

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

BOARD MEMBERS

Grayling Gordon, President
Rick Rodriguez, Vice President
Valda Lewis, Secretary
Gilberto Cantu, Member
Eugene Austin, Member

Regular Meeting Minutes
(Via Zoom Conference)
Tuesday, January 25, 2022 @ 5:00 p.m.

Reported for Fissinger & Associates
By: Lisa Pena

CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL: Present in Chambers: Rick Rodriguez, Eugene
Austin, Grayling Gordon

Present Via Zoom: Valda Lewis, Gilberto Cantu.

STAFF: Present in Chambers: Ateria Allen, Vanessa
Hernandez-Orange

Present Via Zoom: Dawn Dawkins.

ELECTION OF OFFICIALS:

MR. RODRIGUEZ: First thing on the agenda would be
Election of Officials. We'd like to have any nominations
first of all for President.

I nominate because I have a new position at work
and it's hard for me to be here at the meetings now. I
nominate Grayling Gordon. Second by Mr. Austin.

Motion to Nominate of Grayling Gordon 2022 Board President
made by Rick Rodriguez. Second by Mr. Austin.

Questions/Comments: None.

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

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Now would be our Vice-President,
2 nomination for the Vice-President.

3 MR. GORDON: I'll make a motion to nominate
4 Mr. Rodriguez.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I accept. Second by Mr. Austin.
6 Motion to Nominate Rick Rodriguez 2022 Board Vice-President
7 made by Grayling Gordon. Second by Eugene Austin.

8 Questions/Comments: None.

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

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: We have to nominate our Secretary for
12 the Park Board. I nominate Miss Lewis. Second by
13 Mr. Gordon.

14 Miss Lewis, do you accept the nomination?

15 MS. LEWIS: Yes, I do.

16 Motion to Nominate Valda Lewis 2022 Board Secretary made by
17 Rick Rodriguez. Second by Grayling Gordon.

18 Questions/Comments: None.

19 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
20 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

21 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Mr. Gordon, you can now run the
22 meeting as the Board President. And we are at Administrative
23 Matters.

24 ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

25 Approval of Minutes: January 11, 2022.

Motion to approve January 11, 2022 Meeting Minutes made by
Gilberto Cantu. Second by Rick Rodriguez.

Questions/Comments: None.

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

Approval & Signing of Payroll: January 21, 2022

1 Motion to approve January 21, 2022 Payroll made by Valda
2 Lewis. Second by Rick Rodriguez.

3 Questions/Comments: None.

4 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
5 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

6 Approval & Signing of Warrant: 123121PB \$192,901.24

7 Motion to approve Warrant 123121PB made by Gilberto Cantu.
8 Second by Valda Lewis.

9 Questions/Comments: None.

10 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
11 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

12 Approval & Signing of Warrant: 012522PB \$16,847.30

13 Motion to approve Warrant 012522PB made by Valda Lewis.
14 Second by Gilberto Cantu.

15 Questions/Comments: None.

16 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
17 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

18 OLD BUSINESS: None.

19 NEW BUSINESS:

20 MR. GORDON: We will continue New with Business. We
21 have Miss Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director of Parks &
22 Recreation.

23 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Good evening. Once again
24 congratulations to all the officers. It does take a little
25 while to kind of sink in and know the Board Members.
Everyone I am sure will be patient.

The first item I have on the agenda is Resolution
Number 2022-1. The Resolution states that we will have a
Contract, Consulting Agreement with our previous Park Board
President, Anthony Serna.

With the park being completely finished or
completely finished on the outside and the actual structure,
he is now able to start the process of getting games

1 scheduled with different pro teams. Also going to start
2 furnishing the location as well as just any fixes that need
to happen.

3 So what we're running into right now is seeing that
4 there's a lot of minor things that have not been completed by
the company's contractors. Again very minor. But still we
5 have to just look into it because we don't want to have
long-term damage.

6 Right now it's under warranty. So just we're
7 making sure it's done correctly and fix everything that is
under warranty.

8 We have been sought out by at least four semi pro
9 teams to play at Block Stadium.

10 Again we understand that we spent a lot of money on
that location. But what we want to do is make sure that we
11 bring something to the City to invite our Community to come
and have fun.

12 We also are not going to allow them a free day. So
13 we're going to make sure that they're paying for something at
Block Stadium also. It's not going to be for free.

14 With this contract Mr. Anthony Serna is not only
15 going to be in charge of Block Stadium, but he is going to be
in charge of all the baseball complexes.

16 So for instance Kenny Lofton Field he will work
17 with the Little League that we have. Helping Lofton Field
with maintenance, with scheduling of let's say the semi pro
18 teams or the men's leagues.

19 Whatever is needed for Kenny Lofton Field as well
as Block Stadium and Kosciuzko will now be underneath him.

20 With our administration it's a big big thing. It
21 takes a lot of time. And mind you me being the Director we
have difference sources that we have going on. And we're
22 anticipating baseball to be one of our biggest events,
revenue driver that we have for Parks & Recreation.

23 Again it's not just going to be Block Stadium games
24 for baseball. Most of these things that we come in contact
with speaking with staff movie nights. They want to bring
concerts. They want to bring other things to it.

25

1 So we're continuously talking to them to see what
2 works for the City of East Chicago. But it's definitely
3 through Mr. Serna.

4 He knows that he has to be in charge of the
5 maintenance of the fields, all that fun stuff that I am sure
6 Mr. Rodriguez used to do back in the day. I know I held and
7 I remember the athletic office getting that water out of the
8 dugout. That will all be underneath him.

9 Again he reports to me being Director. But he will
10 be solely in charge of that.

11 So I just need approval for Resolution Number
12 2022-1 from the Board.

13 Motion to approve Resolution 2022-01 made by Rick Rodriguez.
14 Second by Eugene Austin.

15 Questions/Comments: None.

16 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
17 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

18 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The next item we have before you
19 is Resolution Number 2022-2. It's a Quitclaim Deed and Sales
20 Disclosure for Magnolia Street.

21 What we found out is that there is a portion of
22 what we consider Goodman Park from West Calumet area that
23 kind of sits between Carrie Gosch and the old Calumet
24 Complex. I have a map just to kind of show.

25 This is the old Calumet Complex. This is Carrie
Gosch. And this is Goodman Park area.

 So Housing currently owns this area here where the
old building used to be. This Goodman Park area basically is
considered part of Parks & Recreation. And then it's Carrie
Gosch that falls into it.

 So we're going to sell this portion of the Goodman
Park to the Housing Authority as they're seeking to move
forward in a different direction for that area now with part
of that property to go along with it.

 This is what the Resolution before you states. I
just need approval.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: What's the future?

2 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So there's been future talks of
3 possibly once again putting housing there. There was talks
4 about a company there. I don't think anything is definite or
5 for sure.

6 I just know that when they have their conversations
7 of what is needed to go there that part because it kind of
8 sits in between the Housing Authority and the City, the
9 School City we're just going to give it to the Housing
10 Authority so it will all just be one.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Just give into them?

12 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I mean the Housing Authority
13 basically is underneath the City anyway. So it's just a quit
14 deed to them.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Has this come to the Common Council yet?

16 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I'm sorry?

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Has this come to the Common Council yet?

18 MR. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: This is not something that the
19 Common Council has to approve. However it will go before
20 them afterwards.

21 But again this is just property that is from the
22 Park Board that is a quit deed to the Housing Authority. Now
23 whatever the Housing Authority does with that area --

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: There is nothing there, right?

25 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Currently there is nothing there.
That area the only time that we use it is for fireworks.
It's all gravel in that area right now.

They've done remediation. From being a School
Board President I do know that none of that area was actually
remediated. It didn't need to get remediated. There's only
a small portion closer to the school that needed remediation.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Really. That's strange. The led
company owned that.

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I understand. But I do know that
that portion for some reason was not. When they checked that

1 whole land area, I don't know exactly where it ends or starts
2 where they started the remediation. But I do know it was not
there.

