

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, July 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, Douglas Sloss, Stacy
Winfield

MR. GOMEZ: First on agenda is approval
of minutes for June 15, 2020.

Motion to approve meeting minutes of Monday, June 15,
2020, as written, made by Lilia Ramos. Second by Joanne
Moricz.

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

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

We are going to move on to New
Business. Has everybody received the amended agenda?

MS. MORICZ: I looked at my e-mail.

MS. WINFIELD: I did not. I cannot look
at whatever you just sent me.

MR. GOMEZ: That was sent earlier today.

1 MS. WINFIELD: I work, so I can't get on
my e-mail.

2 MR. GOMEZ: Did everybody else receive
3 the amended agenda?

4 CHIEF SERNA: Yes.

5 MR. ALLEN: Yes.

6 MR. GOMEZ: Mr. Morrisroe, you can
proceed.

7 MR. MORRISROE: If I may, I'll continue.
8 This morning when I arrived at work I had an e-mail on
my desk from Eric Hornbeck of Superior Engineering,
9 located in Hammond. Mr. Hornbeck is with us this
afternoon.

10 What happened is, that Grace
Chemical -- W.R. Grace -- which is located at 5215
11 Kennedy, on part of the old Dupont property. When you
are going along Kennedy south, you pass along W.R.
12 Grace, which is a small portion of the Dupont property,
now the property of East Chicago Gateway Partners. They
13 have had a single office building. They would like to
put up a second office building that is complimentary to
14 that.

15 After talking to Mr. Hornbeck, it
turned out that Grace had given a lot of attention to
16 what had to be done in Indianapolis, but somehow dropped
the ball -- their Baltimore, Maryland managers -- when
17 it came to contacting the City. They received a design
release from the State and would like to pursue this
18 project as soon as they may. It has not yet had a Tech
Review meeting. We have scheduled one for this coming
Wednesday.

19 What I would like to do, is invite
Eric to speak with us today about the building. We have
20 also sent to you the plans, which Eric had sent to me
today, and to ask that you consider approving the
21 project, provided the Tech Review Committee -- this next
Wednesday -- approves it.

22 Eric, if I could, rather than
23 talking at length or talking more, I'd like you to
introduce yourself, give us the background and the
24 design of the building, and what it is we are being
asked to approve. We can at this time simply approve
the foundation work -- and that may be the easier route
25 -- than trying to approve the project without having the

1 Tech Review input.

2 MR. HORNBECK: Either one would be fine
3 with us at this point. Again, kind of lost
4 communication or never had the communication with the
5 local presidents, and that was an error on their
6 corporate group. We were originally only involved in
7 getting the State approval, and now Grace has pulled me
8 in to be local presence, since their project manager is
9 stuck in Atlanta. So with that being said, as soon as I
10 let Rich know, I knew probably a brief five minutes
11 before that, but I have been involved with this project
12 for a while.

13 So, basically what they have on the
14 existing property, there is an office, current office
15 building to the north. As soon as you get in their
16 gate, you go to the south, and that's where their office
17 building is. What they need is a little more capacity.
18 Majority of it is for a lab. Currently they have a lab
19 only in the plant and it doesn't basically provide the
20 cleanliness, and like I say, the functionality of
21 visitors in and out.

22 So, this has gone through multiple
23 review changes over the last year. Currently what you
24 have is -- what the idea is, is to basically have -- you
25 have the existing building and to the south, they are
attaching a new entry vestibule, and to the south of the
vestibule there is going to be a new building, which is
going to be basic 40 by 100 feet. This building is
going to have, I believe, four offices, one lab area
that probably takes about a third of the area, and some
storage.

26 When we had designed it, they
27 originally wanted a bathroom and that has been removed
28 at this point. They are making it a storage room. So
29 they are really not going to have any sewer tie-in with
30 this new building. The bathroom was taken out because
31 they realize that they are just going to convert their
32 existing showers, that they never used, to a bigger
33 bathroom for both buildings. All the tie-ins on the
34 site are basically tying into their existing
35 infrastructure. There are no tie-ins from public
standpoint, a public utility standpoint. So that kind
of makes the budget a little bit easier.

36 As far as runoff, this area is
37 mostly already asphalt. So they would be ripping up the
38 asphalt. It's actually go over -- there's a big empty
39 parking lot, so they are ripping up that asphalt. They
40 are putting a new building there, putting some new

1 landscaping around the building. So your runoff total
2 is probably going to be about the same. We are really
3 not having any additional runoff.

