

**REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING  
AUGUST 28, 2014**

President Niksch called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Recording Secretary Gena Knapp took Roll Call. Members answering the roll call were Doug Niksch, Jim Langen, Greg Shook, and Craig Earley. Phillip Kuiper and Timothy Cottingham were not in attendance. Also present were Building Administrator Tom Trulley, SEH Representatives Matt Reardon and Rich Oman, Planning Consultant Jim Mandon, Northwest Indiana Forum representatives Don Koliboski and Karen Lauerman, Town Council President Edgar Corns, and one member of the press.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Mr. Langen made a motion to approve the July 24, 2014 regular meeting minutes, seconded by Mr. Earley and carried by voice vote.

**OLD BUSINESS**

Town Council Approves membership for NWI Forum – Mr. Niksch announced that the Town Council had approved becoming a member of the Northwest Indiana Forum beginning in 2015. He stated since we are beginning later in the year for 2014, Mr. Koliboski has been able to sign us up as members at no cost for the rest of 2014.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Economic Development for Decision Makers – Mr. Niksch stated as we go in to 2015, Mr. Koliboski had mentioned to us, in order to be successful in the joint efforts with the NWI Forum, we literally have to engage with the Forum. If you look at some of the fierce competition that is out there, everyone is laying out the red carpet. The reason for this meeting is to begin the discussion of using our resources, such as Mr. Koliboski, Mrs. Lauerman, and Mr. Reardon, to help us lay out the red carpet and make these transactions easier. We want to make sure that we are in as much competition as the next guy, and we need to use our professionals to help us do that. SEH Representative, Matt Reardon, stated that Mr. Koliboski and Mrs. Lauerman were present to give the Commission a broad spectrum of the progress and process that occurs. Most of the jurisdictions around here have participation in the Forum or broader economic development groups, which is a good thing. We want to make sure that the Town is prepared for economic development investments. Mr. Reardon explained certain projects that will have a big impact on Lowell, such as the Illiana Expressway. He stated that these projects are where Mr. Koliboski and Mrs. Lauerman will come in and help the community understand how to move forward and figure out the best way to do something, rather than avoid doing it. We are getting in a position where there is likely to be a lot more activity than there was before, and we want to make sure that it does not have a negative impact on the quality of life and that we keep up the level of effort when it comes to being able to provide services. Mr. Reardon explained that there is a lot of opportunity within the Town and outside of it and that working with the County now will help to plan for future development the way the Town would like to see it. Without planning ahead there is greater likelihood of ending up in litigation due to the lack of infrastructure capacity or utility capacity.

Karen Lauerman, Northwest Indiana Forum Representative, stated there are many entities available in Northwest Indiana that assist the communities and counties in preparing for

economic development opportunities. Mrs. Lauerman briefly went through and explained each entity that is available in Northwest Indiana. She stated there is also another organization that has been developing over the last two years called the Lake County IN Economic Alliance, which herself and Mr. Koliboski will be moving to in early October. This organization is designed to facilitate opportunities for Lake County, and it is dovetailing in with what the Forum does on a regional basis. The LCEA is also a member of the Forum, so we will be partnering on things like regional marketing and activities. Mr. Koliboski stated this organization has been assigned to us because there were seventeen to nineteen communities that did not have a cohesive effort with Lake County, which is the largest County in the seven-county area. In the other six counties that we represent, there are county alliances. Every one of those counties is collectively sharing resources, but they still have their own identities and are competitive with each other. On the onset, you have to layout your community. Your priority is Lowell, Indiana, but if something lands in an adjacent community it also affords your residents the opportunity for economic growth and the creation of jobs. Mr. Koliboski explained how the LCEA was developed and the purpose of the organization. Mrs. Lauerman stated we want to give businesses the best look at Lowell and also to help you be a proactive community. Mr. Koliboski reviewed the 'Site Selection Perspective' handout with the Commission. He explained the marketing, advertising, relationship building, and the many variables that go in to the site selection process. Mr. Koliboski also gave an overview of information that is needed for filling out RFP's and proposal screenings such as utility and location information. We know what Lowell is good for, and we will market it that way, but we will be focused on the entire county. Mr. Koliboski added that they are working with Ivy Tech and getting the trades and science in to the school system to help students in their junior and senior year to earn credits towards their associate's degree at Ivy Tech.

Mr. Reardon stated, as Mr. Koliboski pointed out, we now have another resource that has a more narrow focus, which is good. The easier we can make a real estate transaction work, the better chance we have of making a real estate transaction work. If we can have the Forum, Mr. Koliboski, and Mrs. Lauerman working to show available properties in Lowell or adjacent to Lowell, the better opportunity we have to land projects. When more people understand what the community wants to do, we have a better chance of getting the development we want. There will be some pretty big items that will be intriguing to business and industry such as the Illiana Expressway and the availability of the CSX Railroad. The other challenge will be to work with the County a little more aggressively to have them look at the land uses outside of what the Town can control. He stated he would recommend that there be a renewed effort to bring that back to the forefront and that it should be done soon. What the County does will have a huge impact on the utilities and capacity that the Town has to worry about. Mr. Langen asked what ever happened to the TIF District that was being proposed by the County that would range from Cedar Lake down to Lowell. Mr. Reardon stated it was being considered; however until there was a more thorough discussion about Illiana impacts and INDOT money, it was put on hold. They were also questioning if Route 2 and US41 was the right spot, or if Route 2 and I-65 was the right spot for the district. Mr. Nicksch asked where we should start in regards to working with the County. Mr. Reardon stated the County started this because they thought if someone is going to build a road down here, how should it be developed? There was a lot of discussion in regards to the Illiana not happening, however our charge was if you do not plan for it, then we will have some one-off planning request to come in for a property to be something that may not fit there. Mr. Reardon went on to express how important future planning is in order to make transactions easier. Mr. Langen stated we are up against communities that are going out and looking for the business rather than just waiting for it to come to them. Mr. Nicksch asked how we would plan for development outside of the town limits. Mr. Reardon stated the Commission should send a letter to the Lake County Redevelopment Commission that urges them to continue their economic

