

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO  
PLAN COMMISSION

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Val Gomez, President  
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Douglas Sloss, Commissioner  
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Regular Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 16, 2019 @ 4:30 p.m.

Reported for Fissinger & Associates  
By: Lisa Pena

CALL TO ORDER: 4:30 p.m.

Roll Call: Present: Val Gomez, Anthony Serna, Lilia Ramos,  
Monique Kurmis, Joanne Moricz, Christine Vasquez, Douglas  
Sloss, William Allen, Lydia Lopez.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Meeting of Monday, December 2, 2019

Comments/Questions: None

Motion to approve December 2, 2019 Meeting Minutes made by  
Douglas Sloss.

Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None  
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

NEW BUSINESS:

CITY PLANNER'S REPORT:

MR. GOMEZ: We'll move on to New Business. We have the  
City Planner's Report. There are two items on our agenda.  
Mr. Morrisroe.

MR. MORRISROE: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to a full

1 quorum meeting, full Commission meeting. We've had quorums.  
2 We haven't had all.

3 I'd like to welcome back some who because of  
4 sickness or other reasons have not been able to be with us.  
5 Thank you for coming.

6 We're switching the order of these. The  
7 Fitzsimmons Legal Status, Attorney Vis has to be in St. John  
8 for a meeting. And Mr. Mitchell who is here for Nana's  
9 Bakery was kind enough to let him go first.

10 So his presentation concerns what we're calling the  
11 Fitzsimmons Building. It's where the Fitzsimmons Furniture  
12 Store was at 138th and Main Street.

13 Fitzsimmons died and Fitzsimmons lives again. The  
14 furniture store went and somehow the name has stayed.

15 So, Nathan, if you would. Mr. Vis.

16 MR. VIS: Thank you, Mr. Morrisroe. Members of the  
17 Commission, good afternoon. Merry Christmas and Happy  
18 Holidays to everyone.

19 Mr. President, thank you for the opportunity to let  
20 me share a few minutes with you. As well, Mr. Mitchell, I  
21 appreciate the time and opportunity to go first. I have to  
22 Chair a Cedar Lake Redevelopment Commission Meeting after  
23 this at 5:30.

24 So like you I sit in these chairs and help make the  
25 decisions for our Community. So thank you for your work and  
time that you put in.

I've been retained by the Redevelopment Commission  
as well as I think assisting the East Chicago Urban  
Enterprise Association to assist with the development that we  
all fondly refer to as the Fitzsimmons Project.

I've been retained specifically to assist with the  
preparation of the Condominium Association that is going to  
be governing that particular set of buildings.

And as we all know the bottom floor along Main  
Street we've crafted and we've built several commercial  
units. Some which are smaller. Some which are larger.  
Above that we have condominium units. And then as we go down  
the adjacent side street we have several town homes.

1           And in the preparation of that documentation went  
2 back with City Officials and took a look at it. And we came  
3 to realize that we may have briefly put the cart before the  
4 horse.

5           And what I mean by that is the property was built.  
6 It was built beautifully. If you've not been there, I  
7 encourage you to contact perhaps the listing agent, Lynn  
8 Watkins, or others to take a walk through it. It's a  
9 wonderful contribution to the community especially in the  
10 Downtown area.

11           The only difficulty is that some of the residential  
12 units and town homes have been built right on Main Street  
13 right along the street and right on ground level. And that  
14 is built in an area that's known as C3 or the North Harbor  
15 Business District.

16           And the North Harbor Business District is broken up  
17 into three different parcels. There's 01. There's 02 and  
18 there's a straight up C3 North Harbor Business District.

19           As it turns out in the North Harbor Business  
20 District which is where this is located the way that our  
21 forefathers crafted our ordinances technically residential is  
22 not supposed to be allowed at the ground level. But as you  
23 can see we have a predicament.

24           And in order to get past that predicament what we  
25 are looking for is a Special Use Variance to allow that those  
town homes can sit where they're currently located. Not only  
sit there, but that they can be used for residential  
purposes. So that is the purpose of our first request.

          The second request is this. As we delved earlier  
into our ordinances there's a specific section I've noted if  
I can briefly turn your attention to it. I'll just summarize  
it if you turn to it.

          And that is for any commercial space that is  
crafted and built for every 200 square feet of flooring that  
is within that premises you're supposed to have one off  
street parking that is dedicated to it.

          And again when we think back to the folks that  
crafted and designed the Fitzsimmons Project trying to  
maximize as much as possible what is left is approximately 11  
to 13 parking spots in the back of the building that are to  
service I believe four commercial spaces, three town homes

1 and four condo units.

2 So as we do the math there's about one parking,  
3 1.1 parking spaces per each of those units. And several of  
4 these commercial spaces exceed 200 square feet. I believe  
5 two of them are a little over 400.

