money, and all you've done is handed someone else a bill to fill them and clean them and refill them and water them and fertilize them. It's like, well, you can't do it because you can't maintain. And you hand someone else a bill. and I've always thought it was ridiculous. But it's just the way it is. It's terrible.

Commissioner Robertson stated I'm for redevelopment, improving that lot so that we can nearly eliminate maintenance as far as problem areas, you know, in front of the fire department or anywhere else. We probably have to get on them to take care of those activities out of their budget.

Commissioner Black stated these are the bump outs that were just put back in when we redid the lot. I mean, I know they look lousy when the weeds get high, and I know that sustainability. They talked about killing that grass, and they were going to put in native plants.

Commissioner Robertson stated. They tried a small section. And it's, you know, it's really outside of what they can they can handle. We've got the landscapers they're working out there today. We've got the landscapers they're working out there today. I think it would be worth getting a few quotes to see if we can improve that lot and reduce the maintenance on it, and we don't have to worry about it. Put some nice ground cover there, just get rid of the weeds, you know. That is a very new redevelopment project that, in my opinion. we didn't take it all the way. You know it. It was left with these weeded areas. It's like, let's just finish it off, you know. rather than having parks come out there and wasting their time.

Commissioner Turich asked if it is that parks property, or is it public works?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated No, but parks and public works. That's the great thing about our parks. Public works like they help each other so much between cutting grass, and we whack and like.

Commissioner Turich stated the bandwidth and the available time to do this? I have Trevor analyzing that for us right now. he's doing a time study for each park to see how long it takes to cut, so that we can compare that or convert that to fts and labor hours to see if they even have enough people to

support all the activities we have within the town. I think we're going to see that right? And then it's then it's a decision up to us that says, Hey, we have this much work. But this much, this many people. What do we do? Right? How do we? We see it? We hear it.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated Well, that's once again, Park Board's got to come up with that, or that's what I'll plan. I'm just all the time. Luckily, with Shepherd with the Soccer Club. We have a parent in the Soccer Club. You can ask Parks crews and he'll be out there. He'll go cut the grass. Yeah, he's got it for free and we fertilize it. We take care of it, aerate it. But again dots, sections that sort of thing.

Commissioner Georgeff asked Do you fill them areas with big, big, heavy stone?

Commissioner Turich stated yeah, I mean, that stone is going to grow weeds, though. Right? Unless you just once a year you go and spray it, or spray it and kill the weed and the gravel. The rock's going to move, you know. You're going to get it in a lot.

Commissioner Robertson stated my thought was, get some robust ground cover that just kind of chokes everything else out, and it can still look nice, because we're also restricted with the pipelines. There, you know, we can't plant trees. There's a short list of things that we can put there even as far as shrubberies, is it?. I can work on getting some quotes.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked well, what if those bump outs just become all concrete?

Commissioner Black stated I think the initial idea of putting those in they called it a rain garden, and it was to help absorb some of the runoff.

Commissioner Turich stated So it was part of the engineering. It was part of the that's tough, because then, if you even put rocks there. Does that still meet that criteria? Right? So it sounds like we need to, you know, at least include Derek in the in the decision, or let him allow, provide some guidance to us based on his engineering.

Commissioner Robertson stated we can talk with the contractors, too, is, you know, it's not a large area, not wouldn't be a very big project talking to some landscapers and say, Hey, what? What are your thoughts here present? Some ideas get some numbers so something that it's not going to require maintenance right?

Commissioner Turich asked How many EV chargers are sitting in that lot now?

Ed stated That there are 4. there're 2 boxes, 2 on each, but since the inception one of them has been giving away free ones, so we had to turn it off, and the people that provided it never could fix it. They claimed it was a cellular issue. Okay, but it was their cellular just to let you know those EV charges are kind of useless because they're making us thanks for making money. But we're not losing money on the electricity. But anybody who knows EVs. If you own EV, you literally have to park it there 14 hours to get a full charge. They're a level 2, really. What should be there, and it's a substantial increase in cost is a level 3 charger like maybe a Hyundai. But if you really want to draw people to the downtown area a level 3 charger would be more in line, and you'd be able to make more

literally, there's a person that charges a Tesla, one of the Tesla trucks cyber trucks and literally, it takes him 14 h, and he had the way it's set up every 2 hours you have to go and restart it. It was the way it was programmed but it's making us money, but it's not really. It's nothing to brag about It's obsolete.

Commissioner Robertson asked if we can look into that, too, Maria.

Commissioner Robertson stated That was my short priority list I think that we should all the stuff and figure out what our priorities are. So we've been doing a little bit of volunteering and putting our names on some of these as we've discussed, and we'll do more of that as we keep going next would be outline clear directives, Maria, on current and future projects. Is there anything we want to? communicate down to her, things that should be worked on.

Commissioner Turich stated I think it's too early to really give clear directives. Right? You, you say, outline clear directives. I don't even think we have created a priority list yet to then share out what we think should be our top 3 objectives and building milestones around those. I think it would be best if we took a more time to prioritize those and then put together a plan. It's my opinion.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated Yeah, cause there's a lot we have unanswered. Still, right? I mean, we have Ultra appraisals unanswered. We haven't heard from Mr. Patel. We don't know what's going on with the gentlemen that own North and South Kennedy project parcels it. I mean, the original plan is completely out. The window is my understanding. We kind of got a lot out there.

