

**TOWN OF PORTER
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 9, 2020**

DRAFT

- A. Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.
- B. Pledge of Allegiance
- C. Roll Call
Present: Rob Pomeroy, James Burge, Elka Nelson
Also, Present: Michael Barry, Tammie Sufana, Attorney Sobkowski
- D. Consideration of Minutes-Ms. Nelson made a motion to approve the minutes of March 9, 2020 as submitted, Mr. Burge made second.
Motion passed 3-0.
- E. Audience Participation-Jennifer Klug, 200 Franklin St Apt A, trying to understand the definition of blighted area? In regards to the area that used to be the waterpark. What does blighted mean if the owner is cleaning up the property? What do you mean by blighted. Mr. Sobkowski states the EDC's roll is to make a favorable or not make a favorable recommendation to the Council about establishing an Economic Development Target Area. In order for residential development to get tax abatement it must be in an Economic Revitalization Area and the Town Council has exclusive authority to determine whether an area is an Economic Revitalization Area. And for a residential developmental not only must it be in an Economic Revitalization Area, it must be in an Economic Development Target Area or a Residentially Distressed Area. And this area is not a residentially distressed area. The Town Council ultimately makes the decision with a favorable recommendation from the Economic Development Commission. An area that has become undesirable or impossible for normal development and occupancy because lack of development, cessation of growth, deterioration of improvements or character of occupancy, age, obsolescence, substandard buildings, or other factors that have impaired values or prevent a normal development of property or use of property may be designated as an Economic Development Target Area. That is the standard the commission should consider when making a favorable recommendation to the Town Council.
- F. Reports
- G. Old/New Business-Creation of Economic Development Target Area(EDTA)-Ms. Nelson comments she has done a lot of homework and wants to be as transparent as possible.

I do know that the impact of our decision leads to the Town providing 3.5 million dollars in tax abates for a residential development on a major piece of property. In order to determine if this area was blighted in addition to looking at the rest of Porter? I don't think the property as it sits today is blighted. And I don't think anyone in good conscience can, based on the information we've been provided today, find that the area is prime at this point to be classified as undesirable or impossible for normal development. The only positive is the developer; they are well qualified for this project. She doesn't know if this is a project for this town.

Mr. Burge comments his feelings are similar to Ms. Nelson. They were not given any guidance and left to their own devices. He states the IC code suggests part of the EDC's role is to consider if declaring an EDTA will create jobs or business opportunity, and a residential development wouldn't. Since the purpose of creating this target area is for granting tax abatements, it needs to be offset with something the community gains. Mr. Burge also comments the unknown economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on municipal budgets, on top of existing issues in Porter, makes him hesitant to declare an EDTA for a development that won't create jobs. We already have things that haven't been funded properly, like sidewalks going to nowhere and streets that flood. It's not like we have a whole bunch of money sitting around.

Mr. Barry comments that the only reason the waterpark site is cleaned up is in anticipation of sale. If Weiss properties were here the property would still be blighted. Also, Mr. Weiss also agreed to complete a \$2 million sewer extension project on Waverly that would brought service available properties north of US 20 where development has stalled due to limited sewer capacity. That is a benefit to the Town. We cannot fix that sewer; we don't have the money.

Mr. Anderson, representative of Wiess properties, comments it is very unfair to punish them because the seller is doing some cleaning. It is not all cleaned up all the underground equipment is still in the ground. Mr. Anderson noted that Worthington Steel is Porter's largest taxpayer with an AV of \$8 million compared to the estimated \$26 million investment in the proposed apartments.

Mr. Weiss states they build good developments in the area. He has grown up in the area and knows about the Industrial highway. This development will not happen without the tax abatement. Not everyone wants to live in a single family home. I'm out of time, we have extended the sell. It won't happen without the abatement. He can not afford to pay \$2 million for a sewer improvement. It is a blighted area, anything prevents growth or prosperity. It is zoned now someone can build a truck stop there. Just look what Andershocks used to be.

Mr. Anderson they would like to bring forth the data you requested. We would ask for it to be tabled for two weeks.

Ms. Nelson made a motion to deny EDC 2020-01 Resolution for a Tax Abatement, Mr. Burge seconded.

After roll call vote motion passed 2-0. Mr. Pomeroy said nay.

H. Commission Comments

I. Adjournment- Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Robert Pomeroy, President

James Burge, Vice-President

Elka Nelson, Secretary

Tammie Sufana, Recording Secretary