CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
ECONOMIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
March 23, 2026

BOARD MEMBERS:
Wanda Clark, President
Jesse Avitia, Vice-President
Sharma Frazier, Member

STAFF:
Tracy Ailes
Sandra Favela

Reported by: Peggy S. LaLonde
Fissinger & Associates

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Present: Wanda Clark, Jesse Avitia
Sharma Frazier

Staff Present: Tracy Ailes, Recording Secretary

MS. CLARK: I'd like to call to order the Economic Development Commission meeting of Monday, March 23, 2026.

I need a motion to approve the minutes of Monday, January 26, 2026 meeting as written.

MR. AVITIA: Motion to approve.

MS. FRAZIER: Second.

MS. CLARK: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MS. CLARK: Motion carries.

There is no Old Business, we'll move on to New Business.

MS. AILES: Today we have five new businesses. To begin with we have Sheffield Metals International, 1200 West 145th Street. The business owners name is Adam Mazzella. This is zoned M1, light industry. They are a distributor for coated and bare metal products and engineered standing seam metal roof profile systems. They operate Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. They received their business license on February 4th, 2026.

Also on the same site is Mazzella Lifting Technologies, 1200 West 145th Street. Actually there are two businesses that are kind of tied together. This business owner is Matthew Mazzella. Zoned M1, light industry. They do designing, manufacturing, and selling crane and rigging products and services. They are open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. They received their business license on February 4th. Their location, both of those businesses are on the north end of the building that we previously discussed, Hearn and Hearn takes everything to the south.

Then we have Annie Lou's Resale at 5001 Indianapolis Boulevard, doing business East Chicago Thrift Shop. The owner is Gregory Isom. Manager is Nicole Isom. This is zoned R4, multi family dwelling, three story or less, which meant they did have to go through the Board of Zoning and Appeals. They were approved to have a variance to open the business there. It's a secondhand retail store. They are open Monday through Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. They received their business license on February 26th and they are operating on the first floor there.

Then we have Roundtrip 103 located at 4502 Indianapolis Boulevard, doing business as S & S Petco, Inc. Owners name is Simar Tiwana and is also manager. It's zoned general commercial. It's a gas station with a convenience store selling candy, non-alcoholic drinks, snacks, Lottery tickets and various items. They are operating 24/7 and they received their business license on March 9th.

Then we have C.U.T. Gymnastics at 3725 Main Street. The business owner is Orfeus Floyd, also the manager. This is zoned C2, Harbor Business District. This is training and tumbling, gymnastics and cheerleading for ages four years and up. Because of the zoning he also did go through the Board of Zoning and Appeals, and was approved. He operates after school hours and weekends. He received his business license on March 10th, 2026. He's taken over the High Fashion storefront.

That's all I have.

MR. AVITIA: I have a couple questions for the Sheffield development. They are separate businesses, right, or we don't know?

MS. AILES: They have separate business licenses and are operating two separate businesses.

MR. AVITIA: I looked it up on the website and they are All Metals from Cleveland and they have over 200 locations in the United States. It's kind of a medium size industry. So when did they have -- when were they contacted?

MS. AILES: So they were operating prior without a business license. So they have just now come into compliance. It has been awhile that they have been operating there. I want to say maybe two years, year and a half. They were operating without a business license.

MR. AVITIA: They were empty for awhile.

MS. AILES: It was empty for a long time, yes.

MR. AVITIA: They also acquired a whole slice or just portion?

MS. AILES: They only take the north side of the building, so probably less than half of the building. And the other half is Hearn Industries that we discussed a few meetings back, that had to do with the automobile parts for the Ford Plant. So Hearn has taken all the south side of the building. So maybe half way, less than half way.

MR. AVITIA: And do you have an idea how many actual employees they have, let's say in both the metal and the technologies?

MS. AILES: I do not have a number for them. I am not familiar with either of these companies.

MR. AVITIA: It's a medium size company, so they provide a lot of service for the metal industry and for cranes and lifts. It sounds familiar. With some of that technology, some of those crane things. So I was just wondering what kind of employment they have.

MS. AILES: My understanding it wasn't very large. When we did meet for the Hearn project and we were discussing that, the comment was from the Misner Group, who owns the building, saying that they have limited -- they only need a limited number of parking on that north side. So I wouldn't anticipate more than 30.

MR. AVITIA: Most curious, how do they get enticed or drawn to do business in East Chicago? Who actually had the lead on that? We used to have a Manager of Economic Development and he was in charge of going out and searching for different businesses or bringing them to East Chicago and making favorable deals. How does that work now?

MS. AILES: Because this building is owned by Misner, they did it themselves.

MR. AVITIA: That explains that. The owners of the building were the ones that actually went out and searched for them.

MS. AILES: They advertised, yes. They advertised and through their realtors that they were able to secure these tenants.

MR. AVITIA: That gives them East Chicago, it was the owner.

MS. AILES: The owner for this one. We do out source. We do have some people who help us with projects, like with Harvest and those. We have people who out source to help us on the economic development side for City projects.

MR. AVITIA: I'll be curious to see the number of employees that are actually working in those two industries. They were fairly good size company.

MR. AILES: Okay. Any other questions?

MS. FRAZIER: I have one. For the last one, the C.U.T. Gymnastics. It's a training and tumbling and cheerleading. So is that actually a store as well?

MS. AILES: No. He sells, I think, some T-shirts with his logo and stuff on it.

MS. FRAZIER: I thought it used to be a store.

MS. AILES: It used to be High Fashion, yes.

MS. FRAZIER: Are they taking that name

down?

MS. AILES: Yes. We are working with him on the signage. That's an old picture from Google, but the High Fashion sign has been removed and we are working on getting him a sign.

MS. FRAZIER: Okay. Thank you.

MS. AILES: Any other questions on the Redevelopment Commission meeting minutes or anything?

MS. CLARK: It seems like we are off to a good start with businesses within the City and we have a variety of businesses. Maybe we can give our community different stuff.

I was just wondering how we do this, like you said. We need a cleaners, how do we do that?

MS. AILES: A dry cleaners?

MS. CLARK: A dry cleaners.

MS. AILES: We have discussed dry cleaning, it's an environmental issue. So we have had a couple people inquire. So what the City would require is that they could take drop off and then send it out. But to actually have a dry cleaner doing the work here, the City would not be for it because of the chemicals and stuff. The dry cleaners have environmental issues.

MS. CLARK: Okay. I didn't know that.

MR. AVITIA: It goes along with the Chemical Federal Statute.

MS. AILES: Yes.

MR. AVITIA: Good question. I always wonder about that.

MS. CLARK: At one time I know we had two, maybe three.

MS. AILES: Yes.

MS. CLARK: They were on Chicago Avenue.

MS. AILES: Right. And the one in the

Harbor.

MS. FRAZIER: Helen's Cleaners.

MS. CLARK: I think they take things and drop them off, if I'm not mistaken. We had several in the City at one time.

Any other Commissioner comments?

MR. AVITIA: I appreciate the fact that you continue giving us the reports and there is actually three of them. They keep us informed going over what things are doing. They expanded the City. And like I say, we really appreciate that. And in the first one, it was -- a good section of it that explained the actual impact that the Mortgage Assistance Program we have with the City, how it has actually made improvements to the City, the way people are moving in, the age factor, the number of people coming in. When you read something like that, it shows you the City is moving in the right direction because we are spending money. We are actually bringing people in from different areas. We are getting them from Hammond, South Chicago, Griffith, actually quite a few from Gary. People are moving back in and that report gives you a good idea what is going on in the City and what is happening.

I do appreciate the fact that you are giving us those minutes. It helps us as Commissioners to say, well, we have a full review of what is going on in East Chicago.

MS. AILES: Right.

MS. CLARK: Any other comments? (None)

Our next meeting is Monday, April 27, 2026, at 4:30.

MR. AVITIA: Remember when I asked for maybe a possible visit through --

MS. AILES: I guess they are working on getting more employees and things over there. They just had -- so they weren't completely open. They just had their inspection.

MR. AVITIA: Just keep it in mind. As Commissioners we should be really interested in what kind of industry is coming to East Chicago. That's a large building there, something East Chicago should be

proud to have, and I would like to see what the building is like, what the interior is like, what work is continuing. So we can talk to people and tell them this is actually going on in East Chicago. Visually seeing that we are doing it and seeing what it happening.

MS. AILES: They had their final inspection for the other half. They were still working on internally being under construction. So hopefully soon.

MS. FRAZIER: Also with that, like he was saying about that, because they had on Facebook a lot of people complaining about they didn't hire East Chicago residents. So it was a big mess with that.

MR. AVITIA: That's one of those issues when we have companies that come in.

MS. AILES: My understanding is that there is some communication going with them. I know Common Council has also asked a letter to be sent to them in regards to that. So I can't speak on their behalf, but my understanding, they have lost some people in their HR Department and things; so I can't really speak for them. But it's being addressed through multiple departments and the Common Council.

MR. AVITIA: East Chicago residents would probably appreciate the fact that they are here, they don't have to go out of town. They can make food and buy food here. Good comment.

MS. CLARK: Our next meeting will be Monday, April 27, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.
If there are no further questions, can I have a motion for adjournment of the meeting?

MR. AVITIA: Motion to adjourn.

MS. FRAZIER: Second.

MS. CLARK: All in favor?
(All signify aye.)
MS. CLARK: Motion carries.
Meeting adjourned.

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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday
March 23rd, 2026

Approved and signed May 22, 2026

Wanda Clark

Wanda Clark, President

Jesse Avitia

Jesse Avitia, Vice-president

Sharma Frazier

Tracy Ailes

Tracy Ailes, 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 27th of March, 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde