

**TOWN OF PORTER
PORTER REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
Town Council Workshop
303 FRANKLIN STREET
January 24th, 2005**

Present were: Bill Donley, Paul Childress, Trudi Gallagher, Jennifer Granat, Sandi Snyder and Bill Sexton.

Upgrading the town's aging sanitary sewer system was deemed a high priority Monday for the Porter Redevelopment Commission during a joint workshop with the Town Council.

No one other than members attended the meeting.

Redevelopment treasurer and council member Paul Childress said the commission conservatively will have about \$340,000 of the \$600,000 it likely will receive this year available to spend on new projects. The redevelopment fund also has approximately \$800,000 in the bank now but loaned money to the cash-strapped general fund in 2003 and 2004 and may have to do so in 2005.

Redevelopment funds are certain property taxes that are paid and stay within a designated tax-increment financing (TIF) district; generally, TIF money must be spent for uses within the district boundaries, adjacent to them or to benefit the TIF area.

Council President Bill Sexton said a serious look needs to be taken regarding expanding the TIF boundaries so more areas of town can benefit. A map of the current TIF district wasn't immediately available. Said Redevelopment Commission and council member Jennifer Granat, "I was told most towns include everything in the TIF district but I don't know if I'd want to do that."

Commission member Bill Donley asked if Munson Place industrial park, platted but not built on Porter's northeast side, is in the TIF district. Childress and Sexton said they didn't believe so.

Granat said Porter needs to promote economic development and with the closing of Franklin Food Mart downtown needs to attract new business. Said Sexton of Munson Place, "We've got an industrial park sitting there empty and no one knows we have it. We need to help them develop it ourselves." After the meeting Sexton said he was referring to considering requests for tax abatement.

Donley offered to talk to someone at Munson Place's developer, Lake Erie Land, a subsidiary of NiSource, about the status of the industrial park. The only tenant confirmed there is future construction of the joint Porter County/Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore visitor center.

Town department heads had submitted wish lists of items, purchases and projects they'd like to see funded. Rather than use TIF money for a pick-up truck or a copier, Childress said, "These tax dollars come from taxpayers and as we spend them we should make sure they benefit (taxpayers)."

Sexton said the clay tile Porter Avenue sanitary sewer from Lincoln Street to Indiana Street is close to collapse and in need of major repairs. Everything in the downtown feeds into the Porter Avenue line, he added, and any disruption would greatly impact the whole area.

In a November, 2004 draft estimate of sewer system upgrades prepared by town engineer Tim Haas, cost of the Porter Avenue sewer rehabilitation was set at \$300,000 and recommended for 2005 construction. It was agreed Haas will be asked to provide updated, prioritized information. Sexton said about 85 percent of the Porter sewer system is mapped and the Francis Street line is in poor condition as well.

Redevelopment Commission member Trudi Gallagher said if Haas shows a needed project outside the TIF district, could the boundaries be expanded to include it? Childress replied, "That's a possible yes." The Redevelopment Commission would recommend revised TIF boundaries but the Town Council would have to approve them.

Sexton said leaking sewers cost Porter money because groundwater infiltration makes its way to the Chesterton sewage treatment plant, which charges Porter for processing its waste. "There's suspicion there's really high infiltration into the (sewer) system," he noted. Haas has proposed placing automatic chart readers on key sewer lines to monitor infiltration.

Page 2

Council member Sandi Snyder said Porter Avenue has been proposed as a route for the planned \$2.6 million Porter hike/bike trail slated for a possible 2006 groundbreaking. She said any sewer rehabilitation would have to be closely coordinated. "If we're going to rip the roads up, let's do it right," said Granat.

Snyder suggested that if the bike trail does go down Porter Avenue perhaps a trail restroom could be located in adjacent Hawthorne Park to serve its baseball players and spectators. Sexton said that's part of the plan at this time.

Childress reminded that in order to hold the recent increase in Porter sewer rates to 22 percent it was decided to take purchase of a vacuum/jet truck for the sewer utility out of the rate; at some point the Redevelopment Commission could consider purchasing that truck.

Observed Childress, "If we agree Redevelopment will take on improvements to the sewer system, the discussion is over. The roads and the rest are the council's problem."

Sandy Boothe, President

Trudi Gallagher, Vice-President

Paul L. Childress Secretary-Treasurer

Jennifer Granat

Bill Donley