

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, June 1, 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

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,
William Allen

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

MR. GOMEZ: We have a full house. First we need a motion to approve meeting minutes from Public hearing of Monday, May 4th, 2020; regular meeting of Monday, May 4, 2020; and we have the regular meeting minutes of Monday, May 18, 2020.

Are there any comments or questions on these minutes? (None) I'll entertain a motion to approve.

Motion to approve all minutes aforementioned made by Anthony Serna. Second by Lilia Ramos.

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

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

We'll move on to New Business. City Planner's report, Mr. Morrisroe.

MR. MORRISROE: What we are going to do, one of the things included in your packet is the article

1 from last Thursday, entitled, East Chicago City Council
2 Okays West Calumet Rezoning Plan. That was reporting on
3 the Council meeting of a week ago today. And I just
4 wanted to ask -- before we go into the chapter on
5 Communication -- is there any feedback, any questions,
6 any observations, that any of the members have about the
7 protest? We all remember May 4th. We remember the
8 meeting before that, but the major meeting was May 4th
9 when we had both the Public Hearing and made our
10 recommendation to the Common Council to change the
11 zoning from residential -- R-4 -- to light manufacturing
12 -- M-1.

13 So I'd just to like open up, with
14 our Chairman, for any questions or observations. Any
15 questions or comments?

16 MR. GOMEZ: Any questions? (None) No
17 questions on the first subject.

18 MR. MORRISROE: Let's then go to our
19 book, the Planner's Guide, and we are looking at
20 page 68, where we have left off last time. It talks
21 about public forums and work sessions, executive
22 sessions. We certainly had a public forum at the last
23 meeting as you notice the many pages from the court
24 reporter. We look at work sessions, which we in a sense
25 had a work session the meeting before the May 4th
meeting, the meeting in mid April, where we tried to
discuss and see how we would be setting up and working
for the May 4th meeting. We haven't had any executive
sessions recently.

Notice the reasons for the executive
sessions can be discussing strategies, when we think
there might be a lawsuit. Receiving information about
respective employees -- we haven't done any hiring
recently, even though we have advertised for actually
nine months -- ten months -- for a permanent planner.

We have not had many allegations
against either Courtnee, myself or Esperanza about our
alleged misconduct and we haven't done a job performance
evaluation, although I thank you for continuing to let
me work with you.

Now, the public meetings -- again,
this is on page 69 -- it talks about the different ways
about public hearings being fair, orderly, allowing for
thorough discussion of the issues at hand. We tried to
do that during our public hearing of May 4th. Again, we
note that those deliberations that we had are a matter
of public record and the decisions must be based upon a

1 record created by the various parties participating in
the public hearing.

2 We did try during that meeting to
3 give everyone their three minutes and the opportunity to
speak to the issue of whether or not the rezoning should
take place.

4 It talks about information outside
the meeting, that we would suggest where that is
5 disclosed, simply that we have received that outside
information. That was not an issue in the recent public
6 hearing.

7 Now, on page 70, it refers to some
tips for effective public meetings. I believe that our
president has worked very hard to have fair, clear and
8 concise meetings.

9 Now we'll go down the points. If
anyone has any questions, that's fine, otherwise we will
end at that point so that we can give the Water Board an
10 opportunity to have their meeting.

11 Meeting should be conducted in a
professional manner, demonstrating that the Board
members take their jobs seriously. I think we have
12 shown that.

13 Individual members should be well
prepared. Preparation includes viewing sites on the
agenda, reviewing materials provided by staff. We did
14 not have a site visit because we assumed that most knew
where the site was -- on 151st -- and have seen it. We
15 are in a relatively small community and it is easy to
get around. However, a tour of the site is something
16 that we could build into one of these meetings, if we so
choose.

17 Applicants should be treated fairly.
We try to listen both to the developer and the public
18 also, both those opposed and those in favor. We talk
about the decision making procedures, that those be
19 understood.

20 One point that I think we do
differently is that we would remove our masks when we
are speaking into the microphone. And also, thanks to
21 Steve Segura and his communication team, we are able to
make sure that all of the microphones are working. For
22 instance, the one I was sitting next to was not working,
so I moved to this one, which is.

23 The meeting agenda is available at
the door. It's kind of hard when we are doing the kind
24 of meetings that we have been doing of late, a virtual
meeting. However, the agenda, the single agenda of the
25 zoning was well-known in the community.

