



REGULAR MEETING
 September 28, 2023

- PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Ralph Mundt
- Commissioners Present:** Mayor Lynch, Lach, Czilli, Mundt
- Commissioners Absent:** Ekdalh, Finley

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Lach made a motion to approve the minutes from the regular meeting of August 24, 2023. Commissioner Czilli seconded the motion.
 4 yes 0 nays

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS:

Commissioner Czilli made a motion to approve the claims presented to the RDC on September 28, 2023. Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.
 4 yes 0 nays

STAFF REPORTS:

Director AJ Monroe invited Community Project Manager, Bailey McGrath to speak on the Downtown Development Corporation.

Ms. McGrath, spoke on behalf of the following:

- **Downtown Development Corporation (Reactivation and Implementation of the Downtown Plan)**
 Ms. McGrath stated that the Board has been mostly identified and a kickoff meeting is planned for October 5th, where they will present the Downtown Plan and the recent implementation of the RFP for the Founders Square Improvement Project (to be discussed later this afternoon). She stated they will also discuss how they will be filing and making the Corporation a formal entity.

Mr. Rich Piazza with Abonmarche spoke on the following:

- **Portage Library Garden**
 Mr. Rich Piazza with Abonmarche provided an update on the Library Garden Project. Mr. Piazza stated that the conflict with the telephone pedestal reported at last month's meeting has been resolved. He stated that they have since found and removed a gas main that has been resolved as well. He also stated that he has met with NIPSCO to have a streetlight relocated. He further stated that stormsewer structures

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 Dr. Shauna Finley
- Director**
 A.J. Monroe
- Legal**
 Dan Whitten
- Recording Secretary**
 Sonya Lindgren

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should be going in next week, as well as light pole bases and some foundations for the building should be going in as well.

Director AJ Monroe shared the staff report:

- **Open Air Pavilion / Craftsman Community Maker Labs of Indiana, Inc.** Director Monroe stated that later tonight the Commission will hear more on the progression of the Makers Labs.
- **Central Avenue West – Phase 1A.** Work continues on the engineering design related to the change order approved at last month’s meeting. The project is remaining on schedule for a second change order for construction to be presented to the Commission at November’s meeting.
- **Central Avenue West – Phase 1B.** Land acquisition continues.
- **Downtown Plan Implementation.** Mr. Monroe stated that there are several items on tonight’s agenda pertaining to the Downtown Plan Implementation, which include the Founders Square Lighting Project, Founders Square 2023 Improvement Project, Engineering Design Services for the Downtown and the Due Diligence Extension on a lot to the east of Founders Square.
- **Transit Development District.** The RDA’s work is continuing. It is expected that the District will begin capturing increment in January 2024.
- **Marquette Greenway Trail (Raise Grant).** Northwestern Indiana Regional Planning Commission is working with the Federal Highway to finalize the grant agreement.
- **5391 Central Avenue (Garyton School).** The Department had a meeting to discuss the electrical and IT requirements for the security system at Garyton. Discussion was held on more robust security as discussed by the Commission.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

Amendments No. 8 & No. 9 to the 2023 Working Budget

Director Monroe stated that Amendment No. 8 consists of including Founders Square Lighting Design in the working budget as an addition of \$24,500.00, and will include the construction of the Founders Square Lighting Project if approved later in the meeting for an addition of \$190,615.00.

He further stated that Amendment No. 9 includes closeouts for Founders Square Plaza, City Hall and the Irving Street Trail Design Contract for a total addition of \$197,936.77.

Commission Czilli moved to approve budget Amendments No. 8 and No. 9. Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.

4 Yes – 0 Nays

Purchase Agreement Execution – 6051/6071 Central Avenue

Attorney Whitten informed the Commission that the agreement had already been approved contingent upon his review and the Mayor's execution. Mr. Rathjen stated that it was fully executed on September 27th and that their Due Diligence period starts today (September 28th). Director Monroe stated that he received an email from the proposed purchaser to meet and discuss the required review process for the City. Mr. Rathjen stated that Abonmarche is performing our portion of the due diligence, which is the survey.

