

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO  
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
Thursday, January 21, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS:	STAFF:
Anthony Serna, President	Ateria Allen
Rick Rodriguez, Vice President	Dawn Dawkins, Legal
Valda Lewis, Secretary	Vanessa Hernandez-Orange
Gilberto Cantu	
Eugene Austin	

Reported by: Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR  
Fissinger & Associates

Call to Order: 4:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Present: Anthony Serna, Eugene Austin,  
Rick Rodriguez

Telephonic: Valda Lewis, Gilberto Cantu

Staff Present: Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary  
Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director

CHIEF SERNA: I'd like to call to order  
today's Board of Parks and Recreation Special Meeting  
for Thursday, January 21, 2021.

Any administrative matters, Madame  
secretary?

MS. ALLEN: None.

CHIEF SERNA: Old Business, Madame  
secretary?

MS. ALLEN: None

CHIEF SERNA: On to New Business.  
Vanessa?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: First, I would  
like to ask for approval for a quote regarding Belson  
Outdoors for waste stations and bags. So these are  
waste stations for dog poop, and place holder for bags.

So, we have a big complaint issue  
with people bringing dogs into the park -- which we know  
they are not to bring dogs in the park, but people are

1 doing it anyway -- we have to find a preventative way to  
2 take care of that. We are going to try and add these  
3 waste stations with the bags, because people actually  
4 drop off bags to see if we can put them somewhere in the  
5 parks. I had two big boxes of 100 bags donated to us  
6 because of the fact they want to find a way to keep the  
7 parks clean.

8 So, with that being said, if we  
9 can find a way to just add to our waste baskets that we  
10 have throughout the city. When I did my research about  
11 the waste station, obviously what they usually have is  
12 those big long poles that say waste station here, blah,  
13 blah, blah. Or they have like medium size pole that has  
14 waste station. These are actually just going to go on  
15 the hooks of our waste baskets that we already have at  
16 the park. So it's for all of our parks and it's a good  
17 price. Hopefully that will help with the dog waste at  
18 the parks.

19 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. So we have a quote  
20 here for \$6,020.80, that's the total quote. That's the  
21 price.

22 MR. AUSTIN: This is for the parks, for  
23 the clean up for animals?

24 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes.

25 MR. AUSTIN: I didn't quite get the thing  
you said, you want to set up a system that will kind of  
help this transformation of dogs in the park, people  
bringing them?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So in our parks,  
one of the rules, you are not to bring dogs in the park,  
but obviously that's not the case. People still do  
that. And I would rather try to find a way to protect  
our parks and just have something available so that  
people do clean it. Because there are a lot of people  
who bring their dogs, leave the waste all through -- you  
know -- through the park. And, again, this is a  
preventative measure for our parks because then we won't  
have waste all over.

MR. AUSTIN: Well, something to look at,  
right off the top of my head. Why can't we maybe think  
about this, put the bags and have the bags set up in a  
way that you can get some money. We make it like a  
transition as you travel through here, you got your dog

1 with you, you just get your bag, drop a dollar or 50  
2 cent in there, get the bag. Now you walk through the  
3 park and on the other end, going out of the park, we got  
4 a disposal where they can just drop the bag in there.  
5 And then I just suggest a figure off the top to help,  
6 because most people know -- but anybody who's got a  
7 dog -- you have a sign up there. Look, you come in the  
8 park with your dog, you pick up a bag and drop it like  
9 when you're leaving.

10 CHIEF SERNA: Well, you know what, I  
11 think that as far as this dogs in the park, the rules  
12 state no dogs, one. Two, if you look at every park,  
13 somebody is walking a dog.

14 MR. AUSTIN: That's what I'm saying.

15 CHIEF SERNA: And third, charging, maybe  
16 trying to get revenue, that's not a bad idea -- maybe a  
17 vending machine. I don't think that will go over well.  
18 I think at some point though park rangers or some kind  
19 of supervision of this would go a long way. What do you  
20 think about this bag vending machine?

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: If you have it out there,  
22 I think they will break it.

23 CHIEF SERNA: Because the parks are  
24 unprotected 24 hours. You know what I mean? There is  
25 so many parks. But I would say as far as approving this  
quote, half of me says, dog gone it, the rule says no  
dog. But the reality is, there are dogs on leashes,  
sometimes not on leashes, with people. And we are  
trying to make it easier for clean up after the dog. If  
we had enforcement, we could fine them or enforce the  
rule, and say, get your dog out. I think that's  
probably the big picture of solving it, but in the  
meantime, to spend an amount of money for all the parks,  
it's a good gesture and I think it's something we should  
do.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: We can try it.

