

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO  
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING  
Monday, March 16, 2020

BOARD MEMBERS:

Valeriano Gomez, President  
Anthony Serna, Vice-President  
Lilia Ramos, Secretary  
Monique Kurmis, Commissioner  
Joanne Moricz, Commissioner  
Douglas Sloss, Commissioner  
William Allen, Commissioner  
Lydia Lopez, Commissioner  
Stacy Winfield, Commissioner

STAFF:

Belinda Bonilla  
Richard Morrisroe, Legal

Reported for Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.

By: Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR RPR

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Present: Valeriano Gomez, Lilia Ramos,  
Monique Kurmis, Douglas Sloss,  
William Allen, Lydia Lopez

Motion to approve meeting minutes of Monday, March 2,  
2020, as written, made by Douglas Sloss. Second by  
Monique Kurmis.

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

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

New Business, we have none. One  
thing I want to discuss is the possibility that if this  
virus continues, our meetings may be canceled.

MR. MORRISROE: Some neighboring cities  
have canceled all board meetings. There may be some  
requirement or directive from the State about that.

Curiously, Joe has a matter that  
he's been working on, a development matter that effects  
the former Zone 1, where the housing was for -- the  
project for the housing, the Calumet government housing  
project, and it effects the zoning in that area.  
There's going to be a request that be rezoned from  
Residential 4 to Manufacturing 1. There is a  
possibility of a warehouse distribution center,

1 logistics center, as they are calling those places these  
2 days. A lot has to do with timing and how products get  
to where they are going.

3 So, Joe and I have spoken about  
4 that. It wasn't ready for today to bring before you,  
5 but he's working on the documents and probably will be  
6 brought the first Monday in April.

7 MR. GOMEZ: I think we are going to play  
8 this day-by-day. We'll maybe receive notice on what is  
9 going, unless they say they want us to cancel  
everything.

10 MR. MORRISROE: Exactly. For instance,  
11 ten is the number, apparently that's the new threshold  
12 for meetings.

13 MR. GOMEZ: Okay. I don't know if we  
14 want to proceed with that Chapter 4, I don't know if  
15 people from the Water Department are going to show up or  
16 not, or should we continue?

17 MR. MORRISROE: I think we can continue  
18 for five minutes, and then I can sign the claim sheets.  
19 Do some of you have your materials with you? Okay.

20 We are looking at page 66, a lot of  
21 this is pretty straight forward. It just asks us, for  
22 instance, to look at the community, other public  
23 agencies, like what we were talking about, a rezoning.  
24 Remember that we are in the role of being an Advisory  
25 Plan Commission. On some things we make a decision and  
that's it. So we are working indirectly with the State  
agency that's approving plans. We are working with our  
own Building Department, which is going over those plans  
and issuing permits. And then we are making decisions  
ourselves on a construction project, such as the new  
school garage on Columbus Drive. Which hopefully we  
will open one of these days when they get the punch list  
straightened out. Punch list being a final check of all  
the details that go with the building before it is  
accepted and finally opened.

So we are part of kind of a mixture  
and it's important that we communicate with them. So we  
have at the beginning citizen board community, various  
public agencies, and local legislative body, which is  
our Common Council; the element that we want to be able  
to have to make informed decisions, in the best interest  
of our community. And it asks then that the Board do  
these four things. That we identify issues, that we

1 gather input on the issues, we encourage input from all  
2 sides of an issue.

3 Unfortunately we don't have a lot of  
4 people come forward to do that, except when I mentioned,  
5 for instance, when we'll have a hearing this Wednesday  
6 on whether or not to allow a building on Columbus Drive  
7 to have a certain number of homeless people, homeless  
8 mothers with children. So on that, that's kind of a  
9 situation where we'll be looking for input from people  
10 from different sides, because that issue will draw  
11 people from different sides, different perspectives for  
12 an agenda, and then base the decision on adopted policy  
13 and facts presented.

14 Now, it talks about communicating  
15 with the legislative body. We are pretty good with  
16 that, about the different forums. Usually the main  
17 forum is we ask to be on their agenda when we have an  
18 item, like with the parking lot for the church down the  
19 street. We simply prepare some documents, a document  
20 reflecting your hearing -- or the BZA hearing rather --  
21 and the BZA vote and recommendation, and whatever  
22 conditions went with that. Like conditions of lighting  
23 and of the way people would go in, and the way they  
24 would leave; that they would leave in different ways.  
25 So that the communication is the BZA decision.

The communication on the proposed  
manufacturing logistic center will be your  
recommendation, the Plan Commission recommendation to  
the Common Council. When you have had a chance to hear  
that and consider it and decide.

