

MINUTES OF
REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION MEETING
Hearing: RC2023-01
Thursday February 16th, 2023 at 1:00 PM

The Rensselaer Redevelopment Commission held a Public Hearing on Thursday February 16th, 2023. Commission President Stan Haines brought the hearing to order at 1:00 pm.

Present: Stan Haines, Bill Hollerman, Robert Brenneman, Kenny Haun, and Janice Deno

Absent: Estel George

City of Rensselaer: Mayor Wood, Shelby Keys, Kevin Cochran, and Jerry Lockridge

Guests: Jacob Ahler and Bob Schenk

Previous Minutes: Stan Haines asked for a motion to approve the minutes presented from Meeting RC2022-05 held on Thursday December 8th, 2022. Bob Brenneman made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Bill Hollerman. President Haines said all in favor say Aye. All said Aye.

Motion Passed.

Old Business: None

Election of Officers: Bill Hollerman made a motion to retain Officers as is, second by Bob Brenneman. Stan Haines remains President, Estel George remains Vice-President, and Kenny Haun will remain Secretary.

Motion Passed.

New Business:

A. AMENDMENT TO PERMIT LOCAL ART WORK

Stan Haines confirmed that Mayor Wood was presenting the Amendment to Permit Local Art Work. Mayor Wood explained that the murals have taken hold of Rensselaer, which he supports, and last year the City donated \$35,000 to the Jasper Newton Foundation (JNF). Public Arts is asking for the Redevelopment Commission for possible donations of \$35k in the years to come to support future art work in our city. Mayor Wood went on to say that cities such as Merrillville, Munster, and Dyer have all started to incorporate murals in their cities as well. The Mayor of Watseka personally contacted Mayor Wood inquiring about our art work and the process to obtain murals in their city.

Stan Haines wanted to know who determines what murals the artists will be painting in the future. Mayor Wood stated that the Tourist Board will be working with the artist. He also informed that the next potential mural location for Rensselaer is the back entrance of City Hall. Mayor Wood reiterated that this is a good project; it has increased tourism and traffic

in Rensselaer and we have received several compliments regarding our art work. There have been 47 murals done thus far, and we want to keep it going. The City doesn't always have the extra funding; however, the Redevelopment Commission may be able to help.

Shelby Keys clarified that the \$35k that was donated in November of 2022 is intended for the art work being done this summer. JNF has not come back to ask for more funding. Resolution No. RC 01-2023 is just going to be set in place "just in case" the JNF were to ask for potential funding.

Kenny Haun wanted to know why the Resolution never stated the previous donation and Shelby stated it was because the previous donation was not given by the Redevelopment Commission. Mayor Wood added that in order to follow the statutes, the donations have to be given to a nonprofit organization, which in this case is the JNF. A letter (see attachment) received from the JNF explained that the donation will be set aside and specifically used throughout the City of Rensselaer. Mayor Wood was adamant that we needed to approve the Resolution for the Redevelopment Commission and move on from there.

Kenny Haun asked Shelby Keys if they were going to receive a contract for the State Board Accounts relating to the Resolution. Shelby responded that as of right now, the Redevelopment Commission is not agreeing to give money, only agreeing to pass the Resolution. Jacob Ahler included that when an ordinance or contract is presented, the State Board Accounts will want that.

Bob Brenneman wanted to know what the City gets for \$35k and what was the cost of the prior murals done. It was said, by Kevin Cochran, that each mural is a different cost based on size and artist, but on average each wall painted was between \$30k and \$40k.

With the modification to request that each artist will come before the Redevelopment Commission to inform the members of their choice of art work, there was a motion to approve by Bob Brenneman, second by Kenny Haun.

Motion Passed.

B. OPEN DISCUSSION

Kevin Cochran informed The Board that the Brick Street Project cost was going to be a little higher than expected. Jerry Lockridge confirmed the cost was higher than what the engineers anticipated.

Kevin Cochran let the Redevelopment Commission know that Adam Alson, of Appleseed, would be in attendance at the March meeting to discuss the possibility of another donation. Kenny Haun said Appleseed received \$115k from the Redevelopment Commission and another \$150k from the County and requests that Adam Alson present them with a generalized budget of past expenses.

Kevin Cochran started discussion about a possible Façade Program for Rensselaer using TIF funds, since OCRA will not have funds available until 2024. TIF funds would be used for 50/50 grants between the City and local business owners, with one to two approved projects per calendar year, following application approval. Stan Haines wanted to know who would determine which businesses got approved and how the determination process would take place. Kenny Haun and Kevin Cochran discussed that it was unlikely that multiple

businesses would apply at once. There would need to be a committee formed to set guidelines and regulations. Following the PowerPoint presented, Kenny Haun made the suggestion that the business owner pay for the Façade improvement, and once complete, the City's portion would then be reimbursed to the business owner.

Future plans for R & M were discussed. Kevin Cochran suggested using TIF funds to take down the building. Jacob Ahler informed members that the Redevelopment Commission does have legal authority to buy properties. It was suggested that the City obtains at least two appraisals for the R & M property. The main concern was not breaking even financially in the long run. Jerry Lockridge and Kevin Cochran both implied that a committee should be formed to look into the R & M property, along with the two residential properties close by, and determine what would be the best option to pursue. All three properties are blighted and unsightly, it is likely the cost to renovate outweighs the cost of demolition.

Next Meeting: TBD

Redevelopment Commission President Stan Haines entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting. Second by Kenny Haun.

Motion Passed:

Meeting adjourned at 1:44 pm