6 So we're in a quandary there. And we're afoul of  
7 the City Ordinances there as well.

8 As I just look at within a 300 foot radius of the  
9 front of the building off Main Street and I believe it's  
10 138th by my count there's approximately 18 parking spaces  
11 within 300 feet. Great walking distance.

12 You have the park right across the way. Phenomenal  
13 on street parking. I'm jealous of that. I wish we had it in  
14 Cedar Lake. But we don't. But you've got great off street  
15 parking.

16 So in order to specifically comply with your  
17 ordinances what we are specifically requesting this evening  
18 and to move forward with is to seek a Special Use 01 within  
19 C3 and North Harbor Business District, that we petition for a  
20 location specifically to allow residential units at all  
21 levels. I've cited to the specific sections of the code.

22 And then secondly in regards to Code 17.16090 to  
23 waive the parking requirement mandating one parking space per  
24 each 200 square feet of ground floor area.

25 And I briefly enunciated. I'm happy to elongate on  
that for future adoption by the BZA that it will not be  
injurious to the public health, safety, morals and general  
welfare, that it will not adversely impact the property  
values. If anything I believe it's a substantial  
improvement, increase to property values in that area.

We're incorporating residential intertwined with  
commercial. We're utilizing those spaces not only during the  
business day. But I call it 24 hours a day of foot traffic  
through those areas which I believe is really helpful in  
attracting new businesses to the area.

There's definitely a need for the variance. The  
properties are already built. So it definitely needs to be  
approved. And it definitely does not interfere with the  
master plan of the City of East Chicago.

1 This was specifically designed and built with the  
2 collaboration of your Redevelopment Commission as well as the  
3 East Chicago Urban Enterprise Association.

4 Also attached is a map that shows this particular  
5 area. Couldn't really blow it up. But if you would look on  
6 the right-hand side about a third of the way down you'll see  
7 a red T on the map in front of you.

8 So if you go down the shaft of the T in that red  
9 area, that's specifically where the Fitzsimmons Project is  
10 located.

11 So you can see right to the backside of it is  
12 something that's zoned C2 which is General Commercial. And  
13 then immediately adjacent to that is either R3 Residential  
14 Multifamily Dwelling, two-row story houses or R4 Multifamily  
15 Dwelling, three-row story more or less right adjacent to it.  
16 So we can see how it intertwines.

17 The other item that I would indicate is that  
18 elsewhere within the C3 District there are other districts  
19 that specifically allow on floor or on the ground residential  
20 dwellings. For some reason the North Shore area where this  
21 is built specifically did not. So it's not as if we're  
22 venturing too far afield.

23 And then the last three pages if you turn to  
24 page 4 I'll turn your attention to where it says 156.216.  
25 You'll see there Table 6.

Table 6 you'll see there's a column marked C3  
Business District as well as Special Use 01. And again for  
reasons that I do not know of initially C3 did not allow for  
residential units at all levels. And that would be the  
variance that we would be requesting here.

So with that, Mr. President, I will entertain any  
questions.

MR. MORRISROE: If I may, Mr. President, this is also to  
go before the BZA. So what he has prepared is both for your  
reading and for the BZA. So they will consider this as well.  
And we're preparing for that.

You're approving it and the BZA is approving it.

MR. GOMEZ: And there is no need for Council approval  
yet?

1 MR. MORRISROE: I don't believe it needs councilmanic  
approval. But we'll check that.

2  
3 MR. VIS: I don't perceive that it does either. I  
believe specifically it's Plan Commission and BZA. But  
4 counting on Mr. Morrisroe to get the necessary approvals if  
this body approves it.

5 MR. GOMEZ: So at this point you're just asking for  
approval of a motion to approve Petition for Variance,  
6 Mr. Morrisroe?

7 MR. MORRISROE: Yes.

8 MR. GOMEZ: Are there any questions or comments?

9 MS. VASQUEZ: I have one. So regarding the parking are  
the residents, not the commercial, the residents that are  
10 going to live in those units are they going to have special  
assigned parking?

11  
12 MR. VIS: Yeah. So if you can envision it's an L shape  
and then to the back a postage stamp. There are parking  
lots. And there's specifically for sure one for each unit.  
13 So one will be designated to each of the units as a minimum.

14 And then the town homes they have on street parking  
right in front. So if those persons that occupy those units  
15 need additional there would be on street parking as well.

16 MS. VASQUEZ: Is that directly behind the building or on  
the side?

17  
18 MR. VIS: They're directly behind. I'm still in the  
process of obtaining as built other drawings.