Commissioner Georgeff stated that the body shop wants to come in in May. I believe they suggested email I saw was, May I think.

Maria answered Yes

Commissioner Turich stated for a short-term list. Then what would we need for those 4 activities that you've just listed to make sure we're prepared.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated We're seeing Rohit next week. He's coming in to present to us. So I think that'll give us some clarification and then we can make a decision on that.

Commissioner Black stated We just discussed setting up an executive session for the other.

Commissioner Robertson stated so just to get it down on paper. Make sure we're clear. So Maria's talking with Rohit. He's coming in for a study session, and then John and Maria are going to set up an executive session with the developer

Commissioner Black stated I would say also, let's get the ball rolling on the environmental, that gas station. So we can do that.

Attorney Reed asked Do you guys prefer to do those executive sessions like before or after the meeting

Commissioner Robertson it sounds like there's been some contact with the developer interest over on the other Kennedy site. So we'll keep following up with that. Sorry the other Kennedy. The dog pound property.

Commissioner Turich It's not dog pound right? We don't want to keep referring to it as a dog pound. Larry's going to go out tonight that we're going to use it as a dog pound if we keep saying dog pound.

No, it's not at all. It's not. That's what we're trying to clarify. What do you get against animal shelters? I'm curious. No, it's the local residents are upset that they have to listen to barking dogs behind their house. That's what I've heard .

Attorney Reed made a comment.

Maria asked if for SSFA if Commissioner Black was still willing to help and he said yes

Commissioner Robertson said under new initiatives. George, you'd brought this up. This was something that we talked about when we were on the Redevelopment commission before this. A home buyer program.

Commissioner Georgeff said yeah, it should say, police and fire.

Maria stated This is just this is just a draft that was developed.

Commissioner Georgeff went on to explain I think we start there and see how it, how it develops and we could ex possibly expand that I know the school. The school was talking about, possibly being interested in offering that to teachers also.

Commissioner Robertson asked is everybody familiar with? That's what he's talking about with his 1st time home buyer program

Commissioner Georgeff stated That Hammond has it and Commissioner Scheeringa agreed. Commissioner Georgeff went on to state the police and fire are exempt from income limits, because there are police and fire in in the town that you live in. What, Hammond I think you and I had talked about. You thought there were some limits on income limits, and how you qualify Hammond's income limits pertain to their residents that apply for their down payment assistance program that they have.

They have income limits, and they have to attend a train some type of financial training seminar to make sure that they're able to financially manage their affairs before the city will give them the money. But the police and fire were exempt from that, so the income levels would not pertain to police and fire. when redevelopment before the \$10,000 down payment assistance. And it's actually in this draft. It shows every year it's considered a loan. Because if you give that, if you say you're giving them money than they have to pay tax on what you're giving them. If it's a loan, and it's a forgiven loan over year after year after year. Then, when you come down to 0, they pay no tax on that, and the benefits are to help attract the volunteers for our fire department to attract police officers and keep officers in our town, parking their squad cars in front of their houses, going to our schools, going to the events in town, and you see those cars driving around town.

They don't know nobody if they're on duty off duty. And it it's a benefit to the entire community by doing that. I just think that that type of incentive will keep our officers from looking for to upgrade their home in another community and moving to any place like we've seen happening here. May even get some of them that may decide to move back. I think that originally we're going to have an influx of. If let's say, if we did 6, we're able to afford 6 loans, 3 allocated to fire 3 allocated to police.

See how they go, and if they don't get used you can. You can move them back and forth. But and originally your 1st couple of years, you're probably going to use those grants up. But eventually they're not going to be used. I'm sure, in Hammond they don't use them too often anymore. And then we at that point we can look at expanding it to maybe our public works parks department employees people like that help them out.

Commissioner Robertson stated I, personally am not too excited about something like that, although if we included other municipal employees or teachers. It would make it a little more palatable, because I feel like those are also employees that we want to incentivize, to stay in town, and we don't really have an incentive, for unless there's something I'm not aware of, you know. You want your plow drivers to be in town and responding as quick as possible. We want to retain teachers. I think they've had some struggles with that in the school town of island, so I would like to see it. If we want to move forward with something like that, I would like to consider expanding it, and not at a future date, right out of the gate.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I'm all about. If including parks and public works, you know schools. I don't know if I'm as much as I love working with them. I mean, they're not our employees. You know, at this time, you know, unless you know all the other things we sign on to do with the school. They usually put a little something in the pot. They're willing to do that fine, or we can see how this goes with ours. You know, the town's employees first

Commissioner Robertson stated I definitely appreciate that perspective.as far as the Parks department and Public Works. They're lower paid compared to our police. I think that would really help out some people and attract talent to the town.

Commissioner Georgeff stated If we if we could afford to do them all like I'd be in favor.

Commissioner Scheeringa said Well, how about we put a put an amount on it, say, or I think we'd have to allocate so much a year. So if we do that, it's let come let come. They got to be a town

employee.

Commissioner Georgeff stated I think the next step is to identify the funds that we're able to use, because one of the obstacles that we ran into when we 1st covered. This was that there are certain funds and redevelopment funds that are not allowable to be used. I believe. What's her name the attorney for redevelopment of the State, Becca could probably give us some advice as to what funds we would be able to use. I think capital funds but I'm not sure. But then the State has changed the allowable uses for police and fire in there and they're allowable expenses, Munster is actually using their Tif funds redevelopment commission funds for their police officer salaries. I don't know how that relates to other town employees, but I know I would think fire would also qualify in that police fire amendment that they just did that last year.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated yes, there's some neighboring towns that do this program as well. Towns and cities they do it.

Commissioner Georgeff stated I know Hammond, East Chicago, and Gary. They use their gaming funds. That's why they don't. They are not using Redevelopment commission funds. It's all gaming funds. I don't know how much how much we get in gaming funds here.

Maria answered that she would check with Mark but there was also the Cedit funds

Commissioner Georgeff then went to state I mean funds. And then, whatever we're using the gaming funds for now, if Redevelopment commission funds could be used to do that instead. Then it's just a tit for tat here.

Commissioner Robertson asked Maria getting with Mark figuring out what sort of money there is

Commissioner Georgeff Stated which funds we can use if it's capital funds. We do have some of those game, I know, for sure. Gaming funds can be used. But how much do we get?

Commissioner Robertson stated alright moving on new LED light. So Mark Knesek had sent did we consider is that in the next area.

Maria added we put it back on the agenda, but it was presented last February, and then it was put. It's really just to hire nice engineering to do a study for 35,004 not to exceed 35,400. I don't know if that number will hold a year later, but it was just to approve the engineering services for roadway led upgrades. Yeah. So at that time it was just it was put off. I think you had mentioned bringing it back

on.

Commissioner Robertson mentioned Yeah. So that had come before us before. Mark asked, that we cover the engineering costs, and either we if we do want to pursue it, we have either all the engineering done at once or do it in sections. He seems to think that if this is a project we want to move forward with that doing, all the engineering upfront would be wise. It could save us some money in the long run and then, obviously, after the engineering is done, and put it out to bid, you would also want redevelopment to pay for the LED light upgrades.

Commissioner Black stated My thought on that is, can we get that into our safe street plan? I mean, that was just I was thinking the same. I think there was some light right? There were lighting issues. And that's something we can do

Commissioner Robertson stated yeah, could that be covered through that. I think so. Implementation grant.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I remember talking about this for some reason I already thought it went to engineering. That's that. I mean, that was a year ago I forget things I thought we paid for.

Commissioner Georgeff stated I thought we paid for it

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I thought we did the engineering. Yeah, I thought we did the engineering already?

Attorney Reed asked Do we do it on a small portion ?

Commissioner Scheeringa answered I think we have, or is it to do? We have to redo it? We have the quote.

Commissioner Robertson stated We did do the engineering. I think we have to redo it.

Commissioner Robertson stated then just a little more insight right now. The estimated repair costs for street lights in 2024 is a little over \$20,000. So at that current rate and you know, given a 10% increase in costs over time. Mark thinks that this project will pay for itself in 7 years with the electric savings by doing the upgrade.

we did that remember the travel station when we when we replaced the lighting in the downtown area there

Attorney Reed stated That was about roughly the 5 - year payback. Something like that. Also the lights have to be replaced so infrequently.

Commissioner Turich asked if there are Grants for that ?

Commissioner Robertson answered We were just talking, if it could fall under the implementation of safety.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I don't think there's grants to pay for it. The engineering usually engineering is on the municipality .

Attorney Reed stated if it became a thing Nipsco would incentivize. It would give you a break on it.

Commissioner Georgeff stated Mark said we weren't eligible for that through Nipsco. With what we have, it needs to be done.

Commissioner Robertson asked Would you like me to speak with Mark and get that, requoted, and consider it. Do you want to consider the whole project, or just part of the project?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated are you talking about doing the project after it's engineered.

Commissioner Robertson stated So just keeping that in mind. If we do the engineering, we spend whatever it is \$38,000 on engineering.

Attorney Reed asked Did you want to break it up into phases or engineer, get all the engineering at once, and then decide to break it up into phase. I think that would be the smart way rather than retooling up every time.

Commissioner Scheeringa added maybe I'd say, in in my opinion it would be smart to get all the engineering done, and then we see what the cost because that's all cost estimates and then we see if we have funds, or if we can get it through the Grant implementation.

Do you want to do our homework 1st and see if the implementation could be covered, or at least in part, then decide if we want to, engineer or just say, Hey, let's take a look at the engineering?

Commissioner Georgeff asked Would the Grant pay for the engineering?.

Maria answered I think so , I mean the grant paid for engineers to develop the plan.

Commissioner Georgeff stated We probably should get a quote. So we can include it in our response in our grant application.

Maria stated I can get a quote, it'll help if it's eligible and the grant will be ready to go.

Commissioner Robertson stated I think we already have a quote. It just would have to be updated.

Commissioner Black asked if it was like almost 3 quarters of a million dollars, wasn't it?

Commissioner Scheeringa added Well, I'm not opposed to getting it engineered. 3 quarters of a million. Engineering usually comes out of capital funds. Correct?

Maria answered Yes.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated engineering usually comes out of capital ,obviously it has to appropriate it, and that takes a few weeks but we invest all that money and get all the interest for those things. I I'm not opposed to it. I don't know if I can say that whatever, but I'm not opposed to putting it on the agenda to we get the engineering done, and if we can get reimbursed, if we can get reimbursed for the whole town. If we can get reimbursed for it through the grant. Great.

If we can't, at least we have the information in front of us to see what maybe, then, the implementation we're already ready to be in the grant when it when it gets up. If we get approved right or is it looking at the engineering is a project that redevelopment we feel is something we want to pursue it, because it is for our safety and the safety of our police officers, our plow drivers.

