

**MINUTES OF
RENSELAER REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Monday, July 1, 2024 at 5:00 PM CT**

The Rensselaer Redevelopment Commission (RRC) held a meeting on Monday, July 1st. Commission President Smith called the meeting to order at 5:01 PM CT and requested Building Commissioner Davis to perform the roll call.

I. Roll Call

Present: President - Kevin Smith, Vice President - Estel George, Secretary - Jeff Webb, Commissioner - Bob Brenneman, School Board Rep - Janice Deno, City Attorney - Todd Sammons, and Building Commissioner (BC) - Joshua Davis.

Absent: Commissioner - Matt McAleer, Clerk-Treasurer - Shelby Keys

Guests: Mayor Phillips, Councilman Arnold, Councilman Rayburn, Todd Wilson, Building Department Assistant Krystal Bassett, Greg Whaley, SME Stephen Zins, and Bob Schenk.

II. Previous Minutes

President Smith presented the minutes of the meeting held on May 6th, 2024. Motion to approve the minutes was made by Webb, seconded by George. **Motion Passed**

III. Claims

BC Davis presented four (4) claims to the RRC. Smith made a motion to approve the claims, seconded by George. **Motion Passed**

IV. Old Business

A. Update on 470 N Cullen St Property

BC Davis informed the RRC that he had been in communication with the property owner to make them aware that the RRC was taking steps to pursue purchasing the property. Since there were multiple items on the agenda in regards to this he did not elaborate further. The RRC asked Davis if he had been in communication with the abutting property owner. Davis had not but Mayor Phillips informed the RRC that he had. Mayor Phillips stated that the abutting property owner had also had environmental studies done and is willing to share them with the RRC. The abutting owner indicated to the Mayor they would consider selling their properties in the future if the RRC was interested in purchasing them.

V. New Business

A. Environmental Phase I Study Agreement - Stephen Zims, SME

Stephen Zims from SME presented their proposal to do a Phase I Environmental Study on 470 N Cullen St and the two abutting parcels. He informed the RRC that a Phase I includes a site inspection, historical review, and an IDEM review. By doing an Environmental Study, the City would be protecting itself from potential liability as an Innocent Landowner. The proposed cost for the Phase I study was \$2500. Once the study was complete and SME had reviewed the previous study done by the abutting property owner, they would make a recommendation on whether a Phase II study was needed.

George made a motion to approve the SME Proposal for Phase I Study at a cost of \$2500, seconded by Webb. **Motion Passed**

B. Engagement Letter - Drexel/Fairgrounds ED Plan Amendment to Acquire Properties

BC Davis presented two different engagement letters for legal work needed to Amend the Property Acquisition list of Drexel/Fairgrounds Economic Development Plan. The first was from Thomas Pitman, Barnes & Thornburg LLP, for \$12,000 and the second was from Dennis Otten, Bose McKinney Evans LLP, for \$4,000. The RRC has worked with both firms in the past. City Attorney Sammons had reviewed the letters and saw no major difference in services being offered to the RRC.

Webb made a motion to approve the Engagement Letter for legal services for Bose McKinney Evans and to allow Mayor Phillips to sign the contract. Seconded by Brenneman. **Motion Passed**

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C. Community Arts Project Funding Request

Mayor Phillips presented JCEDO's proposed Water Tower Mural Project to the RRC, which is currently under construction next to I-65 along IN-114. The RRC amended the Drexel/Fairground EDP last year to contribute TIF revenues towards Community Arts projects. JCEDO's idea for the water tower design was to tie together Rensselaer's downtown murals with their Discover Jasper County project. JCEDO has received \$40,000 from the Tourism Board and was requesting \$25,000 from the RRC. Councilman Arnold expressed his opposition to the request since the City Council/Utility Board had publicly approved the painting of the tower with the understanding that there wouldn't be any City funds contributed towards the project.

Following the ensuing discussion from Arnold's statement, George made the motion to approve a \$25,000 contribution to Jasper County Economic Development for Community Arts, seconded by Smith.

Motion Passed

D. Gas Utility Extension Funding Request

BC Davis presented a potential project for the RRC to consider. The City currently has a contract with Jasper County to extend water and sewer services west of the City underneath I-65, just north of SR 114. He had asked Gas Superintendent Carol Lockridge to consult with the department's engineer about also running a natural gas pipeline at the same time as the water and sewer. This would allow the gas service that is currently west of I-65 to be connected in a loop. Todd Wilson, Gas Dept Rep, further explained the current infrastructure and the improvements that would be needed to complete the project to the RRC. He expressed that the initial estimate to only bore a sleeve/conduit under I-65 was approximately \$30,000. This would not include any development or construction needed to actually connect the two mains. The RRC expressed their interest in the project and felt it would greatly benefit the continued development of Drexel/Fairgrounds TIF District. They did not make any motions but asked that Lockridge and Wilson continue to work with their engineer to get an estimate of the costs to complete the entire project.

E. Downtown Lot Purchased for EV Charging Station Grants

Mayor Phillips presented an opportunity for the RRC to purchase a parking lot downtown that could be used as an electric vehicle (EV) charging station. There are a lot of grants currently available for EV chargers and it could be a potential revenue source for the Electric Department. BC Davis added that this site would be included in the Property Acquisition List list that the RRC had approved Bose McKinney to assist them in amending. The RRC was receptive to the idea and the Mayor stated he would first gauge the City Council's interest before asking the RRC for any assistance.

F. Update from Indiana Legislative Changes

BC Davis reviewed the new Indiana legislative updates that would affect the RRC in the future. The new public meeting live streaming and RRC Annual Spending Plan requirements had been discussed at previous meetings. There were two additional updates that were new. One, the RRC could now adopt rules to govern unruly behavior at their meetings and two, the rules governing the publishing requirements for conducting public hearings had been updated to reflect the changes to the newspaper industry. Davis stated the City would probably need to pass a new ordinance in order to comply with the new methods, but they could continue with their current procedure.

G. 7th Street Improvement Ideas

BC Davis introduced the idea of creating a Residential TIF around the undeveloped portion of 7th Street. The Mayor, Project Coordinator Jerry Lockridge, and Davis had been working with Bose McKinney about possible funding sources to complete this project. Of the ideas they had discussed, the creation of a Residential TIF seemed the most logical. Davis stated he had asked Bose McKinney to prepare an engagement letter but had not yet received it. He plans to bring the proposal to the next meeting for the approval to move forward with the creation of the new district.

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VI. Public Comments

Greg Whaley, representing the Rensselaer Community Recreational Development Corporation (Park Corp), came before the RRC to introduce a potential attraction for the Rensselaer Parks and request funding to have architectural plans developed. He has been working in conjunction with the Park Corp and the Parks Department to develop a Rensselaer Miniature Train Exhibit. The current plan is to build the Exhibit at Foundation Park. He provided the RRC a brief history of the Rensselaer Miniature Train Company that used to manufacture these trains at Leggett and Platt building located at Cullen and Merritt Streets. There was a discussion about the general concept of the Exhibit, costs, community support, and alternate funding sources. Ultimately, Whaley was before the RRC to make this request because the Park Corp was unable to proceed any further until tangible plans had been developed, so that real project costs could be calculated. Whaley had received a \$4500 quote from a local architect to produce said plans.

President Smith commented that he would like to have a proposal in writing prior to approving the funding. Webb suggested a motion to approve the funding of \$4500 to the Park Corp, on the condition that the written contract did not exceed said amount. Webb felt this was appropriate to prevent an additional delay, which might cause the project to lose community support.

George made the motion to approve funding for the Park Corp toward the Exhibit, not to exceed \$4,500, seconded by Webb. **Motion Passed**

VII. Adjournment

Webb made motion to adjourn, seconded by George. **Motion Passed.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:04 PM CT.

Next Meeting: Tentatively, August 5th, 2024 at 5:00 PM CT

Minutes Prepared by: Joshua Davis, Building Commissioner