

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, April 20, 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:

Courtnee Dinkins
Richard Morrisroe
Joseph Allegretti

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, Anthony Serna
Present through Zoom: Lilia Ramos, Monique
Kurmis, Joanne Moricz, Douglas Sloss,
William Allen, Lydia Lopez, Stacy Winfield

Motion to approve meeting minutes of Monday, April 6,
2020, as written, made by Monique Kurmis. Second by
Anthony Serna.

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

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

As everyone knows, this meeting is
the trial run for electronic communication during this
Pandemic situation.

First item on the agenda is
Resolution 02-2020. A resolution amending Resolution
01-2020, being a resolution of the East Chicago Advisory
Plan Commission initiating a proposal to change the
zoning map of the City concerning the former West
Calumet East Chicago housing site and Goodman Park.

Attorney Allegretti, if you could
just give us the highlights what is being amended.

MR. ALLEGRETTI: Please recall,
Commissioners, at the last meeting you adopted

1 Resolution number one, which is the initial resolution
2 acknowledging the petition to modify the zoning map.
3 That resolution purported to give instructions to the
4 staff for publishing, giving actual notice to adjoining
5 property owners, being interested persons, and also
6 placing an ad in the newspapers, advising of a public
7 hearing, at which time interested persons would be
8 allowed to come and participate. Since that time,
9 because of the Pandemic COVID-19 virus outbreak, the
10 Governor's Executive Order, and the Mayor's Executive
11 Order, limited the number of members of the public
12 allowed to attend Commission meetings and public
13 hearings.

14 So this resolution purports to amend
15 the previous resolution, reschedule the public hearing
16 for the first meeting in May, which is May 4, 2020, the
17 same time and place. And it also provides that the
18 meeting will take place pursuant to our new procedure,
19 which we are using today, whereby members of the Plan
20 Commission and the Public, can log in to utilize the
21 City's Zoom meeting application and participate
22 remotely.

23 So this resolution before the
24 Commission now makes that modification I just described.
25 It contains amended notice of Public Hearing, which
26 direct staff causes to be published in the newspaper.
27 Also provides for amended notice, written notice sent by
28 First Class mail to be sent to interested persons --
29 which is a term defined by statute -- and reschedule
30 these proceedings to occur at the first meeting in May,
31 which is May 4th, at 4:30, here in the Council Chambers.
32 And that's the sum and substance of the resolution now
33 before the Planning Commission.

34 MR. GOMEZ: So, Mr. Allegretti, the Zoom
35 link is sent out in the newsletters?

36 MR. ALLEGRETTI: The public notice, which
37 is going to be published, contains the log in
38 information and instructions for logging into the Zoom
39 meeting, whereby they get the audio and video. It also
40 provides for a call in number, where the caller can
41 participate and listen to the meeting proceedings by
42 audio, by phone number call in. The notice to
43 interested persons -- First Class mail -- contained the
44 same instructions.

45 MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Can anybody mail in
46 comments by any chance?

1 MR. ALLEGRETTI: The notice also invites
2 interested persons in the public, and all citizens or
3 interested persons, to send in written notices or
4 remonstrations or opinions and comments to be received
5 by the Plan Commission and considered in the
6 Commission's deliberations on the Resolution, which will
7 be on the agenda for May 4th.

8 MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Are there any
9 questions or comments by the Commissioners on this
10 issue?

11 MS. WINFIELD: They will get the letter
12 with the Zoom phone number so that they can call in and
13 they will be able to speak, where we will be able to
14 hear them, as we are hearing the ones that are not able
15 to visibly be present; is that how that happens?

16 MR. ALLEGRETTI: My understanding -- and
17 I could be corrected -- but my understanding, the
18 application purchased by the City allows up to 100
19 persons to participate via Zoom. The notice to
20 interested persons, Councilwoman, interested persons is
21 defined by statute in this context as persons two plots
22 removed, up to two properties removed from the subject
23 plot where the rezone is being considered. So it is not
24 everybody certainly in West Calumet, but I think there
25 was about 50 letters sent out to those persons that are
getting actual First Class mailings.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Whoever speaks from
the Zoom app, please give your name.

MS. WINFIELD: So their name will be
given when they speak. When this notice goes out in the
paper -- and I know that they will probably put it on
Facebook -- will they be given the Chicago number or
have the list of all these numbers, so if they call in
to speak, they are able to?

MR. ALLEGRETTI: There will be a phone
number for call in and also instructions if they have a
laptop or I-pad, if they are able to. It's very easy to
do it. Even somebody as old as I am can learn how to do
it. It only took me a couple months.

MR. GOMEZ: For the record, we do have --
I believe it's a 60-inch monitor right here -- where we
can see you and anybody calling in.