19 MR. MORRISROE: They're behind. But only one per unit.

20 MR. VIS: We also had to maintain some space for garbage  
disposal, et cetera. But the space is very well maximized  
21 back there.

22 MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions or comments?

23 Comments/Questions: None.

24 Motion to approve Petition for Variance for the Fitzsimmons  
Project made by Anthony Serna. Second by Monique Kurmis.

25

1 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None  
2 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

3 MR. GOMEZ: Thank you.

4 MR. VIS: Thank you. Appreciate it.

5 MR. GOMEZ: Next on our agenda, Mr. Morrisroe.

6 MR. MORRISROE: Yes. If I may Mr. Mitchell is a general  
7 contractor for Nana's Bakery. This is at the corner of Main  
8 and Broadway. It is a new structure built some five, seven  
9 years ago. But has remained empty, the lower floor for all  
10 of that time. And at this point Mr. Mitchell has a proposal.

11 MR. MITCHELL: Good evening. My name is David Mitchell,  
12 Mitchell Construction on behalf the Hispanic Community  
13 Development.

14 We're looking to build Nana's Bakery at 3636 Main  
15 Street. And what it's going to detail is an awning, a hood,  
16 two ADA bathrooms. It's just walk up customers.

17 There's going to be I would imagine, I'm trying to  
18 remember the plan, like 350 square foot for walk in customers  
19 to come in. There's not going to be seating. But we are  
20 going to have a ledge by the window if someone wants to come  
21 in and have a coffee or a doughnut before they walk on. But  
22 it's going to be mostly walk up business for her.

23 They have seven parking spots in the back of the  
24 building. And they have 15 parking spots outside the  
25 building which is shared by CVS. But her main focus of  
business will be walkups.

There's a lot of foot traffic going up and down the  
street. And there is parking if they need it. But other  
than that we're just going to be putting a stove, a hood,  
couple of coolers.

We're putting new lighting, LED per the lighting  
code. We're going to install a new furnace with air  
conditioning and put new floor tiles in and ceiling tiles.

That's the scope of her work which is going to be  
right around \$36,000.

MR. GOMEZ: I believe you went before Tech Review?

1 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, sir.

2 MR. GOMEZ: Mr. Morrisroe, we're there any issues at  
3 Tech Review?

4 MR. MORRISROE: Tech Review was very positive. However  
5 there's some continuing communication with the Fire  
6 Department.

7 MR. MITCHELL: The Fire Department, I dropped off the  
8 DVD with the original build out which he received. And he  
9 reviewed and said it looked fine.

10 And the other one was for the sewer which we didn't  
11 have to go into the main sewer. We have a sewer that was  
12 built when the building was originally under construction.

13 MR. MORRISROE: So I believe the issues, the remaining  
14 issues have been addressed.

15 MR. GOMEZ: So no issues with Tech Review. Any  
16 questions or comments?

17 MS. MORICZ: I have a question. Will there be any  
18 public restrooms in there?

19 MR. MITCHELL: Yes, ma'am. We have one ADA. And then  
20 we have another ADA for the employees. So there will be two  
21 bathrooms.

22 MS. MORICZ: Thank you.

23 MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions?

24 MS. VASQUEZ: Do you know the hours of the business?

25 MR. MITCHELL: Her hours are going to be from 7:00  
o'clock in the morning to 5:00 o'clock in the evening Monday  
through Friday. Saturday 9:00 o'clock to 4:00 o'clock. And  
I believe she's closed on Sunday.

MS. VASQUEZ: Monday through Friday what?

MR. MITCHELL: Monday through Friday 7:00 to 5:30. I do  
believe on her menu, I had submitted it, she has her hours on  
it too. I might be off an hour. But I do believe it was  
7:00 o'clock in the morning until 5:30 Monday through Friday.  
Saturday was 9:00 to 3:00 or something. She's off on Sunday.



1 MS. VASQUEZ: Do you know when she's scheduled to open?

2 MR. MITCHELL: The first of January.

3 MS. VASQUEZ: I live right next door. So I see her  
4 working on it.

5 MR. MITCHELL: We're getting everything ready with the  
6 hopes that you guys say go ahead.

7 MS. VASQUEZ: January 1?

8 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

9 MS. RAMOS: I have a question. I see that you have a  
10 current location in Hammond. Are you moving from Hammond to  
11 East Chicago?

12 MR. MITCHELL: No. She used to have a place five years  
13 ago. But I don't believe that's related.

14 MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions or comments?

15 MR. ALLEN: I know the Health Department wasn't present.

16 MR. MORRISROE: That's the other. Have you had any  
17 contact with the Health Department?

18 MR. MITCHELL: Yes. We put a 200 gallon grease trap  
19 that we're going to install. That was really the only thing  
20 we asked for.