3 Miss Dawkins, I know you've been in contact with
4 Mr. Morrisroe.

5 MS. DAWKINS: I think that the photograph that you
received is sufficient to show if you showed it to the Board.

6 They're not buying it from the Park Board. It's
7 really just a quitclaim deed to exchange ownership name. So
it's not a purchase. But a quitclaim deed is required to
8 take it out of one Board's name to another.

9 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Are there any other questions?

10 MR. AUSTIN: With the change of the name who would have
more say so over it?

11 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The authority would fall under
12 the East Chicago Housing Authority Board.

13 MR. AUSTIN: So we'd just be a vote only?

14 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: After your vote here to approve
the quitclaim to them then it will be theirs. I mean it's
15 all on record.

16 Any other questions?

17 MR. GORDON: Is there a motion out there for Resolution
Number 2022-2 for Quitclaim Deed and Sales Disclosure for
18 Magnolia Street?

19 MR. AUSTIN: We would like to see some more information
on this.

20 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So you have in your packet the
Resolution. And I could read it. Did you want me to read
21 the Resolution?

22 It just states that now resolved by the City of
East Chicago Park Board Recreation that the property located
23 on Magnolia Street particularly described in the quitclaim
deed attached hereto be sold and made to the East Chicago
24 Housing Authority for no consideration. And the Board
President is hereby authorized to execute the quitclaim deed
25 and perform all acts to execute all other documents necessary

1 to carry out this transfer.

2 So that right there gives the authority.

3 MS. DAWKINS: It's just a simple exchange of City-owned
4 property from one department to another. There is no money
5 transaction involved. And a quitclaim deed is what is
6 normally used to make that transfer.

7 And in addition the sales disclosure form is
8 something that is required by the Assessor's Office. And
9 it's just giving the detailed information about the exchange
10 of the property.

11 Motion to approve Resolution 2022-02 made by Rick Rodriguez.
12 Second by Grayling Gordon.

13 Questions/Comments: None.

14 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
15 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

16 PUBLIC COMMENTS:

17 MR. GORDON: Now we'll move to Public Comments.

18 MS. RAMOS: Good evening. Happy New Year and hello
19 everyone.

20 MR. GORDON: State your name and address.

21 MS. RAMOS: It's Debra Ramos. I live at 4228 Parrish.
22 And I'm also the Councilwomen at Large for the City of East
23 Chicago.

24 I am here today because I live across the street
25 from Washington Park. I don't know if all of you are aware
what happened on New Year's Eve.

We have people shooting from the park at midnight.
And I recently had a meeting with Deputy Chief Rivera to
discuss solutions of some kind that we can have in place for
next year, for the summer and things like that.

Because if I feel that we don't take action of some
type, then these people that congregate in the park and all
the parks will think that this is okay. And it's not okay
for me and the residents or my neighborhood.

1 I'm also in charge of my Crime Watch. And we
discussed this. And this is why I am here today.

2
3 One of the solutions that we came up with and they
told me to come here to discuss that with you. To suggest,
not discuss, suggest it. Is to have more lighting in the
4 park when it gets very dark. Because there's section in the
park that are pitch black. And that's where the shooting
5 occurred.

6 Yes, I did call the police. But, you know, it's
very difficult for them to come out on New Year's Eve. I
7 don't know if you know. But it's kind of like a war zone in
our City.

8
9 There's a lot of guns on the street. And they
can't be everyone. And I don't expect them to.

10 No one really should expect that on midnight on New
Year's Eve. We also have to look at their safety besides
11 ours.

12 So what I am suggesting as a solution that we came
up with our Deputy Chief is possibly getting more lighting in
13 the parks.

14 And also as summer starts coming around it gets
darker you have problems too.

15
16 But that was my concern and that's why I am here
today. And also to extend my hand to the Parks Director,
Vanessa Orange and to everyone here that my doors are open.
17 And I am willing to work with you. And no matter what is
needed I am just a phone call away.

18
19 Thank you very much.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: There is a question I forgot to ask you.
I don't know if it was explained before. Can we get
everything ready that we need to present to the Council so
21 that it could be approved instead of waiting so long to get
stuff we need for our parks?

