

HIGHLAND, ILLINOIS
MINUTES OF REGULAR SESSION
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
CITY HALL, 1115 BROADWAY
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 3, 2011
12:00 PM

Call to Order

The meeting of the Industrial Development Commission was called to order at 12:07 pm by Chairman Bellm.

Roll Call

Members present: Darell Bellm, Jon Greve, Rick Frey, Ryan Goodwin, and Eric Rehkemper.

Members absent: Ex-Officio Member Jami Jansen

Also present: City Manager Mark Latham, Chief Building & Zoning Official Kevin Limestall, Business Recruitment and Retention Coordinator Andrea Enright, Dennis Rinderer, and Deputy Clerk Lana Hediger.

Approval of Minutes

Rick Frey made a motion to approve the minutes of the July 20, 2011 Industrial Development Commission meeting; seconded by Eric Rehkemper. All members voted in favor; the motion carried.

Reports

Website update:

Kevin Limestall reported that growhighland.com went live last Wednesday at Noon. There were a couple of suggestions for changes that we are working on but so far so good. Darell Bellm reported that has been on it and thinks it is great. Jon Greve thinks it is going to be a huge tool for us.

Business Inquiries Update:

Huddle House had their groundbreaking yesterday, and the owners are anticipating the building to be completed by Oct 31. City Manager Latham reported they will be hiring 40-45 new jobs to eventually be whittled down to ~35.

Bruegge Furniture is closing. Mike Bruegge is retiring. Kevin indicated that it has been for sale for some time. He was approached by one buyer but he wanted it to remain named Bruegge Furniture and so they declined to purchase. Eric Rehkemper asked if Mr. Bruegge would be open to leasing the store to another furniture store, noting that it is a shame that a city the size of Highland isn't able to support a furniture store. Dennis Rinderer pointed out that several furniture stores have closed elsewhere recently. Chairman Bellm suggested opening a dialogue with Mr. Bruegge to see if he would be open to leasing the store to another furniture company or other type of business. If there is some way that we can help him, we should do it. Rick Frey suggested that Kevin try to keep in touch with the party that was previously interested.

Lory Theatre

Mark Latham reported on the up-coming event to be held as a farewell to the Lory Theatre on August 19th. There is a couple that is interested and Mark will continue talking with them to try to get them to purchase it.

Chairman Bellm stated for the record that another recession is being predicted now. It appears that the burden on the IDC is growing.

Old Business

Future Land Use Options:

Regarding Mrs. Steiner's property: Dennis was doing some rough figuring on this. He calculated the average between the two appraisals at 22,500 and suggested giving Mrs. Steiner a premium of 5,000 to offer her \$27,500 per acre. And, he isn't even sure that she would sell at that price considering the recent comparable sales of land nearby at \$30,000. Jon Greve asked if the Council has indicated that they would be supportive of this idea of purchasing ground for industrial use. Mark Latham indicated that he has not yet discussed it with the councilmembers. Jon Greve pointed out that if the land was purchased, it is very likely that we would be sitting on it for a number of years before anything happens with it. Mark believes we should take a step back from this and rework the City's strategic Plan. Chairman Bellm agreed and asked, if we were to spend development money right now, would it be wiser to purchase undeveloped ground or a facility that is or may soon be vacant that would serve our needs?

City Manager Latham reported that he has heard that several industrial facilities may be going up for auction in the near future; possibly the Devtron building, maybe Hal Klaus' building, etc. Darell Bellm agreed that there may be several opportunities in the near future that may serve the needs of the IDC for far less money than we are discussing for the Steiner property. Rick Frey added that very few of the St. Patrick's Center businesses, that the committee visited, were industrial in nature. Most of them were businesses that needed a store-front image.

The IDC members reached a consensus that Mrs. Steiner should be told that at this time, we are not interested in purchasing her property.

New Business

Discussion -- Venture Advisors Meeting: Mark Latham reported that he is looking into partnering with the Venture Advisors. Venture Advisors are a non-profit group referred to us by St. Patrick's Center. Entrepreneurs have been the backbone of Highland and we want to promote it again by beginning with a mentoring program. Rather than looking for businesses outside the community, why don't we try to grow them here? The plan would be to get the community excited about what we are trying to do and build a mentoring program first. Three objectives of the mentoring program are:

- 1) Economic Development: The goal is to provide the City of Highland with human resources to efficiently leverage the significant infrastructure improvements the City has made, which has to do with the fiber. Targeted industry segment: critical on the electric and fiber services. He mentioned developing strategies and tactical plans to attract and incubate business entities within this industry segment. So that is our targeted industry.
- 2) Incubator: You're creating and implementing a business mentoring program. What is interesting is that it is not just about starting new businesses. There are businesses out there that are struggling. The idea is to put together a mentoring program with a panel of professionals (i.e. bankers, architects, lawyers, accountants, etc.) prior to looking for any property to purchase. Then look for businesses that may be struggling or entrepreneurs that want to turn an idea into a successful business and get them started in the mentoring program.
- 3) Community Engagement: Engage businesses, civic organizations, educational institutions, etc. Bring them in and create a synergy within the community and get buy-in. Then the community gets excited about this thing.

The establishment of this program can be worked into phases similar to the following:

Phase 1, program design and start-up, was estimated to take 3 months

Phase 2, program roll-out

Phase 3 is the program transfer and ongoing support; identify who will ultimately be responsible for overseeing the program long-term

We could try to get this program funded through grants. Mark believes that the Chamber of Commerce should be involved in this. We could try to get some sponsors. Mark indicated that there is a possibility that the City could fund it for the first year with Economic Development funds. It would be better to get sponsors who would become involved in the program.

Kevin indicated that this allows the entrepreneurs and sponsors to help each other. The program is designed to be self sufficient once it is established. Jon Greve pointed out the benefit of this program is that it also supports the existing businesses.

There was some discussion about getting funding for the initial \$25,000 for start-up of the program from the Chamber of Commerce and/or the Highland Area Community Foundation. Mark asked the IDC members if they thought that businesses in the community would be willing to sponsor a portion of this if given a seat at the table.

With this type of program, we could help them develop a business plan.

Eric Rehkemper made a motion to offer this to the Chamber of Commerce and the Highland Area Community Foundation to discuss funding to establish a program like the one presented; seconded by Jon Greve. All members voted in favor; motion carried.

Discussion – City’s Comprehensive Plan: Mark Latham would like the board members to take a look at the comp plan and think about tweaking it to update it a bit to what is going on.

Other Business

Rick Frey asked what became of the Retail Market Analysis. Kevin reported that all the entities that were identified by the survey were contacted and there was no response from any of them. It seems that about the time that the City was making those contacts was when the national economy was tanking.

Eric Rehkemper asked what the new census count is. The official count from the 2010 census is 9919. He noted that there was a drop in the number of students enrolled at Highland High School.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Industrial Development Commission is scheduled for Wednesday, September 7, 2011 at 12:00 pm at City Hall.

Adjournment

Rick Frey made a motion to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ryan Goodwin. All members voted aye, none nay; the meeting adjourned at 1:03 p.m.