Commissioner Black stated my fear is, if we keep doing small projects like that, I mean, it's not small. But will we be encumbering money that can be used to entice larger development?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated well, the thing with the larger developments is the developers got to be here and be interested and we see what's happening downstate. They're not going to let us; Just I think you said it before. Attorney Reed you going to start using it or you're going to lose it somehow.

Attorney Reed stated It's just the state lets you have those programs and They just don't like you sitting there watching the money grow.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked well, isn't that what forced the parking lot downtown. It forced it. That was really a forced issue by the State in my understanding

Attorney Reed added and the downtown parking lot. This dawned on the story after we stopped talking about it and I apologize for that but the I believe part of the plan with the parking lot was that when the train service starts that people be able to park there, and there was talk of a shuttle running from there to the to the station straight down Ridge Road Manor Station, and that way you can just drive almost nowhere and zip down the road

Commissioner Black asked Would that then turn the downtown in an area for transit-oriented development funds.

Commissioner Georgeff stated if you put it in the TOD?

Attorney Reed stated Well, put it in TOD just gives more money to the RDA not to get too into the alphabet soup of the thing. But the TOD kind of steal some tax money. Honestly, I see the developments that go in the two part of the property tax. They pay right to the RDA. Not that they're not a fine organization. But keep it here. Yeah, so those are my thoughts.

Commissioner Robertson stated Now ongoing initiatives. And we've hit several of these already. 7950 Kennedy Avenue. We've hit that Ultra we looked at that. So if you would say we hit that North and South Kennedy. Developments got that vacant parcels. These are some mostly all identified a lot downtown and I was kind of curious what we can do on our side whether it's ordinance incentive just reaching out having a conversation places like the like 2923 Highway Avenue like that old Deli you've got someone in there is either renting or owning it, and intentionally keeping that front part vacant. Is there? We do anything about that?

Commissioner Georgeff stated the owner does not live there. He leases the property out. Highland Lock and Key inquired about moving to the downtown. They'd like to be in the downtown, and they were the owner set up. The tenant in the home was not interested. Then he would not allow that to happen, because he wanted to keep his tenant happy. That's there. it's remains vacant, because the owner won't do anything unless the tenant in the home right agrees.

Commissioner Robertson went on to say Now we got another property like that over on Highway. and Kennedy that the old aquarium yeah, the old aquarium there that just sits vacant, John, is there anything we can we can do like with?

Commissioner Scheeringa asked Do we know what he's asking for it? I don't know if he's selling or renting, because the apartments are still being used above

Commissioner Georgeff stated It's not for sale that I can see.

Commissioner Scheeringa went on to say I mean, because I know another business downtown that's looking for a larger location.

I know another business downtown that's looking for a larger location. And I do not want this person to leave the town. I think it's a great business.

Maria added it's 2803 to Attorney Reed

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I don't know if that's up for rent. I think this person would be interested in going in there, because it's a larger space. You know, which then in turn may open up. I mean, this person's further down. But at least I mean, that's a I mean, I think that's what we just need to know. Is it for lease? Is it for rent or for sale?

Commissioner Scheeringa asked Is that too much that would you be able to do? Do you know who owns their property?

Maria stated I believe the Clerk Treasure knows the person, the owner, so I don't know who owns that. I'm sure I may and I believe the person even lives there upstairs. Yeah, I think there's people living above it. So I can ask, you know, how to communicate with that person just to see what they if they're interested in selling it or rent you said somebody is interested in leasing it.

Commissioner Robertson stated John, maybe to help with places like that downtown where you have residential mixed with commercial and it's right on our main drag. Is there anything we can do in requiring people that you know? When you have a property like that, you just can't leave half of it on unoccupied.

Attorney Reed Yeah, I mean there, you know, it's an it's a roundabout zoning issue. If you say, Okay, it's a mixed use, commercial residential and you put this commercial on the bottom of the residential, and you never build it out. You never do anything with it. Well, it's not really commercial, residential. It's just residential, I mean, it's not really supposed to be that way, and I guess you know, is it necessarily a zoning violation? Well, no, I mean, I can buy industrial property and farm right. But are they really complying with the zoning code? But they never plan to use it or fix it or build it out?

Commissioner Robertson asked Is there anything we can add in specific to prevent issues like this in the future?

Attorney Reed stated that's a good question. I think there can probably be. If there's not a build out or lease up in a certain period of time. It could subject the property to penalties, fines, things like that.

Commissioner Robertson stated if there's something like that was don would that be valid if ownership just changes

Attorney Reed stated It would be a legal, nonconforming use until ownership. So if it burned down, had to be any more than 50% of the value goes away, you lose that use. It's like anytime when you if you rezone and we've done it time before. When you rezone commercial property or commercial property to residential. The commercial can stay, but if it burns down it's gone, you lose, and if you don't use it, you lose it. Same thing with the rehab facility or the proposed rehab facility. It was a

anyway. So yeah, if we could. If we change the zoning to say, you know, and we use the mixed zoning category. And we added a caveat that said, if you don't do these things. But that owner would be able to ride that out. Something catastrophic happened, you know. but it's a tough one, it really. They put it for lease because they're doing a lot.

Commissioner Georgeff added If they don't really don't want to lease it. They jack the lease rate up so high that nobody wants it. And then the argument is, we're trying.

