CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
OFFICE OF CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION
FIRE DEPARTMENT

IN RE:)
REGULARLY SCHEDULED)
MEETING)
_____)

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

The transcript of proceedings as held in person Monday, February 9, 2026, commencing at or about 4:30 p.m. CST, and as reported by the duly engaged verbatim stenographer for said meeting, Rebecca A. Lempa, Associate Reporter.

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COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

VALERIANO GOMEZ, President
ROBERT NUNEZ, Vice President
STANLEY KUBAS, Commissioner

TOLBERT & TOLBERT, LLC
BY: DITA GUHA
1085 Broadway, Suite B
Gary, Indiana 46402
(219) 427-0094

Appearing via Zoom on behalf of Chief Escobedo

ALSO PRESENT:

Fire Chief Marc Escobedo

Chief Examiner Angel Gilarski-Taylor

Secretary Dina Rodriguez

(Members of the public present in person and via Zoom.)

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Monday, February 9, 2026 --

(Parties present in person and via Zoom at or about 4:30 p.m.)

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call to order the Fire Civil Service Commission meeting for February 9th, 2026. Roll call?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Commissioner Gomez?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Present.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Commissioner Kubas?

COMMISSIONER KUBAS: Here.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Commissioner Nunez?

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Here.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Next on our agenda is approval of the agenda. I'd like to make a motion to approve the agenda --

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: I'll second.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. All in favor say aye.

(Ayes in unison.)

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Motion passes. Now we have the minutes -- approval of minutes of January 2026; I'd like to make a motion to approve the minutes of January 2026 as written.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Second.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: All in favor say aye.

(Ayes in unison.)

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Motion passes. Now we have correspondence; we have a letter to the Board of Safety from the chief. And it's pertaining to the Board of Safety.

"Dear board members, I am respectfully requesting the Board of Safety approve and accept 2nd Class Firefighters Jacob Garastik, Alec Barney Jr., and Miguel Fernandez as Master Firefighters for the City of East Chicago. Jacob Garastik, Alec Barney, and Miguel Fernandez have successfully completed their year as 2nd Class Firefighters on February 6th, 2026."

And, just for the record, everybody needs to know, when we submit these to the Board of Safety, we're the deciding board, civil service. We have more authority than the Board of Safety. So, we actually don't have to send it to them; it does have to come to us, but it's a courtesy we send it to the Board of Safety. So, even though the Board of Safety approve and accept those motions, we're the ones that approve.

FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: Yeah. And, typically, we would send them to the commission and cc the

board; I don't know if our secretary was under a time crunch when she filled this out, so that's why (indiscernible). I know she e-mailed Olga, the secretary of Board of Safety probably as a way to --

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Yeah, and just for your information, when we found out that for several years, nothing was coming to the commission; it was going to the Board of Safety. So, when we found that out, we corrected it. It didn't happen with this chief but the previous chief.

Okay. Next we have communications from the chief, chief's attorney? Chief?

FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: I've got nothing.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay.

ATTORNEY GUHA: Yeah, this is Dita Guha from Tolbert &~ Tolbert -- how are you -- on behalf of the chief.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Good. Do you have any comments or . . .?

ATTORNEY GUHA: Oh, no. No comments.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. Next we have we communications from the chief examiner. We do have entry level hiring process. It just seems like a few -- one year ago we did this, doesn't

it? Time goes by.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Seems like we just did it.

Chief Examiner Angel Gilarski-Taylor. I just wanna bring it before the commission that we are in a new hire year. The list expires on June the 16th, 18th, somewhere in there. So, we are right on track to start talking about this. So, if we wanna do it, like, mirror exactly how we did it last year, or if the commission has interest in doing it a different way?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Well, the department, I feel like they've always stayed consistent; do you have anything you saw from the last hiring process that you would like to change or amend?

FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: Yeah, I'd definitely like to have more of an active role in the process. I know there was questions following the testing, just getting ahold of the candidates. So, yeah, I'd definitely like an opportunity to sit down with our chief examiner to --

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: You know I always say, we've gotta work together, you know, the commission, the department.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: So, the time

line will be as follows then: Within the next four weeks, we should develop a flyer, and that came from -- the city did that, but that's gonna have to be -- the fire chief's gonna have to go through and make sure that the salaries and the benefits and all that stuff is accurate with it. I believe Chief Escobedo took point on the flyer last time, so perhaps he would take point on the flyer this time?

FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: Sure.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Okay. So, Chief Escobedo could do the flyer. Another point is the application itself. I think it was kind of old, would you say, Dina? Like . . .?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: I mean, it could stand to be revised.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Right. Some parts -- And I don't know what all is relevant because I've never seen, like, the City of East Chicago's application. Is it the same -- I don't think it's the same one. Obviously, the fire department would ask some more specific questions than perhaps the city would.

But I do know that, like, parts of the application -- I'm not sure if it's relevant --

it's asking, like, your credit, if you've ever filed bankruptcy --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: The police department still does that.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Do they?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, that's part of it.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: -- list all your outstanding debts. I'm not sure it's relevant.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: I haven't seen it in a while. Might wanna get copies so we can compare the city's to what we have and then go from there.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, I can e-mail you -- I'll e-mail the commission, and all involved, the actual application. But I do think that we should update it, make it a little bit clearer.

There was some language in there that definitely needs to be updated; especially, with some of the age hiring things changed. So, I don't know who would do that, how that would work. I don't even know where that application came from.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: You might wanna check

with -- some of the other departments have a similar civil service like we do. I think Gary, Hobart. Hammond doesn't have civil service, but I know those two do. And they have the same like we do.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, I know that there was talks of using the city's application last time because it's an online application.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Oh, I don't remember.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, I don't know.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: It should be on our website, shouldn't it?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, it might be. I'll go look at it if it's on there.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: What, the city's application?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Yeah.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: I think those are on the website.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: I know for the civilian side. Never really looked on the fire --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Fire Civil Service and police -- police, you have to pick up at the

department; for Fire Civil Service, the way we did it last year is we had them request it via e-mail, and we would e-mail it back to them.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: And that worked out well.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: It did. I have to say it really did.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: So, I agree, we continue that part of it. Just somehow update that actual application. So, I'll have something, talk with the chief, talk with whoever wants to -- whoever, and then bring something back at the next meeting to have an actual, like, "This will be the application." That'll definitely need to happen by the March meeting though.

So, then we'll -- Applications, we did 30 days last time, which I think was well; there was a slight extension period I think. We gave, like, a few days extra, something like that; I don't remember. So, we can open the applications from April 1st to April 30th, and those all fall on weekdays, so it's not weekends.

One of the things that I did think was kind of -- made it challenging is we had two periods where it was like, "Hey, your application's due by

the 30th, and your supporting documents." Like, for residency and your DD 214s were due, like, on a different date, which created, like, more labor and trying to figure out -- get people to do it. Like, if we could just have, like, one ticket, "Here's the application; in the application, here's your DD 214 and the residency stuff all in one; your application's due in its entirety when you turn it in."

It would probably solve some of the labor problems that we had last time because it was a lot of work trying to do -- it was like two applications and trying to mesh them together.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: So, tell them what they have to bring in and it's all due on the same day.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah. You want your military points, you -- your -- you know, everything has to be in by the application deadline.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Thirty days; right?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah. The application period would be from April 1st to April 30th.

I spoke with Mr. Tyler; he is available for

testing on -- it would be a Saturday, May 16th, for the testing, if that pleases the commission. And then in the June meeting, the June 8th meeting, is when everything would be prepared and certified, and then we would have a list of all -- for another two years.

I would like to suggest one deviation from the process, is to add an actual exam prep to the package with Mr. Tyler. We don't require college degrees, but some of the math and some of the testing we could do -- he quote -- added an exam prep session; he said he'd do it for, like, 250 bucks.

We could do that on May 2nd, where we have it, all the candidates could come. "Hey, this is how you test." And just kind of give people a little bit of a refresher how to test. Go over, like, reading comprehension, little bit of math, and, you know, just to better prepare our candidates.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: He's actually been doing that for years and years. One time we had him at central; one time we had him at the library. You know, that's when we were trying to get more city people to pass. As a matter of fact, we made an

agreement once with (indiscernible) gave example booklets, and they were trying to help with --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: -- (indiscernible). Okay. I don't have a problem with it. Chief, any issues?

FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: No, I don't have a problem. Is this gonna be geared towards city residents or employees or --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: It's gonna be anybody who --

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: It's open to everybody.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah. Anybody who -- The applications will close on the 30th; that's a Thursday. And once you have -- you got your application and it's approved, you know, we'll issue that person, like, an invite to the exam prep on the 2nd. So, the only people coming to it are the people with approved applications, you know, who are gonna be testing on the 16th. These are actual testers. So, ...

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: In fact, we might -- because Mr. Tyler wants you to be (indiscernible), maybe they could e-mail, then they could get in contact with them and you could have them online.

