



CITY OF PORTAGE
**REDEVELOPMENT
 COMMISSION**



REGULAR MEETING
 July 25, 2024

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Bonta

Commissioners Present: Mayor Bonta, Ambler, Jozwiak, Mundt, Lach, Vazquez

Commissioners Absent: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Commissioner Mundt a motion to approve the June 20, 2024 minutes.
 Commissioner Jozwiak seconded the motion.
 5 yes 0 nays

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS:

The chair opened the floor for discussion on the payment of claims.

A question was raised regarding the Founders Square Improvement Project, specifically concerning two claims related to lighting. It was confirmed that the expenditure was approved and was part of a contract between Circle R and the Redevelopment Commission from the previous year. The work has been completed, and the current claims are for invoicing purposes.

Commissioner Jozwiak made a motion to approve the docket. Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.

5 yes 0 nays

STAFF REPORTS:

Director Botich provided updates on several ongoing projects. He stated he has been working with the NWI Forum and the Portage Economic Development Corporation on several projects as well. He informed the Commission of a meeting the City had with Marianne Cusato, the Director of Housing and Community Regeneration Initiative with Notre Dame. They discussed planning efforts and opportunities within the City of Portage and resources that they may be able to offer.

Mayor Bonta asked about the Home Tiff Resolution, and Mr. Botich stated that it would be ready at the August meeting.

President

Austin Bonta
 Mayor

Vice President

Penny Ambler

Secretary

Greg Lach

Members

Ralph Mundt
 Judi Jozwiak

School Board Liaison

Wilma Vazquez

Director

Daniel Botich

Assistant Director

Sandra McDaniel

Legal

Daniel J. Bartnicki

Recording Secretary

Sonya Lindgren

City Hall
 6070 Central Avenue
 Portage, IN 46368

219-762-5425

ACCOMODATIONS

Contact the Mayor's Office
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 information regarding building
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 accommodations.

Attorney Bartnicki spoke on behalf of Bill Rathjen with McColly Bennett Realty. He stated that the transaction for the Northwest parcel at Lute Road and Airport Road was closed and the property now belongs to the Redevelopment Commission. He stated that Mr. Rathjen and staff are working through the due diligence periods for Northside Properties and things are progressing well. He did state that there are due diligence issues with the buyers of the 6051-6071 Central Avenue property and expects final determinations in early August.

OLD BUSINESS:

Consideration: Consideration of Working Session Schedule and Meetings with Stakeholders

Mr. Botich reviewed a previous conversation from the June meeting regarding the scheduling of work sessions. These sessions would replace the need for study committees or subcommittees. The sessions would focus on topics related to Redevelopment Commission planning and projects. The work sessions would be open to the public, allowing for presentations and input, but no official action would be taken during these meetings. Mr. Botich proposed a bi-monthly schedule for the remaining six months of the year, beginning in August.

Proposed Schedule:

1. **August 13th** - Focus on the proposed Irving Street Trail project. The session would likely take place at the Portage Library, which is impacted by the project.
2. **October 15th** - Focus on the educational and worker training grant program. The session would likely take place at Portage High School.
3. **December 10th** - A planning work session at Woodland Park, focusing on gathering public input on potential redevelopment projects, which would assist in the budget development for January and February.

The goal is to keep each session to about one hour from 6-7pm, and the locations are subject to change based on availability. A question was raised to confirm the October session date, which Mr. Botich clarified as October 15th. The schedule was well received, with no objections to the proposed dates. Flexibility was noted as necessary, but the approach was praised for enhancing transparency and communication with the community.

Consideration: Consideration of the Educational and Worker Training Grant Program

The Educational and Worker Training Grant Program was discussed previously, this discussion is following up from the previous meeting in June. Mr. Botich noted that necessary corrections and revisions to the program were made and resubmitted for final review. The resolution for the Redevelopment Commission was also included, which officially creates the program and allows eligible entities to apply for the grant. The resolution outlines that 15% of the net available tax increment revenue will be calculated annually to fund the program. The resolution number was proposed to be "Resolution Number 24-02," making the program official. The October meeting will feature an open public session to invite educational institutions and worker training organizations to participate. The program is open to educational institutions or worker training programs that provide students or worker trainees with experiences that enhance their success in the global economic environment.

Examples were given from other communities:

- Michigan City's Redevelopment Commission provided \$2.3 to \$2.5 million for in-class technology improvements.
- The Merrillville Community School Corporation used funds for technology and programs supporting juniors and seniors taking pre-university or dual-credit classes.
- Additional examples included programs for campus visits and support for programs like the 360-program facilitated by the Portage Economic Development Corporation.
- **Selection Process:**
 - The selection of grant recipients will be conducted publicly by the Redevelopment Commission members. Proposals will be reviewed, discussed, and voted on in an open meeting, ensuring transparency.
 - While any eligible entity can submit an application, the Redevelopment Commission is not obligated to approve every application. The board will have discretion in choosing which proposals to support.

The board members expressed understanding of the process and agreed on the importance of maintaining transparency during the selection process.

Commissioner Lach made a motion to approve Resolution No. 24-02. Commissioner Ambler seconded the motion.

