

TOWN OF PORTER
Redevelopment Commission
303 Franklin Street
June 24, 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

Bill Lopez made the motion to approve May 27, 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 May as presented, with Jamie Hogan making the second.

Motion carried 5-0.

Audience Participation

None

Reports

Building Commissioner/Director of Development

Barry mentioned we are still waiting for the Environmental Review on Mnoke Prairie Trail so nothing new.

Barry sent a letter to the owners of the property at the corner of Waverly and Hwy 20 and hasn't heard back yet as soon as he does, he will let you know. There is nothing new on the Brickyard property. The water park just went up for auction. Maybe something will move along on that.

Barry said he had a meeting with Commonwealth engineers so we can start pulling some stuff together on sanitary projects.

Hultman asks what does it mean when you say the Mnoke Prairie Trail is still under environmental review? Barry explained it goes through a federal review of all the environmental, so its wetland plants, and all kinds of stuff at one time, so National Park signed off on everything that got submitted to them.

We are just waiting to hear back.

Hultman asks if that is the last step, Barry comments once we have approval then we're ready to go to bid.

Lopez asks about waterpark properties being put up for auction. Barry stated the east side had been listed for 3 million and they came down to like 2- 2.5 million, with an opening bid of one million. On the west side there are 15 acres, and then there are 6.5 acres with that house that has the driveway. They have the house listed separately, the other parcel for \$499,000.00 or something like that.

Barry has had calls from people looking at both sides of that and had a meeting with one person, we will see if anything comes of it.

Lopez asks what is the current zoning on it? Barry states the west side is zoned R1 single family it never got changed. The east side was the PUD for the multi-family. The PUD expires next May, and there is no reason for us to renew that. He would let it expire and have somebody propose another.

Hultman asks about the property at Wavery and Hwy 20, didn't we talk about getting two appraisals. Barry states he wants to see if they want to sell it before he gets appraisals, he hopes to hear back before next meeting. If you purchase property you have to get two appraisals and then the offer price is the average of the two appraisals. They were originally going to put a gas station on it, and it didn't get approved or something happened. It's hard to tell from the files because the site was so small. Plus, now they lost right of way to INDOT when they reconfigured the intersection, so it's even smaller. It would be nice for us to have it to run our trail across.

Hultman mentions the grant money Barry came across and asked if that would help support this and if it was around half a million.

Barry said it is \$569,667.63 and we can use it for anything related to Dunes Kankakee Trail. Hultman asks if this doesn't work out and they don't want to sell do we have any backup plans for funding. Barry mentions there's other options for upgrading sections of what is the Porter Brickyard Trail, which is also Dunes Kankakee Trail, they all tend to have more than one name because they overlap trails. When you cross the bridge at 20 on the north side, the National Park put up a sign that says that it's part of the Dunes Kankakee Trail, we could use funding to upgrade the trail in certain areas. One area was behind the National Park Office, with prior superintendent, we looked at possibly putting a node back there, a round spot with benches and signs on it. A trail connecting to the National Park, he brought it up to new superintendent and they haven't really discussed it much yet, but it gives an opportunity for education, connection to National Park Office, or use restrooms. Hultman states that's a good plan.

Erwin asks what the status of the welcome signs is and INDOT.

Barry mentions the sign at SR49, and Tremont has been in the permitting phase at INDOT for a while. Now they want a revision on the survey that we put in, because they didn't like the verbiage on the survey, so he is trying to see if we can easily fix that to get the permit. They didn't like the words gateway to the dunes. If we can't get the permit from INDOT, we have five or six other options, one being the property that's right next to that right of way, just move it over about five feet. The one on Hwy 12, INDOT sent us drawings that said the right of way is the edge of pavement, that means everything on the side we wanted to put it on is NPS property, and they balked at putting another sign on the property. So, he went to NICTD side and talked to county, talked to NICTD.

The county owns that four county commissioners own the property, and if we can't put it there, we will pick another location.

Hultman asks if we put them somewhere else, we would have to pay for a survey?

Barry states we would not put them on INDOT property we would put them somewhere else.

Old Business

Exterior Grant Program

Hultman mentions Maura sent over a more finalized version taking comments into account and our legal representative had a few questions on program. Our Attorney asked if the intention is to fund only reimbursement or will grant also cover work in progress that require payment during progress. Barry mentions it should be reimbursement.

Sawochka-Dalton states the grant reimbursement itself calls for a reimbursement, which is applicants will be reimbursed, and at the end it certainly implies it must be completed as there's before and after photographs.

Hultman states last question, will there be an additional agreement upon award being made, which would include remedies if the applicant breaches its duties. Hultman replied we are not sure we have much authority.

Erwin mentions it basically stated in there that if they breach it, then they're not eligible for any future credits.

Barry said we should put proof of payment and should include lien waivers, if it doesn't state that.

Hultman mentions the Memorandum of Understanding, the funds that Porter provides to the DEDC are dedicated to Porter projects only. Contractors must be licensed with the Town of Porter, or they can do the work themselves. And then asks what the next steps are.

Barry mentions he spoke with attorney, the last sentence should be this agreement is of paramount importance and should be a deal breaker if others are opposed.

It doesn't need to be difficult, just a very simple document that just basically says what I said.

Barry states if the application is the way you want it, you can approve it. We are not approving the program until we have the MOU signed. Barry mentions when you sign the MOU, I think you are approving the whole thing. Consensus commission agrees and it looks like it's all included again.

Hultman states so then we are safe to say that once that MOU is signed, we can go public, and we are moving forward.

New Business

None

Commission Comments

Hultman mentions she has a list, she thinks we have some good things moving forward façade grant, trails, and purchasing the property at Waverly and Hwy 20 to expand our direction.

She put some thoughts around what she thinks the RDC can help support and then kind of where we are in some of those buckets. She essentially broke it down like strengthening local business and economic resilience, establishing a small business growth program. She thinks we are trying to do that with the façade grant. Could we create a work from quarter initiative, so many people are working remote today, does that help bring more people to our community. Even if it's just for summer months, to work remotely in a beach town. Can we partner with any tourism assets, under that umbrella of community advancement. Revitalizing the downtown and public infrastructure. What can we do with vacant properties, is there anything else we can be doing there.

I think we're focused very much on walkability and connectivity of enhancements with the trails that we're working on. I think the ESC has done a great job with the gardens and green streets. I think we could do better, perhaps, at supporting youth, could we launch a Porter Youth Leadership council and see what they might be able to bring from an idea and execution standpoint. There are some high schoolers on the ESC, and I think they bring a lot of energy and support to the overall group. Ask them what they'd like to see in town, for our downtown. It's a good resume builder and experience and makes them feel a part of the community. I think we have a good group of people sitting up here, and I think we can be impactful. Hogan states I think what Allison shared we all need to see it. I applaud every step she's taken to make us more relevant and make it work better. Barry states how do we get tourist dollars in Porter. At the July 16th Plan Commission meeting at 6:30 p.m. we are doing a presentation of the Flap Grant project, which was the trail from Porter Beach to downtown.

Adjournment

Bill Lopez made the motion to adjourn.

Meeting Adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Pursuant to IC 5-14-1.5-2.9, this meeting was livestreamed to youtube.com/porterindiana. A recording of the livestream will remain publicly available for a minimum of ninety (90) days following the date of the meeting. Meeting agendas, minutes, and any memoranda, may be viewed at townofporter.in.gov.

Approved the 22nd day of July, 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