22
23 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Actually what we put in our
budget that we put in last year it was reduced. Most of it
was reduced to zero.

24
25 When I meet with the Council -- I wish I had my
budget. When I met with the Committee, the Finance

1 Committee, I gave them a budget last year as well as this
2 year, everything and the amounts I needed for all my
3 departments which would include supplies, material,
4 et cetera.

5 We don't put every line item, mulch, pencils,
6 notebooks. But I do put on there supplies.

7 Again that was given to them at two of our finance
8 meetings, the one prior to and this year.

9 This year out of three departments my budget was
10 also reduced once again by 500,000. So that would be me
11 having to -- and the 500,000 that I did get reduced that
12 mostly goes to the Marina Board.

13 In my packet on page 1, second paragraph, the first
14 line stated 500,000 goes to the Marina for their upkeep
15 because technically by State the Marina is shown to be under
16 Parks and Recreation.

17 So we give them that 500,000. I am not sure what
18 we're doing for this year.

19 Again I've already given them information. And
20 that was last year my budget was cut. I have to go back and
21 ask for the money.

22 So our due diligence what we do for the State prior
23 to even having a budget discussion we tell them what we want,
24 what we perceive for the future.

25 When we see funds are still available after most of
our projects are kind of close to finish, we usually go out
and see what else we could purchase for Parks & Recreation.

Again I do our due diligence to get everything out.
I also try to use money to the best of our ability because
it's not for me. It's for the residents of East Chicago.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Why are we giving them 500,000 if that
lakefront now is under the Port Authority?

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Because if you do any type of
research regarding marinas or beach fronts, they're mostly
all under the Parks and Recreation. It's just another
department.

So it's like subsidiary of the Parks and Recreation

1 as mostly every department. Do your research and
2 go see.

3 When I had my finance meeting, I explained that to
4 them also.

5 If we get money from DNR, it goes to Parks &
6 Recreation. That's just how it's viewed by the State.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How much did we get from DNR?

8 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That I can't tell you. I don't
9 have the figures. But we can ask the Marina Manager, Natalie
10 Adams.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Two more things. I was asked about a
12 dog park. Can you work on that, getting a dog park
13 somewhere?

14 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So when I think Mayra was
15 previously here, there was I guess a survey, a community
16 survey was done.

17 And two of the items -- and I brought it to the
18 Finance Committee previously to show them what we're working
19 on and getting a checklist off. One of them was a dog park
20 and the other was a skate park.

21 The dog park even when I was -- my mother-in-law
22 was a councilwoman and I had a brand-new dog. And I said I
23 cannot take my dog to the park because technically park rules
24 to this day so no dogs in the park.

25 So I felt being a dog owner that that's not good
for us. So I asked Mr. Frank Bergman in North Township this
year how much it was. Because he told me do the work, figure
out how much it is.

I asked how much it was. And because of the dogs
that we have here, the insurance is going to be the pricing
point, not the location.

We even talked about the location being actually
behind here where the railroad tracks are. There's a portion
of land there. Because it's away from everywhere, possibly
go there.

But because the City of East Chicago has
Rottweilers, Pit Bulls, German Shepherds, those are all

1 considered high aggressive dogs. Meaning their insurance is
2 going to be more. Not only to the residents, but also to the
3 Department.

3 So as we chip away we could probably revisit that.
4 So I did ask if I could allow dogs.

5 So there's signs on there now that say dogs are not
6 allow. I did ask if we could have dogs allowed in the parks
7 with a muzzle and we put it on the new boards we're going to
8 do for this year.

9 I did get doggie waste stations to put throughout
10 the parks just so that we could show that we are fighting for
11 animals because I do feel as a dog mom that that's completely
12 not okay.

13 This year the Special Events Team is going to put
14 on a National Dog Day Event at Tod Park where we'll be
15 chipping dogs. And we'll be giving vaccinations as well as
16 just showing that maybe we could try to do something with a
17 dog park because our dogs are actually friendly.

18 So I know you gave me those questions last time. I
19 definitely have looked into it. And I've also looked into it
20 from Mayra also.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Also you mentioned a skateboard.

22 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Skate park.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That was Mayra too. I know that two
24 other directors said they were looking into it.

25 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: And I honestly have to do the
research. So I live in the First District where we usually
have skateboarders. And when I go to the First District, I
ask those skateboarders where they're from. None of them are
from here.

They're usually from Portage. They're probably
from Whiting. The reason they go there is because of the
steps and they're able to go on that railing.

So we're talking about where. It's not a definite
no. It's something that we still have to look at insurance,
at location.

But we have other things that in our opinion are

1 more important such as where we go with the pool. We want to
2 get Block Stadium done. We had to get the soccer fields.

3 So those things our East Chicago residents use
4 more. Because of that, we are focusing on that first. And
5 we'll keep on chipping away at the other stuff.

6 We can't just get everything right away. Money
7 does not grow on trees. And if we have where people are
8 stopping progress, obviously we can't get it done.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Hammond has one, skateboard park. It's
10 nice. I mean if you look at the room Riley Park has an empty
11 field. I'm just giving you little options there.

12 So if you look into that, call Hammond see how that
13 works and how much that costs.

14 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I can tell you how much it
15 costs. It's insurance honestly. Because that's a flat fee.
16 And if you walk the concrete and do the steps I mean it's --

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: If we put skate at own risk, is that
18 still a liability?

19 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yeah. It's a liability. I mean
20 we put it at the School City. It's still a liability for us.

21 As a matter of fact from experience I know we had
22 skateboarders break doors and break people's cars. And it
23 doesn't matter.

24 And there's complaints from the First District area
25 from those people who are actually doing skating.

26 So I understand you're interested in having the
27 skateboard parks. But somebody else in the district might
28 not. And I guess that's another thing.

29 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That's fenced in though. That's a
30 different story. These kids are probably going on the
31 sidewalks throughout the neighborhood.

32 I'm just talking about fenced in just like Hammond.
33 Just throwing that out there.

34 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Okay.

35 MR. AUSTIN: I'd like the same. I think we should

1 secure our parks. I think they should be registered. And if
2 you bring a dog in, show you've got insurance and shots and
everything.

3 If you're walking a dog, you're supposed to have
4 some kind of pick up with your dog.

5 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Totally understand. Actually
6 there's an ordinance that states that you should have your
7 dog have tags and shots. I don't know the ordinance offhand.
8 But technically everyone who has a dog should have it.

9 I know they don't. But technically there is an
10 ordinance.

11 MS. DAWKINS: Excuse me. I would like to say that
12 you're going to have to consider the liability issues for
13 anyone that's skating or doing anything like that in that
14 park. There does need to be signs that say that we won't be
15 liable if anyone is hurt.

16 I also work with the Health Department with Animal
17 Control. And most of the people in the City do not muzzle
18 their dogs. And they're supposed to muzzle the dogs and they
19 don't.

20 And so you're looking at some liability issues that
21 are going to have to be addressed as well.

22 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Any other questions?

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No.

24 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Thank you.

25 MS. DAWKINS: I was going to welcome our new Board
Member President Elect to the Board. That was going to be my
Public Comment.

MR. GORDON: Thank you. Glad to be aboard.

* Next Regular Meeting Date: Tuesday, February 8,
2022 @ 5:00 p.m. City Hall Council Chambers.


1 Motion to adjourn was made by Rick Rodriguez. Second by
Eugene Austin.

2 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
3 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

4 * Meeting ended at 5:38 p.m.
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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of
Tuesday, January 25, 2022

Approved and Signed February 8, 2022



Grayling Gordon, President



Rick Rodriguez, Vice President

Valda Lewis / Zoom

Valda Lewis, Secretary

Gilberto Cantu / Zoom

Gilberto Cantu, Member



Eugene Austin, Member

Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary


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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lisa Pena, 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 said proceedings taken at said time and place, so ordered to be transcribed.

Dated at Portage, Indiana, this 3rd day of February, 2022.



Lisa Pena
Notary Public Porter County
Certified Shorthand Reporter
License Number 084-003483

