CITY OF EAST CHICAGO BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS
Public Hearing Minutes
March 5, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS:
Cesar Perez, President
Lilia Ramos, Vice-President
Lydia Lopez, Representative
Ralph Peterson, Representative

STAFF:
Eduardo Fontanez
Marino Solorio
Tracy Ailes

Reported by: Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.
By: Peggy S. LaLonde

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Present in Chambers: Cesar Perez, Lilia Ramos, Lydia Lopez, Ralph Peterson

Staff Present in Chambers: Tracy Ailes, Secretary
Eduardo Fontanez, Attorney
Marino Solorio. Director

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

MR. PEREZ: I would call to order the meeting of the Board of Zoning Appeals Commission for March 5th, 2026. It's 5:00 p.m.
Motion for approval of the regular meeting minutes of January 15th, 2026 as written.

MS. RAMOS: Make a motion.

MR. PETERSON: Second.

Questions/Comments: None

Roll Call: "All in Favor": Cesar Perez, Lilia Ramos, Lydia Lopez, Ralph Peterson Abstain: None
Opposed: None

MR. PEREZ: Motion carries.
Has a quorum been established?

MS. AILES: A quorum has been established.

MR. PEREZ: There is no Old Business. We'll go on to today's agenda here, New Business.

A petition for a land use variance within an R3 Zoning (Multi family dwelling, two-story row house) on the property commonly known as 3424 Fir Street, East Chicago, Indiana 46312. The variance is to permit a supervised residential emergency shelter.

MR. PEREZ: What staff are present?

MS. AILS: Tracy Ailes, Secretary

MR. FONTANEZ: Eduardo Fontanez, Legal Counsel for the Board.

MR. PEREZ: So the purpose of this hearing is defined by the Zoning Code in accordance with the following sections that I will read. The Ordinance number 2752, which states:

WHEREAS, the Common Council of the City of East Chicago, Indiana, deems it necessary, in order to conserve the value of the property in the City of East Chicago, and to the end that adequate light air, convenience of access, and safety from fire and other dangers may be secured, the congestion of public streets may be lessened or avoided, and that public health, comfort, convenience, morals, and general welfare may otherwise be promoted in accordance with the general plan for the use and development of all property throughout the City of East Chicago.

Ordinance number 0-00-0016 states:

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission and the Common Council of the City of East Chicago, Indiana have determined that proposed uses, at proposed locations within the community should promote the public interest, promote public health, safety, and welfare, should promote public convenience and should not adversely affect property values, and

WHEREAS, the Plan Commission and the Common Council of the City of East Chicago have determined that proposed uses which are not permitted uses within a zoning classification should confirm for the purpose, intent, and the spirit of the Zoning Ordinance, be compatible with the surrounding area, and should not be detrimental or injurious or create excessive nuisance in the surrounding area, and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of the citizens of the City of East Chicago to amend the Zoning Ordinance to provide for certain uses to be classified as "Special Uses" and allowed in certain zoning classifications only upon showing that the above criteria have been met; and

WHEREAS, Indiana Code requires that the Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals hold a public hearing and make Findings of Fact to determine whether the above criteria have been met before forwarding the Special Use Permit request to the Common Council.

MR. PEREZ: Have all required public notifications, documents and receipts been completed and received for this variance petition?

MS. AILES: I certify receipts for funds to cover public notices, published notice receipts from the local press, and receipts from certified mail have been received.

MR. PEREZ: The next section of the hearing is for testimony and exhibits. The order of the hearing shall be as follows: The Petitioner's presentation, acceptance of written comments or petitions, and comments from those present in the audience. If You would come forward and state your name, spell your name and sign on the sign-in sheet.

Has there been anything submitted in writing for or against?

MS. AILES: I have had some phone calls, but I have nothing in writing.

MR. PEREZ: We have people here?

MS. AILES: We do.