4 The water load, like I said, they
5 are going to be getting rid of their showers, they don't
6 use them any more. This new building has a sink for the
7 lab and sink for the kitchenette. So you are probably
8 talking two or three sinks, and that's really the
9 additional water load that they are putting on the site.

10 Like I told you, the sewer is just
11 going to be additional drain sink, so minimal impact
12 from the sewer standpoint. And water, we are predicting
13 right now is no change. Power, they are tying into
14 their existing power, which is right to the east of
15 their building. It's going to have a new feed from that
16 transformer, so everything will still be on their
17 property. As far as the gas connection, the building is
18 going to have natural gas. They are tying into an
19 existing six-inch natural gas, which is their
20 infrastructure. So there is no public gas tie-ins
21 either. So kind of gives you a better feel of the
22 infrastructure, what they are trying to do there.

23 The building will be bricked on the
24 outside, similarly match what they currently have. The
25 window structures are going to be very similar. We
26 tried mimicking as close as we could to their existing
27 one so it looks the same. The only thing really
28 different that's going to look on this building, versus
29 what they already have, is their existing building is
30 basically wooden trusses. And what they want to do here
31 is basically have a metal kind of soffit area around it,
32 which kind of mimics what they have on their existing
33 one. On the roof, it's going to be a rubber roof,
34 single pitch, towards the street.

35 So because their main entry actually
36 will be on their property, that's why the pitch is going
37 towards the street, to minimize the front entry that
38 they have to the east. So that kind of gives you a high
39 level overview of the project. Everything inside is
40 basically going to be similar to their existing VCT
41 floors. The windows are going to be similar as
42 possible. And then the landscaping is basically
43 matching similar to their existing landscaping. There
44 will be additional parking lots to the south.

45 Again, we are just reusing the
46 existing parking lot that's already there. It will just
47 be striped for a few more spots. Currently it's just
48 black asphalt, non-striped at this point.

49 So that kind of gives you an

1 overview of the project. Is there any kind of specific
2 questions or other things you want me to go in detail
3 on?

4 MR. MORRISROE: If I may, Eric, can you
5 give us a ballpark figure as to the cost of the project
6 and whether or not they are expecting any additional
7 employees as result of this.

8 MR. HORNBECK: The cost of the project,
9 if I remember right, was about a million dollars. They
10 would be shifting the employees from out of the plant to
11 this area. So as far as I know, there is going to be no
12 additional employees. More or less providing the lab,
13 better quality control out of their existing plant into
14 their new building. There is a couple more office
15 areas, so maybe they are thinking about putting a couple
16 more people in there. I can tell you this one has four
17 more offices. They did not tell me that they would be
18 hiring any additional people. I know it was four more
19 offices.

20 MR. MORRISROE: Any other questions from
21 commission members? Just identify yourself and ask the
22 question.

23 MS. WINFIELD: Yes, Mr. President, Mr.
24 Morrisroe; can you hear me?

25 MR. MORRISROE: Yes.

MS. WINFIELD: I just need to know --

MR. MORRISROE: Can you identify
yourself?

MS. WINFIELD: This is Stacy Winfield.
My question is, I know you said this was going to go in
front of Tech Review, my understanding. What is the --
this question is to Mr. Morrisroe -- what is the policy
on amending your agenda four hours before your meeting
with a project like this? What is the urgency that we
had to put it in today four hours before, because like I
said, I do have a job. I was not able to go on my
e-mail until right before this meeting to see there was
something on here. Pictures, I did not get a chance to
look at on my phone. They are quite small. But what is
the urgency? Was this something that had to happen
right away?

1 MR. MORRISROE: I would let Eric speak to
2 that, and to say that perhaps I was -- I don't think
3 there is a policy. If there is one, it would be one to
4 have them wait till the 20th of July.

5 My understanding was that this
6 project had gone through all kinds of State approvals.
7 It was admitted negligence on their part to not have
8 contacted us, but I didn't feel that we should penalize
9 them, and at least give Eric a shot. I made no
10 promises. However, I did feel it was within the scope
11 of the meeting that had no other agenda, other than
12 pages 71 to page 74 of our study guide, to give Eric an
13 opportunity to at least bring this before us and to see
14 whether or not we would consider approving it, pending
15 the Technical Review Committee work.

16 MS. WINFIELD: I appreciate Eric, but I
17 think it is so unfair to the commissioners to receive
18 something four hours prior to meeting. I've been on
19 boards that have policies that you do not do that.

20 Now, as far as him presenting it to
21 the commissioners, that's fine. But to ask us to vote
22 the same day that you sent it, isn't. Like I said, I
23 didn't get a chance to go through any pictures, but I
24 appreciate his presentation. I'm glad I was able to
25 hear it, but I don't think it's fair to the
26 commissioners to receive -- unless everyone else has
27 access to their computers -- to look at their amended
28 agenda, if there is an amended agenda, during our
29 meeting. Can the commissioners at least receive a phone
30 call to see or contact some type of way to look at the
31 amended agenda before it's presented to your
32 commissioners?

33 MR. MORRISROE: I would certainly accept
34 that recommendation, that should -- this has not
35 happened during the time that I've been with the Plan
36 Commission. I thought that Grace is a fairly large and
37 substantial industry in town, and to at least be given
38 the opportunity to present today rather than tell him to
39 wait till the 20th. We are meeting early this month.
40 Usually we would meet on the 7th, which would have given
41 us a lot more time. However, because of the lack of
42 availability of a meeting on the 7th, the Tuesday after
43 the holiday, we are having it early. And so in light of
44 that, and the fact of a three week wait, I made the
45 decision to invite Eric to speak to us.

46 He also sent everything as quickly
47 as possible, which I asked for this morning, and it's a

1 rather substantial package, more than we usually would
2 hand out. You have everything that the Technical Review
3 people are going to receive. I have asked Eric, with a
4 number of consultants, people who have helped put that
5 packet together, to be available for the Tech Review
6 Committee meeting next Wednesday morning.

Eric, if you'd like to speak --

7 MS. RAMOS: Mr. Morrisroe -- this is
8 Lilia -- I have a question for you. You mentioned that
9 we can probably, due to the fact it was given to us
10 today, we could probably vote on the foundation and then
11 vote for the others at a later meeting. Now, would that
12 be something that the Tech Review would still have to
13 recommend or review?

14 MR. MORRISROE: One way that can be done
15 -- and there are different ways -- one way is that you
16 would approve the foundation, pending Tech Review
17 recommendation on Wednesday, and then it would be on the
18 agenda for the 20th, as far as the structure. The 20th
19 is our next meeting, and then you would have the full
20 review and recommendation. Or you'd be asked to wait
21 longer because there is some unanswered questions. So
22 it would give an opportunity to Grace and to Superior
23 Engineering, the other people who are part of this --
24 Tonn & Blank is the construction, the general
25 contractor -- they are very reputable firm. They have
done a lot of work. They were owned by the Franciscan
Hospital. They did St. Mary's down the street and
couple other projects.

So, we can limit what we do today to
the foundation, pending the review of that. And then
bring it back to you either the 20th or the August
meeting, the remainder of the building.

MR. GOMEZ: I think one consideration I
had when Mr. Morrisroe called me, I looked at it and it
wasn't a controversial building, just basic office
building, hardly any tie-ins. I thought this was
something we could bring to the Board and have a motion
with conditions on it, because it isn't a project that's
controversial, something hazardous or going into the
ground deep; I think then we would have delayed it and
said we need more time. But we are not looking at
reviewing the paperwork, just a basic one-story, 40 by
100-foot building. And even the sewer tie-ins are very
limited. Everything tied in basically to the other
building, and I think that was my consideration.

1 I told Mr. Morrisroe, I think we
2 could make a motion, put the conditions that it has to
3 get the recommendation and approval of the regular
4 project, and we can move forward with it.

5 MR. HORNBECK: The foundation is a very
6 basic upside turn down slab, so we are only going -- one
7 side is three feet down, and the other side -- I believe
8 -- it's only like a foot down, because the grade slopes.

9 MR. GOMEZ: The other consideration is,
10 it's kind of isolated. It's away from everything. I
11 know we had issues, and I agree with Stacy on the other
12 ones, where we should let the surrounding neighbors know
13 about it, but here they are almost all by themselves,
14 that was my consideration in bringing this, and after
15 Mr. Morrisroe talked to me about it.

16 MR. MORRISROE: It's at least two city
17 blocks south of the operating facility, and the office
18 and lab seem to be non-invasive kind of activities that
19 don't have much to do with the environment or with the
20 local community.

21 MR. GOMEZ: Are there any other
22 questions?

23 MR. HORNBECK: So, I just want to say
24 again, this was -- we recognize we didn't know that your
25 meeting was today. It just happened that I called Rich
this morning, and he said the next one is not going to
be for quite awhile. Well, let me know if there is
anything you guys could do. Anything you guys could do
would be highly appreciated, even if it's just the
foundation. They want to get moving on it. They are
worried about not getting it finished by the end of the
year. And, I guess, I think they had their sights on
trying to deal with bigger things, the State and EPA,
and this got missed. And they brought me in this
morning, 8:00 o'clock this morning, to help them as best
I can because they were stuck in Atlanta.

