

**REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
MAY 22, 2014**

President Niksch called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Recording Secretary Gena Knapp took Roll Call. Members answering the roll call were Doug Niksch, Jim Langen, Craig Earley, and Tim Cottingham. Greg Shook and Phillip Kuiper were not in attendance. Also present were SEH Representative Matt Reardon, Planning Consultant Jim Mandon, Town Council President Edgar Corns, Town Council Vice-President Donald Parker, and one member of the press.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Langen made a motion to approve the February 27, 2014 regular meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Earley and carried by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Matt Reardon – Discuss Loop-Net, Indiana Forum, and NIPSCO – Status of Tri-Creek School System – SEH Providing Services - Mr. Reardon stated we were asked to work on the Town’s website to make it a little more interactive and to also update it. We had asked the school to help us, but they have gotten a little bogged down with other things, which is okay. We do have a professional staff at SEH that does these things, so we are able to do it at a pretty reasonable cost. The goal is to work closer with the local realtors to get things accomplished, and also to connect the website with Indiana Forum, Loop-Net, and NIPSCO. This way, you will have more accessibility to pieces of real estate and real estate brokers that have the knowledge of what is available here. We should hopefully have the site revamped by the end of June. Discussion followed. Mr. Niksch asked if we knew how much the revamp would cost. Mr. Reardon stated it would be \$5200.00. Mr. Niksch asked if that was for the design and maintenance. Mr. Reardon stated that it would be for the design and maintenance through the end of the year. Anything that comes up in the newspaper would end up on the site, and anything related to any activity in Town would pop up on the website. Mr. Langen asked if it would be competitive with other towns. Mr. Reardon stated the whole goal is the “three-click” rule. You want to be able to find any information within three clicks on the website. Mr. Niksch asked Mr. Earley if we already had a budget for that and if it needs to go to the Council. Mr. Earley stated he was not sure, but Clerk-Treasurer Judith Walters was at the previous meeting when we discussed this, and if there was not a budget for it or she was not in favor of it, she would have said something. Mr. Reardon stated depending on how much you want the site updated depends on how much it would cost, but something like this would not need to be updated more than once a week. Mr. Earley asked if we wanted to make those weekly or monthly changes, would we be able to do that in house. Mr. Reardon stated you would be in contact with us and instruct us as to what you want on there and when. There would be no need to have anyone in-house learn the site or maintain it. Discussion followed regarding what types of things would be advertised on the website.

Mr. Niksch stated we had worked with the school initially on trying to revamp the website, but the teacher is no longer having the classes that were in session before. He stated he had been talking to Jay Blackman from the high school, and wondered if they could figure out a way to still have the students involved with the Town and SEH. Mr. Reardon stated that could be a possibility. Mr. Earley stated something like that should come through us first, but it probably would not need to be a recommendation to the Council. Mr. Langen asked if there would be a way to connect to the school’s website from the Town’s website. Mr. Cottingham agreed that

that access would be convenient. Mr. Reardon stated that would just be a matter of having a link on the website. Discussion followed.

Matt Reardon – Discussion of Costas Property – Mr. Reardon presented a map of the Costas property and the surrounding areas. He stated the information that is being provided came from the Lake County Assessor and Treasurer's office. There are currently two parcels that are owned by Costas. Parcel #2 has an assessed value of \$36,000 and is basically the driveway into the building. Currently there is \$8,300 due plus a little more of a balance. This parcel is not very problematic, but it would give us access to the property both ways. As much as we would like to intercede, when people pay their taxes on time, it is not a good idea. That property is also not listed in the redevelopment area. On parcel #1, the building and parking lot, the assessed value is \$464,900. Currently they are delinquent \$128,000 according to the current records. Another \$5,700 will be due in the fall. Without digging in to it, we are not sure if they have paid their 10% or were listed for a deed or tax sale. If the Commission wants to pursue this, the best option is to have the County stop the proceedings if they have already taken title to it. Once that occurs, the Redevelopment Commission can approach the County and tell them that we would like the property, and we would like them to waive the taxes. If the Commission is considering that, then we also need to figure out what we would like to do with the property. We do not want to take on liability since we have not had access to it, and probably will not get access to it until either the County allows us access because they have control of it, or if the current owners still have control of it, we will not get access. Even though this is not a historic building, there are still rules and procedures that have to be followed. Mr. Reardon recommended that there be a discussion regarding how important it is to get that building, and how much they are willing to spend to demolish it with the assumption that the County Commissioners can convey that to the Town at no cost.

Mr. Langen stated he believed it was sold at tax sale, but then went back. Mr. Reardon stated currently it is still listed in the original owner's name. If the County Commissioner has the title to this property, they can either give it away, or sell it and try to get at least the \$128,000 for it. Mr. Cottingham asked if the parking lot across the street is included in this. Mr. Langen stated the owners have maintained that property. Mr. Reardon stated if the Commission would like, he could dig in to this further to get more information on the property, but you would need to look in to if the Town would have the money to demolish it. Discussion followed regarding the condition of the building. Mr. Niksch stated his thought is if we do not do something, it will continue to sit there and deteriorate further. We should take a look at it, see what we can do, and see if there are any grants out there to pay for the demolition. Mr. Reardon stated this map shows the adjoining property owners because they may even want to take a piece of the land. You can either do that or demolish the building and put the lot up for sale. Mr. Langen stated you really only have about an acre, which is not much, but if you plan strategically, you could make something work there. Discussion followed. Mr. Niksch stated his suggestion is to proceed, but the question is if we can get it for free and then look in to a grant for beautification. Mr. Reardon stated as far as grants, there are not a lot of them out there. The ones that are out there, you would not qualify for, which is good and bad news. It is a Council decision and there will be money involved, but there are not a lot of outside resources that will help you. He stated he could ask about block grants, but he doubted that would work since it is a private building. Discussion followed. Mr. Niksch asked if it was in the TIF District and the Historic Downtown District. Mr. Reardon stated that it was included in that. Town Council President Edgar Corns stated we have taken about one hundred and fifty florescent lights out of the Costas building that we now have to dispose of, and the County put in \$175,000 for the demolition of the old school building.

Mr. Reardon stated if he understood correctly, the Commission would like him to figure out if we can get the property transferred at no cost, getting the taxes waived, and if the County has title to it, then we will have access to it. If the private owners still have it, then it has not gone through the entire process. At that time we will stop and send a letter to the County Commissioners and the Auditor's office stating that we have a desired reuse for the property and we would like the County to get it under their control and convey it to the Town, waiving the back taxes. Mr. Reardon stated he would also ask about any grants available. Mr. Langen made a motion to allow Mr. Reardon to proceed as he had just explained, seconded by Mr. Earley and carried by voice vote.

PUBLIC COMMENT

ADJOURNMENT

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Langen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:43 PM, seconded by Mr. Earley and carried by voice vote.

Doug Niksch, President

Greg Shook, Secretary