

HIGHLAND REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

STUDY SESSION MEETING MINUTES

Monday November 10th, 2025

The Highland Redevelopment Commission (“Commission”, “RC”) met in person at Town Hall on Monday November 10th, 2025.

The regular scheduled Study Session meeting was called to order at 7:53 P.M. by President, Alex Robertson

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

Additional Officials Present: Maria Becerra, Redevelopment Director, Attorney Reed,

Homeownership Forgivable Program

It would be 4 loans for Police/Fire and 2 loans for municipal employees AFTER May 1st applications available to all municipal employees if police and fire loans have not been awarded .

Commissioner Georgeff asked if they would be awarded to Public Works and Town employees ?

Maria answered It would open up after May 1st

Maria mentioned the only thing for the fire department the exception if they are not full-time employees it would require a letter of recommendation from the Chief that they are in good standing

Gaming Funds will be used and it was stated that we get approximately \$150,000.00 per year and we have close to \$350,000.00 in the fund right now . We will be using \$60,000.00 and if at anytime we can't fund it , it will be terminated .

The applicants will be required to take an E America online buyer program or something comparable , that is free as one of the guidelines to apply for this loan .

The program will be reviewed and revised as needed annually by the Council.

Commissioner Robertson state his would be gaming funds, and those funds can be used for anything the far-right conservative liberal in me is coming out. I'm just wondering, since it can be used for anything else, and there's, you know, concerns about the budget, is this another thing we should maybe consider pumping the brakes on?

Commissioner Scheeringa asked if gaming funds can be used for anything but salaries?

Commissioner Georgeff answered Yes anything but salaries and compensation

Commissioner Robertson stated it could be helpful in other areas

Commissioner Georgeff stated it could be and an extra \$290,000.00 is sitting there right now, even if we do the program next year . The Department Heads have already got that reduction so I think we're good this year.

Commission Robertson mentioned equipment purchases for using the funds also

Commissioner Scheeringa stated That's if someone even takes our offer. This might be an incentive for a year or two. It's not something that has to be set in stone . Whatever their budget cuts are, and that comes out of this fund, that fund, if we're losing that fund. There's nothing saying that we couldn't allocate \$50,000 a year to help with that. I think it's something that can be used as a trial and not set in stone.

Commissioner Robertson stated it's easier to give than to take away.

Several examples were given were money might need to used fire , police , parks or even sanitary

Commissioner Georgeff stated we can afford to it this and who knows about next year because we probably won't know till the middle of next year how the SB1 is going to affect us

Attorney Reed stated Mark would know a lot better than I would, how it would work from a legal clerk-treasurer budgetary standpoint, but now that you are allowed to use excess TIF funds above what it takes to pay bonds to enhance public safety. Can you take officers, or fire department employees, or whomever that deals with public safety out of your budget and pull it back in with TIF money because our TIF money grows a million or so a year does that plug the hole

Most of the TIF bonds have not been paid off at this point. Cardinal Campus is a new one, and they're killing it over there. You know, the excess funds that come in with that, there's a reason, you know, I have to assume when the state changed what you can do with TIF money to include enhanced public safety. Maybe they met those funds to plug that hole. The excess funds that come in with that, there's a reason, you know, I have to assume when the state changed what you can do with TIF money to include enhanced public safety. Maybe they met those funds to plug that hole rather than just incentivize new projects.

Commissioner Robertson stated it's a hernia made out of dollars

Commissioner Scheeringa stated what you're saying, you're just opposed to backfilling public safety budget with redevelopment funds?

Commissioner Robertson went on to say I'd be skeptical, you know, it's one of those things, it's trying to conserve as much of that money as possible to grow the town

Attorney Reed added if you grow the town you're getting your assessed value, and that's the real way to get money that's the long-term right answer.

Attorney Reed asked Maria if \$100,000.00 goes to the schools to help pay for the safety officer ?

Maria answered Yes

Attorney Reed went on to say There's no reason it's 100 it could be more it could be less

Commissioner Georgeff stated Munster actually funds some of their police officers' salaries

Attorney Reed added Once they change the case

Abandoned gas station at 3303 45th update on the Commissioners sale

Attorney Reed stated we got the map of all the properties that are going to the commissioners sale and we've notified the people that do the sale that the Town of Highland wants that parcel of property and it's like a pre-bid . They won't let anyone else take it They know we want it . Dan Repay he sent me the map, actually, because he got it

before I did. Little Cal does the same thing. They got 110 parcels and the ones they don't aren't valuable enough to buy at tax sale, they just wait for this.

We have to issue a 4.5 notice. depending whether it's residential or commercial property, this is obviously commercial. We issue a 4.5 notice and a 4.6 notice, and the original owner would still have, I think, about 90 days to redeem it. And when those 90 days go by, we just get the deed. The court issues the deed.