Whatever's easier.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: So, that's essentially giving 24 hours to review and make sure all the applications are complete? Even though we're telling him to put everything together, but if somebody has until that 30th and they send it in, are we doing a cutoff time?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: The 30th?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Yeah.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Well, hopefully we don't get a whole bunch of last minute --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: I'm just saying, it's just that the 24-hour turnaround, and then the test is on the 2nd.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: -- you can tell them what's required, if you wanna take a refresher course or whatever. Give them all the information, then that date they've got 30 days. Let's get everything on one date, finishes off on --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Okay. So, we're good with exam prep May 2nd?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Yeah, unless something comes up or we didn't think about --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: All right. And then one final thing we haven't done is maybe -- and I just notice, like, Gary Fire Department has been doing this, and Hobart's been doing this. They've been doing I guess, like, question-and-answer sessions.

Like, "Hey, come and work through -- tell you" -- well, our fire department. And so, we can have a commissioner there saying like, "Hey, this is what we're doing; we're testing. This is" -- somebody from the commission -- "This is how this works." The fire chief will come, talk about the department; the union comes, talks about the culture, pension board, and just try to, like, get people interested in actually applying, you know?

And it'd just an initiative of, like, -- I mean, all we're doing is just, like, putting stuff out on social media, and not everybody's on social media, and then the flyers. If we had, like, a little informational session, people come and maybe somebody was like, "Hey, think I'd make a good fireman," and somebody's mom or dad drove them down there, and they're like, "Hey, maybe I can do this." Like a little recruitment tool.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Gary and Hobart do this?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, they've done multiple.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: You wanna move up your open house?

FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: Yeah.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: I mean, we could do it or not. I don't mind, you know, organizing it and trying to --

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Depends on how many applicants and how many people sign up for this. You know, we can have it for a week, have people come and --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Well, it'd be just like a day. Like a day we could have applications there, like, if we're gonna do it during the application period. Like, "Hey, here's your application," you know, "This is how you need to fill it out," questions and answers about how to fill out the application, the requirements, what you would need. You know, "You can't be a felon; you can't do this." Have firemen there, be like, "Hey, this is a great job," and talk about the job and, like, why it's good.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Depends on the fireman talking.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Well, we'll pick the right ones.

(Laughter.)

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. We'll give it --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: You don't have to.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Chief?

FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: Do we have a thought for the exam prep location? Are we thinking fire station or PD again?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: No, it'd probably have to be at the police department. It depends on the amount; I haven't even talked to Chief Rivera yet about the location.

So, it'd have to be somewhere large like the VFW or Knights of Columbus or a hall or the police department. Preferably the police department; that worked out great.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: The VFW, isn't that a company now?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, I think it is.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Maybe we could put it in the packet that anybody interested to let us know so then we know a number. Then we'll know how big

of a place.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Wait, what?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: During the week when they're coming to get a packet, part of the information would be anyone interested in having this educational class, they have to let us know so when we know the amount --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Uh-huh.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: So, basically RSVP.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, like RSVP?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yep. I think that's all I've got.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Anybody have any questions for Angel? Any comments? No? Okay. Thank you.

Okay. Do we have any other communications from any other commissioner?

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: No.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. Any old business, new business? Public comment? With no further questions or comments, I'd like to make a motion for adjournment.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Second.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: All in favor say aye.

(Ayes in unison.)

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Motion passes; everybody have a good night.

(Meeting adjourned at or about 4:46 p.m. CST.)

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STATE OF INDIANA)
)SS:
COUNTY OF LAPORTE)

COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Rebecca Lempa, Associate Reporter, do hereby certify that I reported by the means of CAT shorthand the proceedings held on February 9, 2026, commencing at or about the hour of 4:30 p.m., held in person before the Office of Civil Service Commission, Fire Department;

That I have transcribed my shorthand notes into the typewritten form, and that the foregoing and attached pages or parts of pages, numbered one through 19, comprise a complete, true, and accurate transcript of said proceedings to the best of my skills and abilities;

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 13th day of February, 2026.



REBECCA A. LEMPA

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ATTORNEY GUHA: [2] 5/15 5/20
CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: [32]
COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: [40]
COMMISSIONER KUBAS: [1] 3/10
COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: [6] 3/12 3/16 3/24 11/20 18/19 18/24
FIRE CHIEF ESCOBEDO: [7] 4/23 5/13 6/15 7/9 13/6 16/4 17/7
SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: [15] 3/7 3/9 3/11 7/14 8/2 8/5 9/9 9/16 9/19 9/23 10/5 14/1 14/8 14/12 18/8

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