MR. PEREZ: Okay. Can --

MR. SOLORIO: I'm sorry -- the phone calls in favor or against?

MS. AILES: Against.

MR. PEREZ: That was going to be my next question. If we have the petitioner here, if you could step up to the podium and give us your name, your

address, spell your last name, and then let us know what we are looking at here.

MS. MORRISON: Hello, my name is Shevon Morrison, M-O-R-R-I-S-O-N. I do have the support documentation, if I can hand that to the Board members.

MR. PEREZ: Sure. Go ahead and tell us what we are looking at here.

MS. MORRISON: Good evening. My name is Shevon Morrison as I stated. I am the founder of Champs 78 Services, Incorporated. I am requesting a variance to operate a licensed emergency group home at 3424 Fir Street, in East Chicago, Indiana.

This facility will serve youth from the Department of Children Services who require a short-term emergency shelter, emergency placement, while long term agreements are being made. The youth placed in my program are required to come through the Indiana Department of Children Services and are placed in a structured, supervised environment designed to stabilize long term placement plans and development.

We work closely with the Department of Children Services to insure youth in our program are appropriate for services structured at our facility. So therefore this is not a detention center. This is not a correctional facility. And there will not be high traffic at this facility. Youth will always remain supervised at all times. It's a supervised residential home for youth and foster placement, who will need a safe and stable temporary housing placement.

The home will serve a maximized unit of ten girls, into two units, five residents in each unit. The two units will be operated together as a single licensed emergency shelter. The facility will be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Each unit will have two awake staff at all times and an additional floater that will go between both units to insure supervision at all times.

Youth will remain in the program for a short period of time before transitioning into longer term placement. Security measures are already in place at the facility, which include interior cameras in the common areas, exterior cameras at the front door, side door, parking area, and rear entrance, window alarms, exit monitoring system.

There will be no unsupervised outdoor activities and the program will be operated with

a structured daily schedule. The property is fully gated and includes a recreational area within the basement so youth can participate in activities within the home while minimizing any impact in the neighborhood. Staff and approved visitors will park in the rear of the property to prevent street congestion.

I hold a Master's Degree in Social Work and I have extensive experience working with youth in child welfare and trauma situations. All staff members will be trained properly and safely in regards to behavioral support and emergency protocols. If there were ever an emergency situation, staff are trained in quick response and deescalating procedures. Emergency pro services will be contacted immediately if necessary.

There is no unsupervised activity in the neighborhood. This location was selected because it is a residential property capable of supporting structured, supervised activity, while allowing youth to remain in a community based environment rather than in an institutional setting.

Our goal is to operate a quiet, well supervised, residential program that supports youth in crisis, while maintaining the safety and residential character of the neighborhood.

This program provides essential services to vulnerable youth while respecting and maintaining the character of the surrounding community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

MR. PEREZ: I know we have got quite a few questions. How many bedrooms is that unit?

MS. MORRISON: Each unit has three bedrooms and one bath. There are two units within the building, which is all enclosed.

MR. PEREZ: First floor, second floor?

MS. MORRISON: Correct.

MR. PEREZ: Bedrooms upstairs or downstairs?

MS. MORRISON: There is two units within the whole building structure. The upstairs unit is three bedrooms and the middle unit has three bedrooms and one bath. Each unit has both exit and entrance doors within the building.

MR. PEREZ: And how many employees are you going to have there?

MS. MORRISON: So there will be two staff for each unit and a floater to go in between each unit so no staff is left alone with five children.

MR. PEREZ: So you will have four people there?

MS. MORRISON: No, total of five because there will be two upstairs, two down, and then there will be a floater to go in between if someone needs a restroom break or a lunch break as well.

MR. PEREZ: These girls are coming from where?

MS. MORRISON: Indiana Department of Children Services. So, I have a contact with DCS. These aren't random children off the street. This individual contacts me through DCS and tells me, like sends a referral to let me know the protocol of the child, the young lady that is coming. Then I have to decide whether the child is fit for our group home.

