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, March 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: MICHAEL E. TOLBERT
1085 Broadway, Suite B
Gary, Indiana 46402
(219) 427-0094

Appearing on behalf of Chief Escobedo

ALSO PRESENT:

Deputy Chief Ronald Bergren

Chief Examiner Angel Gilarski-Taylor

Secretary Dina Rodriguez

Union President David Mata

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

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Monday, March 9, 2026 --

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

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call to order the Fire Civil Service Commission for March 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: We have a quorum; next, we have approval of the agenda. I'd like to make a motion to approve the agenda as written.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: I'll second.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: All in favor, say aye.

(Ayes in unison.)

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Next we have approval of the minutes; we have the minutes of the February meeting, 2026. I'd like to make a motion to approve this also as written.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Second.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: All in favor, say aye.

(Ayes in unison.)

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Passes. And no correspondence. Moving on to communications. First we have on our agenda, do we have any communications from the chief or the fire department attorney?

DEPUTY CHIEF BERGREN: The only information that I had was that the -- for the flyer update, that city IT was working on creating a secure e-mail address that was city related versus gmail.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. I think we're actually gonna do --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Yes, we're still waiting on it, but Kevin's on vacation this week.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: So, I know we've been talking to our IT director, so -- but he has vacation planned. But he did start it.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, he revised the -- sent me the -- to be able to work on the application, and he's working on it.

DEPUTY CHIEF BERGREN: Okay.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. Now we have communications for the chief examiner?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Chief Examiner Angel Gilarski-Taylor. So, just a couple

housekeeping things: The test still is May 18th. Dina, in the packets, gave two pieces about the -- it was just informational piece that was going to go out with the applications and the study guide. There's just a few things that we're gonna do, housekeeping, between me and Dina just to correct; it's nothing that would require commission action.

The study session will be May 2nd. Kind of sitting on two locations: Chief Rivera said we can use the police department for the study session. That's a really big space; we'd have to go in there and set all the tables up and the chairs up. I was thinking about reserving the library. We could fit -- it's a smaller space; tables and chairs would already be set up. It's, like, $10, but that decision would -- we'd probably wait and see how many applications we're getting. If we're getting a bunch of applications, then it's like, "All right. Let's use the bigger space," but -- so there was that.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: How have we been doing it in the past, though, entry level?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: We -- Well, no, I'm talking about the study session before the test; we've never had that.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: If people would like to have a study session?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah. It's voluntary, so you don't have to show up for it.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Have you been averaging over a hundred? I mean, people -- it's way down?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: I was just curious.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, I'm thinking -- hopefully we get a hundred applicants; that would be nice. I don't remember the number last time. It was --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: It was 50s.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, it was up there. More like 70 or 80, and I think passing, we had about 50 people on the list. It was a pretty decent list.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Remember when we had 500 --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: I know.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: -- our numbers. I was thinking, like, 200, but you're saying 50?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Other than

that, Dina worked on the application; she had just kind of reorganized everything, added the correct IC codes in there, and then --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: It's in the packet.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Oh, in your packets. Then if we wanted to, like, eliminate any of the things in there. Because there were some kind of, like, interesting questions. Seemed like a lot of the stuff was --

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: In the application?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah. Like, I went through and I looked at the City of East Chicago's application; it's four pages, except the very first page is just, like, the seal of the city, and, you know, HR information. And so -- and then it's three pages of, like, information. Like, your general applicant information, employment history, education. Had some stuff about military and your residency, where you live. Ours is, like, 14 pages long.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Yeah, I was looking at that. But I was wondering if this is the one we've been using the past several years? Has it been reviewed by the law department? Attorney Tolbert, have you seen the application by

any chance?

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: I have not; I haven't looked at it.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: I'm wondering if maybe we should have both attorneys take a look at it.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Yeah, I can look at it, if it's the pleasure of the commission. And the Chief.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Because I was looking at it, and I see some of the questions, and I -- these are different times. Like, in the past, it wasn't an issue. But I know some of the things Trump and then our governor and attorney general have been saying, wonder if they -- if somebody can challenge this based on what they've been enacting. That's one of my concerns.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: That's what -- I was kind of looking through it; I was like -- one of the things was, like, your financial -- asking like, "Have you ever declared bankruptcy?" Then under that, it was like, "List all of your debts that you have and the date you opened those accounts," and, like, how much you owe. And I'm like -- because I had some people asking about those questions on the last test.

And I'm like, "I don't know; just fill out the application, what they're asking for you."

So, like, are we hiring somebody who's never -- who's filed bankruptcy versus never? And so, if that's not a determining factor, then why are we even asking the question? And all that stuff would come out on the background check. When the city does a background check, if, like, you're disqualified because of, you know, some kind of financial felonies that you've committed or something like that.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Well, that's why I asked if it's been basically the same one for the last few times or something?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: I feel like this is the application that I filled out when I got hired.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: I've been on the board for six years, and this is the same application.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: I don't recall the application. Not after this long. Because you were hired when I was chief.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah. Oh, it was a pretty long application. Remember the application had some pretty wild stuff. Do you

remember?

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Yeah, but I feel like mine was different. It had, like, boxes and fill-in -- Yeah, I remember. I specifically remember mine.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: We'll have both attorneys look it over. When are we --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: April 1st.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: So, we're set for people to start applying -- fill out the application --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, the time period is at least April 1st to April 30th, is the application, so we're kind of on a crunch.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: And then the testing is May 3rd?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: May 18th.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Oh, May 18th?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: May 2nd will be the study session, and then May 18th is the testing date.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Who is the commission's attorney?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: We currently don't have one at this time.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: That's right. Lyles

retired.

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Attorney Lyles retired.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Okay. So, how do you want to process the review? You want me to just review it or . . .?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: HR's attorney.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Dina, do you want to inform Attorney Allegretti?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: I'll talk to Attorney Allegretti.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Then he could assign an attorney --

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: All right. That's cool.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Because I think on the police side, we have Levinson, and she's been working --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: No.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: No?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Well, she's the -- yeah, she's the attorney for the commission. Yeah.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: She's familiar with civil service; right?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: When did the attorney retire?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Just recently; right?

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Yeah, it was --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: December.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Yeah, it was in December. Not too long ago.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. We'll see what Attorney Allegretti says from this side, and Attorney Tolbert can look at it from the department's side.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: And just looking at it for legality? Or streamlining or . . .?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Both.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Both? Okay.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Yeah.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: And the deadline of -- when does it need to be done?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: In a week?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: At least by early April.

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Okay.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, it's April 1st, so --

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: So, this week.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: This week?

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Okay. No problem.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Yeah. Because I'm concerned more about what the president's enacted and our governor's enacted, and our attorney general --

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: Some DEI language in it or something?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Well, it goes -- asks some questions on your racial makeup and, you know, so --

ATTORNEY TOLBERT: I gotcha. Thank you. Whatever the reason, it --

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: No, it didn't.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, there was, like, a section, and it's got, "List all your living relatives; your mother, your father, your brothers and sisters." It's like, that's not necessary; we don't need to be asking people that.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: I don't recall that. Okay. Anything else?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: That's all I've got, I believe. Dina, did I miss anything?

SECRETARY RODRIGUEZ: Nope. That's it.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: I did have

one additional thing; I brought it up at the last meeting. Our promotional list was gonna expire on June 16th. Chief Becerra's retiring, and then there's only one person left on the list.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Are you sure this time?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: He's sure; he's 100 percent. Yes, he's aging out; they're forcing him out. He has to go. So, he can retire, or we can kick him off the job. So, no, he is retiring June 16th. One person on the list is District Chief Pauly Russell; he'll take his spot, which would leave us with no list for --

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: District chief?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: -- chauffeur, captain, district chief, or AC. So, if we started testing -- we can start testing now. Like, do the same -- roll out the same exact stuff that we did, and we can have -- we can have it set up to where we'll have a list shortly thereafter there is no list. Probably, like, by the end of July. And the concern is, if we wait longer than that, we're testing -- this is also an inspection bureau test this year, and that's gonna fall in October. So, now do you want to run two reading lists and two tests, like, at the same time? Or

do you wanna kind of keep them separate?

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: I'd like to keep them separate, then, like you say, it's harder -- especially if people wanna take -- they're eligible to take tests on both, so . . ..

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah, it would be pretty easy to just kind of, like, do exactly what we did last time -- it was just a few months ago -- roll out the same things, same book list, same -- all the stuff. Put it all out. Just change the dates.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Yeah. Especially the bureau test. The other test, it's not that much literature on that one.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: It's still a lot. It's technical stuff that -- it's a little technical; I took that test. That one's hard. It was a lot of reading.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Do you mean testing for everyone or just for the AC positions?

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: No, it's --

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Nobody passed the other one we just had.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: No, they passed. Everybody -- People got their positions.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: So, they -- Okay. That's what I meant. Nobody left on those.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: No, the only -- we have one person left -- when we speak of the promotional test, it's not like, "Hey, chauffeurs' list." It's one list: Chauffeurs, captains, district chief, AC. In the list, there's only one person that's on the list for AC.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Right.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: So, once that's expired, then it -- the civil service rules say you have to test again. You have to maintain a list.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Right.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: So, once that list is over, then we maintain a list.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: If there was somebody there, you would actually have two lists, and that first list would correspond with the one that turns two years in July, then we'd -- they'd use the other one, so we've done that before.

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: Yeah. The last time we did, like, a split year -- like, this would be, like, an off year, be, like, kind of like a bonus test. In the past when that's

happened, the list only stays good for, like, a year. Or like how it would during the first testing cycle. Because you have one year where you have the inspection bureau, then the next year it would be promotional, and so you wanna keep those separate. So, this next test will not be a two-year list -- I mean, unless the commission wanted, but it would not be recommended. But it would just be like the fulfillment of that two-year list. The remaining time limit, I guess. Does that make sense?

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. We'll discuss it at the next meeting more. We'll let the department give their view; okay? Any other --

CHEIF EXAMINER GILARSKI-TAYLOR: That's all I've got.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Okay. Any communications from the commissioners?

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: No.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: Anything you wanna bring up? No?

We have no old business on our agenda, no new business. Any comments from the public? No? Okay. There being no further items on the agenda,

I'd like to make a motion for adjournment.

COMMISSIONER NUNEZ: Second.

COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: All in favor, say aye.

(Ayes in unison. Meeting adjourned at or about 4:43 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 March 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 18, 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 22nd day of March, 2026.



REBECCA A. LEMPA

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ATTORNEY TOLBERT: [15] 8/1 8/5 10/20 11/2 11/13 12/3 12/5 12/11 12/14 12/16 12/21 12/24 13/1 13/6 13/11
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COMMISSIONER GOMEZ: [50]
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