development area process and/or reengage the kids from Ball State to complete the plan they started. You really just need to lay it out there. Discussion followed as to what should be highlighted in the letter to the County Commission and how to eliminate the possibility of litigation by planning.

Mr. Earley asked if by having a plan from County would eliminate that possibility of litigation. Mr. Reardon stated it should. If we allow certain zoning or development to occur, then we get to build it. If we do not allow certain development to occur due to farmland preservation being written in the plan and adopted, then that is it. Mr. Earley asked how much input we could have if the County decides to go ahead and move forward with planning. Mr. Reardon stated you should have a lot of input. Discussion followed regarding the previous discussions that were had about planning in the County and the input that Lowell should have. Mr. Koliboski stated that he had also met with some of the County Commissioners and discussed their land use plan and how it does need to be more specific. Discussion followed regarding the possibility of getting some guests from the County to come down to a meeting and discuss planning. Mr. Mandon stated the Town has the tools in place to plan for development, but it is still very important to remove as much uncertainty as you can for those people who are going to be investing in and around your community. The best thing you can do is to work with the County and have them buy in to your plans, which is more of a political process. It is a political process in the fact that the public is intimately involved in the whole process, and we are talking about people's property values and land use changes. It would involve the Town Council outlining how they would like to see the Town develop and grow. If you would get the County to go along with your plans, then you would avoid inconsistent land uses that are developed in the County before you get there, and insufficient or over capacitated utilities depending on how the land is developed. Your annexation plan is going to take years to implement. The Illiana will already be built and will begin to be developed well in advance of the Town getting that land so it is very important to work with the County in planning that area. Mr. Earley asked what would happen if we plan it all the way up to our boundary that we would like to annex to. Mr. Reardon stated we could come up with what we would like to see and submit that to the County. Discussion followed regarding contacting the County, finding out their plans, and having a plan ready for the areas surrounding Lowell.

Mr. Earley asked if there was anything that could be suggested when sitting down with County to bring up the roadblock to the east, Buckley Homestead, and getting them to develop it. Mr. Reardon stated you could challenge the County to demonstrate why that is an economic driver for the area, beyond the legal reason. You would need to find out if it would be a problem to utilize the frontage for some commercial retail, and then keep the rest of it cornfields or whatever else they would want to do. Discussion followed regarding ideas for Buckley Homestead and how to present something that would suffice both parties. Mr. Niksch asked if they would possibly need a work session to include Mr. Koliboski, Mrs. Lauerman, and the Forum to discuss utilizing their expertise. Mr. Reardon stated that himself, Jim Mandon, and Tom Trulley would be the ones to discuss plans with the County. Discussion followed regarding who would need to be involved in reaching out to the County and suggesting a meeting. Mr. Niksch stated his suggestion was that he would meet with Mr. Reardon to discuss some things, make a plan, and then present it to the Council. Mr. Earley stated before we sit down and speak with the County we need to have our plan together, which should be cleared up rather easily. Mr. Niksch stated by putting a draft on paper, it would give us a guideline to have as well. Mr. Reardon stated you just want to make sure that everyone is on the same page before you meet with a different group of people.

Mr. Langen asked if Mr. Koliboski and Mrs. Lauerman were charging anything for their services. Mrs. Lauerman stated not at this point. This is a brand new entity, and while funding is needed,

we have a good base to start working from. As we move forward with various projects, there will be a discussion about that. We would like to come out and meet with every community involved in order to assess what best works for that community. At this point, we want to make sure that you have a good understanding of the organization before you make that commitment. Mr. Niksch asked if the decision to become a member of the Forum should be reevaluated now that this new entity is in place, or if the Commission should be a member of both. Mrs. Lauerman stated there will be individuals that take our place at the Forum, but they will have our support as we have their support. As we move forward, Mr. Reardon will be able to evaluate what will work best for your community. Mr. Niksch asked if we were to come to you with a perspective client, would you share that with another community? Mr. Koliboski stated we perform in strict confidentiality. We will work strictly for Lake County, but will be participating regionally. Discussion followed regarding how they handle clients that come to them and are looking for a specific site. Mrs. Lauerman stated if there is a client that comes to you and you involve us, if for some reason the client will not fit well in the area they are wanting, then we will market to Lake County. If for some reason we are not able to fit them in Lake County, then we will market them to Northwest Indiana through the Forum. Discussion followed regarding the help that the Town would receive from Mr. Koliboski and Mrs. Lauerman. Mr. Langen stated he believed that they should be the ones telling the Commission what they need to be doing. Mrs. Lauerman stated that is part of the strategy, but with respect to both companies, we are just trying to inform you right now of what we do and how it will benefit you.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **ADJOURNMENT**

With no further questions or comments, Mr. Langen made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:18 PM, seconded by Mr. Earley and carried by voice vote.

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Doug Niksch, President

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Greg Shook, Secretary