MR. SLOSS: May I ask a question? So it  
comes to us first, and then it goes --

MR. MORRISROE: Goes to the Common  
Council.

MR. SLOSS: So it doesn't have to go to  
Zoning?

MR. MORRISROE: Well, you are zoning.  
This Board is planning and zoning. There is not -- the  
Board is Zoning Appeals doesn't generally deal with  
zoning. What it deals with is a request for a "Special  
Use" for variance. Now they may have to do that, but  
probably not. If it becomes rezoned, as Manufacturing  
1, the lesser level of manufacturing, then to set up  
that plant and offices and to have a training center  
there; all of those are within the umbrella of what is

1 allowed in that zoning. So it usually would not require  
2 that it also go before the Board of Zoning Appeals.

3 MR. SLOSS: Okay. Makes sense. Thank  
4 you.

5 MR. MORRISROE: Now, talks about type of  
6 meetings. Here I am just going to outline and then we  
7 are at our five minutes. If I understand this, we have  
8 here public meetings and public hearings. The  
9 difference is one of legalisms. Public meeting, the  
10 public is invited. We may or may not have the public  
11 meeting. You wouldn't have to give people the  
12 opportunity to speak, it would discuss an issue. The  
13 Board must maintain a permanent record. I'm on page 6,  
14 where it talks about these type of meetings.

15 The public hearing, I'd like to  
16 focus a little bit more on because once in awhile we  
17 have those. Those are required to be published in the  
18 paper. Usually that means the Post Tribune and the  
19 Hammond Times. And people want to know -- like for  
20 instance, this rezoning will eventually have to have a  
21 public hearing. We'll have to have notice. And I have  
22 one man who's been calling me for a month and a half on  
23 that. He is not in favor of it and has wanted to know  
24 when it is going to take place, and I'm sure he will be  
25 here.

1 The Enabling Act talks about looking  
2 under public hearings -- bottom of 6 -- requires formal  
3 public hearings on certain matters. The Board holds  
4 public hearings for the purpose of taking public comment  
5 on matters presented for official action. Public  
6 hearings are subject to legal notice requirement, which  
7 I was speaking to you about, the two newspapers. The  
8 hearings provide an opportunity for citizens to  
9 participate in the decision making process by officially  
10 voicing their opinions and providing information to the  
11 board. A recording or minute notes may be made of the  
12 public hearings. If these types of records are made,  
13 they must be retained under the public records law.

14 The public records law requires the  
15 documents, such as the national records from the  
16 controller's office, and these hearings, be kept for  
17 seven years. Often there are records of even longer,  
18 but the official keeping of records is for a seven-year  
19 period. If these type of records are made, they must be  
20 maintained.

21 When the law requires public  
22 hearing, the Board cannot take official action until  
23

1 after the hearing. Now, Boards are not bound by -- for  
2 instance, if ten people come and it's 6 to 4 or  
3 something, and four against, that doesn't bind  
4 yourselves, but you have to take that into  
5 consideration, listen to it, and make it part of your  
6 deliberations, to the extent you want to do that.

7 So, it talks now -- on the next page  
8 -- and this will be our end for today -- before the  
9 public forum. It has a list of what kinds of actions  
10 require public hearings. So for the Plan Commission and  
11 Zoning Commission, the adoption of the Comprehensive  
12 Plan. Now, that was done, as I last mentioned, 2008 it  
13 was adopted by the Plan Commission. There have been  
14 hearings. There have been the various people that were  
15 going to be a part of that spoke before the City Council  
16 and authorized the Planning Department. And the Mayor  
17 had a special group that kind of looked at that  
18 contract. We had interviews with five finalist  
19 companies and then we chose -- I think -- a pretty good  
20 company. And I think it's a pretty good plan.

21 How many of you have seen the  
22 Comprehensive Plan? It's on our website. How many have  
23 had a chance to see that? So it's -- it has different  
24 neighborhoods for the City. It has different kinds of  
25 activities. It has priorities in terms of the -- some  
of the hoped for economic use of industrial land in the  
City. It hasn't all come about the way it was talked  
about, but it's there. And at least the profiles of the  
communities and some of the other information is still  
good, even if the numbers change in the 2010 census and  
will change again in the 2020 census.

The second item, Comprehensive Plan  
or plan elements, you might want to change part of it.  
The adoption of the zoning ordinance, amendment of the  
zoning ordinance text, amendment of the zoning ordinance  
maps; these are the activities that will be taking place  
with regard to what is called Super Fund Zone 1 or the  
West Calumet Housing Project area, which has been  
everything that was demolished as of a year ago. It's  
fenced in now.