Attorney Reed added yeah, the market conditions just won't allow it. We get that a lot. I'd love to do this. I mean, that's really what happened to senior living center. The economic conditions changed and the business model is not good. The this was you could do these things. The secret was. I've heard this subsequently to that whole deal, that GMAC and these huge finance companies would finance those senior living places over 50 years. The payments were negligible, and the interest rate was negligible because they're never going to go bad. They're never going to go out of business and with interest rates and some other restrictions. Those deals are gone. It's better just to buy bonds now, I mean, make more money than a 2% 50-year loan So that's what you hear. Well, why aren't? Why aren't you doing this? You put up 4 million dollars. We did other things, and then you disappeared. Well, business model failed. What do you want me to do? Right? I think a lot of people are glad it did,

Commissioner Georgeff but the one I see on the list that I think we could or should address is Zorn. We sold them the property they came in and told us what they were going to do there they were, going to put in a distillery and everything. It's been like 4 years. We keep asking them about it. Maybe we ought to just tell them if you're not going to do anything there, we want the property back.

Attorney Reed stated we can pick another seller

Commissioner Georgeff stated yeah, we'll take it back. They're not going to do anything with it.

Commissioner Turich stated You said you reached out in our conversation the other day. You said you reach out to them. They seem like they were coming back, or they were going to start making some movement.

Commissioner Robertson stated It was the same thing. They told me a couple of weeks ago that they told me a few months ago that they told me a year ago. You keep telling me the same thing. Same thing. We're coming. yeah, we're coming. Just hold on so. And I let them know about the property improvement, grant, if you know it's not well, do they own other properties down to it.

Commissioner Robertson continued and I let them know about the property improvement, grant, if you know .

Commissioner Scheeringa asked do they own other properties down to it.

Commissioner Robertson stated one of one of the owners owns safety training services or training services. What else to get safety training at some point the same owners of that bought into one degree, or I got which with that building, you look at how busy things get over there by the coffee shop and Miles Books, and then, you know, we've got this other restaurant that hopefully go in further down. That parking lot gets pretty crammed. I'm wondering is the best use of that restaurant.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated I usually park there on Crawl nights because it's the nicest spot to park.

Commissioner Robertson added I think at one time they were talking about extending a patio into that parking lot. So then you would be losing that parking and parking is valuable for those other businesses as well.

Commissioner Turich I didn't realize how small that building is which one the Zorn property. Yes, it's tiny.

Commissioner Robertson stated I know that Rhonda from Sip. she was interested. She had offered the Redevelopment Commission I think more money than what Zorn offers don't like that. But his developmental plan was better and we had sold her the Sip property. I think our thinking was, there's more potential here, and here we are.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated so we're going to contact those people and yeah, that I mean, we've talked to him. We talk again

Commissioner Georgeff added and then, John, we get you involved. I mean, we could just authorize a letter to be sent having Alex sign it at our next meeting to the owners there.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked so how's that work. They gave us a developmental plan to purchase that property, and they didn't follow through with that developmental plan. Right like, isn't that a violation? So, what actions then could be taken?

Attorney Reed stated You can. You could sue for rescission. if someone, you know, if the if they're if the benefit of the bargain is not met. You can either say, well, you owe us damages, or you can rescind the contract. You can say, well, you didn't perform. Therefore it's like a nullity.

Commissioner Robertson added I don't know if any development plan was formally presented.

Attorney Reed added It was an abatement

Maria stated , ironically checking the records and I did inform Mark they're paying. 0 taxes. He called the Lake County today. So and just to be clear like this agreement for Zorn went through before this council came into office and cause. I didn't know. I thought it was honestly just a parking lot.

Commissioner Turich stated just to be clear like this agreement for Zorn went through before this council came into office.

Commissioner Scheeringa added I didn't know. I thought it was honestly thought it was just a parking lot.

Maria stated It went from the town of Highland to Richard Krull in 2021, and then in January of 2022 it went to RJTIG, Inc. I don't know if they just changed names. Still own still the same owners,

Attorney Reed stated I mean, when it comes to do something to them. We'll have to have you know, Mike, or so most of it, because I, the safety training people. I do represent that company.

Commissioner Georgeff stated just like to get them moving. If they're going to do something, let's do it.

Attorney Reed stated yeah. It was supposed to be. They're going to brew beer there, but they're also going to have a tasting room. It was kind of to expand their name and get it out there, and so far nothing. That's been a long time, and the food was going to be provided, they told us, by Growlers

Commissioner Turich asked what about the old Omni office equipment building. What's the status on that project? The one that the old pharmacy parking lot in that area? What was purchased by he came and did a big presentation, talked about doing 3 buildings right, and rehabbing and doing some facelifts.

Commissioner Georgeff answered my understanding is that he's allowed them one year in that space.

Commissioner Turich asked who's they? Because there's 3 separate buildings there, right?

Commissioner Georgeff answered The Omni people that are operating the business machine repair

agreement. He hadn't purchased it. They would they would be out being able to phase out their business or something within a year.

Commissioner Turich stated so that building that he did a massive facelift to is just going to sit like that until the other property vacates.

Commissioner Georgeff stated Well, it's been reassessed. So he's going to pay a lot more taxes on it than he was.

Commissioner Turich asked did he buy the other property to the East?

Commissioner Georgeff answered No, he's in negotiation with the owner of that property now, too.

Commissioner Turich asked who continues to follow up with him?

Maria answered we speak with at least twice a week and he's working on it.

