

The Regular Redevelopment Commission Meeting of the Town of Schererville, IN was called to order by President Kevin Connelly at 7:09 p.m., in the Schererville Town Hall, 10 E. Joliet Street Schererville, IN.

Attendance was taken with the following Board Members present: Caleb S. Johnson, Robin Arvanitis, Rob Guetzloff and Kevin Connelly. Absent: Councilman Thomas Schmitt. Staff members present: Attorney David Austgen, Fire Chief Robert Patterson, Deputy Fire Chief David Meyer, Police Chief Pete Sormaz, Deputy Police Chief Steven McNamara, Park Superintendent John Novacich, IT Dan Gin, Town Engineer Neil Simstad, Director of Public Works Andy Hansen, Town Manager Robert Volkmann, Clerk-Treasurer Michael Troxell and Recording Secretary Robin Thiel.

THEREUPON, Approval of the minutes. Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2022 Public Meeting, seconded by Mrs. Arvanitis. All in favor (4-0).

THEREUPON, Claims

- A. APV #102192 - APV #102521 on the Redevelopment Commission Docket, Totaling \$33,566.04
- B. Various Funds, First National Bank of Omaha, Credit Card Charges, \$12,915.41
- C. Various Funds, Austgen Kuiper Jasaitis, April Legal, \$8,356.33
- D. TIF Fund, Budget Blinds of Frankfort, Station #3 Window Blinds, \$2,111.40
- E. Various Funds, Menards, Parts, \$1,165.28
- F. TIF Fund, DLZ LLC, Various Invoices - Kennedy Avenue, \$39,198.30

Mr. Johnson made a motion to accept the claims as presented, seconded by Mr. Guetzloff. All in favor (4-0).

THEREUPON, Correspondence NONE

THEREUPON, Reports NONE

THEREUPON, Old Business NONE

THEREUPON, New Business NONE

THEREUPON, Business from the floor

Sylvia Gerike, 6404 west 76th Ave. Crown Point, IN stated that she is questioning the redevelopment that is happening through downtown Schererville, as well as any redevelopment that is happening where the Speedway was on US 30. She stated that to her awareness, there's several eminent domain cases that are happening currently, she had no idea how bad it is happening in the Town of Schererville and she is very concerned for our moral compass. Mrs. Gerike stated that she doesn't understand why, when we've acquired 51 acres of the speedway, that the Wilson Family, you want three more acres of their land. She said she spoke to Eli, the Funeral Home Director and he said that you want six acres of his land.

Mrs. Gerike stated she understands that the Town acquired Nancy Townsend's house through eminent domain and there's renters there, and they now pay their rent to the Town. She stated that you've taken away Scarborough Café through eminent domain, actually it's a back door eminent domain. She stated that the owners of Scarborough wanted to sell to a business and the Town wouldn't allow them to and you said no, we'll buy your land. She stated that if they didn't sell it to the Town, then the Town would go through eminent domain. She stated that they were forced to sell it to the Town, they had no other choice.

Mrs. Gerike stated that there is hearsay that a Fire Station is going there, but now it's economic redevelopment, so she is trying to understand what type of economic redevelopment is happening. She asked Attorney Austgen if he would like to clarify in terms of the eminent domain.

Attorney Austgen stated that eminent domain is the process a unit of government utilizes under the Indiana Code to acquire land for several purposes. He said one and most common, but not only, is public need, public necessity, and public improvement, for example a Fire Station.

Mrs. Gerike asked Attorney Austgen if a Fire Station is going where Scarborough Café was. Attorney Austgen advised her she would have to ask the Redevelopment Commission.

Mr. Connelly stated that the Town did acquire the properties just to the west of Town Hall. He stated that there's got to be a bid process to happen for an individual or individuals to purchase that property, so there's no real direct plans right now.

Mrs. Gerike stated that when you go through eminent domain, you're supposed to have a business plan, so where is the plan, by law, you're supposed to have a plan.

Mr. Connelly said he doesn't know that we exercised eminent domain for those properties. Mrs. Gerike stated, so what about Nancy Townsend that was eminent domain, she told me about it, and so what's the plan there. Attorney Austgen stated that there was an arm's length transaction with Ms. Townsend based upon an offer made as authorized by this Council, that offer was made in conformance with Indiana Code, the provisions for uniform land acquisition offer that are specified in the Code and based upon appraisals.

Mrs. Gerike continued to ask what is going to be built there, you have to have a plan, what is your plan.

Mr. Volkmann stated that none of those properties were taken by eminent domain, every one of those properties was a negotiated buy. He stated they were all made by offers and they were accepted.