Abonmarche Service Agreement for Parcel C

Mr. Rathjen stated that this contract is for minor survey work. The expenditure was approved a couple of months ago to mow the area which has been completed and stated that surveying is the next step so that the soil borings can be done. He stated it is his recommendation to approve the Service Agreement submitted.

Commissioner Czilli moved to approve the Service Agreement with Abonmarche for \$875.00. Commissioner Mundt seconded the motion.

4 Yes 0 Nays

NIRPC/Portage EDC Lease Extension – 6100 Southport Road

Mr. Rathjen stated that this is an extension of a sublease between Portage EDC and NIRPC/NWI Forum. Mr. Rathjen recommends approving the lease extension. Attorney Whitten stated he has reviewed and recommends it being approved as well.

Commissioner Lach moved to approve the NIRPC/Portage EDC Lease Extension. Commissioner Czilli seconded the motion.

4 Yes 0 Nays

Founders Square Lot Due Diligence Extension

Mr. Rathjen stated that this is an extension of the east lot in Founders Square. Their due diligence period has technically run out. The purchaser is looking for another 120 days to include the financing and construction permitting in this extension. Mr. Rathjen stated that without any other options his recommendation is to sign the extension.

Commissioner Czilli moved to sign the extension. Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.

4 Yes 0 Nays

Founders Square Lighting Project

Director Monroe stated that the bids were opened last month. The apparent low bidder was Circle R Electric in the amount of \$190,615. He stated it is staff's recommendation to approve the contract with Circle R Electric in the amount of \$190,615.

Commission Czilli moved to award the contract to Circle R Electric in the amount of \$190,615. Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.
4 Yes 0 Nays

Founders Square 2023 Improvement Project

Director Monroe stated that we received two bids with the results as follows:

<u>Company</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Gariup Construction Co.	\$987,500.00
Grimmer Construction	\$792,000.00

Director Monroe stated it is staff's recommendation to take the bids under advisement.

Commissioner Czilli moved to take the bids under advisement. Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.
4 Yes 0 Nays

Mayor Lynch asked for a description of the work to be done in this project. Director Monroe stated that it would consist of additional sidewalks, lighting, as well as parking along Sirko/Harding, and N Founders roadways.

Portage Police Department Parking Lot Project – 6260 Central Avenue

Director Monroe stated that Chief Candiano sent correspondence expressing their concerns and issues they have been experiencing with motorists using their driveway and parking lot as a road. They are requesting that the Redevelopment Commission support closing off the north end of the drive at 6260 Central Avenue. Mr. Monroe stated that it is staff's recommendation to support this request and seeks permission to seek quotes to perform the work. Discussion was held.

Commissioner Czilli moved to seek quotes for this project. Commissioner Mundt seconded the motion.
4 Yes 0 Nays

Downtown Engineering Services – HWC Engineering

Director Monroe stated in their packet is a memo reporting on the interviews that were conducted. He thanked Commissioners Greg Lach and Ralph Mundt for their time conducting the interviews. He stated that it is the recommendation of Commissioners Lach and Mundt to move forward with contracting with HWC Engineering. Discussion was held on why they were chosen having been the higher proposal. Commissioner Lach stated that they believe that HWC had a better overall holistic approach with their phasing and different options. Commissioner Mundt agreed their ideas were the better option.

Commissioners Lach and Mundt moved to contract with HWC Engineering for the Downtown Engineering Services. Commissioner Czilli seconded the motion.

4 Yes 0 Nays

Alternative Fuel (AFV) Grant Program (CNG) – Request for Financial Assistance

Superintendent Randy Reeder stated they have been seeking grants for the Sanitation Department to upgrade equipment. He stated he is here today to ask the Commission to help the Sanitation Department with support of funds for their recent NOFA Grant, which is an 80/20 match. The total match for this grant through the year 2028 is \$5.4 million with the City's match being \$1.4 million.

He stated that within the grant is the request for four(4) CNG Trucks through Best Equipment for \$1,897,928. He is seeking help with this purchase. Mr. Reeder stated that the trucks take approximately 12-18 months to be delivered with payment being due upon delivery. He explained that the NOFA Grant is set up that the total amount must be paid, then the Grant is processed with a return of 80% to be given within 30 days. Leaving the remaining 20% that will need to be paid back overtime. Discussion was held. Commissioner Lach asked if he was asking for the full \$1.9 million and asked which fund would it be paid from? Director Monroe stated he believes the Allocation Area. Attorney Whitten stated that it is two-fold. The full amount of \$1,897,928 is needed with 80% (\$1,352,000) paid back from the NOFA Grant within 30 days and the 20% (approximately \$545,000.00) would be paid back over time. Discussion was held on the cost having gone up since the grant was issued causing the 20% to be higher. Mayor Lynch reminded the Commission that the Street Department is in the TIF District. Discussion was held.

Commissioner Czilli moved to approve a commitment for a loan up to \$1,897,928 towards the purchase of the four CNG vehicles. Commissioner Mundt seconded the motion.

Mayor Lynch requested a Roll Call vote:

Commissioner Lach: Yes

Commission Czilli: Yes

Commissioner: Mundt: Yes

Mayor Lynch: Yes

Portage Lakefront South Properties – Open Air/ Craftsman Community Maker Labs of Indiana, Inc.

Tom Kuhn and Matt Pearson with CSK Architects spoke in regard to the Open-Air Pavilion/ Craftsman Community Maker Labs of Indiana, Inc. He stated that for the open portion of the building they are envisioning making this a multi-season use room by installing folding window walls, similar to ski resorts. Mr. Kuhn stated that the west portion of the building would stay the same with minor modifications taking place. Mr. Kuhn believes the existing power amperage is adequate for the needs of the Maker Labs. He anticipates the kitchen needing upgrades. He also stated they are looking to close off the backside of the fireplace. He stated the major challenge would be to insulate the open-air portion, since it was not originally insulated.

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Commission Czilli asked if there were any additional concerns, we need to look out for besides heating and cooling? Mr. Kuhn stated just the insulation of the building. Commission Czilli stated that enclosing the open-air side will make this space easier to rent with the remaining space to be the Makers Space. Discussion was held.

Mr. Kuhn stated that a rough estimate of \$2.5 million did not include insulating the open-air side. Depending on the amount of upgrades to the kitchen can also bring the costs up. Discussion was held. Council Person Scott Williams came before the Commission and stated closing in the open-air side allows for more opportunities for the City. He believes that the 8,000 square foot on the other side (west side) is sufficient for the Makers Labs. He referred to the Makers Labs Business Plan before them and asked them to take the next 30 days to review the plan. He is asking the Commission tonight to move forward with the engineering and design phase with CSK for a projected \$160,000.00.

Commission Lach stated he would like to have the next 30 days to review the plan and consider the Engineering and Design phase. Commissioner Czilli asked if this item was in the budget. Director Monroe stated that the Commission has held a small contract for the initial work which is what CSK has been used for the work before them. He stated that the additional engineering and design portion spoken of tonight has not been included in the budget at this point. Commissioner Czilli asked if the \$160,000 is available within their budget to be able to move forward. Director Monroe stated it was. Discussion was held.

Commissioner Czilli asked Mr. Kuhn to provide the Commission with a proposal to be addressed at next month's meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Request to use Green Space in Portage Mall

Robin Bender came before the Commission requesting to use the green space in front of her business at 2522 Portage Mall for a summer concert to be held in June. She stated that they are looking to host a large artist and are hoping to keep this event in Portage since she has businesses within the area. Director Monroe stated that this was presented to the Board of Works earlier this week. Ms. Bender stated that she has spoken to an insurance company for insurance for the event and has spoken to the Fire and Street Departments regarding their needs for this event as well. Discussion was held.

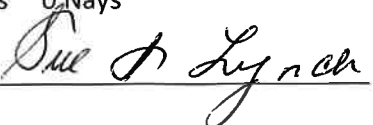
Commissioner Czilli moved to allow the use of the Redevelopment Commission property between the dates of June 8th through June 16th of 2024 within the following boundaries: Little League Fields to the east, Central Avenue to the south and the western most boundary of the property line, contingent upon the Board of Works approval. Commission Mundt seconded the motion.

4 Yes 0 Nays

With no further business to become before the Commission, Commissioner Mundt moved to adjourn.

Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.

4 Yes 0 Nays





Sue Lynch, Mayor

Sonya Lindgren, Recording Secretary