1 MS. KURMIS: I can't see anybody.

2 MR. GOMEZ: We can see you on this
3 60-inch monitor. There is a 60-inch monitor here and we
4 can see everyone who is using the computer, I guess.

5 MR. ALLEGRETTI: And, Councilwoman, just
6 to continue the discussion, the app allows the moderator
7 to control who is speaking. You know, if we have a 100
8 people doing this, so you won't be able to talk all at
9 once. He can control who speaks and can eliminate the
10 possibilities it could turn into some kind of free for
11 all -- I'm told.

12 MR. GOMEZ: Are there any other questions
13 or comments from anybody else? Any questions? (None)
14 No further questions or comments, I'll entertain a
15 motion to approve Amended Resolution 02-2020.

16 Motion to approve Resolution 02-2020 made by Douglas
17 Sloss. Second by Lilia Ramos.

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

20 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

21 We have lost Ms. Kurmis at this
22 point, she may return later.

23 Next on the agenda is -- I'm not
24 sure you all have the updated agenda -- this was just
25 added late today. It's proposed gas station at 1311
Chicago Avenue. This will be presented by James
Portalatin. I believe he came before us some time ago
and described the project.

MR. MORRISROE: James will explain the
reason for this coming up today.

MS. WINFIELD: Did you say you have
amended the agenda?

MS. RAMOS: I don't have it.

MR. GOMEZ: This came last moment today.
James will explain.

MS. WINFIELD: Are you amending the
agenda to add it? Our agenda doesn't have it.

25

1 MR. GOMEZ: I realize you didn't get the
2 change of agenda, so I am going to ask for a motion to
3 amend agenda, adding the proposed gas station at 1311
4 Chicago Avenue.

5 Motion to amend agenda and add proposed gas station at
6 1311 Chicago Avenue, made by Anthony Serna. Second by
7 William Allen.

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

10 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.
11 James, you can give your
12 presentation now.

13 MR. PORTALATIN: James Portalatin, East
14 Chicago Building Commissioner. This is a proposed gas
15 station that will be located on the corner of Euclid and
16 Chicago Avenue, kitty corner from the Charter School, in
17 the vacant parcels that are there. Mr. Syad is the
18 owner of the Golo that is across from City Hall and he
19 also purchased this, so there will be another gas
20 station there as well.

21 This was City owned and he purchased
22 the property to install this gas station. We have had
23 final drawings for this that are both stamped, both the
24 architectural and the civil engineer drawings. He will
25 be presenting the same before State to get construction
design release. It will be a convenience store, 35 feet
by 70, and four pumps. He has other gas stations, so
it's fairly common design. There will be some
landscaping there as well at the front entrances, both
from the Chicago Avenue side and the Euclid side.

This has gone before Tech Review and
we were waiting on the final stamped drawings. We had
received drawings, but the architect was taking some
time -- due to the COVID-19 -- to stamp it, but we
finally got it, that's why we wanted to be able to
present it. It was being held up because of that.

MR. GOMEZ: So you are asking the Board
to approve this?

MR. PORTALATIN: I am requesting approval
of the project based on obtaining the construction
design release from the State.

MR. GOMEZ: Until we receive construction

1 design from the State?

2 MR. PORTALATIN: Yes, subject to the
3 construction design release. Each of the departments
4 has had a chance to view the drawings. We had them in
5 the Plan Commission room for them to go one by one and
6 review them as well.

7 MR. GOMEZ: Are there any questions or
8 comments from the Commissioners on this proposal?

9 MS. WINFIELD: Yes. You say you have
10 drawings, we don't have the drawings because this was
11 just added. This project is not being placed on hold
12 due to the COVID? I couldn't hear if that's what you
13 were saying.

14 MR. PORTALATIN: No -- no. What I said,
15 that the architect took awhile to be able to stamp it
16 because it was hard to reach him due to the COVID, at
17 his offices. But we do have it, we finally got it
18 stamped.

19 MS. WINFIELD: This is not going to be a
20 project that's put on hold, that's what I am asking?

21 MR. PORTALATIN: No, it is not going to
22 be on hold. It still needs to go down State and down
23 State could take anywhere from three weeks or so. It's
24 not going to be something that you will see a shovel any
25 time soon, but we want to be able to give them an
26 opportunity to approve the project so he can submit it
27 down State and get the construction design release.

28 MS. WINFIELD: Okay. The only reason I
29 am asking, I have a concern with this gas station being
30 there when you have a school across the street. The
31 school couldn't purchase the parking lot across the
32 street for parking for the parents, but we are putting
33 in a gas station kitty corner to the school. I have a
34 great concern about that.

35 MR. PORTALATIN: I think that was already
36 discussed -- Mr. Allegretti -- when the purchasing came
37 about, and that went through Planning as well.