5 yes 0 nays

NEW BUSINESS:

Consideration: Memoranda of Understanding between City Departments

Attorney Bartnicki stated that when asked to provide legal counsel for a resident who was looking to use RDC property to park for a graduation party and prepared a Hold Harmless Agreement, it was brought to his attention the need for the same type of agreement for City Departments that use RDC property. The primary issue is park land. Where the Park Department is operating a park but the RDC owns the parcel. He stated he pulled a common template that the State Board of Accounts/Auditor uses as an example of what a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would look like between the Park Department and the RDC for use to figure out who is going to maintain control and whose insurance policy. Which lead to a discussion with the insurance carrier who suggested making sure it is clear in any memoranda or any agreement between departments whose insurance policy is going to control.

Attorney Bartnicki stated that what he is asking is that the RDC put in place a similar agreement like the one before them with the different departments where they are operating on an RDC parcel to control any litigation. He stated this would not be a Hold Harmless Agreement but rather a document to delineate responsibilities, duties and insurance policies and liability. He stated that with the Commission's approval he will then take it before the City Attorney and staff to review and put together a final product.

Discussion was held on when properties were handed over to other Departments.

Commissioner Ambler made a motion to approve the creation of an MOU between City Departments. Commissioner Mundt seconded the motion.

5 yay 0 nays

Consideration: Landscape Maintenance Contracts – Allen’s Landscape

Sandra McDaniel stated that this item is more of a heads up for the Commission, she stated that the Department of Planning & Community Development along with the Mayor’s office and a Commission member have been working to alleviate issues that the City has recently faced with landscape maintenance issues this year. She stated the RDC has stepped in in the past and this year to fund the maintenance of certain sites (see attached list of sites with cost) for Allen’s Landscaping to maintain.

Mayor Bonta stated that due to fragmentation of responsibilities among various departments and entities the RDC is often called upon for help. The Redevelopment Commission (RDC) has previously funded maintenance for certain sites, but with the recent hiring of Kelly Smith as the new Park Director, there is an opportunity to streamline and consolidate maintenance responsibilities.

1. A comprehensive review of maintenance responsibilities and realignment with the Park Department and Street Department.
2. A focus on removing the RDC from routine maintenance roles, with the goal of creating a more efficient and coordinated approach.
3. Anticipation of changes and improvements in park management and landscaping over the next three years.

Director Botich stated that the projects are maintenance projects to existing improvement of the RDC and the work being done is being paid from the General Fund, Fund 255 not from the allocation fund, which is not eligible for maintenance work. This report highlights the necessity of transitioning landscape maintenance responsibilities to more appropriate departments to eliminate reliance on the RDC. The proposed reorganization will involve:

Consideration: Amereco Proposal for 6051-6071 Central Avenue

Tom Cherry, the Director of Planning & Community Development spoke regarding Amereco’s Proposal for Contamination Remediation at 6051-6071 Central Avenue. He stated that upon discussion with all parties involved, the chosen remediation method involves going through a Voluntary Remediation Program (VRP) through IDEM, which releases the City for all liability once this is closed. He stated this will address the Army Corps issues, the purchasers’ issues as well as the City’s. The proposal involves working with Amereco to handle contamination issues identified at the site. The proposal is a continuation of previous remediation efforts, with the intention to close out contamination issues comprehensively. The VRP program offers the advantage of releasing the city from future liabilities related to the contamination. He recommends approving the proposal.

Commissioner Lach made a motion to approve Amereco’s proposal. Commissioner Mundt seconded.

5 yes 0 nays

Consideration: Founders Square Masonry Maintenance & City Hall Council Chambers

Director Cherry stated that during inspection of Founders Square , Assistant Director of Planning & Community Development, Sandra McDaniel, noticed that the monument limestone bases have experienced significant deterioration in its limestone and brick masonry, with issues including shifting limestone bases and deteriorating mortar. These issues have been observed over the past year or two and have worsened recently. Three masons were contacted for quotes, with one responding who has previously worked with the city. The quote includes:

- Grinding out and caulking instead of mortar for waterproofing.
- Tuck pointing and repair of the brick wall above the current location.

The maintenance work has been identified as necessary due to wear and tear over approximately 20 years. There is a need for a warranty on the workmanship to ensure the longevity of the repairs.

He further stated that the second proposal is for tuck point work that needs to be done on the masonry here in the City Council Chambers as leaking occurs. He stated that tuck pointing was not part of the contract with the recent renovation work done in this area. Commissioner Ambler asked if a warranty will be provided on this work presented today. Discussion was held.

The recommendation is to approve the masonry maintenance proposal on the condition that a satisfactory warranty (at least one year) is secured for the workmanship. The proposal should include a contingency for staff approval of the warranty terms. Attorney Bartnicki

Commissioner Lach made a motion to approve the proposals from Custom Masonry Restoration, Inc. in the amount of \$7,220.00 for Work in the Council Chambers and \$6,260.00 for the work at Founders Square contingent upon an appropriate warranty for workmanship is found sufficient by staff. Commissioner Ambler seconded the motion.

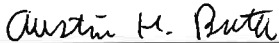
5 yes 0 nays

Other Business

None

With no further business to become before the Commission, Commissioner Ambler moved to adjourn. Commissioner Lach seconded the motion.

5 yes 0 nays


Austin Bonta, Mayor


Sonya Lindgren, Recording Secretary