MS. RAMOS: In your experience, what is the turnover for a child to come into your place or into any place, and then go into a foster home; what is the turnover?

MS. MORRISON: The emergency placement, the turnover is usually 30 to 45 days for a child. That's usually the longest, that's long term.

MR. PEREZ: These are all females?

MS. MORRISON: Yes. One unit will have young ladies ages of 10 to 17, and then the next unit will have young ladies that might have children due to circumstances of rape or anything like that. They will be up on the top unit and they will be 10 to 17 as well.

MS. RAMOS: Will you count that child as another person? If you have the three bedrooms will that child be in the same bedroom with the adult or the teen?

MS. MORRISON: Housed with their parent,

yes.

MS. RAMOS: When you transport these children, how -- do you have transportation for them?

MS. MORRISON: Yes. We have a van allotted toward that particular building, yes.

MS. RAMOS: You said you train your personnel. Do your personnel go through a check, security check? What type of protocol do you have for training?

MS. MORRISON: So there is CPI training, CPR training. There will be behavioral training that will have, when the staff is ready to be hired, have already in place to train the staff so they are equipped with crisis intervention skills, if need be.

MS. RAMOS: Is there any other apartments in that building or just the two, that's the whole unit?

MS. MORRISON: Just those two. Just those two.

MS. RAMOS: What fire and safety licenses do you need to have to operate that business?

MS. MORRISON: So the State will come in and the building has to pass the State inspection. So I have to submit -- right now our policies and procedures are under review through the State. Once those are approved, then the Fire Department, they will come out and have to do their inspection to make sure the building is qualified for a shelter.

MS. RAMOS: I have a question for our planner. So should we wait then until that is done before we approve or make a decision here?

MR. SOLORIO: That would be up to you if you want to table it, for sure. I mean if that would appease, you know, why you would chose one or the other.

MR. PETERSON: Then I notice you said up to ten people, but only three bedrooms.

MS. MORRISON: No, it's six bedrooms. Five girls in one unit and five girls in the other unit.

MR. PETERSON: But you said three bedrooms.

MS. MORRISON: It's three bedrooms in each unit, six bedrooms in total.

MR. PEREZ: Your employees, male or female?

MS. MORRISON: Female employees. So I would say 85 percent of my employees are from the East Chicago area and I have two that are bilingual as well.

MR. PEREZ: Do you run another place like this or have you?

MS. MORRISON: No, this will be my first experience. I have experience with children because this is what I do. I have been doing this for the last 20 odd years. So I have experience which makes me want to open this because, unfortunately, these children are placed from Illinois to Fort Wayne, South Bend. You have children that will have babies, which might not be on their own terms, and they might be placed in Marion County and their child in Fort Wayne because foster placement doesn't want to take both at the time of delivery.

MR. PEREZ: What school or are they not going to school because these are young girls, correct?

MS. MORRISON: Absolutely. DCS has a lot of referral, supportive, educational liaisons. There will be therapists that can come in to meet in the basement or rec area. If those providers need to come in and support those children, they will have that opportunity. So if there are education liaisons, that's who brings the homework for them. If they need to use computers or tablets to complete their work, that would be an option for them as well.

MS. RAMOS: You currently work with DCS?

MS. MORRISON: I worked for the State prior to being a contractor. I worked for the State ten years prior to and realized this is a high need. A lot of homeless children are just being misplaced and they don't have the supportive resources or area demographic that is not being addressed. Instead these children

just end up homeless or in the system until they're 18 because they don't have the appropriate support.

MR. PEREZ: My only concern, we have a place like this, Carmelite Home. I work for the PD and I cannot tell you how many calls I get there for young, 10, 12-year old kids fighting with the nuns. I walk in and it's like WWF. You got two nuns with one girl fighting. That's very bothersome. So are you doing psychological testing on these girls and behavioral studies?