1 Board and staff members are
2 generally introduced. We inform the public about the
3 meeting process, appeal procedures, any changes in the
4 agenda. We did have some requests for continuance
5 because of the virtual meeting. However, we felt since
6 the Mayor's team and the developer wanted to have some
7 direction, it was important that we not simply table
8 this for another three to four months.

9 Members of the public were welcomed
10 to speak. They gave their name and address. The Chair
11 kept the meeting moving. Staff and supporters gave
12 their best to serve as a resource. It was a single
13 agenda item, so we did not need to have a consent
14 agenda. That's point one.

15 And then number 2, each agenda item
16 gives an opportunity for miscellaneous matters, letters
17 from citizens, inquires from Board members, and
18 discussion of Board activities. The letters, e-mails --
19 I believe most of the correspondence we received were
20 e-mails -- they were announced. We tried to transmit
21 those to the Board members -- those we had on time --
22 and presented them usually with the Chairman.

23 Are there any other questions or
24 comments before we consider moving forward?

25 MR. GOMEZ: Any questions or comments?

(None)

Mr. Morrisroe, our agenda has
residents questions regarding the proposal of the gas
station. Do you want to touch on that?

MR. MORRISROE: I think we should. You
have received calls. I still have not received any
calls on that matter.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Just for information,
I did receive several calls last week -- two or three --
from citizens asking about this gas station at 1305 East
Chicago Avenue. And the questions were basically not
being notified by letters what type of business. And
also I think some were under the impression the Council
voted on it, which I don't believe they did. It wasn't
before the Council, right?

MR. MORRISROE: No. As I understand the
matter, the zoning, which was C-1 commercial, pretty
much made it possible; even though we had one health
care institution, St. Catherine's, which was looking at
the property for awhile, but then backed off and told us

1 they didn't have any commitment to finance acquiring the
2 land. They were going to bring up an office building,
as they had given us some preliminary sketch of.

3 Whereas, Mr. Syad, who has the Golo
4 gas station across the street from City Hall, I believe
his performance with that gas station and his reputation
5 in the community was sufficiently straight forward, that
6 he wanted to move forward and acquire that property and
put a second gas station at the corner of Columbus and
7 Euclid. There was no requirement of any written notice
because there is no variance being granted. And we have
8 talked to different people about having a communications
message or announcement of it. However, there is not
any Council action called for in that matter.

9 MR. GOMEZ: If some people had some
concerns, can they call the Planning Department? I
10 wasn't sure on who they would speak to, because they
wanted to speak to people further, but I see nobody
11 called your department or Planning.

12 MR. MORRISROE: No, no one called. I'm
operating out of the Law Department. No one called me
13 in the Law Department or no one called Courtnee or
anyone else in the Planning Department.

14 MR. GOMEZ: Just for the record, I took
the phone calls at the Controller's office and directed
15 them to Planning and Law Department. I did check with
Mr. Morrisroe a few days later, nobody called their
16 office. I just wanted to make sure they had an
opportunity to say what they wanted to say, but
17 apparently we didn't get any other calls to your
offices.

18 MR. MORRISROE: At least not so far.

19 MR. GOMEZ: That was about Wednesday last
20 week.

21 MS. WINFIELD: I have a few questions. I
had received several phone calls also about the gas
22 station. But I had some questions, if I can get them
answered or -- I don't know how we do this -- as far as
23 me asking the questions, or maybe you will be able to
answer. I have like three questions I'd like to ask.

24 MR. GOMEZ: Ask your questions.
25

1 MS. WINFIELD: First, I wanted to know if
2 it's public information that I can receive, if they did
3 a traffic study. If so, I would like to request a copy
4 of it. Also, how many corners did they -- as far as the
5 curb to the street -- how many ways will people enter in
6 and out of the gas station. Also, who will control the
7 traffic light timing to check the safety of the children
8 with that school being across the street. If I could
9 receive that reply.

10 MR. ALLEN: They did a small traffic
11 study that was part of the plan that we went over in
12 Tech Review. They did a small traffic study. They had
13 a plan that was part of the documents that were received
14 that we went over in the Tech Review. We can send you a
15 copy of that. It shows how tanks will be coming in and
16 out, as well as vehicles, from the property.