CHIEF SERNA: I'll entertain a motion to  
approve the quote for waste stations and purchasing the  
bags for \$6,020.80.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion.

1 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

2 CHIEF SERNA: Any discussion on the  
3 motion? (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?  
(All signify aye.)

4 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next we have the  
6 agreement with Balance Holdings, and they are makers of  
7 ECSIA. This is our aquaponics system. This was very  
8 familiar because we recently had one approved for the  
9 2019-2020 year. Now this is for the 2021-year.

10 The reason why we are doing it so  
11 early is because we continually miss the possibility of  
12 the class that they have for our individuals. So when  
13 we finally got the agreement approved for last year, we  
14 had one time only to try to go to a class, that was in  
15 November. Obviously with COVID, we can't allow our  
16 staff members to go out of town and they literally had  
17 to stay the night because of the time difference.  
18 That's not a possibility. The year before that they  
19 also missed it because, I think it was in March when  
20 they were suppose to go, and that's when COVID first  
21 hit. I just want to make sure that we give the  
22 opportunity to my staff to be able to attend class, as  
23 well as I would like to make sure we do not miss any of  
24 the feed. I don't want to go before the Board and ask  
25 for special permission to be able to pay out for feed  
that we need for our fish.

So, this is now the agreement for  
this year before you. And this is basically the same  
thing as last year. The dollar amount has not changed.  
Everything that we asked for last year, they included.  
Balance Holdings was very helpful. I told them what I  
needed and what they had to do for me, and I think the  
relationship and the conversation -- the communication  
has been a lot better with them.

20 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. Any questions Board  
21 members? (None) Entertain a motion to approve the  
22 general service agreement between East Chicago Parks and  
23 Recreation Department and Balance Holdings Inc., maker  
24 of the ECSIA system, in the amount of \$8,200.00.

23 MS. LEWIS: I move for approval.

24 MR. CANTU: Second.

25 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor signify

1 by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

2 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

3 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next we have a  
4 quote for Balance Holdings, who is also the maker of  
5 ECSIA system, for our new fish. With our aquaponic  
6 system we have to purchase fish every so often. This is  
7 my first year here, but from what I looked at in the  
8 book, it's every year basically.

9 So what I have been told by Balance  
10 Holdings, we basically have to have 400 fish in the tank  
11 in order to properly give nutrients to the system. So  
12 when I first got here, we had about 900. When they  
13 purchased the last time -- and I think it was in  
14 December when they purchased -- it was like 1500. They  
15 purchased extra.

16 So, the fish is something that we  
17 need. Once the fish get to a certain width, the fish do  
18 not poop as much. So with that being said, they hurt  
19 the nutrients in our system. So they don't poop the  
20 nutrients. They don't go through the system to feed our  
21 plants. So we have to have them a certain length and we  
22 cannot put baby fish in with the big fish because of the  
23 fact the baby fish would get eaten. We have to get  
24 brand new seedlings.

25 The reason why we are going with  
Balance Holdings is because of the fact that they  
actually acclimate the fish in their locations. They  
give them the feed to begin with and then we'll end up  
getting it acclimated to our system. So if I could have  
approval for that.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Don't they mate? Can't  
18 the fish mate so we have our own fish?

19 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No. So in the  
20 system -- and this is very interesting -- when I  
21 researched it, the fish are in a circle and they go in a  
22 circle and they cannot stop. They cannot help it. They  
23 just go in a circle. So there is never --

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So a current.

25 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It's a current.  
The waste would stay on top. Like that bottom area, we  
need the current to push through into the pipes that go  
into the separation of the nutrients and then goes into  
our system.

1 CHIEF SERNA: All right. So I'll  
entertain a motion to approve the purchase of the fish  
2 from Balance Holdings, in the amount of \$4,990.00.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve.

4 MR. CANTUA: Second.

5 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the  
6 motion?

7 MR. AUSTIN: I have one question. What  
is the lifetime of these fish?

8 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It all depends on  
how fast they grow. So I couldn't tell you what fish is  
9 going to be bigger than the others.

10 Now, I was going to ask for approval  
for something else in today's meeting, if they are  
shocked because it's either too hot or too cold, that  
11 fish might not be able to handle it. If there is  
cleaning being done, and maybe the person who cleaned  
12 ended up touching the fish, that might have shocked it,  
and then it might have passed away.

13 I can't tell you the life  
expectancy, but I do know from speaking to those from  
14 ECSIA company, as well as different companies, because  
we did try to find other companies in this area to see  
15 if they acclimate, to kind of do a price match, but they  
don't do feed. The feed that we use, they don't do  
16 that. But again what they said was, they all have to do  
with the length that they would be, as well as the  
17 environment. So if they are in shock, then they  
probably could die quicker. If you remember, when we  
18 lost those 400 fish when I first got here, and it was  
literally -- you had bigger ones and you had smaller  
19 ones. It just depended. So I can't really tell you.

20 CHIEF SERNA: So we don't know what the  
life expectancy is.

21 MR. AUSTIN: You actually don't know what  
22 size fish they would grow to once you purchase this  
fish? You get just mixing all kinds in.

23 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No, we know what  
24 kinds we are getting. Actually they are yellow perch.  
Fingerlings is actually what we are getting and they  
25 grow to be just that type of fish.

1 MR. AUSTIN: Also, this is the first time  
2 that we trying this out, because before we had 900 fish.

3 CHIEF SERNA: I can't remember the  
4 number, but this is the first time we are buying fish.

5 MRS. HERNANEZ-ORANGE: No. You have  
6 bought multiple fish on multiple occasions.

7 CHIEF SERNA: It's not the same fish we  
8 started with when this project started. I don't know if  
9 it's every year, but it's definitely not the first  
10 group. The seniors have graduated and we got to bring  
11 in more freshman.

12 MS. LEWIS: I have a question. What  
13 happens to the fish when they outgrow the tank?

14 MR. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So what we asked  
15 Balance Holdings, what particularly usually happens, we  
16 had two options. We could sell them if we wanted to go  
17 get a license to sell the fish. And you can sell them  
18 as long as you don't cut through them.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: What do you mean cut  
20 through them?

21 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Cut along to  
22 kill them, as long as we don't cut them, we can sell  
23 them without a certain license. I personally don't want  
24 to go into that business. I also think that's a  
25 liability on the City, if we do sell that.

So, we have a pond. And previously  
what has been done, they put those fish in the pond.  
Currently we have no more fish in the pond, they've  
either outgrown it or have died. But that's the plan,  
those that are still there would go in the pond. The  
pond is big enough for them to be there.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do they mate in the pond?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I have no idea.  
That would be the first time for me, I don't know.  
That's a great question. I don't know if we can take  
those -- I doubt if we can. They are fingerlings and we  
can't put them in the system because they were used to  
just being open. But yet, how they acclimate as  
fingerlings, Balance Holdings already starts the system  
of the circle thing.

1 CHIEF SERNA: All right. So any other  
2 questions on the motion? (None) No other questions --

3 MR. AUSTIN: Could we have more time  
4 maybe to study this or you just think --

5 CHIEF SERNA: No, they need these fish.  
6 So we have a motion on the floor. All those in favor of  
7 the motion signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

8 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

9 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next we have a  
10 quote for Balance Holdings, and this is asking for  
11 approval of chillers to help keep the fish alive in the  
12 summertime. If the temperature of the water goes above  
13 82 degrees, then more than likely our fish will end up  
14 dying. That was the biggest issue we had this past  
15 year, where we had to literally put fans on the water,  
16 dump ice in the water because of the fact that it was so  
17 hot in there. The shades we have on, but then the  
18 humidity, that's something that we can't stop. And I  
19 can't have my staff come in at night every two hours and  
20 add more ice. So that calls for a lot of our fish to go  
21 into shock, which caused a lot of them to die.

22 Again, it's another preventative  
23 measure to hopefully not have to purchase more fish  
24 throughout the year

25 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. It's an agreement to  
purchase from ECSIA chillers for the fish tank, and that  
amount is \$6,041.27. Entertain a motion to approve the  
purchase of the chillers from Balance Holdings, in the  
amount of \$6,041.27.

MS. LEWIS: I move for approval.

MR. CANTU: Second.

CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the  
motion?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Is this ours to keep or  
we have to --

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It's ours to keep.  
And what they are doing for us also, so ECSIA, this is  
their chiller. They actually made it for our tank and  
they will --



1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It's customized?