MS. MORRISON: Absolutely. Like I said, these children -- that wouldn't happen. DCS will contact me, I'll review to see if they were a fit for our home. I don't want anybody that's disruptive. I don't want them on my property. As well as I don't want them to harm my employees or other residents. I would attend to their needs, because I have a therapist and have been a licensed social worker for years, I have the experience. I am going to make sure my staff has that available. I am going to be on-site, so I am not going to let these children, you know, be unsupervised, be unsupported. My staff will have the same knowledge and support that I present. If I am not present, these children will still feel safe.

MR. PEREZ: Any other questions here?

MS. RAMOS: I have one more. Do you own the building currently?

MS. MORRISON: I do, yes.

MR. PETERSON: Is that the building there? (Picture on monitor)

MS. MORRISON: It is.

MR. PEREZ: Thank you. Do we have people in the audience that want to speak?

Thank you. You can sit down, we may call you back up.

MR. GARCIA: Thank you for the opportunity to talk. Robert Garcia, District Councilman. I have been approached by a few residents in the area who are opposed to this. They have called me and voiced their concern about it.

One resident wrote a letter, which I can read and hand it to the attorney here, but I am going to read it first.

I have lived at 3411 Grand Boulevard, East Chicago, Indiana for more than 50 years. I seriously object to the petition for the land use variance R3 zoning for the so-called supervised residential emergency shelter as part of a startup business. This individual will be collecting funds for each individual. The neighborhood is strictly residential, not business. It's not mixed use for residential, slash, business. If you approve this it will impact the neighborhood in a negative manner.

If this individual wants to start up a business, he or she should use their own property and not a residence in my neighborhood. They can lease any business on Main Street or any other business site.

If you would like to discuss this any further, my contact number -- and it's on here.

MR. PEREZ: Thank you. Anybody else in the audience like to come up and speak?

Please state your name and your address.

MS. JENSON: Jessica Jenson, 3413 Grand Boulevard, on the other side. It seems like a lot of people to be in like a small space. That's only three bedrooms and then there is two adults living there. Assuming they each have their own room, five to a bedroom, for the five children, the square footage wise, I'm not sure that really makes a whole lot of sense. And then the other workers are in and out, with one adult living there.

But I think before the house was listed as four bedrooms, total of 2 and 2. I'm not sure why now it's six or maybe it was changed.

MR. PEREZ: Thank you. Attorney Fontanez, your opinion and your insight on this situation.

MR. FONTANEZ: Well, like you said earlier I think, if you guys wanted to take time, because this is pretty significant to the neighborhood, and take some time to think it through. There is nothing wrong with doing that considering the need that she spoke of that's needed.

You said this is to transition the

children. Is it to transition them to go into a foster home?

MS. MORRISON: Correct.

MR. FONTANEZ: I don't know, if my memory is correct, maybe look into what other avenues or similar businesses went into certain areas, and then come back with some other questions maybe the next hearing date.

MR. PEREZ: Okay.

MR. FONTANEZ: Maybe to solidify your answer better and maybe you'll have different questions when you look into it more. I think that might help to at least have a better understanding to where she is coming from.

MR. PEREZ: Marino?

MR. SOLORIO: So, I have a couple of things before I can even give a recommendation. So really based on today, and I'll have you answer before that -- we don't have a floor plan. Do you have any access to the floor plan that can show us where the bedrooms are in association to like where the kitchen, the bathrooms? Where the staff members are going to be sleeping versus where are the kids that are going to be there going to sleep? How does that work in terms of the person that's the floater, where will they be entering and coming in and out?

There's fencing in this facility -- so there is the four-foot fence. I think it goes all the way to the back; is that correct?

MS. MORRISON: Can I see what you are looking at? That's a metal fence that's in the front. The back, which is the picture is also included, the back is a privacy fence, wooden.

MR. SOLORIO: That goes from the back of the building?

MS. MORRISON: The whole building is gated. So the wood starts kind of like, a little bit passed like where the metal stopped. So it really starts in the back area. It's gated and fenced fully around. The back is higher fencing and wooden.

MR. SOLORIO: That's six-foot privacy?

MS. MORRISON: Correct.

MR. SOLORIO: To give some context, you originally were applying for a daycare in this facility, correct?

MS. MORRISON: Correct.

MR. SOLORIO: So you didn't go through because of the funding cuts related to the daycare system in general with Administration. Not this Administration, but the Federal Administration cutting those -- cutting that funding. And so then you have diverted from opening up the daycare to now opening up this.

My concern is, you know, you mentioned, or you discussed, and I can't obviously speak of the validity of that, you are passionate about what you do. I am not discrediting that, but I do call to question that you would have started as a daycare, but then you are kind of mentioning this is your passion and these kids and things like that in general foster care. Now daycare, when the funding kind of went away, now we are going to this, right?

So, you don't -- we asked about any experience, like opening up one of these facilities. The answer was no, this would be your first. And I think I have concerns, you know, if this is not something -- we already know that these, you know, these type of facilities have a certain stigma to them. There is some people on this Board that have had experience with these type of facilities that correlate with that stigma.

And so my concern is that if you do not have experience in running it and this is your first one, it would speak to me better if this is maybe your second facility or you have done this before. So there is some credibility to that, but I can't really speak to anything regarding that. I really need to understand how this is going to operate. And so I think the site plan, the floor plan is going to be critical for us to understand better where people are going to be situated, because she does bring up a good point. Where are staff that are there, where are they going to live. They are not going to be living in there.

MS. MORRISON: No.

MR. PEREZ: So when say 24 hour, like people that will be there in case the girls -- whatever the case may be, who is living there? Someone has to live there to make sure they are not on their own per se.

MS. MORRISON: I can -- am I allowed to elaborate in regards to all of the questions that have been asked?

MR. PEREZ: You can step back up.

MR. PETERSON: My thing, I know it's not a prison, so the kids are coming out, are going to be outside.

MS. MORRISON: Absolutely.

MR. PETERSON: That's where they mingle or associate. They are not going to stay in the house. Who's going to be --

MR. PEREZ: Let's stay on track and answer those other questions.

MR. PETERSON: That's all I'm saying.

MS. MORRISON: I really should have brought the floor plan, that would help tremendously. When you enter in my building -- there is only two units -- when you enter in, you go upstairs, that's Unit A. And then on the same level you have an entry for Unit B. And then the downstairs, the basement/rec area. Unit A has three bedrooms up there -- it's enclosed -- three bedrooms up there and one bathroom. Unit B, the other children will be in has three bedrooms one bathroom. Why I say staff will not be living there because staff will change. There is 7 to 3-shift, there's 3 to 11-shift, and there's 11 to 3-shift; so this will be staffed but not residing there. Staff is not allowed to sleep. This is a 24-hour facility.

MS. RAMOS: You said 11 to 3-shift, you meant 11 to 7, right?

MS. MORRISON: 11 to 7, yes, 24-hour awake staff. They cannot sleep in these conditions with children because you cannot sleep, you have to be awake. Like I said, there is alarms on the windows. Alarms and

cameras currently at the building, the parking area. So there is going to be supervision at all times.

You expressed the children being outside. Right now it's raining out, that's why the basement will have a rec area to help them burn off energy, to keep them indoors. They will have a structured schedule. You don't wake up whenever you want. It will be a structured schedule for breakfast and lunch, dinner time, recreational time. The outdoor back area is fully done. They will be able to relax. It's enclosed. They will have space to play games. They won't disturb or they won't disrupt. They will be -- if you think about it, you have five children to three adults, that's usually more attention than the average child gets at home. They wouldn't have that support and attention and resources.

