Town of Merrillville
Redevelopment Commission Meeting Minutes
July 28, 2026, 6:00 pm
Merrillville Municipal Complex

Call to Order
Mr. Pettit called the meeting to order at 6:08 pm.

Roll Call
Ms. Hardaway took roll call. The following members were present: Mr. Pettit, Ms. Uzelac, and Ms. Haynes-Edwards. The following members were absent: Ms. Chandler-Felton. There were 4 members present; there was a quorum.

Consent Agenda Accts. Payable Register Voucher Approval for July 28th, 2026.
Approval of Meeting Minutes from June 23rd, 2026. Ms. Uzelac made a motion to approve, seconded by Ms. Haynes-Edwards; there was no discussion. The motion was carried with a voice vote of 4 yes and 0 no.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

- LPA consulting contract.

  Project Description: Construction Engineering for the sidewalk and drainage project within the Merrillville Heights neighborhood on Catherine Street from 73rd to 70th Avenue in the Town of Merrillville.

Mr. Pettit referred the matter to Mr. Griffin, Town Manager, and Ms. Chilcott, Economic Development Director. Mr. Griffin asked Ms. Chilcott if she wished for him to address the Commission, and she indicated that she did.

Mr. Griffin addressed the Commission and stated that Ben Eldridge of VS Engineering was present regarding a project that had been underway for some time. He explained that VS Engineering had completed the design work and that the project was ready to proceed to the bidding phase. The remaining service needed was construction inspection services, formerly referred to as construction engineering. Mr. Griffin explained that, under the applicable law, engineering firms are permitted to both design and inspect their work. He recommended that the Commission approve the agreement.

Mr. Griffin stated that the project was not federally funded and appeared to be funded entirely through allocation area proceeds. He explained that the agreement was necessary to allow the project to proceed and that, as the project moves forward, the Town would begin billing for construction costs associated with the allocation area.

Mr. Griffin asked Mr. Eldridge if he knew the estimated construction cost for the project. Mr. Eldridge stated that he did not have that information at the time. Mr. Griffin indicated that he would obtain the construction cost estimate.

Mr. Pettit noted that the contract amount was $80,000. Mr. Griffin clarified that the $80,000 represented VS Engineering's fee for construction inspection services. He further stated that he did not see the project included in the Town's prepared spending plan required by law and that the spending plan could be modified to include the project. He indicated that the Town would obtain the necessary construction cost information and asked the Commission to consider modifying the spending plan accordingly.

Ms. Uzelac asked whether the Commission could vote on the item without having the additional construction amounts available. Mr. Griffin responded that he believed the Commission was already committed to moving the project forward and explained the project had been initiated under the previous Street Director. He stated that he was currently serving as

both Acting Street Director and Town Manager.

Mr. Griffin recommended that the Commission proceed with the agreement, stating that the project was part of a process previously established by the Town. He emphasized the importance of maintaining a consistent paper trail and stated that he did not believe the project would significantly deplete the resources of the allocation area most closely associated with it. He noted that obtaining the agreement was necessary to move forward with the bidding process and begin construction.

Mr. Griffin further stated that the sidewalk area was in need of repair and that the Town had received a call from a resident inquiring about the project's status. He stated that Mr. Riley, Town Media Officer, had taken the call and that he would follow up with the resident.

Ms. Uzelac asked for clarification regarding the $80,000 amount. Mr. Griffin confirmed that $80,000 was the amount of the proposed fee. Ms. Uzelac asked whether the amount represented a fee, and Mr. Griffin confirmed that it was VS Engineering fee for construction inspection services. He explained that the services would involve overseeing the construction to ensure that, once the project was bid, the contractor complied with the specifications and plans developed for the project.

Ms. Uzelac asked whether there was an estimate of the additional construction costs. Mr. Griffin indicated that the information was not yet available.

Mr. Pettit stated that the project was located on the north side of 73rd Avenue, extending toward Pierce Street. He recalled that during Mr. Spires tenure as Town Manager, drawings for the project had been provided and may still be located in the Town Administration office or Streets Department. Mr. Pettit stated that he had seen the drawings and that residents had been asking about the project, including a resident near the corner of 73rd Avenue and Cathrine Street who had inquired on several occasions, including during the Fourth of July parade.

Mr. Griffin stated that once all bids were received and recommendations were ready to be presented to the Commission, the Commission would have the actual construction cost and would then consider approving the bid and construction contract. He explained that if the project were being funded through appropriate funds, an appropriation would be required before the Town could make a commitment. However, because this project was being funded through an allocation area, the spending plan could be modified as necessary. Mr. Griffin stated that he was not concerned about the availability of resources to support the project and recommended that the Commission approve the agreement so the process could move forward. He explained that the agreement would allow VS Engineering to prepare the specifications, advertise the project, solicit bids, and provide construction inspection services for the project.

Ms. Uzelac asked whether Mr. Griffin was recommending that the Commission vote on the project at the current meeting. Mr. Griffin clarified that he was recommending approval of the VS Engineering agreement and stated that the actual construction project and contract would be brought back before the Commission at a later date.

Ms. Haynes-Edwards asked whether the agreement was solely for supervision of the construction. Mr. Griffin confirmed that it was and further explained that the $80,000 fee would cover construction inspection services through completion of the project. He stated that VS Engineering could not bill the Town if the project did not proceed and that the project was expected to move forward.

