

TOWN OF PORTER
Redevelopment Commission
303 Franklin Street
February 25, 2025

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Present: President Allison Hultman, Vice President William Lopez, Russ Erwin, Jamie Hogan, Peter Sawochka-Dalton, and Beth Mehling

Also Present: Director of Development Michael Barry, and Secretary Karen Spanier

Approval of Minutes

Russ Erwin made the motion to approve January 28, 2025, meeting minutes, with Peter Sawochka-Dalton making the second.

Motion carried 5-0.

Consideration of Claims

William Lopez made a motion to approve claims for February as presented, with Jamie Hogan making the second.

Motion carried 5-0.

Audience Participation

Tara Duffie, 525 N 3rd St.

Duffie noted that the RDC allotted \$10,000 to Environmental Sustainability Commission for sustainable projects and wants to start moving forward with these projects. She mentions they will be doing native gardens and how there will be a new trail, with a map and hopefully encourage visitors to come walk the trail. The first two garden trails approved were Town Hall and Hawthorne Park.

She is asking if the RDC's budget allocation is for TIF area funding only.

Allison Hultman and Clerk-Treasurer Corinne Peffers confirm they would not be able to use funding, even though it's inclusive with the TIF district and other gardens will be in TIF areas.

Peffers explains what TIF funds can be used for, and to spend TIF funds you must follow certain criteria. Peffers will get clarification from the Attorney on what can be done. The focus needs to be on public improvements that's benefitting or promoting economic development.

Hultman states if they are making improvements in TIF areas they can use that funding but couldn't use for pollinators not in TIF area.

Duffie stated either sponsorships or grants would be the way forward.

Peffers said that perhaps it could be related to a Stormwater Project.

Duffie asks if this allocation

Allison Hultman states RDC sets a budget every year, and they look forward to allocating funds accordingly for the following year. So, if you didn't spend it this year, she can't guarantee it will be available next year. She thinks it is probable that we will try and keep it in the budget if we can support the ESC.

Jennifer Klug, 200 Franklin St, said it was brought up before about money for the Fire department to

help them higher part-time Firefighters in times when they are going to have heavy traffic, like July 4th. And asks if they are still going to get the money? Allison Hultman states the RDC does have at least \$40,000 set aside to support Fire department. But we cannot use those funds towards that until the Town Council approves that path and then we can help financially support it.

Reports

Building Commissioner/Director of Development

Barry stated he sent out his notes from his meeting with Matt Reardon. With Brickyard Property we are going to put some preliminary costs together and look at partners to develop them.

We are still trying to figure out what's the best use for that property.

Barry mentioned Johnson Inn; it is still in probate. The purchaser is looking for a source of funding for sewers, as the property cannot be developed without it.

Barry said the forum has been pushing this READI Grant and said they have steered money to some projects, but they haven't come to fruition. He explains how the READI Grant works and how you must have private partners. He stated how we're just essentially waiting for the Johnson Inn to get out of probate and by the time that gets done he doesn't know if the READI Grant is going to exist. He is looking at different funding, but without it this would be something he would ask the council to borrow money against, grant, loan, etc.

Barry announced there is a Section 219 Grant through the Army Corps of Engineers for water-related environmental infrastructure available, and they'll give you up to a million dollars.

He is looking at the Dune Forest area that is a 1927 subdivision with clay pipes. When it rains hard storm water gets in there and then we pay to process it at the treatment plant.

He is pushing this to the top of the list for something we can tackle immediately and just get that done. If we can get a million dollars from the Section 219 Grant that would cover almost the whole project. Matt Reardon works with HWC Engineers, and they are putting a proposal together for this project.

He has a proposal from Commonwealth Engineers to do some other Sewer items and is reviewing the Commonwealth Contract before it goes to our Attorney. He might have two different engineer's proposals on the project.

Barry gave an update on all the vacant buildings.

He states he would rather have some better development in Porter, but it's hard to attract people to a town of 5,200 even though you have a lot of traffic that drives by in the summertime.

Barry acknowledged that we are land locked and don't have a lot of properties to develop.

Russ Erwin asks if the owners of the property on Lincoln Street are interested in selling his building at all. Barry replies no. Erwin states he has been in talks with the owner of Trackside Coffee, but they want to own no lease.

Peter Sawochka-Dalton mentioned that Portage and Chesterton cannot accept the Town's leaves or brush. Do we have any other options? Barry states at this point no; Chesterton's yard is full, and Portage said they don't have any capacity to take any more. So basically, we store our brush and leaves on the Brickyard property and they just compost, we don't turn them or anything.

Sawochka-Dalton asked if any further boring, will be done on the Brickyard property. Barry states yes, he is getting a quote for it.

Hultman mentions we previously talked about the 501c3 for the exterior Façade Grant, so we are going to try and move forward and bring Maura from the Duneland Chamber to a future RDC meeting to answer some more detailed questions.

Barry stated he is going to talk to our new Attorney about it also, to see if that solves the problem.

New Business

None

Commission Comments

Adjournment

Jamie Hogan made the motion to adjourn.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:36 p.m.

Approved the 25th day of February, 2025.

REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION, OF THE TOWN OF PORTER

/s/ Allison Hultman, President

/s/ William Lopez, Vice- President

/s/ Russ Erwin, Secretary

/s/ Jamie Hogan, Member

/s/ Peter Sawochka-Dalton, Member

Attest: /s/ Karen Spanier, Recording Secretary