

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO  
ECONOMIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
Thursday, January 28, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS:	STAFF:
Jesse Avitia	Douglas Powers
Leon Valdez	Richard Morrisroe
Ezell Foster	Esperanza Ceja-Ramirez

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

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Present: Jesse Avitia  
Ezell Foster

Staff Present: Esperanza Ceja-Ramirez  
Douglas Powers  
Richard Morrisroe

MR. AVITIA: I make a motion to approve  
the minutes of Wednesday, December 16, 2020.

MR. FOSTER: Second.

MR. AVITIA: Roll Call.

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

MR. AVITIA: Motion carries.  
Old Business: None  
New Business

MR. POWERS: So, regarding the Broadway  
and Main Corridor, few things of interest. So 2105  
Broadway, there has been an accepted offer on that  
property. 2201 Broadway still needs some additional  
clean up. And another item, 3724 Main Street, that's  
the Galleria building, there has been a a lot of  
interest in potential business incubator program there.  
So that will be it for the corridor.

I believe that we mentioned before  
beginning today, the Board would like to postpone the  
election; is that correct?

1 MR. AVITIA: Yes, that should be our  
second item.

2 MR. POWERS: I'm done with the first  
3 item, that's all I have for updates.

4 MR. AVITIA: Can I ask a question about  
the Galleria -- what are the plans for that and how  
5 soon, what is the timeline on that?

6 MR. POWERS: So, the Galleria currently  
is entertaining possible design look at bids for the  
7 interior design. So hopefully by next month on the  
agenda I will have some more updates on that as to  
8 whether or not they have accepted an offer for the  
interior design. Currently that's where the status is.

9 MR. AVITIA: But there are plans to  
10 develop that Galleria?

11 MR. POWERS: That is correct.

12 MR. AVITIA: Okay. I'm moving on from  
the update, to second item under New Business, which is  
13 the election of officers.

14 Ezell, couple comments. Because  
Leon is not here -- he may be next month -- I suggest  
that we postpone or table the election, if you find that  
15 acceptable.

16 MR. FOSTER: That's fine.

17 MR. AVITIA: So, we'll table that,  
nominations for officers of the Economic Development  
18 Commission till next month, until we get some resolution  
on what the status of Leon Valdez will be.

19 We'll move on discuss the 2021  
Facade application process and resolution. And I think  
20 that's in your hands.

21 MR. POWERS: That's correct. Miss Morgan  
had just provided me with the resolution. Do they have  
22 a copy of that?

23 MS. MORGAN: Not yet.

24 MR. POWERS: So we have revised the  
facade application to try to make it a little more  
25 transparent, hopefully streamline the process. Along

ORIGINAL

1 with that we are presenting you with a resolution for  
2 the future facade program.

2

3 MS. MORGAN: Do you want me to address  
4 this?

4

MR. POWERS: If you don't mind.

5

6 MS. MORGAN: Good afternoon, gentlemen.  
7 Carla Morgan, Corporation Council for the City. I  
8 apologize for the lateness of getting this resolution.  
9 It's actually one of two that we need to do, but this is  
10 the only one ready for today.

11 So what this resolution does is  
12 officially renew the existing program, which as you  
13 know, is two parts. One for the North Harbor Business  
14 District and the other is for the city-wide program.  
15 The North Harbor District, you all reimburse at  
16 80 percent. The city-wide one you reimburse at  
17 50 percent. And that program was created by the  
18 Interlocal Agreement that the City Council passed and  
19 then the Board of Works passed the same thing. The  
20 Board of Works provides the funding.

21 This is officially asking the Board  
22 of Works to fund it again, to renew it by renewing the  
23 program. But our Planner, Doug Palmer has suggested  
24 some very needed updates to the program, which we'll  
25 hopefully do at the very next meeting. We are going to  
have to get the Board of Works and City Council to buy  
in the changes that are requested.

16 So for now we would hope to renew  
17 this. Again, I can answer questions on the content of  
18 this -- but this is just simply renewal, explains what  
19 the program is, explains that the Law Department and  
this Commission does not have the funds itself to fund  
the programs, and just renewing the program as is. We  
will send this in front of the Board of Public Works.