21 MR. MORRISROE: That was Mr. Carrillo you dealt with?

22 MR. MITCHELL: Yes.

23 MR. MORRISROE: Thank you.

24 MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions or comments?

25 Comments/Questions: None.

Motion to approve Interior Build Out for Nana's Bakery made  
by Douglas Sloss. Second by Monique Kurmis.

Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None

Opposed: None Motion Carries.

MR. GOMEZ: Thank you.

1 MR. MITCHELL: Thank you. You guys have a great  
Christmas.

2  
3 MR. MORRISROE: The reason I'm coming forward is I had a  
call today from Phoenix, Arizona from a technician that I  
4 want to bring to you.

5 The Senior Building that is along Main Street, the  
proposed 200 units along Main Street from 136th to 135th and  
6 then along 136th Street from Main Street to Guthrie, those  
units are to be four stories.

7 He pointed out to me that our ordinance has a limit  
of three stories. I asked him to send me some papers that I  
8 could bring before you. It may be necessary. But I want a  
public hearing with a court reporter to tell you of that.

9  
10 Mr. Allegretti and I thought since it had not been  
brought to the attention earlier that we simply waive it  
rather than require an extensive hearing.

11  
12 I will hear back from the planner actually from  
Phoenix. He was to send me some paperwork this afternoon at  
13 3:00. But he did not. But I just wanted to bring it to your  
attention.

14 I don't think it's a game changer that will hold up  
the construction. However he thought it was important that  
15 some of the financiers wanted to make sure that every dot was  
very strongly dotted and every T properly crossed. So I  
16 bring it to your attention.

17 I don't think without any kind of notice that I can  
ask you to vote on it. But we may vote on it the next time  
18 and it's formally part of your agenda if that is required for  
the financing of the building.

19 MR. GOMEZ: Would that require any other action?

20 MR. MORRISROE: I don't think so. It may require BZA.

21 MR. GOMEZ: That's what I was thinking.

22  
23 MR. MORRISROE: But it's a curious sort of thing.  
There's a ten story building, the Hunter Building right next  
24 to it. And there was formerly the Lincoln Apartments that  
were ten stories.

25 I think there were three buildings in the City,

1 residential buildings that were zoned R5 with the two senior  
2 buildings and the Lincoln Apartments near Guthrie and  
3 Broadway which were torn down because of some serious  
4 structural problems.

5 Any questions about that?

6 MR. GOMEZ: We might see it at our next meeting?

7 MR. MORRISROE: Yes.

8 OLD BUSINESS: None.

9 MS. VASQUEZ: I would just like to say good-bye. And  
10 thank you for serving for the last four years on the Planning  
11 Commission.

12 I'll still be around. I'm not moving out. Just  
13 won't be here on the first and third Mondays of the month.  
14 So thank you.

15 MR. GOMEZ: Come by and give us a report on Nana's  
16 Bakery.

17 MS. VASQUEZ: Okay.

18 COMMISSIONERS COMMENTS: None.

19 PUBLIC COMMENTS:

20 MR. LOPEZ: Yes. I want to wish everybody a Merry  
21 Christmas and Happy Prosperous New Year.

22 \* Next Regular Meeting Date: Monday, January 6, 2019 @  
23 4:30 p.m.

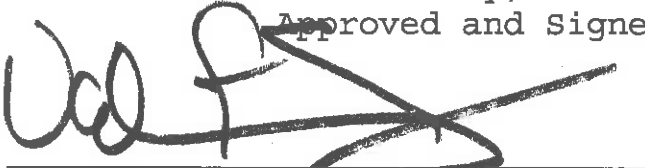
24 Motion to adjourn was made by Anthony Serna. Second by  
25 Christine Vasquez.


Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None  
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

\* Meeting ended at 4:53 p.m.

Approval of the Meeting Minutes of  
Monday, December 16, 2019

Approved and Signed \_\_\_\_\_

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Val Gomez, President


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Anthony Serna, Vice President

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Lilia Ramos, Secretary


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Monique Kurmis, Commissioner

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Joanne Moricz, Commissioner

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Christine Vasquez, Commissioner

  
Douglas Sloss, Commissioner

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William Allen, Commissioner


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Lydia Lopez, Commissioner

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lisa Pena, a competent and duly qualified court reporter, do hereby certify that I did report in machine shorthand the foregoing proceedings and that my shorthand notes so taken at said time and place were thereafter reduced to typewriting under my personal direction.

I further certify that the foregoing typewritten transcript constitutes minutes of said proceedings taken at said time and place, so ordered to be transcribed.

Dated at Portage, Indiana, this 1st day of January, 2020.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lisa Pena  
Notary Public Porter County  
Certified Shorthand Reporter  
License Number 084-003483