Commissioner Robertson added I think he talked to Kevin Boyd about I wasn't going to say names, but the property to the East, the property to the East about that, you know, because he was going to do like a drive through, or whatever.

Commissioner Robertson went on to downtown initiatives . Main Square Fence. I just put on there something to keep in mind if it's in the future, or with the activities that are have been discussed about electrical repair and upgrade. I think HCC had pointed out some issues last year with some outlets and receptacles and disrepair. Something to think about, you know, that's 1 of those weird gray areas with this park of like, you know, is it a parts department thing

Commissioner Turich asked so is the disrepair that you refer to above and beyond what was because there were several repairs made last year at Main Square prior to the 4th of July. Fest new breakers, new outlets, all that was repaired and fixed is this in addition to.

Commissioner Robertson the outlets, were not repaired. Just the breaker replacement A couple outlets were repaired as they were found. Once we started mobilizing for that I think Kathy had put together a bunch of pictures and had sent over off to look through my emails but a lot of things were identified being involved in that last year One of the contractors said that the electric in the Gazebo should be addressed sooner than later, and then, obviously with the Backyard Barbecue. We had

some issues there with the electrical lost power for half the vendors,

Commissioner Turich but that was 2023 not in 2024 correct

Commissioner Robertson answered no, it was 2024

Commissioner Turich stated so after the 4th of July fest, you guys had additional problems correct. you and I spoke about this. I'm going to say it out loud. Maybe it's the not a great idea, but I'm at least going to throw it out. We have in the past, and the you and I spoke about this. I'm going to say it out loud. Maybe it's the not a great idea, but I'm at least going to throw it out. There we do. We have in the past, and the you and I spoke about this. I'm going to say it out loud. Maybe it's the not a great idea, but I'm at least going to throw it out. There we do. We have in the past, and the trend is that we'll continue. We do pretty well with the 4th of July fest right?

Why can't we take from the top right off the get? We take some money from that festival and reinvest it into Main square and fix these issues that have been identified. Is that allowed? Is that something we can do? And so we reported, I think, a net profit last year of north of \$250,000. Is that right? Was that gross?

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that was gross? I think we're like a \$120,000.

Commissioner Turich stated Okay, yeah, right? a \$120,000. Could you take \$25,000 of that off the top and do the repairs that need to be done to this area.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated the way that's always worked is and then that rolls over and that's our budget to spend this year. It kind of rolls to pay for itself. Okay, this is also the role that pays for the stipend for the person to rerun trend is that we'll continue

Commissioner Robertson added it's a little more clarification on that. So the revenue that they get that goes into that non - reverting fund that's more of like a like a rainy-day savings account. They still get a budget at the beginning of every year, and then, whatever they're profiting does go into a fund, and that's like, you know, if I wanted to use a different word, if things go wrong.

Then there was some discussion about the fence and Parks Department other needs including the baseball fields and rubber matting

Next on the Agenda was the DORA

Commissioner Robertson asked There's any updates and John, if you had a chance to take a look at anything, or I mean I you know it's all. It's a question of go or no go.

Attorney Reed stated I mean, I don't see anything, you know, legally, there's nothing stopping us from doing it? And does it provide more control? Yeah, because I think, like we talked about in the beginning, someone could bring a cooler and sit on a bench on Highway Avenue and drink as much as they like until they're inebriated and they get arrested this way. You can't do that right, and, like you talk about, you know, for the crawl. It's great crawl now. You don't have to finish your drink and then go to the next place, or you know you can leave with a plastic cup, and you're on your own, you know and I think it would include would include Main Square. So now we won't have the weird liquor license issues.

Commissioner Turich added So are we all in favor. I think that the challenge for me right now is, I do have a lot of people that are approaching that aren't really in favor of it. you get people on the street. They're like, Oh, that's a great idea. This one is. Truly. I have a 50 50 response from people when I talk to them.

Commissioner Georgeff stated I don't think people are even aware of a lot of people are aware that Griffith even has a Dora or the court. The current rules that are in play. Maybe they just don't understand the current. You have to look at it. You have to look at a versus right.

Attorney Reed stated The Dora means you can't just hang around in downtown and drink as much as you want out of your own and you can't sit there with a bottle of Jack Daniels and swig it, you know. I guess that's the difference. It's better control and I think that might be what people are missing. This isn't saying. Oh, now we're going to authorize people just to walk around downtown with drinks. They can do that right now. They don't have to buy them from anybody, and you can't control how much, and there's no dram shop problems

Commissioner Georgeff stated but now they have to purchase it from a vendor and carry it in a plastic cup right? And then they go back. When they go back for another one. They're being evaluated as to whether or not they should sell them another drink or not.

Commissioner Turich stated as long as it's enforced in the same boat we're in right now, right what benefit are we gaining out of this without creating more enforcement from the Pd. Right? What I don't see the enforcement is that they can take.

Commissioner Georgeff stated If we create the door, they can take the beverage out of the business and walk during our crawl, or whenever onto Highway avenue.

Commissioner Robertson added I believe Griffiths is only in effect during their rock and rail festival. I mean right now.

Attorney Reed I mean right now. Theoretically, you have a free for all you would not have a free for all later and that doesn't mean I can't. I can't go into Langel's with my own booze right? But I can sit on the street outside like, legally, legally. Yeah, you can walk right down the street drinking a bottle of beer or whiskey or whatever

Commissioner Georgeff stated yeah, you can walk right down the street drinking a bottle of beer or whiskey or whatever.

