

TOWN OF PORTER
Redevelopment Commission
303 Franklin Street
March 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,

Absent: Beth Mehling

Also Present: Director of Development Michael Barry, Clerk Treasurer Corinne Peffers, Maura Mundell and David Gilbert from Duneland Chamber and Secretary Karen Spanier.

Approval of Minutes

Jamie Hogan made the motion to approve February 25, 2025 meeting minutes, with Peter Sawochka-Dalton making the second.

Motion carried 5-0.

Consideration of Claims

Russ Erwin made a motion to approve claims for March as presented, with William Lopez making the second.

Motion carried 5-0.

Audience Participation

None

Reports

Building Commissioner/Director of Development

Barry stated there is still no change in Mnoke Prairie. It is in environmental review, and that's kind of a long process.

Old Business

Façade Grant

Hultman mentions as everyone knows, Porter has been working an exterior façade grant to try to improve the visual esthetics of businesses in the TIF district. Maura and David have worked a similar program for more than just one town, including Chesterton, Porter, and Burns Harbor. They have a 501c3 set up that would potentially allow Porter to put funds into and then grant those funds through this exterior façade program to businesses in Town in a way that works with our budget.

Essentially, how it would work if we could put money in that 501c3 that is dedicated to Porter, and then Porter would have to come up with a committee that then approves the funds to be used for those projects. The way I understand it is that the applications could come to RDC and then we can approve them to move forward to that committee for review, and then potentially the funds could be dedicated to that project if the Porter committee were to approve.

Barry states potentially it sounds like a logical thing. However, none of this has been sent to our new attorney yet. So, he is going to have to review that, agree to it, and then set up some parameters to that. So, we have not even discussed that with him yet.

Hultman states we have not, she wanted to kind of have this group come together and talk about what we think is potential before we got Legal involved.

Hogan asked if Town Council had to be involved.

Town Council President Laura Madigan mentions the RDC controls TIF funds, how RDC sees fit, and that's separate from council.

Maura Mundell has been with Duneland Chamber for over 10 years now, as well as the Duneland Economic Development Corporation, which has the 501c3, that we talked about. Mundell explains a little bit about the Duneland Chamber Foundation and the Duneland Economic Development Corporation, stating there are two separate options for the 501c3.

We do want to distribute funds among all the Towns when we do them, but can earmark funds for the Town of Porter, those can be dedicated to the Town of Porter projects. Both entities are willing to do this.

DEDC or Duneland Chamber Foundation are two different boards and different entities.

Hogan asks do we then dictate where we want those funds to go? Mundell states you would say set up those funds through the RDC to give those funds to the DEDC to administer for your façade grant.

Hultman mentions copies of the old Duneland Economic Development Grant application were printed. She would like to challenge everybody to look through it and make comments on what might be missing on this application that isn't ours, that we feel are extremely important and should be there. Then potentially we can all work together, if there are broad or general enough to us for all the towns.

Barry mentions that Maura should make the form with changes and then when we can look at it.

Laura Madigan has a question about private donations. For example, Cleveland Cliffs can only donate to 501c3 and if there was a community project that they were interested in supporting the Town would they be able to help fund the project through either the DEDC or the Duneland Chamber Foundation in a similar way?

Mundell states the broadest perspective that you laid that out, is a yes. Madigan states that's the only thing that would stop us from partnering up with yours or just creating our own, is because we want it to be a two-way street. Thank you so much for offering to share.

Hultman asks do we move forward or should we have discussions based on the conversation.

Hogan agrees and states that Legal needs to look at it first.

Sawochka-Dalton agrees to move forward being we have been talking about for so long.

Lopez asks provided legal will approve us giving the money to the DEDC, who would have the final say on the project and if it would come back to the RDC.

David Gilbert states there would be a subcommittee for the Town that the RDC would appoint, and they would approve the project.

Hultman asks if the application could start with the RDC, and they determine what applications to go to the committee.

Barry noted he would leave that out and that there is no point in having the RDC involved in that it should be the subcommittee.

Gilbert states all Porter applications would go to the subcommittee, and then they'll make the recommendation to the RDC or someone on subcommittee can be from RDC.

Madigan asks if there are administrative fees associated with using the DEDC or Chamber Foundation. Mundell states no.

Hultman noted everyone is interested in taking his to the next step and involving Legal to determine if we can move forward.

Hogan mentions once Mundell gives us back the application and contract, they have created we can go to Legal.

Mundell asks when did you want to start this. Hultman states we have funding available for this year so probably sooner the better from our side.

New Business

Corinne Peffers, Clerk Treasurer, mentions she sent Hultman an email on behalf of Brian Bugajski, Park Director. He wanted to make a request of an expenditure not to exceed \$5,000 for playground borders around a new swing set, an area that they are installing.

They were able to get those swings purchased with leftover general obligation bond money but needs the finishing pieces as part of that capital improvement project. So again, he was not able to make it to tonight's meeting, but he asked me to ask on his behalf.

Hultman asks what is left in the budget for those funds?

Peffers states you earmarked up to \$25,000 to help with capital purchases in lieu of trail maintenance agreement that is no longer applicable. So that funding prior was going towards the Park Department from the RDC, but maintenance expenses are not eligible expenses so he's looking for other alternatives to try to make up for that money by asking for other eligible expenses.

Peffers also stated she had sent all of members the TIF Management report and asked if they could touch on that next.

Hogan makes a motion to approve playground borders at Hawthorne Park, not to exceed \$5,00.00.

Lopez seconded.

Motion passed 5-0 with roll call vote.

Hultman mentions that Peffers sent out the TIF Management Report and that the RDC needs to verify or acknowledge that it was received. This is the first year that the report must be reviewed with Town Council, so Corinne offered to help us with that at the Town Council meeting on April 8th.

Hultman states she will be there so she can see how that is done. I've not seen that before, and then ideally, we can take that over.

Commission Comments

None

Adjournment

Jamie Hogan made the motion to adjourn.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:24 p.m.

Approved the 22nd day of April, 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