You highlighted this is my first time. McDonalds opened up one business. You have to start somewhere. I'm trying to start so I can have a second facility. Yeah, this is my first. I have the experience. I have worked in Damar, which is also located in East Chicago. So I have worked there before. So I have the experience in working within a residential setting, so it will not bring down property value.

Like I said, 85 percent of my staff, employees, they are residents of East Chicago. They will also bring revenue to the City.

MR. PETERSON: My thing is, I understand it's a safe haven in there, but I know they can't be locked up. You know they have to mingle and maybe go to the store or come outside, that's what I'm talking about.

MS. MORRISON: Like I said, the building -- they are able to come out in the back area for fresh air. These children will already be receiving services. Some of my services is placement of these children. They can go visit with their family. They aren't going to be outdoors walking around the neighborhood exploring. They might be visiting parents. They might be in therapy services. They are only there for 30 to 45 days, so they are not -- this is not a long term facility. This is a facility where this child needs somewhere to stay. Until we find them a home, they reside in this facility. 30 to 45 days is what the State allows.

MR. SOLORIO: Just so I'm clear, the

people working the shifts, if someone needs to go get toiletries, or say they have to go get groceries, or they are on -- you are dealing with females, I hate to say, but whatever -- they are on their menstrual cycle, someone needs to go get a pad or things like that. Are they allowed to go get things or the employee gets that for them? How does coming in and out of this facility work on a daily basis for these kids?

So I know they are under your care, but as we stated, it's not a prison. So they are able to navigate out, is that a supervised area because everyone has to leave, we all go together. How does that work?

MS. MORRISON: If there is a need, I have extra staff, on-call staff. So I'll have the on-call person, if there is something not in the facility, go get that. But I have thought about all that, the sanitary napkins and toiletries. The facility will be stocked with the essential needs that these children need. That's things such as diapers, lotion, soap, all of those things. They will be available for them. And if there is a shortage, there is always Walmart delivery that would deliver to the facility. Staff will not leave. If it's an emergency, a child gets sick. We are contracted -- we have to have a nurse practitioner on our staff that will come in and treat our children. So it's not like run amuck. This is very structured and it has to be approved from the State before I can even function.

MR. SOLORIO: The State will also look at the room to bathroom ratio on how many people are living there, you know, and whether the proximity to the bathroom is enough, from the furthest most bathroom. That's the things they look at, certain distance from room to room. Where they are living to where the closest bathroom they can go to. Again, not really seeing a floor plan, we don't know how that functions.

You mentioned this basement/rec area. Is the basement, the height of the ceiling is something whereby you are actually able or actual liveable space? Or is that six feet, where it is not the appropriate height and code wise, no one should really be doing any of these type of what is called activities there.

MS. MORRISON: The basement at one point was going to be an apartment. So it does have the

offset. I did receive my approval for a daycare and the pivot, not funding, the pivot was where I was going to be more helpful. So the basement was approved for that. There is ample space in the basement. There is not like a range of things, storage rooms in the basement. This is not locked, where they will not have access to it. So it's just an open concept. It's the ground floor, so they are able to play comfortably.

MS. AILES: When you say approved, that means the Building Department, you had your inspection for the daycare?

MS. MORRISON: Yes, ma'am. I received my approval for that.

MR. SOLORIO: From the Building Department here?

MS. MORRISON: Yes.

MR. SOLORIO: Obviously this is a different use than what was approved at that point based on daycare versus now a different type of facility.

My last thing that I have, you know, you bring a lot of credentials and a lot of letters of support, none of which are signed that I can see, so I'm not sure. And, again, it's not the validity I'm questioning, it's the way it looks. I can easily create this form and kind of put my name and stamp, whatever the case may be.

So I would recommend -- I am not necessarily going to recommend for us to vote on something today because I feel like there is still some questions that need to be asked, but if you can bring back those documents with actual signatures. It's great that you have these different types of trainings and it's good that if you were the person that was there, that is there the majority of the time, I think that would help.