MR. GOMEZ: My other consideration is
that the State did approve everything. They do have
that as a matter of fact among their paperwork, there's
paperwork from the State. They did have the
construction design release among their papers.

MS. WINFIELD: Mr. President, I haven't

1 had time to look at that, which in doing the foundation,
2 seems like if we do it one time, if we are going to go
3 outside and have an amended agenda four hours before our
4 meeting; this is just going to be a mess every time if
5 we are going to go through this. I'm appreciative of
6 his presentation, but had I gone over this -- no, I had
7 not -- because I did not expect for this to come up.
8 Any time we have an amended agenda, if we can receive a
9 phone call so that we know to look for that. But if
10 it's just the foundation, that's fine.

11 As far as going through the whole
12 procedure, it's not fair to the commissioners. And I'm
13 sorry, Eric, saying that to you, but that's just my
14 opinion.

15 MR. HORNBECK: To me even a foundation
16 would be appreciative. You know, normally I get the
17 local authorities involved way early on. They were
18 going to handle this themselves and you can see where
19 that ended. It was not successful at all. They had a
20 change of guard -- you know -- they went through the
21 whole COVID thing. This project has been beaten up
22 pretty bad. So -- you know -- I just said, well, I'll
23 try and do what I can do. And Rich was pretty courteous
24 enough to say, well, he's not making any promises, but
25 he will see if it's possible. So, that's all I could
ask for at this point.

MR. GOMEZ: Are there any other questions
or comments? (None) There being no further questions
or comments, I think we are going to entertain a motion
first for the foundation, approve the foundation work.
I'll entertain a motion to approve that section.

CHIEF SERNA: So moved.

MR. ALLEN: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: Roll call.

Roll Call: "All in Favor": Anthony Serna, Lilia Ramos,
Joanne Moricz, William Allen, Val Gomez. Abstain:
Douglas Sloss and Stacy Winfield Opposed: None

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

Now, I'd like to entertain another
motion that we take the other approvals under
consideration based on approval by our regular scenario,
it goes before Tech Review and the Planning Commission.

1 entertain a motion that it would only be approved once
2 it passes those two.

3 MR. MORRISROE: If I may, it will be
4 brought to the Plan Commission meeting on the 20th.

5 MR. GOMEZ: Brought before our next
6 Planning Commission meeting.

7 CHIEF SERNA: So moved.

8 MS. RAMOS: You are going to present at
9 that time --

10 MR. GOMEZ: We are allowing that Tech
11 Review and the Planning Department review, so they can
12 have a report for us by next meeting.

13 CHIEF SERNA: So moved.

14 MR. ALLEN: Second.

15 MR. GOMEZ: Just to be clear, it will be
16 brought before us next meeting once it's reviewed and
17 recommendation from Tech Review and Planning Department.

18 MS. RAMOS: So we are voting on it today?

19 MR. MORRISROE: Just that it be on the
20 agenda for the 20th. You are not being asked to give
21 any additional approvals, as I understand it.

22 MR. GOMEZ: We are going to make a motion
23 to add it to our agenda for the 20th, and based on that,
24 the Tech Review reviews it and our Planning Department
25 reviews it, and they bring us their findings.

CHIEF SERNA: I so move.

MR. ALLEN: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: Roll call.

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

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

I think that concludes the new
business. We have no old business. Commissioner

1 comments and public comments. (None)

2 There being no further comments,
3 next meeting is Monday, July 20, 2020, at 4:30 p.m..
4 That concludes our business for tonight. Entertain a
5 motion for adjournment.

6 CHIEF SERNA: So moved.

7 MS. RAMOS: Second.

8 MR. GOMEZ: Roll call:

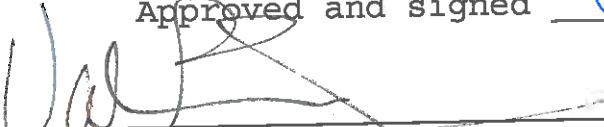
9 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None
10 Opposed: None

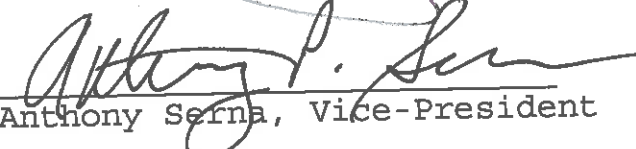
11 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.
12 Meeting adjourned.

13 ***** Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.*****
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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday
July 1, 2020

Approved and signed July 20th, 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 6th day of July, 2020.

Peggy S. LaLonde



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

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