

MINUTES OF THE LITTLE CALUMET RIVER BASIN DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
HELD AT 6:30 P.M. THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 1995
AT THE HIGHLAND TOWN HALL
3333 RIDGE ROAD
HIGHLAND, INDIANA

Chairman Chuck Agnew called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m. Eight (8) Commissioners were present. Quorum was declared and guests were recognized.

Development Commissioners:

George Carlson
Charles Agnew
Arlene Colvin
Robert Huffman
Robert Trelo
Emerson Delaney
Nathaniel Leonard
William Tanke
Arlene Colvin

Visitors:

Donald Shapiro - Highland
Jim Flora - R.W.Armstrong
Melanie Ellison-Div.of Water, DNR
Pete Zak - South Shore Marina
Mary Jane Zak - " "
Bill Petrites - Highland
Stanley Petrites - Highland
J. Mitchell - Munster
Veral Meyers - Highland
Herbert Harris - Black Oak
Pam Seeber - WJOB, Hammond
Dave Taborski - Black Oak
Cleo Wesson - Gary Council
Richard Comer-Deputy Mayor, Gary
Gardest Gillespie - Gary Council
Macarthur Drake - City of Gary
Mara Candelaria - Congressman
Visclosky's Office
Mike VanderHeyden - Dyer Cont.
Joanne Mitchell - Munster
Michael Puente - Post Tribune
Jerry Castle - Castle Estates
Robin Biesen - The Times
John Bach - Town of Highland
Mike Griffin - Town of Highland

Staff:

Jim Pokrajac
Dan Gardner
Lou Casale
Sandy Mordus
Judy Vamos

The minutes of the March 2, 1995 meeting were approved by a motion from George Carlson; motion seconded by Arlene Colvin; motion passed unanimously.

Executive Director's Report - Mr. Gardner spoke on the ongoing progress in working with the city of Gary in trying to secure a resolution from the city, thereby authorizing the easements needed for the levee construction. A resolution was approved at the last Council meeting. We are hopeful that the signed easements will be coming very soon. Mr. Gardner stated that a letter has been received from Macarthur Drake, special counsel to the Mayor,

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regarding continued interest in securing the property at I-65. A meeting will need to be scheduled soon with the city to determine the terms under which they now wish to acquire the 179 acres.

Mr. Gardner referred to Mayor Dedelow's letter to Col. Slockbower regarding the development of the Hammond-owned Oxbow area. The Mayor's letter asked for an evaluation by March 15th regarding the acceleration of the Corps recreational spending ability in this area. The Commission had also requested of the Corps their acceleration to develop the Oxbow, with the Commission cost sharing in this development. Mr. Gardner also referred to the response letter that the Corps sent back to the Mayor. Their anticipated date for the first recreation phase of the project is scheduled for advertisement on July 30, 1995. They are willing to make the Oxbow a priority recreational area as long as certain criteria are met; that criteria being that the Commission must own the park property in fee title, the property must be used solely for recreation in order for the Corps to participate, the Corps must perform the actual construction of the facilities, and the Corps evaluation must show economic justification for these recreational features.

Mr. Carlson was still concerned about this recreational development being done in a more expeditious way; he would like to see it developed before the project actually reaches the west reach.

Mr. Gardner referred to the appreciation letter in the agenda packet commending Dave Hunter on the role he has played in his capacity as Project Manager. The Commission has worked very well with Dave and as he leaves the Corps office, he will be greatly missed.

Land Acquisition Committee - Committee Chairman Arlene Colvin reported that we should be receiving the signed uniform land offer from Gary Urban League. WHITECO has agreed to relocate their sign onto the Urban League property at a newly negotiated lease amount acceptable to the Urban League and WHITECO.

Ms. Colvin also reported that we have requested 38 lots to be transferred to us from the Lake County Commissioners' tax sale. They are on the agenda for approval at the Lake County Council meeting on April 11th.

The Corps Real Estate meeting was held on March 24.

Staff is investigating obtaining clay from several different sites. Thus far, we have met our commitment with the Corps to meet their construction schedule.

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Project Engineering Committee - Committee Chairman Bob Huffman reported that construction at Wicker Park Manor in Highland (Stage V-1) has been resumed. They are currently working on the west side of Indpls. Blvd. Completion is expected by mid-June. Landscaping contract is a separate contract.

The Corps has released a supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). It is now out for review and comments. A copy can be obtained from the Corps by request.

Mr. Huffman referred to letter in packet from FEMA to IDNR stating that it appears that Wicker Park Manor subdivision will not be taken out of the floodplain until Indpls. Blvd. bridge is raised. Mr. Gardner added that staff will follow up and that he still hoped there could be a speedier process.

Legislative Committee - Committee Chairman George Carlson talked about his concern with the problems incurred in obtaining the easements from Gary necessary to allow construction to happen in a timely manner. He reflected that it has been a very difficult process and he commended Mr. Gardner for his ability to successfully manage to keep the project alive and moving.

Mr. Gardner added that he had an opportunity to be in Indianapolis on April 5 and used it as an opportunity to talk Little Cal. He said that Mayor Dedelow was also there and met with Sam Turpin (Ways and Means Committee) and Kathy Davis (INDOT Commissioner). Grant St. interchange reconstruction was discussed and although at the last meeting with INDOT, it appeared that the reconstruction would be moved up on INDOT's list of projects, that was not the case this time. Ms. Davis reiterated to them that the city of Gary will have to come up with about \$1.4 million of funding.