Referring to her father's house, she said they were told to go get an appraisal. She said by law, you do not have to have an appraisal to have negotiations, she said she was not entitled to negotiations. She stated that two weeks ago they did meet with Mr. Volkmann. She said Mr. Volkmann's appraisal said her father's house was vinyl, she said it is not, it's a brick home. She said Mr. Volkmann said it was a fair appraisal and then he offered us less than what we are paying in assessed taxes. Mrs. Gerike made more comments regarding Mrs. Wilson's and the Funeral Home's property. She stated you guys want more land, where is the moral compass in this Town. She has lived in Schererville her entire life, and she is embarrassed. She stated, you guys are abusing through eminent domain, look at all of these empty lots down the street and it's for what, economic redevelopment. She asked if her father's property is for the Fire Station, if so, that is interesting because on part of his lawsuit it says Economic Redevelopment. She asked where is the economic redevelopment, because there has to be a plan before you serve me. She continued to talk about economic redevelopment and said that the papers she was served said economic redevelopment.

Mrs. Gerike said the residents of the Town of Schererville should have a say. She asked why would you want to build a fire station on a single lane road, it should be on a main artery. She stated that there should be alternatives before you go and take someone else's land. She stated that her father is 77 years old, she looked Tom Schmitt in the eye and said he probably won't be around more than ten years, can you wait ten years. She asked why you would want a fire station on top of a hill next to people's homes. Do you think people want to hear that, do you want to hear that by your house?

After more comments from Mrs. Gerike, Mr. Connelly said he thinks we have to pump the brakes on this project entirely. He stated that the Board did talk about that prior to the meeting. He told Mrs. Gerike that she brought up a lot of good points and there are other potential locations and he thinks we need to

rethink this. Mr. Connelly stated that the last thing they want to do is displace somebody.

Mr. Peter Gerike, same address as his wife, 6404 West 76th Avenue. He asked Mr. Connelly, based on one of your responses, you said that you were looking to pump the brakes on this project. He asked exactly what does that mean. Attorney Austgen stated that maybe now is the opportunity to communicate. He stated that our intention, the Town's position is to put the brakes on the proceedings for a period of sixty days. Attorney Austgen stated that he communicated with your father-in-law's attorney and they are going to file pleadings tomorrow in that regard, and it is his understanding that there'll be further communications thereafter.

Mr. Gerike stated that you, Mr. Connelly, mentioned about looking at alternative places for such a project. Mr. Connelly stated that at the Executive Session tonight, they discussed looking at other locations. Mr. Connelly stated that our Town is growing and we want our public safety to grow. We want the best of the best in our Town - that is our intention. He stated that ultimately they want to give our firefighter paramedics a central station, training facility. Mr. Connelly stated that they are not interested in displacing anybody and if we put a stop to this tonight, he would be in favor of stopping this and rethinking it and starting all over again, because there are other locations we can consider.

Mr. Connelly stated that it's unfortunate it's gotten to this point and he doesn't want it to go any further, he wants to do the right thing for our residents. He stated we all live here too and yes, we want a central fire station for our firefighter paramedics, they need it, but there is always a solution.

Mr. Gerike stated that he would agree, there's always a solution to everything. He stated he would echo that statement a little bit differently and that you know, as our elected officials, I would expect that you'd be looking out for the interests of the citizens. He stated let's try not to displace one of your loyal residents.

Mr. Johnson stated that he is speaking for himself, but when it was discussed about acquiring that property, it was to approach your father-in-law and see if he was willing to sell, try to negotiate that. He stated that he has been on the council two years and this plan for a central fire station location has been around and in the works for a decade. He stated there were numerous other alternatives talked about through the years, he even approached other alternatives when they were in a council meeting, but it just wasn't economically feasible to do it because there were other issues with the location. Mr. Johnson stated that he just needs to revisit this and said from his perspective, he is hearing everybody and these points are well taken. He stated he wants people to keep coming up here and making comments because it's good that you're here and this is why we have this process.

Mr. Connelly stated that where it's taken us, there's an opportunity for us to pivot. That's how we harness the opportunity, the past we can't change and please know that was being discussed before all of you spoke this evening.

Mr. Guetzloff stated that if negotiations aren't met and we can't reach an agreement, we're definitely not going to take your dad out of his house. We are going to have to move and look for other areas and work something else out.

Mrs. Arvanitis stated that the Council was in agreement with that before they started the meeting today.

Debbie Sulek, 1702 Anna Street stated that she is just north of the parcel, not the Groszek parcel but there's another parcel there. She stated that she is primarily here because she doesn't want a fire station in her backyard. She stated that she bought her place seven or eight years ago and her and her son live there. She stated that she has elderly neighbors next door and she has a

beautiful scenery outside her back window. She stated she is just
hear to say she doesn't want a fire station in her back yard.

Meeting adjourned.

KEVIN CONNELLY
REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION PRESIDENT

MICHAEL A TROXELL, CMO
TOWN CLERK-TREASURER

A TRUE COPY