Commissioner Turich stated So we establish a DORA. We create boundaries that says, unless you have the right cup you can't just be walking on the or it's only allowed.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated you're only allowed to do that during certain periods during the 4th of July fest or the 4th of July festival.

Attorney Reed stated and since people have to go into an establishment to get a drink. A bartender or waitress will then say, well, this guy fell down 3 times on his way to the bar. I'm not giving him.

Commissioner Turich stated I'm going to play devil's advocate right or different side of the coin. I go by that one cup right now I go there for whatever activity I'm pouring stuff in my in my own glass. There's what stops that from happening.

Commissioner Robertson with our previous Restaurant Crawls they were illegal. Yeah, the establishments down there were serving illegally

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that's the thing I want people to realize, it wasn't 100% legal.

It was asked what Chief Potesta thoughts were and everyone thought he was in agreement with it but Attorney Reed will send an email just to make sure .

Commissioner Turich asked if anyone else wanted to be the point person for the DORA and Commissioner Scheeringa and Commissioner Georgeff will take on the DORA project.

Commissioner Robertson brought the next item on the agenda and it's Decorative Lighting and everyone was in agreement that the lights on Highway look great.

Commissioner Robertson stated that the contractor would still honor the prices that he bid out last year within a certain time frame

Commissioner Scheeringa asked if we could revisit those prices if I remember you, it was complicated

Commissioner Robertson stated It is complicated because everything else well, there's more concrete work, but there's less fixtures. Power is an issue. Wi-fi will be another hurdle as well

Ed answered WIFI working fine downtown. It's for an afterthought wi-fi for less than 500 bucks. It's working fine every night. I check it, and it works the controllers themselves. The firmware is a work of art. I look at it. I'll go down there at 5 in the morning to change the light colors, and I would never depend on a schedule because it takes a couple of hits of the button because of the firmware issues on the controllers. It'll show like they're not online. But they're online and that's some of the stuff. Me and pure illumination went back and forth. On. They were criticizing the Wi-fi, but the Wi-fi works their units jump off, come on, but they work anyway. But Wi-fi would be totally accessible on Jewett.

The only thing I do caution you. I would really rethink the electrical part of it, because the controllers and the transformers and the Wi-fi only comes on at night, and that's really tough to manage. Every transformer needs 110 all the time.

That's how you got to maintain this if you want to maintain it. Now you got to turn all the lights on, for the downtown people have done it and left it on, and it wastes money, physical, wise.

We need to If we're going to put new stuff in, we need to get 110 to the transformers and 110 to the Wi-fi all the time so that the updates could happen. And it just runs. The lights will be controlled by the transformers properly, basically for those items right now, the way it's wired, it's 1 switch. Everything comes on downtown. It's not good to maintain. it's always at night working on it, which is fine. But if it was during the day it would be easier to manage and to put on a schedule in the workout firmware books.

Commissioner Robertson stated yeah, with the price that was quoted. Basically, that is, we install lights and assuming you have functional Wi-fi and a power source. So if you're saying the Wi-fi is fine, we need to get the power source, and that that could be costly.

Ed stated it was \$400 on that Wi-fi and just moved it around a little bit.

Commissioner Scheeringa asked What are they using for power source?

Commissioner Robertson stated They had to change out the timer. and they're going off of the light poles. The problem is that there aren't multiple circuits. And there's conduit in the ground that is collapsed and you can't pull more wire through. So the only workaround was to come off of the same circuit that the street lights are controlled on, and they turn on at a specific time.

We went to a more robust timer instead of a photo cell. So they come on, you know. right at whatever time is programmed instead of based on sunlight. But yeah, we have to figure out the power situation. It's going to be another animal on the other side.

Attorney Reed stated it states that the conduits collapsed. You guys should just throw the wire

through there

Commissioner Robertson stated I know when we looked at it on Highway Avenue, you know, talking about adding more conduit. You don't want to spend a \$100,000 on and spend more on getting the power over there than what we're spending on lights.

I guess my question is, if we do want to pursue it on that other side. Obviously we have to get quotes for the electrical work and figure that out is the quote still valid for the lights that we have or do we have to rebid that.

Attorney Reed asked how old the bid was ? he said he would check into that

They will start getting quotes for electrical work

Commissioner Robertson asked about the owl by the fire station and that could use some sprucing up, but we were approached by humane Indiana, I believe, to have that donated.

Maria answered Oh, humane Indiana! Yes, wanted to be all donated, but if we're going to keep it, we do have the Highland High School Key Club that's working with the Kiwanis Club, and they said they would do that this spring. so I'd like to keep the owl downtown person. I believe Bernie had reached out to the chief that they wanted the owl donated. but then Alex said, No, let's keep the owl but it needs something. But yeah, they would. They said they would do it. They would paint it. The kids would do it.

Commissioner Robertson brought up the fencing by Growlers and getting it replaced there was also talk about getting a LED Sign like parks has to keep everyone updated on current events

Maria stated it was just a question about beautifying the corner by Growlers

Commissioner Turich stated You could you pour concrete there, stamp the concrete color it right? And then you don't have to worry about bricks where weeds are growing up. It's 1 solid slab of concrete that's just it's got some arc or some design and depth to it. Yes, it's expensive on the front end. But there's not a lot of maintenance after that

all that grass, and then people throw their clippings out there, and you get motorcycles and stuff slick and dangerous.

Commissioner Turich stated we could say I could. I could have a conversation with the when I talk with the contractors about the downtown lot. See if there's something we could do over there. See, I like the idea of stamp concrete. Maybe throw a couple of benches up there and create, you know, some more cities. Nice for the parade. Yeah, it was nice. It's a nice idea.

Commissioner Robertson media manager. I wanted to bring this up because this was another main street topic. There's interest in having a media manager for that group and some discussion surrounding that with the 2 Facebook pages that we have we could consolidate because most of what is going on Main Street and redevelopment. Right now it kind of mirrors each other. We could just get rid of the redevelopment page, Rebrand, Main street pages, redevelopment. And then that way we can.

You know, still share all the events, share some updates with what we're doing as a commission. Make it look a little more professional. You can have some input on it. But get someone in there that's skilled and can do that. Talking about. I think this conversation has come up in the past.

Commissioner Turich stated the management of Social Media presence in the town of Highland could use some improvement right, and if that falls under Ed scope in the future. Or if we you know, find an external source, and we contract that out. We need to do something right. Everything's disconnected. There's no organization. There's no single point right? I'll tell you this. I think the Pd. Does a fantastic job of getting good, concise, grammatically correct information out to the to the general public, and we would love to have that type of ownership across all of our social media platforms if we could. I think that would be very helpful. And then some of the stuff that is, I feel like, because there's not great presence from the town of Highland on social media. Other pages monopolize that. And then the information that's getting out isn't always correct, not opposed.

Commissioner Robertson stated I think that's probably something. At least, I mean, we could support that through the main street budget instead of coming for redevelopment. I because we don't really have a lot that we're spending on this year. Right, Maria. It's really just the restaurant call we're literally talking. I don't know whatever we would get from bids couple \$100 a month. It's not liked that board gets paid.

Ed was asked how he ran the Town of Highland Facebook page and he stated I'm also pulling away from it because of some Facebook changes with recordings. I mean, Facebook started to change the way they do business because they want to be a library for everybody free.

Ed added one of the biggest problems you guys got to think about is comes up with content. I mean,

tell you what to do, but you have to tell it all the boards. What to do. I mean, that would be my opinion. You need to structure yourself so that I would feel kind of weird just putting a bulletin out there that wasn't sponsored by the console. I mean, I would put like a crawl, because I don't think you guys would mind if I put a crawl thing up there, but a statement generated on any public media site like there was a tornado thing here. Chad called over to the police department and they put a tornado warning on the police page to get so that the calls wouldn't come in but I think the Board the Town Council needs to generate some sort of protocol when you want something drafted like resumes, like a good case in point, was the fire chief. Everybody put it up. The alcohol bit a couple of last summer, you know everybody orchestrated it. There has to be some management from the governing board on what you want.

Commissioner Turich stated you're right. But I think you also, once you get a guide established, then you've got to let somebody manage it from there. I don't think the best idea is to go to the 5 of us every time and say, Hey, aren't you approve this getting posted? You've got to give somebody the flexibility and the ownership of that. In my opinion, I think there's some risk with that, because that's like the social media presence of the town. So you're saying more from the Council's perspective, right? Us controlling that. But the PD having the ability to put their own messaging out would continue.

Ed stated They have specialized need. They have, like amber alerts. They have stuff like that. They have, you know, an issue with a crime scene. Dog bites whatever I'm just saying, at a higher level. There needs to be some governance over what the presence is on all social media. I mean, like Main Street and redevelopment. What's posted on that? The town, the town website just or the town Facebook pages started as a library. That was the whole purpose of it. It was never intended, or any guidance given, to make it anything beyond just where the recordings were and Facebook's taking those down. They're not letting us store anymore. I recovered all those things. So I have a purse. I have a library for the town now of every meeting that from the day it started. January 1st, 2020. Facebook's finding that people are putting. There's no money in video storage. You got to buy the storage working with idea factory like, right now, our streaming meetings. They're stored on Zoom for 90 days, and then they just get logged on the on, the on the website, and then that's it. For 90 days they're there still, but they're just buried and never seen again.

Commissioner Turich stated but there's maybe I'm on my own island here. But the Idea Factory and the maintenance of our website and things like that is lacking, in my opinion. I think, the idea that Alex has brought to the table is a good one, and I think if we get the right person in the right agreement, then we just let that person manage what goes out on the pages.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that person would reach out to Council President.

Attorney Reed stated Well, probably the president or chairperson of each board have a weekly update, or the day after the meeting, or something. What do you want from me? If you give people clear direction. They're generally you can have them, you know.

Commissioner Robertson stated I'm sure they can make the reins on some smaller stuff. All right, you

Commissioner Robertson stated I'm sure they can make the reins on some smaller stuff. All right, you know, we yeah, we, you know, make 2 posts a week. And you know, okay, it's pictures of and events, and whatever else is going on, or highlight, a business or whatever, and then clear direction on the more meat and potatoes issues that we want to communicate with the community, and by July 1st they'll be able to see Main Street wanted to have someone manage their social media. The idea was then presented at a meeting, and so that media manager won't.

The social media topic will be discussed more at the council level

DULY PASSED AND RESOLVED by the Highland Redevelopment Commission, Highland, Lake County, Indiana, this 12 day of MAY 2025, having passed by a vote 5 in favor and 0 opposed.

Highland Redevelopment Commission



President

ATTEST:



Secretary