20 So, that's what we are asking this  
21 Commission to do today. But again, we hope we'll come  
22 back in a month, at your next meeting, and have the  
23 pieces in place for the updates to the program that we  
24 think are need.

22 This program was created in 2014.  
23 It's been very successful. Our business district looks  
24 significantly better than it did in early 2014 when the  
25 program first started. And in large measure that's  
thanks to the work of this Board, Mr. Morrisroe, the  
Planner, and now we want to continue to improve and make  
more strides in our business district across town by

1 updating the program to refresh the Planning Commission.  
Do you have questions for me?

2

3 MR. AVITIA: Regarding the updating, the  
4 program -- was that specified which planning source we  
5 are going to get for each one of the programs? Is that  
6 what the resolution calls for?

7 MS. MORGAN: No. The resolution renews  
8 it as is. Mr. Powers can talk to you more about what we  
9 would update in a month. But this just makes sure the  
10 funding is in place to move forward now as it has been  
11 these last years. The improvement of the program, he  
12 can talk more about that.

13

14 MR. AVITIA: So basically the Council  
15 approves the resolution -- and do we have funding for  
16 program?

17

18 MS. MORGAN: The Council approved them in  
19 2014. It remains in the budget, but we have to make  
20 sure the Board of Works renews this. The Board of Works  
21 provides the funding. We are dotting our I's and  
22 crossing our T's to make sure the funding is in place.  
23 And, again, we have to come back and have you all  
24 approve of the way things are going to work moving  
25 forward.

26

27 MR. AVITIA: Ezell, any questions?

28

29 MR. FOSTER: No.

30

31 MS. MORGAN: If you approve this, then  
32 we'll put it in front of the next Board of Works  
33 meeting.

34

35 MS. CEJA-RAMIREZ: Which resolution do  
36 they have there?

37

38 MS. MORGAN: It doesn't have a number  
39 yet.

40

41 MS. CEJA-RAMIERZ: Okay, thank you.

42

43 MR. POWERS: So, yes, there are a handful  
44 of improvements that most likely will occur. And we're  
45 working with the controller's office. It looks like  
46 it's ideal for all parties involved for there to be a  
47 specific fund that these are going through, rather than

**ORIGINAL**

1 how this previously was listed, was through the Gaming  
2 fund. And that fund, there is obviously various  
3 departments using it. That is one of the potential  
4 improvements.

5  
6 MR. AVITIA: Can you talk a little bit  
7 about the very detailed document that I have in front of  
8 me?

9  
10 MR. POWERS: So few things are going on  
11 there. Ideally we realize from past experiences, that  
12 sometimes it wasn't completely transparent what all was  
13 needed for people going through the facade process  
14 because, you know, originally this is coming in through  
15 the Planning Department, then being presented to you  
16 and -- you know -- all the data being collected after  
17 that as well. So what we are trying to do with those  
18 applications, is make it as to where the people are  
19 aware of what all is expected. Not saying you have to  
20 go to our website to renew the necessary criteria,  
21 because we have had challenges before with some  
22 individuals not giving us a complete packet and that  
23 potentially delays their financing. It's not ideal for  
24 them or us, and causes undue stress.

25  
26 MR. AVITIA: If I am a contractor and  
27 coming to you for application, I come with all three  
28 documents, I review with the contractor, or how is he  
29 prepared to go through the process?

30  
31 MR. POWERS: So a lot of times how this  
32 works is that one of them actually contacts our office,  
33 and then we can provide it to them e-mail. Because we  
34 don't have as many people coming here currently --  
35 especially now, in person -- if they were to come here,  
36 we have those available and we would guide them to the  
37 proper contract, contingent upon where their development  
38 was, similar to a lot of other inquires that we get.  
39 It's all about having that face-to-face or over the  
40 phone. It's accessible online. And if they were to  
41 fill out the incorrect document online, that's an easy  
42 correction that we could handle as well.

43  
44 MR. AVITIA: How long -- what is the  
45 process right now, average process of going through this  
46 to actual job?

47  
48 MR. POWERS: How long it takes to  
49 complete the job?

1 MR. AVITIA: Yes.

2 MR. POWERS: So, it can vary. Esperanza,  
do you have a time specific that it takes?

3  
4 MS. CEJA-RAMIERZ: Usually we give them a  
timeframe between 30 or 90 or 120 days. But as far as  
going through the process, it really depends on the  
5 individual. We'll have the business trying to get the  
facade, and then we have the contractor, which is why  
6 you have three separate applications or documents.

7 One of them is the project  
description, which explains in detail the information  
that is needed from the business. The second one is  
8 just program information, giving detail what is  
acceptable and what we can pay off, etcetera. And then  
9 the third one goes exclusively to the contractor, and  
this gives us -- details any information that we require  
10 from the contractor in order for him to proceed.

11 Now, the contractor is aware that we  
do require three different estimates, that's why we are  
having -- the business will have visits from three  
12 contractors because that's what we require, estimates  
from three different contractors. I would say pretty  
13 much if they were on target and they are able to give us  
all the information that's required, I would think it  
14 may take about a good month to get all the information,  
because we are not sure how quickly a contractor can  
15 visit the business and give us an estimate.

16 So that's kind of where we are. We  
require other specific documentation, making sure that  
the business qualifies before actually approving them to  
17 go through the process. So there is kind of a check and  
balance that we do here, making sure that the business  
18 qualifies. And also making sure they qualify for Harbor  
contract or city-wide.

19  
20 MR. AVITIA: So including all those  
factors in your timeline, can you determine an average?

21 MS. CEJA-RAMIREZ: I would say a good  
month.

22  
23 MR. POWERS: Mr. President, I actually --  
according to the contract from the resolution that's  
provided, that the work must be completed within 90 days  
24 of your approval letter. If today you were presenting  
one, you could expect to --

25

ORIGINAL

1 MR. AVITIA: You have a ceiling already.

2 MR. POWERS: That's correct.

3 MS. CEJA-RAMIREZ: And the reason why --  
4 I'm sorry, I don't want to belabor it -- the reason why  
5 is because we have one of our inspectors or sometimes  
6 the planner go over there at the end of the project to  
7 make sure that everything that was specified in the  
8 contract has been done. Then there is a final checklist  
9 or punch list that they are trying to look and make sure  
10 everything qualifies, and that's when we give them the  
11 final check.

12 MR. AVITIA: If you hit the 90-day mark  
13 or three months, and you still are having some problems  
14 with the whole process, do you have means to bypass that  
15 and continue the application?

10

11 MS. CEJA-RAMIREZ: Well, what we would  
12 do, we'll inform the contractor and business in the  
13 beginning, if he doesn't reach that in 90 days, give us  
14 a call or send something in writing saying that they  
15 require more time in order for them to finish or to  
16 continue, because we are not sure what is causing the  
17 reason, and many times, depending on when they actually  
18 start, they may not be able to finish because we are not  
19 sure if it's due to circumstances beyond our control,  
20 like weather.

21 MR. POWERS: So if you were to look at  
22 the contract, it's listed right in Section 14 on the  
23 contract, that it clearly states there, that if they do  
24 not complete the project within that 90 days approval it  
25 will automatically be revoked. The EDC reserves the  
right to allow reasonable extension of time upon  
receiving a written request from the applicant to do so.  
So that's where you would come into play. You would  
determine whether or not it was reasonable for them to  
receive an extension or if at that time the funding  
would be revoked and they would not receive that  
payment.

22

23 MR. AVITIA: The reason why I ask that,  
24 because I am trying to make sure that the owner or the  
25 guys that come in here on the application, that they  
have -- they have the ability to have an extension in  
case something happens.

25

1 MR. POWERS: Absolutely. And, you know,  
2 that's really where it comes in play, having that  
3 contact with the business owners.. And if there is an  
4 issue, this is a grant and there is clear expectations  
5 as to what is expected of them. If they are not able to  
6 meet these expectations, once this is approved and they  
7 have signed accordingly, it is their due diligence to  
8 contact us and let us know that they are not able to  
9 make that. So that then that way we inform them what  
10 process and procedures are in place, so they can come to  
11 you and present accordingly.

12 MR. AVITIA: We are flexible enough.

13 MR. POWERS: We are flexible, absolutely.

14 MR. MORRISROE: Sometimes however it's on  
15 other side. For instance, because of this renewal of  
16 the program and funding, we are slower than we hoped to  
17 be in funding the auto parts place on Columbus Drive and  
18 Burr Street. So we are asking them to put up with our  
19 problems so that we can straighten it out, and that's  
20 part of why Miss Morgan is here tonight and what Doug is  
21 referencing, and what we hope to bring to the Council.  
22 So it could be on both sides. Usually it's not on the  
23 City side, but in this case it is.

24 MR. AVITIA: That was pretty well covered  
25 in the minutes. I think I realize that much. Anything  
else?

MR. POWERS: Not with regard to that  
subject, unless you have any additional questions?

MR. AVITIA: No, I don't have.

MR. FOSTER: No.

MR. AVITIA: We finished with that agenda  
item, let's proceed to the fourth item under New  
Business. Any comments pertaining to the any of the  
meeting minutes that require further discussion or  
update? Ezell, do you have any comments on those  
minutes?

MR. FOSTER: No.

MR. AVITIA: The only question I have,  
why are we getting the summaries and not the actual

ORIGINAL



1 minutes?

2 MS. CEJA-RAMIREZ: The reason I provided  
3 that because the meeting minutes are very long and the  
4 e-mail attaches the meeting minutes. Normally we had  
5 everyone agree to receive everything electronically, but  
6 I wanted to at least give you the agenda, a hard copy of  
7 the agenda, that way you can quickly thumb through it  
8 and see which items you may want to look at.

9 MR. PALMER: Excuse me, Mr. President, I  
10 would bring to your attention that we would really like  
11 to get a vote on the facade application and resolution,  
12 and whether or not we move forward with this. So are  
13 you able to entertain that?

14 MR. AVITIA: We can do that. Just to  
15 clarify, for the resolution or application?  
16

17 MR. PALMER: It's to approve the  
18 resolution, you don't approve the application. If there  
19 are any changes we want to make, you are made aware of  
20 that. That doesn't affect your process.

21 MR. AVITIA: I make a motion to approve  
22 the Resolution on the East Chicago Economic Development  
23 Commission regarding the 2021 Facade application, the  
24 agreement between the City and the EDC Board of Public  
25 Works regarding the Facade Grant Program.

MR. FOSTER: Second.

MR. AVITIA: Roll call.

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

19

MR. AVITIA: Motion carries.  
Next item is Public Comments: None  
Commissioners Comments: None

21

MR. AVITIA: Only comment I have, it's  
good to see Miss Morgan.

MS. MORGAN: Glad to be here.

MR. AVITIA: Thank you for the  
explanation on this resolution.

25

1 MS. MORGAN: Glad to do it.

2 MR. AVITIA: Next meeting is scheduled  
for Thursday, February 25, 2021.

3 I'd make a motion to adjourn.

4 MR. FOSTER: Second.

5 MR. AVITIA: Roll Call.

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

7 MR. AVITIA: Motion carries.  
8 Meeting adjourned.

9 \*\*\*\* Meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m. \*\*\*\*

10 Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Thursday  
11 January 28, 2021

12 Approved and signed Thursday, February 25  
13 2021

14 Jesse Avitia  
15 Jesse Avitia, President

16 Leon Valdez  
17 Leon Valdez, Vice-president

18 Ezell Foster - NOT PRESENT  
19 Ezell Foster, Member

20 Esperanza Ceja Ramirez  
21 Esperanza Ceja Ramirez, Secretary

22  
23  
24  
25

ORIGINAL

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 3rd day of February, 2021.

*Peggy S. LaLonde*



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