MS. MORRISON: Which I will be.

MR. SOLORIO: But it says you will be training your staff to have these types of training, so obviously we are not going to be there to determine whether you trained people properly or not because that's not -- we don't have the capacity to do that for any and all businesses in the City. And so we want to

be rest assured that these people, whoever they are, whomever they are, and maybe this is a condition that we put if we are going to approve it, which I am not saying we are or aren't, that you give us an updated list of your staff members and what their training and certifications are so that we are appeased to know that, hey, these people are actually running a facility and they have the credentials to do it. Especially because they are dealing with at risk children that we don't know where they are coming from, you know. I am going to say they are not coming directly from the streets, but it's tomato to tomato for me because when the Department picks them up, they are picked up from the streets, and then they are processed in some form or fashion. And then they find a facility that can house them temporarily in the interim. So you may not have directly picked them up from the streets, that's accurate or would be accurate. But to say that they are not coming directly from the streets would be an inaccurate statement I feel because that's how they get picked up. That's how they get brought to these facilities.

Now whether you are a facility that's taking them in in the interim because you didn't directly go and say, I saw you on Grant Street, if you need a place to stay, that's accurate in that sense. But it could have been somebody that was picked up on Columbus Drive by, you know, the services and whatever, and then they are brought into your facility because you are close to say their social network or whatever the case may be. I understand what you are trying to do. You are trying to make sure they have a safe place to be and that they are in an area that they are at least, you know, not trying to get someone from Marion County to come to East Chicago necessarily. If they are from the area, you'd like to provide them a space that they at least know the area and they are not -- like it's not a complete extreme change or whatever the case maybe.

But, some of these kids come from places where they do need to be moved out of where they are from, right, because they are in danger or because there are situations that they are going through. So I understand the need and the want and the desire to do it. I think for us here, the question is, is placement. Is an R3 higher density family area suitable or would this be better suited in a commercial space, in a commercial area, where say prompt services and things like that would be readily available versus in a residential neighborhood.

And so these are areas that, you know, I would say -- particularly I know we have seen crime go down in the City. There is crime and it is a real thing that exists everywhere. So to bring -- I think it's one thing to control crime, I'll say control crime in the terms of we know what the neighborhood goes through on a daily basis and we know the type of things that happen. This would be something knew to that area. That's something that has never existed in that area, that brings its own problems and its own situations. And so how that neighborhood is going to treat that or understand that is going to be a different thing.

So those are my concerns, and as such, I would say that I don't think I have a recommendation today to be able to ask the Board whether to approve or disapprove. I feel like there is still information we need from you, which I requested. Those letters that I think are going to be important to add more impact to your credentials.

Again, I would say then at the next subsequent meeting we can talk about any conditions that may arise, if it is going to be something that we are recommending to approve. But I just feel there is a lot of questions and I think also there may be a lot of questions in terms, because we just received some of this information today, so I think we need to kind of dissect, kind of look at it. But this is a new type of facility in the City of East Chicago in general and I would want the Board to go back home and study these facilities, where they are successful, where have they been failures, to better glean into any more questions they need from you.

And I apologize that maybe my comment about why you are doing this might have been, you know, may seem derogatory. It's not about money or it's not about this. I don't want to be the person to say this is why you are doing it. I understand that you have credentials that backup why you are doing what you are doing and we understand what you are trying to do. But it is a matter of making sure that whatever is going here, it doesn't matter if it is this type of place or a laundromat, does it fit the area. Does it fit the neighborhood. Is it going to be something that will positively, you know, enhance the neighborhood. Those are questions we need to answer, and as of right now, today, I am not comfortable with being able to recommend for or against.

MS. MORRISON: Can I -- am I able to

respond?

MR. SOLORIO: I am not exactly sure what the procedure is at this point. I think after staff recommendation it is kind of one of those, like if they will this table, you will have another time to present more and discuss more, but that would be it, I guess.