Ms. Uzelac asked when the Commission would receive an estimate of the construction cost. Mr. Griffin stated that he could request an estimate from VS Engineering, but that the Commission would ultimately receive an actual construction cost based on the bids received from the marketplace. Ms. Uzelac stated that she would like to have an estimated cost before voting on the agreement. Mr. Eldridge requested additional time to provide the estimate and apologized, explaining that he was new to VS Engineering and had inherited the project.

Other Business – Roundabout Projects

Mr. Pettit brought up several items of old business that he had previously discussed with Ms. Chilcott. He stated that the Town had received an 80/20 federal funding match for two roundabout projects at 69th Avenue and 79th Avenue. Mr. Pettit noted that Butler, Fairman & Seufert had designed both projects and that Mr. Griffin had taken over responsibilities previously handled by the Street Director.

Mr. Pettit discussed an upcoming meeting regarding the 79th Avenue and Mississippi Street roundabout, which he described as a challenging project due to its location near Costco. He stated that, although he had previously expressed concerns about the project, he did not believe the Town should decline approximately $700 million in federal funding. He noted that the Town would be responsible for 20% of the project costs.

Mr. Pettit requested that Ms. Chilcott coordinate with the City of Hobart to determine whether Hobart would participate in sharing the local 20% match, since the roundabouts would affect both Merrillville and Hobart. He stated that approximately 10% of Merrillville's share would come from the Mississippi Street Allocation Area. He also noted that a property owner on the east side of Mississippi Street had cleared the acreage and was planning future development. Mr. Pettit asked Ms. Chilcott and Mr. Griffin to discuss the matter with Hobart and determine whether the City would be willing to participate at a greater level.

Ms. Uzelac asked whether the project was located behind Costco, and Mr. Pettit confirmed that it was. Discussion followed regarding the project.

Mr. Pettit asked Mr. Eldridge whether he had obtained an estimate for the VS Engineering project and asked if there was anything further to discuss. Ms. Chilcott stated that all matters had been covered.

State Project – Road 55 /73rd Street Intersection

Mr. Griffin informed the Commission that he was involved in a meeting with the State of Indiana was planning a project involving improvements to the intersection of Broadway and Road 55/73rd Street. He stated that the Fire Chief and Police Chief were unable to attend the meeting but had expressed concerns regarding the project, particularly the potential impact on emergency response times.

Mr. Griffin stated that the State was expected to request a local participation agreement from the Town. He explained that the State was primarily driving the project and that he intended to attend future meetings concerning the project. He noted that the State was proposing a roundabout at the intersection.

Mr. Pettit confirmed that the intersection being discussed was Road 55 and 73rd Street, and Mr. Griffin confirmed that it was. Mr. Griffin stated that one of the Town's primary concerns was the availability of alternate routes during construction. He indicated that construction was tentatively anticipated to occur during the latter part of 2027 and into early 2028 for construction. Mr. Griffin stated that he was not sure how far along the Whitcomb Street project would be at that time, but that it was one of the alternative routes discussed at the meeting. He stated that Mr. Lake, Stormwater Utility Executive Director, attended the meeting and that his participation was helpful. Mr. Griffin expressed hope that the Town would be contacted more effectively regarding future meetings.

Ms. Uzelac asked whether Mr. Griffin was referring to the roundabout near Calumet Park Cemetery, located at 2305 W. 73rd Avenue. Mr. Griffin stated that he did not know the exact location but believed it was at 73rd Avenue and Broadway.

Mr. Pettit stated that there appeared to be two separate roundabout projects. He also noted that Commissioner Chandler-Felton had arrived and apologized for not recognizing her arrival sooner. Mr. Pettit stated that there had been a public hearing regarding the roundabout at 73rd Avenue and Taft Street, which is an INDOT project.

He stated that the roundabout at the intersection of Road 55 and 73rd Avenue that Mr. Griffin was discussing must be a separate project.

Mr. Griffin explained that the U.S. 55 and 73rd Avenue project was an older project that had previously gone out for bids. The bids came in higher than anticipated, so the project was delayed. He stated that the State had indicated, based on information provided by the engineering firm involved with the project, that there had been several accidents at the location and that the proposed improvements were intended to address future safety concerns. Mr. Griffin stated that the current design was the recommended design, but that there were still several matters that needed to be discussed before the project could be finalized. One concern raised was whether a fire truck would be able to navigate the roundabout. Discussion followed.

Mr. Eldridge came to the podium to provide information regarding the project estimate. He explained that the $80,000 cost was for project inspection services, which are required for federally funded projects as part of the documentation submitted to INDOT. He stated that the design work had been completed and that the estimated construction cost was $1.35 million. If bids come in as anticipated, the Town's local portion would be approximately $270,000. The project is expected to be bid in November, with construction scheduled to begin the following year. Mr. Eldridge further explained that the inspection cost would be 100% locally funded. Discussion followed.

Mr. Pettit, under the recommendation of Mr. Griffin, asked whether the Commission wished to approve the contract with VS Engineering for construction services. Ms. Uzelac made a motion to approve the contract with VS Engineering, seconded by Ms. Hardaway. There was no further discussion. The motion carried by voice vote, with 5 members voting yes and 0 voting no.

Ms. Uzelac asked whether any TIF funds would be used for the project. Mr. Griffin confirmed that TIF funds would be used and stated that the funding would come from the Broadway TIF.

General Orders: None.

Adjournment: Ms. Uzelac motions to adjourn, seconded by Ms. Hardaway at 6:23 pm.

Adopted on: *August 25, 2026*