17 That intersection is controlled by
18 INDOT. I can bring it to their attention to better time
19 that intersection.

20 As far as entrances and exits, I
21 believe there are two; one on Chicago and one on Euclid.

22 MS. WINFIELD: How many -- two entrances
23 -- is that what you are saying?

24 MR. ALLEN: Two, one on Chicago Avenue
25 and one on Euclid.

MS. WINFIELD: Also, I do know the
residents -- even though I notice it's already passed --
I know there is a petition with the residents. I don't
know if they did not know how to get on Zoom, but I
received several calls. I referred them to you, Mr.
Morrisroe, if that is correct, to President Gomez as
well.

MR. GOMEZ: I received three calls and I
referred the citizens to Planning and to Law Department,
and that was Wednesday when I received those calls, last
Wednesday.

MS. WINFIELD: Okay, I just needed to
know. Thank you.

MS. RAMOS: I'd like to ask a question.
Like Stacy said, I know this has already passed, have we
looked into whether they were going to be selling
alcohol or not, because of the location being so close

1 to a school. And I know we have an ordinance, the City
2 has an ordinance with that, that you cannot sell alcohol
3 within so many feet of a school or area where children
4 are at.

5 MR. MORRISROE: The only gas station that
6 sells alcohol is Mr. Harry's, on the 5600-block, west
7 side of the street, of Indianapolis Boulevard. And Mr.
8 Harry managed to slip in that past the Liquor
9 Commission, past the City, and it had been approved
10 before we knew it.

11 Mr. Syad has not asked to sell
12 liquor there. There is no application for license to
13 sell liquor and we are hoping it will stay that way.

14 MS. RAMOS: Okay. Because I know that
15 there are some gas stations who sell alcohol for some
16 reason.

17 MR. MORRISROE: The one I am aware of,
18 the one on the Boulevard. I am aware of another one
19 that was applying, but has not yet received permission,
20 and we have not encouraged them. That's a gas station
21 near the main Post Office, on Chicago Avenue.

22 MS. RAMOS: Thank you.

23 MR. SLOSS: May I ask a question --
24 because I too did receive some calls. What is the
25 process that determines, once we vote on it at Planning
Commission, whether it goes before City Council or not?

MR. MORRISROE: Some variances require
City Council action, others are considered routine and
do not. Most of the ones that we have had through this
Spring have also gone to the City Council, such as the
parking application. These are ones that have gone
before the BZA. We have had two or three go before the
BZA this Spring.

The only one that has gone to the
Plan Commission that was requiring a major change was
the change for Super Fund Zone 1, and that went from the
Plan Commission to the Common Council. We haven't had
any others this year.

MR. GOMEZ: It usually requires a zoning
change to go to Council?

MR. MORRISROE: Zoning change,

1 comprehensive plan, they are listed actually here in
2 this booklet. As I recall, there is six of them that
3 are listed. The matters that require public hearing --
4 on the top of page 68 -- where it has Adoption of
5 Comprehensive Plan, Amendment of Comprehensive Plan,
6 Adoption of Zoning ordinance, Amendment of Zoning
7 ordinance, Amendment of Zoning map, and then a
8 subdivision. Those are the matters that require a
9 public hearing and those public hearings are usually
10 held then prior to the Council receiving our
11 recommendation.

12 Now, in this instance of Super
13 Fund-Zone 1, the Council, on its own action, decided to
14 have a public hearing. However, that public hearing
15 went above and beyond what the Council was required to
16 do. The Council believed that it wanted to have its own
17 hearing and hear from the witnesses, as well as whatever
18 they received from the Plan Commission.

19 MR. GOMEZ: Are there any other questions
20 or comments? (None)

21 We'll move on to Commissioners
22 comments. Any comments from the Commissioners on any
23 subject? (None)

24 Comments from the Public? (None)
25 Next meeting is Monday, June 15th, at 4:30 p.m.

That concludes our business on the
agenda today. I would entertain a motion for
adjournment.

Motion to adjourn made by Anthony Serna. Second by
Monique Kurmis.

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

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries. Thank you
everyone. Meeting adjourned.

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

Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday
June 1, 2020

Approved and signed _____

June 15th 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

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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 3rd day of June, 2020.

Peggy S. LaLonde



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR