

VALPARAISO REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting Minutes
April 10, 2025

The regular meeting of the Valparaiso Redevelopment Commission was called to order at 4:31 p.m. on Thursday, April 10, 2025, President Rob Thorgren presided.

Members present were: Rob Thorgren, Barbara Domer, Bill Durnell, Trish Sarkisian and Diana Reed. Also present were Director of Development George Douglas, City Attorney Patrick Lyp, City Administrator Bill Oeding, Engineering Director Max Rehlander, Karl Cender & Daniel Cender from Cender Dalton, Audra Peterson, Executive Director of Porter County Career and Technical Education at Porter County Education Services and members of the public. Frank Dessuit was not in attendance.

ITEM #1- MINUTES (2:02):

Mr. Durnell stated Commission members met for the Executive session.

Motion: Ms. Sarkisian moved to approve the April 10, 2025, executive meeting minutes. Ms. Reed seconded. A voice vote was unanimously carried.

Mr. Durnell reported copies of March 13, 2025, regular meeting minutes were distributed to members for their review prior to the meeting. After reviewing the minutes, all seemed in order.

Motion: Mr. Durnell moved to approve the March 13, 2025, meeting minutes. Ms. Sarkisian seconded. A voice vote was unanimously carried.

ITEM #2 CLAIMS REGISTER AND FINANCIAL REPORT (3:30):

Mr. Douglas reported that the Commission was sent the April 2025 Claims Registers and March Financial Report prior to the meeting. Mr. Douglas highlighted a few key claims and noteworthy items in the Claims Register and Financial Report.

Discussion from Commission members ensued. Questions and items of discussion included:

- What are the damages in regards to the SR130 @ CR400N project
- Whether the Nipsco bill for 909 Lafayette is for multiple months and whether this is due to the remediation.

City staff answered and addressed questions and discussion items.

Motion: Ms. Sarkisian motioned to approve the April Claims Register and the March Financial report. Mr. Durnell seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimously carried.

ITEM #3 RESOLUTION 01-2025 – 2025 BUDGET YEAR DETERMINATION FOR TAX INCREMENT FOR THE ALLOCATION AREA: (10:07)

Mr. Douglas introduced Resolution No. 1, which serves as the annual capture notice sent to all taxing units and the county. This resolution states the Redevelopment Commission's intent to capture the full assessed increment valuation for the year.

Mr. Douglas recommended approving the resolution, citing the current budget, existing debt obligations, and potential legislative changes at the state level. They emphasized that all captured funds are accounted for and planned for use. Mr. Cender clarified that full capture of assessed valuation is necessary at this point, due to financial planning needs and pending legislative uncertainty. While substantial legislative changes are expected, he emphasized that these do not currently affect the resolution. If unexpected changes occur later, the resolution can be amended. The submission deadline is June 15, allowing flexibility if adjustments become necessary.

Discussion from Commission members ensued. Questions and items of discussion included:

- Whether pending legislation at the state level could impact the TIF districts?
- If legislative changes are made that affect the TIF districts will we revisit the Resolution before it is filed with the county
- Whether the TIF allocation areas are healthy
- If pruning needs to be done, will the pruning be approved by the Redevelopment Commission

City staff answered and addressed questions and discussion items.

Motion: Ms. Reed motioned to approve Resolution 01-2025 – 2025 Budget Year Determination for Tax Increment for the Allocation Area. Ms. Sarkisian seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimously carried.

ITEM #4 PARKING LOT USER AGREEMENT: (16:42)

Mr. Douglas introduced Audra Peterson, Executive Director of Porter County Career Technical Education (PCCTE) and discussed ongoing conversations about the use of the Regal property parking lot. Previously, PCCTE had an MOU with Regal Beloit for parking, but that agreement ended when Regal sold the property. Now that the property has been acquired, the discussion has resumed to support parking needs for PCCTE students and faculty, given the current challenges. A temporary use agreement has been drafted, allowing PCCTE to use the lot during the academic school year, strictly for daytime use — no overnight parking will be allowed. PCCTE would be responsible for signage, snow removal, and maintenance related to their use. Mr. Douglas emphasized that this arrangement is not intended to serve as public parking.

Ms. Peterson noted that Porter County Career Technical Education (PCCTE) requires parking permits for students and would extend this requirement to the newly proposed lot. This would help with vehicle identification for safety and administrative purposes, similar to their current street parking process. She expressed appreciation for Mr. Douglas revisiting the parking issue, highlighting that the PCCTE building is operating at full capacity; far beyond what was anticipated decades ago. Ms. Peterson emphasized the importance of addressing parking needs and mentioned that their construction students may be able to assist with maintenance of the lot. She reaffirmed PCCTE's commitment to being responsible and respectful community members.

Discussion from Commission members ensued. Questions and items of discussion included:

- Whether the clause for utilities is there because of anticipated use
- If the \$1 million insurance policy is standard

City staff answered and addressed the question and discussion item

Motion: Mr. Durnell motioned to approve the Parking Lot User Agreement. Ms. Reed seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimously carried.

ITEM #5 ATTAINABLE HOUSING GRANT & APPLICATION: (22:48)

Mr. Douglas presented a draft of the Attainable Housing Grant application, which stems from a previously approved \$1 million allocation for workforce housing initiatives in last year's budget. This initiative is divided into three focus areas: infrastructure, property acquisition, and housing initiatives/grants. The current draft specifically addresses property acquisition and infrastructure components. Mr. Douglas stated the grant is still in draft form, with no projects proposed yet, and no official action required at this stage as discussion is intended to refine the program. The application is modeled similarly to the facade grant, meaning it will be rolling and dependent on available funds rather than on a fixed application period. The program is targeted at Valparaiso residents or workers, and applicants must be nonprofit organizations or supported by one (501(c)(3)). Grants may support new single-family, owner-occupied home construction under \$300,000, not apartments or multi-family housing. Funds can be used for land acquisition or infrastructure improvements (e.g., sidewalks, sewers, alleys, roadways). The application seeks details on the project location, nonprofit sponsor, builder, scope, and how many homes would fall under the "attainable" category. Revisions suggested by Mr. Thorgren have been noted and will be included in the next version, which Mr. Douglas aims to present at the next meeting for potential approval.

Discussion from Commission members ensued. Questions and items of discussion included:

- How can the City Council members involved in other housing initiatives be included in the development of this application to prevent overlap?
- What is the overall purpose and structure of the city's housing strategy and how can we ensure the Commission has a clear understanding of the full scope and goals before providing feedback
- Why wasn't the existing City Council housing initiative integrated into the current proposal?
- Why are property acquisition and infrastructure considered separately from the broader housing programs? Is there a specific reason the two areas are seen as easier or more important to address first?
- Would a single streamlined application for all three categories be more efficient?
- Could a clause or additional criteria be added to the existing application once there is more clarity around the initiatives and grants categories.
- How do we minimize bureaucracy in the application process while still maintaining clarity and accountability for the different types of funding
- Whether the application being reviewed serves as the initial step in the grant process
- When a grant is awarded, will a formal grant agreement that clearly outlines expectations, responsibilities and obligations and will it include the necessary details and protections to ensure the grantee fulfills their commitments

City staff answered and addressed the question and discussion item

Motion: Mr. Durnell motioned to approve the Parking Lot User Agreement. Ms. Reed seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimously carried.

ITEM #6 PROJECT UPDATE – MARSH ST LIFT STATION, WATER MAIN EXTENSION ON MONTDALE, MONTDALE PAVING: (44:16)

Marsh Street Lift Station & Force Main Extension: Convert from an MOU framework to a direct public-works project managed by the Redevelopment Commission. Design work will be handled by DLZ in partnership with the utilities department. The project is fully funded (100%) by the TIF district and will improve services for new development and surrounding areas.

Montdale Water Main Extension: Extend the water main along Montdale past key landmarks (Nilea, the MAC) to 325 East. Funding will come from the TIF district, with a cost-share agreement and design/maintenance oversight by Valparaiso City Utilities, which will be reimbursed by the Redevelopment Commission.

Budget & Funding: Although \$1 million was initially allocated for utility improvements, additional TIF revenue and industrial infrastructure funds are available to cover both projects. Higher-than-expected tax-increment revenue further supports the funding recommendation.

Discussion from Commission members ensued. Questions and items of discussion included:

- Will the City Utilities Department oversee both the Marsh Street lift station/force main project and the Mont Dale water main extension
- Will the Redevelopment Commission reimburse the City Utilities Department for all invoices related to the design and construction of these projects
- Where is the next closest treatment plant in relation to the Horse Prairie lift station
- Why is the Horse Prairie lift station expansion being funded through RDC/TIF instead of the Utilities Department's capital budget?
- What's the reasoning behind treating new capacity expansions like Horse Prairie as redevelopment projects, but routine replacements like Sturdy Road as Utilities Department projects?
- Is the hotel planning to request any additional incentives beyond what's already been discussed
- Whether 325 is rated for truck traffic
- What percentage of the area around 325 is developed

City staff answered and addressed the question and discussion item.

Motion: Ms. Reed motioned to the Marsh St. lift station, the water extension and paving on Montdale. Ms. Sarkisian seconded the motion. A voice vote was unanimously carried.

ITEM #7 OTHER BUSINESS: (61:56)

Mr. Douglas reported staff reviewed meeting start times for other redevelopment commissions in the region, which range from 4:00 PM to 6:30 PM. There was discussion about adjusting the commission's regular meeting time to 5:00 PM, with executive sessions beginning at 4:45 PM. The commission will consider trying this schedule and adjusting as needed.

Discussion from Commission members included:

- Can the commission revise future meeting times from the posted schedule, and is public notice required for each change or just the annual schedule?

City staff answered and addressed the question and discussion item.

ITEM #8 PUBLIC COMMENT: (70:00)

Councilman Cotton thanked the commission for their willingness to adjust meeting times in response to public requests. He acknowledged the gesture as minimal but meaningful, emphasizing that increasing public accessibility is important. He also noted that if public turnout remains low, the commission would still have the flexibility to revert to the original time if needed.

Councilman Cotton asked about what potential remedies could be pursued regarding access to County Road 325, such as asking the county to cede control of the road or revisiting the no-truck designation, to improve future access?

Councilman Cotton raised concerns about a bias in grants favoring single family detached homes, which may not align with the city initiatives, like paired units. Why are the funds open to any nonprofit, instead of being reserved for the initiatives that were the driving force behind the funding allocation.

ITEM #9 ADJOURNMENT: (78:47)

Staff said they had no further items for the Commission's consideration. Mr. Durnell motioned to adjourn the meeting with Ms. Sarkisian seconding. A voice vote was unanimously carried. The meeting was adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Bill Durnell, Secretary