MR. PETERSON: What would be nice, if you could make a video on the inside, what there is, what is the kitchen area, how it is set up. And then, you know -- because really there is one bedroom up there.

MS. MORRISON: There is three bedrooms.

MR. PETERSON: Upstairs?

MS. MORRISON: Each unit has three bedrooms. Those three bedrooms in the upstairs unit, total of six bedrooms. So there is three upstairs and three downstairs.

MR. PETERSON: So they have their own room?

MS. MORRISON: Total of five children in each unit. So there is not a total of one bedroom.

MR. PETERSON: I thought it was three beds in one room.

MS. MORRISON: I think the main thing, these are not -- you highlighted these are children that DCS picks them up from the streets. The process of DCS, when it comes to a child, they have to first investigate. And then once it's substantiated, then the child will be taken and placed, you know, somewhere. So it's not like these children are just -- that DCS randomly chose them. They really investigate before these children are placed in a group home.

Like I said, just because DCS calls for referral, doesn't necessarily mean I'll accept that child. I need to be sure everyone is safe and appropriate. So these are not just random DCS seeing a child on the side of the street. Someone called and DCS went out and observed to see if there was real concern. It's short-term, because as I indicated, it's only 30 to 45 day timeframe. So it's not like the children will be there for a long duration of time.

So in regards -- so it will be a positive impact, because like I say, they will be there for a short period. It might be I could go to a commercial area after the residential, after being open to show this area is in need of something like this, substantial need. So like I said, these are not random referrals, not random kids. They investigate before the child actually goes to placement and I have safety questions. Is this a bed wetter? Is this a fire starter? These aren't all random children that have a negative impact on the City.

MR. PEREZ: Thank you. I appreciate it. At this time I think I am going to ask for a motion to put this under advisement until next time we come back.

MS. RAMOS: So moved, Mr. President.

MR. PETERSON: Second.

MR. PEREZ: Roll call.

MS. AILES: Cesar Perez.

MR. PEREZ: Yes.

MS. AILES: Ralph Peterson.

MR. PETERSON: Yes.

MS. AILES: Lydia Lopez.

MS. LOPEZ: Yes.

MS. AILES: Lilia Ramos.

MS. RAMOS: Yes.

MR. PEREZz: That doesn't mean no, that just means we are going to look at this on our time and think about it a little bit longer, and come back at the next meeting. You are welcome to come back with more information for us and then we'll make a decision.

MS. MORRISON: The information that was actually submitted, do I e-mail that? How do I e-mail that?

MR. SOLORIO: Submit it back to Tracy and

she'll disseminate that to the Board.

MS. AILES: March 19th is the next scheduled meeting.

MR. SOLORIO: So for anyone in the audience, if you wish to show up at that meeting, you can, because this will be technically a continuance of this meeting today. So, you know, even say on that day it's voted yes or no, regardless of what it is voted, it has to go to the Council for approval. Actually the Council is the ultimate last stand. If we say no, the Council could vote yes. If we say yes, the Council could vote no. Ultimately they are the ones who decide whether you would be allowed to open or not.

MS. AILES: Any information that you are going to share at the next meeting I would need by next Thursday, I believe that's the 12th.

MR. PEREZ: Okay. I need a motion for adjournment.

MS. RAMOS: So moved.

MS. LOPEZ: Second.

Roll Call: "All in Favor": Cesar Perez, Lilia Ramos, Lydia Lopez, Ralph Peterson Abstain: None Opposed: None

MR. PEREZ: Thank you. Meeting is adjourned.

**** Meeting adjourned ****

Approval of the Meeting Minutes of
March 5, 2026

Approved and signed March 19, 2026

Cesar Perez, President

Ralph Peterson, Vice-President

Lydia Lopez, Representative

Lilia Ramos, Representative

Tracy Ailes, Recording Secretary.

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 11th day of March 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde

Peggy S. LaLonde, Court Reporter