

**LA PORTE COUNTY REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
PLANNING SESSION MINUTES
December 13, 2023**

If any member of the public wishes to attend the meeting electronically, the meeting will be available on Zoom, which can be accessed for free on the internet at <https://zoom.us/> and then click the "Join a Meeting" tab followed by the meeting ID 826 1038 9740 Passcode 325010. You can also download the free Zoom app to your smartphone and join the meeting via the app.

The La Porte County Redevelopment Commission planning session was held on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 2:30 P.M. (CDT), in Room #3, County Complex.

President Justin Kiel opened the planning session at 2:30 P.M.

Matt Reardon, MCR Partners, began with introductions:

La Porte County RDC Commissioners – Justin Kiel (President), Randy Novak (Vice President), Michael Rosenbaum (Secretary), Scott Cooley, Tom Fath, Mark Parkman and Rich Mrozinski.

Also introduced: Attorney Guy DiMartino, RDC Attorney; Mitch Bishop, County Planner; Mary Jane Thomas, MjThomas & Associates, La Porte County Office of Economic Development; Bailey McGrath, Carlton Bishop, Mike Seitz, Matt Reardon, Trista Hudson, Cender & Company; Building Commissioner's Office; Mike Polan and Joe Haney, La Porte County Commissioner.

Bailey McGrath presented the 2023 Office of Economic Development Report. Highlights included:

- 50+ calls made to businesses, 5 tax abatements provided to existing businesses, and 9 on-site visits (within 6 months) with potential businesses/industries to La Porte County sites for sale.
- 30+ leads from the Indiana Economic Development Corporation (IEDC) or direct sources, which included \$36 billion in investments. Several of those remain active leads. A large trend towards electric vehicles' components such as batteries, uptick in data center leads, and a big push towards areas such as the "Quantum Corridor," development of tech infrastructure in the Northwest Indiana area. Discussions are ongoing between La Porte County and Purdue University Northwest - Westville Campus related to the future of the Quantum Corridor in the area.
- Ms. McGrath mentioned the Office of Economic Development team updates the county website as needed.
- The La Porte County Broadband Task Force submitted a Next Level Connections (NLC) Round 4 unserved and underserved addresses in La Porte County. Currently moving into the "Challenge Phase," the providers are deciding which data points move forward. (Looking forward to 2024, the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program will come with additional funding for broadband improvements.)
- Additional residential housing for La Porte County

Ms. McGrath announced remarkable work/projects were accomplished in 2023 and looks forward to 2024. She thanked the Redevelopment Commission for guiding their team.

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Mr. Matt Reardon explained the fundamental goal of economic development and redevelopment is to identify pathways to facilitate prudent use of government resources and to facilitate private sector investment in methods that is consistent with planning documents. He added the importance of quality of life and availability of utilities and how they factor into the site selection process.

President Kiel asked Mr. Reardon what is working well and how the county government can be more effective. The following was reported by Mr. Reardon unless noted:

Business Retention and Expansion (Mike Seitz and Carlton Bishop) – Two (2) meetings a month are conducted with existing businesses (from a long list of small to large La Porte County businesses). Primarily, business retention and expansion meetings include discussions about tax abatements, international trade, small business partnerships, state programs and employment issues. Challenges are reaching the business owner and scheduling the meeting. This is the most time-consuming and difficult aspect BRE. Meeting with 2 businesses a month and doing the follow up has been good. During the month, ongoing assistance and follow-up is provided partnering identified businesses challenges with people or programs. The following suggestions were made for 2024 - to create a small amount of time each month for small business connections, provide monthly feedback of the businesses' challenges, and each elected official visit one (1) business along with Mike Seitz and/ or Carlton Bishop in 2024.

Housing – A new state law went into effect allowing for the creation of residential tax increment finance districts which allows for the capture of property tax to be used to pay the debt for infrastructure at the location. Brainstorming sessions have been held to learn how this new law fits with the county (i.e., work force, shopping, school attendance) and how to gauge the interest from large-acre property owners. The town of Hebron's positive experience utilizing the new state law was discussed. Generally, the new law creates a unique way for developers of subdivisions to pay for the critical, costly utility infrastructure upfront which is usually a barrier for new housing. Suggested actions for 2024 - perform due diligence in creating the inviting opportunity for the potential developer by 1) locating the land 2) contacting area schools and 3) contacting the local utilities.

Broadband – In 2023, La Porte County provided over 9,000 critical data points or addresses in the Next Level Connections (NLC) Round 4 funding that do not meet reliable internet speeds. In order to collect these addresses, media outlets and local government offices were utilized to distribute an online survey to record internet speeds for residents and businesses. It was noted that broadband funding goes directly to the internet provider (not the county) to install the necessary equipment. For 2024, continue to reach out to residents and businesses in order to ascertain areas lacking reliable internet connections and review the maps.

EV Targeting – As noted earlier, 2023 showed a large trend towards manufacturing electric vehicle (EV) batteries and components. The emerging industry involves information technology and new energy opportunities which appear to provide good paying jobs. It was

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noted that the region is one of 31 regions in the United States to be known as the Regional Innovation and Technology Hubs (Tech Hubs) through the Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration. These Tech Hubs will catalyze investment in technologies critical to economic growth, national security, and job creation, and will help communities across the country become centers of innovation critical to American competitiveness. For 2024, continue discussions with the Purdue University Northwest - Westville Campus related to the Quantum Corridor.

At this time, Matt Reardon provided a summary of 2023 activities for each TIF area:

US 421/194 TIF Area – As the 1st TIF district La Porte County created, the idea was to facilitate infrastructure to allow businesses to make investment and to drive commerce at the interchange. During the last 15 years and after maximizing funding opportunities, Love's \$18 million project provided the opportunity to move infrastructure to the other side of the interchange. Moving forward, this new infrastructure brings a possibility of additional developments to the area.

39 North TIF Area – This area was created to extend water and sewer for more development at an interchange. After discussions, the City of La Porte's owned utilities and the 39 North Conservancy District partnered to achieve the goal of extending the water and sewer utilities. This will allow for more growth and development. The City of LaPorte is in the process of annexing this TIF area.

Kingsbury Industrial Park (KIP) TIF Area – KIP development seemed stalled until the county took control over the assets, which is rail. The Redevelopment Commission received IEDC READI grant funding and along with the County Council assistance, was instrumental in the construction of a new rail bridge and the extension of rail which will be used by two (2) Class I railroads to bring railcars in and out of the Kingsbury Industrial Park and its businesses. Property purchase transactions are increasing as 2023 closes. NIPSCO compiled great strategic site marketing materials to assist site selectors and developers with the park's geotechnical, environmental proximity, availability of utilities and location of transportation networks. A tax abatement was granted for a \$2 million investment in an expansion of a KIP business.

US 35/194 TIF Area – As the newest TIF area created, discussions between Michigan City and La Porte County related to new development and the utilities have occurred in 2023. Currently, the County Council has earmarked \$1.5 million for water and sewer extensions in this area.

Mr. Reardon added a possible new TIF area for 2024, is the 194/421 Purdue University Northwest - Westville Campus/Westville area. As mentioned earlier, in 2023, discussions with Mike Albert (Westville Town Council President), South Coast Conservancy District and Purdue University Northwest have occurred related to collaborating together for the future development of the Hwy 421 corridor. South Coast Conservancy District's service area runs north to the Indiana Toll Road. There has been significant investment by the State of Indian and La Porte County including

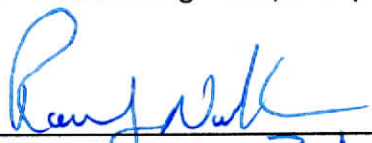
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widening the highway, storm drainage improvements and the Indiana Department of Corrections \$1.2 billion investment south of Westville. The Quantum Corridor, which includes this area, will draw interest from innovative technology companies, create tech job opportunities, and provide the mechanism for opportunity in technology within the rural areas of Porter and LaPorte counties. Over the next two months, a plan will be put together in cooperation with Purdue University Northwest and presented to the Redevelopment Commission for consideration.

Mr. Reardon announced Carlton Bishop can be contacted with any website issues or concerns.


Matt Reardon, MCR Partners, thanked La Porte County for the opportunity to work with them and asked for any ideas to be sent to Bailey McGrath, specifically capital driven, as another READI 2.0 grant process is coming up in January 2024.

President Kiel asked for any closing remarks. There being none, the planning session was adjourned at 3:48 P.M.



President Justin Kiel *Randy Nounk*

Attest:



~~Michael Rosenbaum~~ Mark Parkman
Secretary