Maria asked Attorney Reed so the deadline is the 26th and we are in there ? They have the paperwork they need from us

Attorney Reed answered Yes

Old gas station by the post office 8436 Kennedy Ave

Maria stated the owner is agreeable to what we offered , we just need to draft a purchase and I ordered Phase 1 that's just to protect the town for the future .

Commissioner Georgeff stated There should be a Phase 1 available and a Phase 2

Maria stated there probably is but from what we understand we still have to have one now before we purchase it in case we do pursue dollars or anything. It just needs to be done and hopefully we can get it done before year end .

Commissioner Robertson asked think ahead for some ideas for the next spot

Ideas tossed a Coffee Cabin or another gas station or some sort of public art

Commissioner Scheeringa asked if they had to do remediation on it

Commissioner Black stated they did

Attorney Reed stated that it should be on the IDEM file cabinet

Commissioner Georgeff stated they were monitoring the wells and they wells throughout the property and they monitored them for months

Commissioner Scheeringa stated that Ken would have or the fire department should have what they did with those tanks

Maria stated Ken told her that it was all cleaned up and I'm sure he has the file

Attorney Reed added They generally if there never any leaks and the grounds clean they let you pump them out , clean them and fill them up with concrete . Munster had an underground tank behind town hall for the public vehicles years ago we got to the point with IDO he started at these weird bills every year for monitoring for an 800-gallon tank and it had a small leak and we got wells everywhere . We're paying \$15k a year to monitor the ground water and there's nothing coming up. So we just stopped paying and nothing ever happened . It was like a forever obligation

2026 Spending Plan Draft

Maria explained that Redevelopment has to submit an annual spending plan and anticipated expenditures besides the budget that has already been submitted and the only note here is item C on the first page and that depends on what acquisitions and redevelopment does, it's estimated \$6 million . I know we're talking about \$3 million here and \$3 million there depending on what we negotiate .

It's just submitted , it can be changed we're not locked into that and the bond portion that's on A that was completed by Mr. Higgins and Mark and if there's any changes than we projected we just submit a revision and it goes on Gateway but it's required to be submitted by December 1st so it will be on the November 24th Plenary Meeting for Redevelopment to pass but I wanted a draft prior to

Commissioner Turich asked about Item E professional expenses being around \$125,000.00

Maria answered Mr. Higgins just based it on this year's professional expenses . We have a few of the consultants this year with the Comprehensive Plan I think that's what it is based on. It's just estimates

Commissioner Turich thought that estimate was to low and asked Maria how much do we spend

Maria agreed and thought we should up it to maybe \$200,000.00 and asked Attorney Reed especially if we do bonding .

Attorney Reed answered Yes

Commissioner Turich asked about item G Council's Expenses ?

Maria answered this came off the budget that was already approved. Mark probably just put this in here. I can check with him

Commissioner Turich that is what was submitted for the 2026 budget . May I have a copy of your budget ?

Maria answered yes

Maria stated she was still waiting for the Grant that we submitted for Kleiman through the federal government and she's hoping to hear about it by the end of the year and she didn't put that in there because we don't have the grant yet but once it's awarded we would be looking at \$2,000,000.00 for Kleinman as a match 80-20 that's the only thing that might be added .

Commissioner Scheeringa asked if that has to be paid right up front ? What do they allow you to do because that is going to be a long project?

Maria agreed and said yes it would be a long project I'm sure it would be a couple of years by the time everything's designed, and then by the time we start construction, so it would just come out of our budget, maybe a portion in 2026. It wouldn't be a big hit for next year but we would have to still encumber it but I'll check with Mark on that. At least encumbering it so the money's set aside, no matter when we use it.

Commissioner Scheeringa stated It'll still be put somewhere where it draws interest?

Maria stated yes , it draws interest until we actually pay out the invoice

Commissioners Comments :

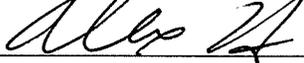
Commissioner Georgeff mentioned the \$2 million that was loaned out from Redevelopment and he talked to Mark and Mark stated he was going to ask for it back

Commissioner Robertson stated he was not aware that Mark was going to ask for it back

Commissioner Georgeff stated just my opinion. They need to find some other place to get that \$2 million, because we lost the interest for an entire year on that \$2 million that would have gone into our fund. They can look for another option.

Duly Passed and Resolved by the Highland Redevelopment Commission, Highland, Lake County, Indiana, this 24th day of ~~November~~ 2025, having passed by a vote 5 in favor and 6 opposed.

Highland Redevelopment Commission



President

ATTEST: 

Secretary