38 MR. MORRISROE: Councilwoman, my
39 recollection in regards to this, the Charter School
40 asked us to give them the lot. They didn't ask for this

1 lot, they asked for the lot to be given to them. The
2 City owns 25 feet, however 50 feet just west of that,
3 that is owned by someone else. The City has been trying
4 to get those, but has not got them yet. As of now, the
5 Charter School only asked for a gift and has not
6 expressed any interest in buying, even at a discounted
7 price, like we sometimes give to churches and similar
8 institutions.

9 MS. WINFIELD: My understanding, the
10 school was willing to purchase the lots if need be, but
11 I still have a concern about a gas station being kitty
12 corner to the school. I have a great concern about
13 that. If anything happens, you are right across the
14 street from the school and I have a great concern about
15 that. That's all.

16 MR. PORTALATIN: I see your concern.

17 MR. GOMEZ: It's zoned M-2, so a gas
18 station is allowable in that zoning.

19 MR. MORRISROE: It's actually C-2.

20 MR. GOMEZ: I misspoke, C-2 zoning.

21 MS. WINFIELD: This is right next to the
22 bar -- am I correct -- Beto's Bar?

23 MR. PORTALATIN: Yes.

24 MS. WINFIELD: You have got a couple
25 things going on, on that corner. I don't know if
anybody has been around the school during dismissal, the
traffic sometimes when dismissing the kids or going into
the school in the morning, that's a hazard. But still,
once again, I am just giving my opinion on that.

MR. ALLEGRETTI: Beto's is right next to
the empty lot.

MR. PORTALATIN: Yes

MS. WINFIELD: That's what I'm saying.

MR. GOMEZ: The tavern was there before
the school was built, right?

MR. PORTALATIN: Yes

1 MR. GOMEZ: Are there any other questions
or comments?

2 MR. SLOSS: Real quick question. Since
3 that does have the proper zoning, what are our options
in terms of this, because I do think that the traffic
4 will be an issue -- it's already an issue -- but if it's
zoned that, what options do we have, as the Commission?

5 MR. MORRISROE: The options are to either
6 approve it or not approve it. I think the Planning
Department and the Building Department have been
7 operating under the assumption that it was -- based on
the zoning -- approvable. However, if we do not
8 approve, that is your decision.

9 MR. SLOSS: Thank you.

10 MR. GOMEZ: I think that's why he bought
that property.

11 MR. PORTALATIN: Oh, yeah. He purchased
12 it with the assumption that he is going to be able to do
the gas station.

13 MS. KURMIS: Are you there?

14 MR. GOMEZ: Were you able to hear the
15 discussion?

16 MS. KURMIS: I don't know what happened.
I was blocked out.

17 MR. GOMEZ: Ms. Kurmis is back with us.
18 Are there any more questions on the proposed gas station
at 1311 Chicago Avenue? (None) There being no further
19 questions or comments, I'd entertain a motion to approve
the proposed gas station at 1311 Chicago Avenue, subject
20 to construction design approval by the State.

21 Motion to approve proposal made by William Allen.
Second by Anthony Serna.

22 Roll Call: "All in Favor": Val Gomez, Anthony Serna,
23 Lilia Ramos, Monique Kurmis, Joanne Moricz, Douglas
Sloss, William Allen, Lydia Lopez. Abstain: None
24 Opposed: Stacy Winfield

25 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

1 That concludes our New Business
2 under the City Planner's Report. We'll move on to Old
3 Business. I believe we have no Old Business.

4 Commissioners comments. Are there
5 any other comments from the Commissioners? (None)

6 Public comments. Any comments from
7 the public? (None)

8 Our next meeting will be Monday, May
9 4th, 2020, at 4:30, I believe preceded by a public
10 hearing and the meeting will start after the public
11 hearing.

12 We have no further business so I'd
13 entertain a motion for adjournment.

14 Motion to adjourn meeting made by William Allen. Second
15 by Anthony Serna.

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

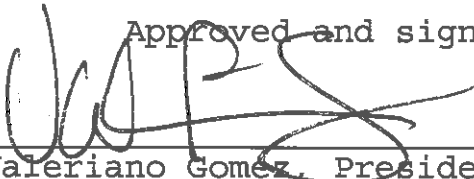
18 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries. Meeting
19 adjourned.

20 **** Meeting adjourned at 4:55 p.m.****

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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday
April 20, 2020

Approved and signed May 4th 2020



Valeriano Gomez, President



Anthony Serna, Vice-President

Lilia Ramos, Secretary

Monique Kurmis

Joanne Moricz


Douglas Sloss



William Allen

Lydia Lopez

Stacy Winfield



Courtnee Dinkins

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 22nd day of April, 2020.

Peggy S. LaLonde



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