Marina/Breakwater Committee - Committee Chairman Bill Tanke informed the Commission that he and staff and recently met with Ron Schults and Jeff Bartoszek from Abonmarche regarding marina progress. Mr. Tanke has some concern about the marina basin and the existing Corps permit as it now stands. The Corps permit did not allow for all the sheetpiling work to be completed in Phase I and there is concern that some soil erosion may occur. Mr. Tanke has requested that the permit be modified.

Mr. Tanke also referred to the marina progress update from Abonmarche. A continuing agreement needs to be worked out with Superior/Dyer for sandmining.

Mr. Tanke also asked staff to get a clearer definition of costs from Abonmarche.

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Mr. Gardner added that John Hannon was not at their meeting and he passed onto Commission that Mayor Maletta is anxious to have a marina meeting to discuss the future development sequencing of the marina site. The Mayor was recently in Indpls. to talk about marina funding. Portage's funding request was for \$2.2 million (part of an overall \$24 million request of the Lake Michigan Marina Development Commission).

Finance/Policy Committee - Treasurer Nathaniel Leonard gave the treasurer's report. Mr. Leonard made a motion to approve the financial status report for February as well as the claims amounting to \$94,734.91; motion seconded by Bob Huffman; motion passed unanimously.

Other Business - Mr. Huffman asked whether the city has received anything regarding any soil borings/samplings taken from the 179 acre site. It was stated that nothing has been received from the developers.

Statements from the floor - Stanley Petrites inquired about the time length of the project. Mr. Gardner answered that if all went well, the estimated completion date would be the year 2000.

Gardest Gillespie, Gary City Councilman, commented on Mr. Carlson's comments earlier about Gary not signing the easements and holding up the project. Mr. Gillespie sees the biggest problem being that the local residents and businesses oppose the way the levees are being built. He feels there has also been a lack of communication in that people weren't given the opportunity to have input as to the levee design or location. He indicated the way the levee is laid out is creating wetlands.

Mr. Gillespie would like to see the plans modified. Mr. Gardner replied that it is too late to change the basic plan but minor adjustments are possible. The Commission has always supported the best plan for Gary with the least amount of land affected. The Congress authorized construction of the plan in 1986 and the only choice today is to have the federal protection plan constructed or to have no protection. The Development Commission, along with Congressman Visclosky and Senators Lugar and Coats, fought for equal structural flood protection for Gary, even though in 1986 the Reagan administration policies favored only limited protection and much more extensive floodplain reservation from future development. Only through extensive efforts did Gary receive equal treatment in terms of flood protection measures. The reasons for Gary's flooding problems are several: (1) its location relative to the flow direction of the Little Calumet River (downstream of Hammond, Highland, Griffith, Munster

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areas); (2) the low topography and natural wetland conditions along the river throughout Gary; (3) constructed "obstructions" to river flow over the years in the form of the culverts carrying roads over the river and most importantly the construction of I-80/94 through Gary in the late 1950's/1960's which created culvert obstructions; and (4) Federal and State environmental permit/regulations regarding removing wetlands and building in floodplains greatly restricting development of the Gary floodplain/wetlands. In Hammond, for example, the levees were built with City funds, at a time (1960's) when permits were much less restrictive, and the topography and soils of Hammond are slightly more accommodating of urban development.

In regard to the plan and the required property easements: (1) the Development Commission is committed to flow improvement projects (culvert replacement with bridges and elevating roads/interchanges) to increase river flow and water capacity; the Development Commission is paying fair market appraised price for easements, not outright ownership of the property to allow \$9.2 million of federal construction to protect Gary urban (I.U. campus, Postal facility site) and recreation (Gleason 18 hole golf course, stadium area) property. The project once constructed will open up additional land for urban development/redevelopment. The channel will flow more efficiently and only in rare occasions will water be present within the levee system to contain major floods, and then for a matter of a few days.

The Corps has developed this plan based on hydrology. Just dredging the river is not the answer. If you did do that, the channel all the way from Stateline to Martin Luther King would have to be 200' wide, which is impossible.

Mr. Tanke stated that originally the river flowed from east to west back in 1910 but man changed/reversed the river to flow west to east. There is very little fall to the area and because the area along the river is so flat, the water has to be contained for a short time.

Mr. Gillespie inquired about plans east of Martin Luther King. Mr. Gardner answered that originally the Corps plan called for the project to end at MLK. Recently, they have changed their position and are going to add a levee section to the east to further insure protection to development. Mr. Gardner again stated that we are committed 100% to maximum protection for Gary; we are committed to maximum recreational development that we are able; and we are responsible for levee maintenance after the project is complete.

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Mr. Gillespie invited the Commission to hold a monthly meeting in the city of Gary.

Stanley Petrites expressed concern about potential water coming around Ultra and once again flooding would exist. Mr. Gardner replied that all measures of protection are being considered.

There being no further business, the next Commission meeting was scheduled for Thursday, May 4, 1995. That meeting will be held back in Portage at the Commission office.

/sjm