2 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Custom to our  
3 tank. When they do their maintenance, because they come  
4 to maintain our tank -- or if something is wrong with  
5 that chiller, they will come and check it, because again  
6 the tanks that they usually have, this is smaller. So  
7 they literally had to customize it to the City of East  
8 Chicago.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

10 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor of the  
11 motion signify by saying aye?

12 (All signify aye.)

13 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

14 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next item would  
15 be the agreement with Federal Protection Agency. And I  
16 am asking for approval of the agreement as we use this  
17 security at our recreation centers when they are open.  
18 Again, we hope to open up this year, and I want to make  
19 sure that we have this before you. We hope to have our  
20 programs back in our recreation centers. Currently we  
21 do not have anyone there because we don't have the  
22 programs at night. Once we get big crowds we'll need  
23 the security. So that's why the agreement is before  
24 you.

25 CHIEF SERNA: Looking at the agreement,  
the amount is for \$22,000. That's enough to get you  
through the whole year at both centers -- or how many  
centers is this covering?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Two centers.

CHIEF SERNA: This is just for Unity and  
Heritage?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct. And  
then basically from usually 4 to 6:00 o'clock. So they  
are only doing a couple hours a day.

CHIEF SERNA: Okay. The amount was low  
for the whole year.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No, actually we  
ended up last year minimizing the amount. And then I  
think it started at 22, and I think it went to 12 if I'm

1 not mistaken is how much we actually used for the  
2 center.

3 CHIEF SERNA: All right, so 22 -- it  
4 wouldn't exceed \$22,000?

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That is the plan,  
6 to stay under the \$22,000. I don't foresee anything  
7 going above that.

8 CHIEF SERNA: Exactly. They are still  
9 basically closed until who knows when.

10 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct.

11 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions Board  
12 members? (None) All right, I'll entertain a motion to  
13 approve the agreement with Federal Protection Agency for  
14 security at Heritage and Unity Hall, in the amount of  
15 \$22,000.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve.

17 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

18 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by  
19 saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

20 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

21 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next we have  
22 approval of quote for Little Apple, for replacement of  
23 the batting cage netting. I have called multiple  
24 locations in regards to replacement of the netting. We  
25 called companies in Chicago who have used the netting.  
And we have also called just our vendors that we use, to  
see if they can bring the netting. It was just our  
assumption was all you need is the ladder to go up there  
and put everything together. And apparently that's not  
something that can happen because of the size of our  
batting cages. That's what we have been told.

So we also -- they do all our  
maintenance, Little Apple. The batting cage is a Little  
Apple batting cage. With that being said, that net is  
also from Little Apple and we have decided to go with  
Little Apple in order to have that installed.

CHIEF SERNA: I can understand from a  
liability standpoint that the company manufactures the

1 poles, the fencing, everything. I would say, sure, go  
2 ahead and install your own netting, but now that voids  
3 any kind of warranty or that would take care of any  
4 liability. They are out of it and you are in it. So I  
5 would assume in this agreement that it also -- does it  
6 maintain a type of commitment with them -- with Little  
7 Apple?

8 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: We have a  
9 maintenance agreement and they said that would also be  
10 included because it was already included to begin with.  
11 If we had gone with something else, the agreement would  
12 not -- that would not have been included. The reason  
13 why I looked for a different company to put that on  
14 there, because basically the amount for installment was  
15 more than the actual netting. So because of those two  
16 amounts, I was like, wait, that doesn't make sense to  
17 me.

18 CHIEF SERNA: Labor versus material.

19 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: What I tried to  
20 find was something else -- just in case -- to do a  
21 comparison and this is the best option.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Vanessa, I have been on  
23 the Board for a number of years already. Is this the  
24 first time we are changing these nets, because I've  
25 never come across that?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I'm going to be  
honest. At this point in time I don't know if this is  
the first time. But I will tell you this, that machine  
has been there since I was in high school. That's a  
very long time, that's 20 years. But my understanding  
is that the people, you know, when they come to work on  
those parts, they can't find parts any more and they  
have asked me to look into getting brand new. So I am  
going to say that you might have had it maybe changed at  
least once in the life span, so far, but I couldn't tell  
you for sure. I can look into that and give you an  
answer.

26 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No, you're good. Thank  
27 you.

28 MR. AUSTIN: Maybe look into what kind of  
29 ball you can use -- you know -- because it's just  
30 practice. The ball will shoot out and you don't have to

1 have a really hard ball because it's just practice.

2 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: We have to use  
3 that ball specific to that machine. So when you throw  
4 the ball you can see that you couldn't put a certain  
5 ball in that type of machine to shoot it out. It just  
6 depends on the weight, as well as the width, as well as  
7 the material for that machine. So the balls are  
8 according to what those machines are.

9 MR. AUSTIN: Just something to look at.  
10 You maybe question it because you never know. You think  
11 they should have headphones for anybody that comes for  
12 practice?

13 CHIEF SERNA: They do that. Hopefully in  
14 the summertime we can go see it for ourselves. It will  
15 be open. That is a requirement, helmet is a  
16 requirement.

17 MR. AUSTIN: We want all the equipment.

18 CHIEF SERNA: All right. Entertain a  
19 motion to approve the agreement with Little Apple in the  
20 amount of 10,000. On the front it says 9,000, Vanessa,  
21 a little bit of discrepancy. On the actual quote it  
22 says 9,000, on the request for PO.

23 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It's 9,000.

24 CHIEF SERNA: So entertain a motion to  
25 approve the agreement to install new netting for the  
five batting cages with Little Apple, amount of  
\$9,000.00.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve.

MR. AUSTIN: Second.

CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by  
saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So previously at  
our last meeting you ended up approving that we purchase  
Riley Park furnishings from Belson. After we received  
all the quotes, we went to see if they had the amount  
that we needed in stock and they do not. So we had to

1 in turn look for different companies to see if we can  
2 just go with a different -- get something different for  
3 our furnishings. And we found that Webstaurant was the  
4 best price. Now I am asking for approval of that.

5

6 CHIEF SERNA: Looks like there are chairs  
7 and tables. We have a six-burner range with griddle and  
8 two standard ovens. You have some folding tables. You  
9 have -- looks like a refrigerator, solid door  
10 refrigerator. You also have an ice machine and  
11 connections that you need, and filtration system that  
12 you need for -- I guess that's for the refrigerator. Is  
13 it for a filtration system, is that for water behind the  
14 bar maybe?

15

16 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes.

17

18 CHIEF SERNA: Looks like the total amount  
19 here is \$13,644.00. Again the PO is \$15,000.00. Maybe  
20 because --

21

22 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: We don't foresee  
23 any issues.

24 CHIEF SERNA: Would you like approval for  
25 the 15,000?

26

27 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes, sir.

28

29 CHIEF SERNA: All right. So I will  
30 entertain a motion -- are there any other questions on  
31 this purchase here for these items for Riley Park?

32

33 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How much are we approving  
34 now?

35

36 CHIEF SERNA: It's going to be 15,000.  
37 Entertain a motion to approve the purchase of  
38 furnishings and different appliances for Riley Park from  
39 the Wedstaurant Company, and that is in the amount of  
40 \$15,000.00.

41

42 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve.

43

44 MS. LEWIS: Second.

45

46 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by  
47 saying aye?

48

49 (All signify aye.)

1 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

2 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Thank you again  
3 for having this meeting at such short notice.

4 CHIEF SERNA: Any public comments?  
5 (None) Our next meeting date is regular meeting for  
6 Tuesday, January 26, 2021, right here at City Hall  
7 Council Chambers, at 5:00 p.m.

Entertain a motion to adjourn.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to adjourn.

9 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

10 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by  
11 saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

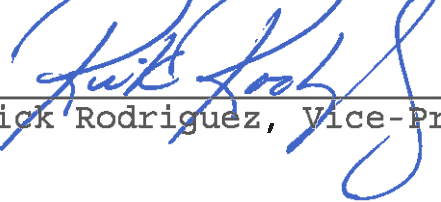
12 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries. Meeting  
13 adjourned.

14 \*\*\*\*\* Meeting adjourned at 4:30 p.m. \*\*\*\*\*  
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1 Approval of the Special Meeting Minutes of Thursday  
January 21, 2021


2 Approved and signed February 9, 2021

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4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Anthony Serna, President

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6 \_\_\_\_\_  
Rick Rodriguez, Vice-President

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8 \_\_\_\_\_  
Valda Lewis, Secretary

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Gilberto Cantu, Member

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Eugene Austin, Member

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Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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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 27th day of January, 2021.

*Peggy S. LaLonde*



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR