



South Bend

# Redevelopment Commission

215 S. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Room 301, South Bend, Indiana

## Minutes

Regular Meeting

January 22, 2026 – 9:30 a.m.

City Hall Council Chambers 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor or via:

<https://tinyurl.com/RDC2025-2026-Meetings>

Meeting Recording Link: <https://tinyurl.com/RDC-Meeting-Recordings>

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The South Bend Redevelopment Commission was called to order at 9:30 a.m.

President Troy Warner presiding.

### 1. ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Troy Warner, President  
Dave Relos, Vice President  
Eli Wax, Secretary  
Gillian Shaw, Commissioner  
Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers, Commissioner  
Marcus Ellison, Non-Voting Advisor

Legal Counsel:

Jenna Throw, City Attorney

Redevelopment Staff:

Erik Glavich, Director of Growth and Opportunity, DCI - Virtual  
Lewis Kouassi, Director of Finance, DCI  
Joseph Molnar, Asst. Dir. of Growth and Opp., DCI  
Erin Michaels, Property Development Manager, DCI  
Abigail Magas, City Engineer  
Leslie Biek, Assistant City Engineer  
Darryl Scott, Chief of Staff  
Bianca Jones, Interim Officer of Diversity, Compliance & Inclusion  
Laura Hensley, Board Secretary, DCI  
Nicolas Munsen, Assistant City Attorney

Attending:

Tim Widerquist, , Widerquist Development, LLC  
Karl Widerquist, , Widerquist Development, LLC  
Matt Barrett, 110 S. Niles Ave.  
Tina Patton, 7070 Sherman Ave.

**2. Approval of Minutes****A. Approval of Minutes of the Regular Meeting of Thursday, January 8, 2026**

Upon a motion by Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers for approval, second by Eli Wax, the motion carried unanimously; the Commission approved the minutes of the regular meeting of January 8, 2026.

**3. Approval of Claims****A. Claims Allowances January 14, 2026**

Upon a motion by Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers for approval second by David Relos, the motion carried unanimously; the Commission approved the claims allowances of January 14, 2026.

**4. Old Business****A. None****5. New Business****A. River West Development Area**

1. Resolution No. 3663 (Establishing the Offering Price, Approving Bid Specifications, and Approving Notice of Intended Disposition of 1818 W. Sample St.)

Erin Michaels, Property Development Manager, presented the proposed disposition of a City-owned parcel at 1818 W. Sample St. The property is located along West Sample St. near the Ice Box and the Lippert plant.

The RDC acquired the 2.71-acre parcel in 2002. It is zoned Industrial (I). Historical aerials show it remained vacant until 1972, when it was converted into a parking lot, which has been its sole use ever since. We now have interest in redeveloping the site for a more productive purpose. Disposition is the first required step in that process.

The minimum bid is \$71,325, which is the average of two recent appraisals. Bids are due February 12, 2026, at 9:00 AM and will be opened publicly at the RDC meeting at 9:30 AM that same day.

President Warner inquired about the disposition process and Ms. Michaels stated, that State law requires the Redevelopment Commission to offer any Commission-owned parcel for disposition before we can begin negotiations. To do that, we present a resolution to the Commission. If approved, we publish a Notice of Intended Disposition in the *South Bend Tribune* for two consecutive Fridays. During that period, we accept bids from interested parties.

All bids must follow the requirements in the disposition packet, which will be available online and in physical form at City Hall. If we receive any bids, we will open them publicly at the February 12th RDC meeting and review them for compliance. If we receive no bids, state law requires a 30-day waiting period. After those 30 days, we may begin negotiations, and at that point the minimum bid price is no longer fixed at \$71,325. This allows flexibility in negotiating the purchase price and terms.

Tina Patton stated that she noticed in the notes that there has been interest in redeveloping this property. Her question is: does that interest involve a bar, a gas station, or any other use that wouldn't be considered family-friendly? Joseph Molnar, Assistant Director of Growth and Opportunity, explained that the interest we've received so far has not involved any of those types of uses. However, one of the reasons we're moving this property through the formal disposition process is that we cannot discuss or negotiate with anyone until that process is complete. This resolution is the first step. Ultimately, the Commission has full authority over whether to sell the property, and any interested party would be required to clearly state their intended use up front. If someone proposed a gas station or liquor store, staff would be unlikely to recommend that use. But final approval rests with the Redevelopment Commission.

Upon a motion by David Relos for approval, seconded by Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers, the motion carried unanimously; the Commission approved Resolution No. 3663 as presented on January 22, 2026.

2. Purchase Agreement for 534 Laporte Ave. (Widerquist Development, LLC)

Erin Michaels, Property Development Manager, explained that this property went through disposition a few months ago. It is a small former service station on LaPorte Ave., just north of City Cemetery. The parcel is approximately 0.11 acres and includes a 250-square-foot structure. It is zoned Urban Neighborhood Flex. The Board of Public Works acquired the former pump station in 2017, removed the underground tanks, and transferred it to the RDC in 2023 to support potential redevelopment.

Widerquist Development is a local developer with more than 30 renovated properties in South Bend, many of them located just down the street from this site. The photos illustrate the before-and-after improvements they have completed on other buildings in the area, highlighting their work on both exterior and interior upgrades.

Purchase Agreement – Key Terms

- Purchase Price: \$2,000

- Minimum Investment: \$20,000
- Planned Use: Renovate the building into an office for their business
- Due Diligence Period: 60 days
- Closing Deadline: 30 days after due diligence
- Construction Start: Within 12 months of closing
- Construction Completion: Within 24 months of closing
- Certificate of Completion: Required from the RDC once the project is finished

Tim Widerquist added that he's been investing in this intersection for about ten years, and this property has been an ongoing eyesore. Mr. Widerquist buys and rents residential properties nearby, and its poor condition makes it harder for him to rent his places across the street. Cleaning it up and relocating his office would improve the appearance of his properties and the neighborhood overall.

LaPorte and Walnut are important intersections coming out of downtown. There's renewed energy in the area, and he believes this site can serve as an anchor for cleanliness and continued improvement.

Commissioner Gooden-Rodgers spoke in favor of the project. Secretary Wax asked what the average appraisals were when the property was put through disposition and Ms. Michaels stated \$5,000. Vice President Relos asked if utilities would be needed, what hours the office would be open, and if there was a historic designation on this site. Mr. Widerquist stated that his plans will be a leasing office with hours of operation by appointment and that water and electric will be needed at this site. Ms. Michaels confirmed that there are no historic designations at this property.

Upon a motion by Gillian Shaw for approval, seconded by Eli Wax, the motion carried unanimously; the Commission approved the Purchase Agreement as presented on January 22, 2026.

#### B. River East Development Area

##### 1. Budget Request (Mishawaka Streetscape)

Leslie Biek, Assistant City Engineer, presented a request for an additional appropriation to cover project change orders. This project was bid in February, with limits from Longfellow to Emerson. The West side, from Longfellow to the overpass, received full streetscape treatment. East of the railroad tracks to Emerson, we completed a lighter streetscape focused mainly on utility connections. The project included a new bike path on the south side of the road, upgraded utilities, and our standard streetscape elements.

The work is substantially complete, but a few remaining items will be finished once materials arrive or when weather allows in the Spring. The largest unforeseen cost came from removing old railroad ties left from the former trolley. We knew the trolley had run through the corridor and estimated removal needs, but once construction began, we found the ties conflicted with nearly all work on the south side of the road—and they were fully encased in concrete. Partial removal wasn't feasible and would have cost as much as full removal while also delaying the project, so we removed the entire section. This item alone accounted for about \$380,000, roughly half of the total change orders.

The financial summary shown here reflects updated funding, including preliminary engineering dollars from River East and transferred funds from the Kelly's Pub project, due to shared site work. We are requesting an additional \$200,000 to complete the project.

Vice President Relos asked, what is left to do in the Spring. Ms. Biek stated trees will be planted in the Spring rather than the Fall. A small amount of paver work is still underway. The main delay is the new signal arm—right now the intersection is operating as a temporary four-way stop with LED flashers. Once the signal arm arrives, we'll be able to put the traffic signal into full operation at Longfellow.

Permanent striping will also be completed in the Spring. As for sidewalks, we installed new sidewalk on the west side of the tracks, and a significant amount on the south side east of the tracks where it was needed for utility work. We also added some on the North side based on project needs.

Commissioner Shaw asked what we could learn from this mistake and Ms. Biek explained that Engineering did take some pavement cores, but they focused on areas where the new utilities were being installed, which was mostly in the center of the roadway—not where the old trolley tracks were located. We can definitely take additional cores, especially near inlets and other locations where we may have conflicts underground, to get a better understanding of what remains beneath the surface.

Matt Barrett asked, it appears this work has already been completed, so he's wondering what the process is for handling change orders. Additionally, if the Redevelopment Commission does not approve the funding, where would the money come from? Ms. Biek responded, since the work has already been completed and the City has directed its removal, if the Commission does not approve this request, we will need

to identify an alternative funding source to cover the cost. The change order will follow our standard project procedure and be approved through the Board of Public Works. Commissioner Wax also spoke in favor of policy for appropriations.

Upon a motion by David Relos for approval, seconded by Gillian Shaw, the motion carried unanimously; the Commission approved the Budget Request as presented on January 22, 2026.

C. Redevelopment General Fund (a.k.a Pokagon-South Bend Fund)

1. Budget Request (2026 Business Assistance Suite)

Bianca Jones, Interim Officer of Diversity, Compliance & Inclusion, presented an overview of the Small Business Assistance Suite. This program has been operating for about four and a half years and is structured as a cohort-based business readiness program designed to build capacity for local businesses. We don't provide grants; instead, we focus on business readiness and improving access to capital. Our program includes workshops on legal compliance, business operations, financial management, marketing, and more. Each participant is paired with a business coach who helps with goal-setting, progress tracking, and coordinating support services such as legal and accounting assistance from licensed professionals.

So far in 2025, we've supported 77 businesses through coaching and professional services. Three businesses accessed the City's revolving loan fund, and six were connected to resources for MBE/WBE certification. Overall, we help businesses strengthen their financial and operational systems, increase their use of professional service providers, and prepare for funding, contracting, and staffing opportunities.

Key outcomes are that we track the number of businesses completing the cohort, readiness milestones like financial systems and legal documentation, and businesses pursuing contract or funding opportunities. We also measure growth in hiring and engagement with professional service providers.

Ms. Jones is requesting a \$100,000 allocation from the Pokagon South Bend Fund to sustain and scale the program. This funding will support cohort-based training, program oversight, and reporting. We plan to serve at least 40 businesses, with approximately \$2,000 invested per business, and continue strengthening the local pipeline of contract-ready and capital-ready businesses.

Secretary Wax asked, do you recall last year's allocation? Ms. Jones responded that the Small Business Assistance Suite received \$85,000 in

2025. Regarding the \$2,000 per business for direct readiness support: each participant typically receives about ten hours of coaching, at roughly \$75 per hour. We also cover professional service costs, for example, setting up financial systems like QuickBooks or Wave, which we provide at no cost for several months. Participants may also work with attorneys for contracts, partnership agreements, and similar needs. The \$2,000 reflects the value of these services, not direct cash assistance.

These services are not provided by City staff. We contract with outside providers. For the past several years, the program has been administered by the IMPower Center, which recruits coaches and professional service providers. We vetted them to ensure they meet program requirements, and then they are brought on accordingly.

Commissioner Shaw asked for more details on why the program plans to increase support per business while serving fewer businesses overall. Ms. Jones replied that, previously, the program worked more like an à-la-carte model—businesses received one-off services, such as legal help, but we had limited follow-up and mixed long-term results. By reducing the number of participants, we can provide deeper, more consistent support and track outcomes throughout the year. We also found that many businesses reapplied because the initial assistance wasn't enough. Although we've had about 800 applications, the actual number of unique businesses is closer to 500–600, since many returned seeking additional help.

Commissioner Gooden-Rodgers asked, of the 77 businesses you mentioned, how are you measuring success? Are these businesses still operating, and where is this program advertised? If someone wants to start a small business, how would they know how to get involved? Ms. Jones explained that our follow-up shows that most of the businesses we supported last year are still operating. At the end of each year, we send a questionnaire to check on their progress. Many have secured new contracts—both private and City-related—and six have completed MBE/WBE certification. Several have also accessed the Revolving Loan Fund or expanded their business activity.

Currently, we advertise mainly through Facebook and word of mouth, and we're working to strengthen our marketing strategy. Because many participants are newer businesses, we also coordinate with ecosystem partners who focus on early-stage startups. For example, programs like the South Bend Entrepreneurship Adversity Program help entrepreneurs get registered with the Secretary of State, and once they complete that program, they qualify for ours.

Commissioner Shaw asked the question, how are businesses prioritized when there are far more applicants than available spots. Ms. Jones explained that the 800 applications represent four years of submissions, with about 100 last year. Previously, the program supported anyone starting a business, but this year it prioritizes businesses that align with City purchasing needs and can create measurable impact. There is no race or gender consideration—the program is open to any small, local business in South Bend. Demographic questions remain on the application only for historical data purposes.

Joseph Molnar, Assistant Director of Growth and Opportunity, wanted to clarify, “These funds come specifically from the Pokagon South Bend Fund, which is tied to the City’s agreement with the Four Winds Casino. The agreement states that these dollars must support initiatives that improve educational opportunities and address poverty and unemployment in the city. These funds are separate from our standard TIF resources, and I wanted to make that distinction clear for the public.”

Upon a motion by Ophelia Gooden-Rodgers for approval, seconded by Gillian Shaw, the motion carried unanimously; the Commission approved the Budget Request as presented on January 22, 2026.

## **6. Progress Reports**

A. Tax Abatement  
None

B. Common Council  
None

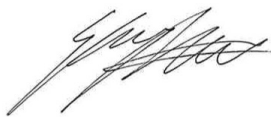
C. Update – Ivy Alley  
Joseph Molnar, Assistant Director of Growth and Opportunity, stated that we will give an update at the February 12, 2026 meeting.

## **7. Next Commission Meeting**

Thursday, February 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m., City Hall Council Chambers 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor

## **8. Adjournment**

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 10:11 a.m.



Eli Wax, Secretary



Troy Warner, President