It's curious when it comes to the  
community issues, there were two issues. One was the  
level of cleaning it up. The other was whether or not  
it should have housing again. There was some who wanted  
it cleaned as deep as possible, feeling that was safer  
for the community. It looks now like it's going to be  
to about a depth of 36 inches. Some wanted to go down  
six feet, eight feet. They feel there is all kinds of  
crap in there that's gravitating and migrating to their

1 community, or where their housing is; and some of that  
2 may be true, some of it not. I mean it's kind of a  
3 scientific question, to which there are no easy answers.

4 So, that activity will have to have  
5 both public hearing and have the public notice.

6 And then finally, subdivision of  
7 land or plat vacation. We don't have too much of that.  
8 We are going to have some major changes with the old  
9 DuPont property, but that's already been zoned  
10 Industrial M-2 for a long time. So there is no change.  
11 Whatever they plan to do, will come before you. But it  
12 won't be coming before you within the need to have the  
13 public hearing, the same way it would when you change an  
14 area from residential to manufacturing.

15 Any questions or comments? I was  
16 clear?

17 MS. SLOSS: Makes sense.

18 MR. MORRISROE: Again, thank you, for  
19 letting me sit like this. It is much more comfortable.

20 MR. GOMEZ: Thank you, Mr. Morrisroe.  
21 That concludes the Planner's report.

22 I believe we have no Old Business.  
23 Any comments from the commissioners? (None) Any  
24 comments from the Public? (None)

25 Next meeting will be Monday,  
April 6, 2020, at 4:30, depending on circumstances.  
That concludes our business for tonight. I would  
entertain a motion for adjournment.  
Motion to adjourn meeting made by Monique Kurmis.  
Second by Douglas Sloss.

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

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

MR. MORRISROE: One item I forgot,  
Belinda has been with us now for a couple of years. She  
is moving back to where she worked for a long time. She  
has an opportunity to be in Human Resources at  
Ameristar. Unfortunately I was unable to meet their  
offer. So, with a couple of kids at home, this will  
enable her to kind of work a straight eight hours and  
then not have to run Friday nights and Saturdays, and  
sometimes on Sundays, to a second job. So that's

1 important. I'd like to give her a hand, if we could.  
2 (Applause) Courtnee Dinkins, who is here, will be  
3 taking her place. Currently Courtnee is on leave this  
4 week to the Fire Department. She has been with us for a  
5 year and will be taking Belinda's place. They have been  
6 working together as a team, but Courtnee more recently  
7 has been working with the Fire Department.

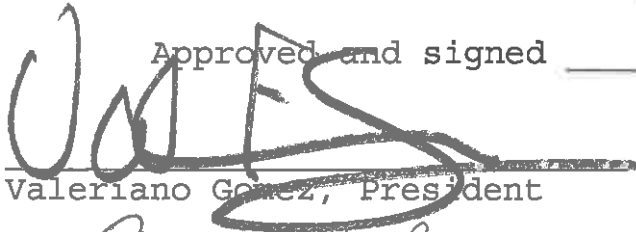
8 MS. DINKINS: It's nice to meet you. I  
9 look forward to working with everyone.

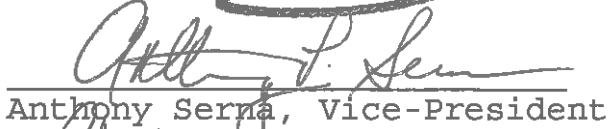
10 MR. GOMEZ: Meeting is adjourned.

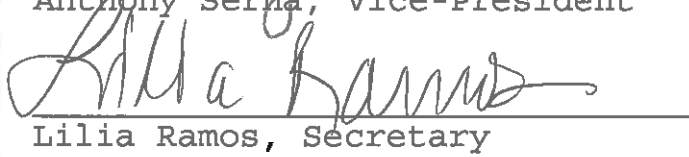
11 \*\*\*\* Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.\*\*\*\*  
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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday  
March 16, 2020

Approved and signed \_\_\_\_\_

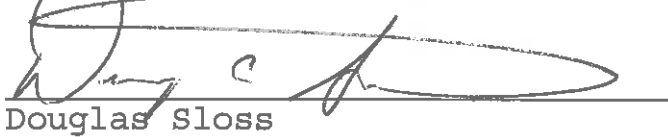
  
Valeriano Gomez, President

  
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Lilia Ramos, Secretary

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Douglas Sloss

  
William Allen

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Lydia Lopez

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Stacy Winfield

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Belinda Bonilla

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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Peggy S. LaLonde, 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 the said proceedings taken at said time and place, so ordered to be transcribed.

Dated at Munster, Indiana, this 18th day of March, 2020.

*Peggy S. LaLonde*



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR