

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

BOARD MEMBERS

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

Regular Meeting Minutes
(Via Zoom Videoconference)
Tuesday, April 26, 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: Grayling Gordon,
Eugene Austin, Gilberto Cantu

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

Present Via Zoom: Dawn Dawkins.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Approval of Minutes: April 12, 2022.

Motion to approve April 12, 2022 Meeting Minutes made
by Gilberto Cantu. Second by Eugene Austin.

Questions/Comments: None.

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

Approval & Signing of Payroll: April 14, 2022

Motion to approve April 14, 2022 Payroll made by Gilberto
Cantu. Second by Eugene Austin.

1 Questions/Comments: None.

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

4 Approval & Signing of Warrant: 042622PB \$37,672.54.

5 Motion to approve Warrant 042622PB made by Gilberto Cantu
6 Second by Eugene Austin.

7 Questions/Comments: None.

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

10 MR. GORDON: Now I just have one quick question. This
11 is not something that we had prior?

12 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No, it's not. But some of the
13 items depending on what they are it might be close to
14 similar.

15 We also have two accounts. I don't think anyone
16 ever explained to you that we have a corporate account and
17 then we have a recreation account.

18 So then depending on what it is, if it's a
19 recurring matter, it might come out of that. But it's
20 similar numbers and different accounts. But no, it's not.

21 MR. GORDON: Sounds good. Thank you.

22 OLD BUSINESS: None.

23 NEW BUSINESS:

24 MR. GORDON: We'll move on to New Business.
25 Miss Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director of Parks and
Recreation.

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Good evening, everyone. And,
Mr. Cantu, happy birthday.

MR. CANTU: Thank you.

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I just heard it's your birthday.
Happy birthday.

MR. CANTU: Not yet.

1 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Well, happy early birthday.

2 MR. CANTU: Thank you very much.

3 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The first thing we have on our
4 agenda is Ozoh Construction and Engineering. I am actually
going to table that, ask for it to be tabled.

5 We're limited to some of our items we previously
6 had with the trails. And Ozoh was one of the people we
submitted previously. But they actually were not awarded the
bid for the previous item.

7
8 So we want to know exactly why they were not
awarded. So I am going to dive into this a little bit more.

9 Also the amount that was on here we have to do more
10 research. It's pretty expensive. I don't know if it's just
because of the fact of the time that it is, whether we have
11 to up the time or up the amount. You know everything went up
in pricing.

12 So I want to do my due diligence and look into it a
little bit more.

13
14 So I am going to ask for this to be tabled at the
moment.

15 The second item we have before you is the East
16 Chicago Little League.

17 We've done an annual contract since I've been here.
And with that being said they have the use of our Little
18 League field.

19 Basically they are taking care of most of the
field. We usually don't do as much. But they're actually
20 the ones who are using the field.

21 They also are doing us a favor. And for our high
school games they are running concession stands.

22 We still have Covid restrictions. Our Health
Department says you cannot sell hot dogs. You cannot sell
23 nachos because they don't want to have hands give stuff that
they made. So everything only can be prepackaged. So they
24 agreed.

25 We did extend the contract though. Now it's to

1 October 31. So they are now playing fall ball at Kenny
2 Lofton Field also. That's good for our residents. We're
excited for another year of baseball. So that is a great
3 thing to have. So I just ask for approval of the MOU.

4 Motion to approve Little League, Inc. MOU made by Gilberto
Cantu. Second by Eugene Austin.

5 Questions/Comments: None.

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

8 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next item we have before you is
to Rescind Sportsfield Agreement that was previously
9 approved.

10 For auditor purposes the Controller's Office has
asked us to make sure we have an amount that cannot exceed.
11 So nothing has changed in the price. It's just how much they
can go up to.

12 And once they get close to that number they know to
call us and contact us to get approval.

13 So the first item I'll need a motion to rescind the
14 Sportsfield, Inc. previous contract for Block Stadium.

15 Motion to Rescind Sportsfield, Inc. Agreement made by
Gilberto Cantu. Second by Eugene Austin.

16 Questions/Comments: None.

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

19 MR. GORDON: Now a motion to approve the revised
20 Sportsfield Maintenance Agreement for Block Stadium Baseball
Field which Miss Hernandez-Orange explained that it was --

21 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: There is a do not exceed amount
added on.

22 MR. CANTU: We already had this one before. If we had
23 to do it before a game and then after the game, we have to
come back again and redo it?

24 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yeah.
25

1 MR. CANTU: So not counting the \$855 one time. So every
2 time they use the stadium it would be like \$1,700. That's a
lot of money.

3 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It is a lot of money.

4 MR. CANTU: And then we don't charge anybody down there.
5 So we're going to be losing all the time, every time they use
it.

6 Even if they come from outside, we're going to tell
7 them you have to pay \$3,000 to use. They're going to say I
8 ain't going to pay \$3,000. But half of that money is going
to go for those people just to come and do the things they
have to do to keep it in shape.

9 All I am saying is we spend a lot of money down
10 there, half a million dollars. And to me it wasn't good
because all those dollars could be used for something else
here on the park.

11 Nobody is going to come and use or want to pay
12 that. They're paying too much money to have that thing down
there.

13 It's a beautiful stadium.

14 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes.

15 MR. CANTU: I've been living here in East Chicago for
16 the last almost 70 years. And we put too much money down
there in the stadium right now. That's my own opinion.

17 I've been fighting for water for the children in
18 every park. There is no water, drinking water for the kids.
19 Every year the same thing. I want to have some water. No.
No. We're going to open up all these things, new things.
There is no water for the kids.

20 MR. GORDON: Why don't we have water?

21 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The water fountains?

22 MR. CANTU: And the ones that we have down there
23 Washington Park close to your office, the corner of Grand
24 Boulevard, there's water down there. But it's closed all the
time. They shut it off right here. But nobody knows that.

25 The kids are playing down in the middle of

1 Washington close to the park. And they're drinking water
2 down there. And there used to be a water fountain down there
next to the playground.

3 I've been here like 13, 14 years. My thing is no
4 water. No water down there or the other one down there on
Broadway.

5 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Any of them.

6 MR. CANTU: None.

7 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: You're right.

8 MR. CANTU: And I was the only one fighting for water
9 for the kids.

10 They said the only reason we don't have water
because that's a neighborhood park. They said they can go to
11 the house and have a drink and come back and play.

12 And I've been saying that for the last 12, 13
years.

13 Even the Mayor was here. And then after the Mayor
we applied for \$2 million. And then they said what do you
14 need. And we usually have people down there to create things
for the park. So I said drinking water and some restrooms.
15

16 There is no restrooms. They used to have inside
of the swimming pool. But there is nothing. The only one
17 that you have restrooms that is open is Washington Park,
right?

18 Is it still open or is it closed it?

19 MR. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No. It's open in the summertime.

20 I'll address all three of your concerns. The first
one with Block Stadium, you're 100 percent correct. It's a
21 lot of money \$1,700 every time.

22 And we have an MOU for the Park Department.
Actually the City of East Chicago School City. We're in
23 partnership where we're saying, hey, we will let you come in
and we'll let you use this for free. But we're going to use
24 your stuff for free too.

25 So some of the stuff that we'll be using from the

1 School moving forward will be the pools. So there's
2 different things that we're getting from the Schools and
3 they're using our stuff for free.

4 We'll also use their parking lot when we have games
5 because we need the space.

6 So that's the agreement we have with Schools. That
7 is the only thing they're allowed to use for free.

8 But when it comes to people renting out, I got
9 multiple calls. And I told them you're going to pay like
10 \$3,000 for you to play at this field.

11 I have some people who want to spend \$3,000 for
12 that field.

13 The reason why we're having a professional company
14 come and do that field is for the longevity. We put way too
15 much money into that to have anybody off the street come and
16 try to fix it.

17 I used to be there with the old baseball teams. I
18 remember trying to fix that field. We had no idea what we
19 were doing. We were just trying to make it look good.

20 We cannot have that happen anymore because we put
21 way too much money into Block Stadium.

22 The sports teams that we have talked to we told
23 them, hey, in your contract we want to know if you're going
24 to pay for the entire amount of how much it is going to be to
25 fix the field or are you going to pay us an amount and we'll
contract them. But you still have to pay us for every single
game the amount we're asking. And it's about \$3,000.

We're not anticipating to get our \$8 million back
from the sports team. We're anticipating year by year to
just meet it and not spend any extra.

So I 100 percent agree with you, Mr. Cantu. We're
trying to preserve Block Stadium and not continue to put more
and more into it.

We explained to them if you want another concession
stand area, you want extra office, you want storage space,
you're going to have to pay for it because we've already done
enough.

1 In regards to the water you're right. We have no
2 water in any of our parks. Mostly because of the pipes they
3 found there's lead.

4 MR. CANTU: I don't like those things that we get down
5 there and all this. It's a waste of money.

6 Another thing is --

7 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Let me address the water first.
8 I had a meeting with the Planning Department. They asked,
9 Vanessa, what do you want to see.

10 And they said we're going to be getting money from
11 the Government and we're going to make some changes to a lot
12 of the pipes. And they said you can use water.

13 And I said the only way we can possibly do it is by
14 putting the water fountains inside the building and have push
15 water because nobody uses water fountains anymore because of
16 Covid.

17 So we need to have push items where you put a water
18 bottle and put the water in it.

19 So Doug Powers is involved with Planning. They
20 know that. He has an internist. She also knows. Her
21 background is in Parks.

22 So we had a good conversation about what we would
23 like to see in the parks to move forward.

24 I am not saying it's going to get done tomorrow.
25 But they know that's one of the things I am concerned with
also because I get it.

 You're outside. You're playing ball. You're
running and you don't have access to that. But I also don't
want access to dirty water.

 Some of those pipes because they've been here for
so long do have lead. So the first step is to get those
pipes cleaned out. The second step is to put somewhere to
get water from.

 And the port-a-potties, we have Riley Park that's
open every summer, Tod Park and Washington Park.

 I have staff who work with Public Works. We'll

1 open. We'll close. And we'll able to have the park rangers.
2 They know how to go and check stuff out and see what's
3 happening.

4 And we will be putting port-a-potties in all the
5 smaller parks.

6 The people who are the park rangers, their job also
7 is to put eyes on port-a-potties to see if they're dirty or
8 not.

9 We get them changed out twice every week. So the
10 money that we put into the port-a-potties we upped that
11 amount because we know we have to change them more often.

12 So if you're concerned, please let me know. I will
13 definitely make sure to put eyes on stuff as much as
14 possible.

15 And I think it's important for you guys to know
16 what I have concerns with or what we talk about because we
17 probably get a lot of feedback from the community. They
18 don't speak to me or the Mayor. And I don't mind telling the
19 people who can hear what they need to hear.

20 MR. CANTU: The chairman down there like he's the
21 director down there. They're every year what do we need.
22 They make priorities and they make priorities. And then this
23 is what we're going to do for the next year.

24 And they always allot like \$75,000 for water.
25 Never did nothing for water for \$75,000 a year.

The money down there we give to the Marina half a
million dollars every year. It come from the Council. But
we've been giving \$500,000 for the Marina. But to take care
of the park, that to me is a no-no.

So that's my opinion. That's why I am here to give
my own opinion. Even if the Mayor doesn't like what I said,
he doesn't want me to be here to criticize.

Like I said every year they always promise.

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: But I think the bigger problem is
the piping underneath. We're getting a lot of the piping
changed throughout the entire City of East Chicago. So I
think with time it's going to happen. I just can't say it's
going to happen tomorrow.

1 It's a bigger thing than me. It's what's
2 underneath. But I do make mention of that whenever I have a
3 Planning meeting that we have zero access to water at the
4 parks.

5 MR. AUSTIN: Who is in charge of that?

6 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I'm sorry. In charge of what?

7 MR. AUSTIN: This is what I can't understand. Whoever
8 have to sit down and explain to them if they say we don't
9 know what to do.

10 They have an idea to start our own technology that
11 we have now. You could run pipe anywhere and you could hook
12 it up accurate for 8 hours then it shuts down and then it
13 starts back up. Only thing you have to do is put it on a
14 timer.

15 MR. GORDON: I think what she's saying is that it's more
16 the cost.

17 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I mean for instance since you
18 brought it up the Calumet area, they're actually doing pipes
19 there. So they're doing an assessment to see what they find.

20 So again it's a bigger picture. I give them what I
21 would like to see. And that big picture I know my budget
22 would never be able to afford that big amount. But I do let
23 them know the concerns. And I will continue to let them know
24 the concerns.

25 MR. AUSTIN: Another question. Do they have water in
Washington Park?

 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: In the building.

 MR. AUSTIN: Baseball field.

 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yeah. There's water there.

 MR. AUSTIN: The water is there, right?

 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: You're talking about the park,
the fountains?

 MR. AUSTIN: Yeah.

 MS. DAWKINS: May I make a suggestion? This is

1 Attorney Dawkins. Is it possible to do an analysis to see
2 the cost that would be involved to do each park and then make
3 a plan to implement it, a yearly plan for whatever parks need
4 it the most just to at least investigate it and give the
5 Board something to consider.

6 And then you can see if you could put it in your
7 budget some kind of way. But at least investigate it to see
8 what the cost would be.

9 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Miss Dawkins, I could ask to put
10 it in to make an analysis. But that will never come out of
11 my budget solely because of the fact that I don't have an
12 inch of how much it costs for those pipes to be replaced.

13 So we have to excavate. We have to change the
14 pipes out. All that would never be in my budget. I have a
15 million and 500,000 of that goes to the Marina. So there's
16 no way it's coming out of my budget.

17 Now the faucets for that --

18 MS. DAWKINS: Is there other Departments that could
19 possibly have it in their budget like Public Works?

20 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That's what I am saying. I could
21 ask the Planning to do something of that nature. But I
22 personally, me doing it and having it come out of my budget,
23 that would never happen.

24 MR. GORDON: I don't think she's asking for it to come
25 out of your budget. But she's asking I believe just for a
cost analysis.

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That's up to you guys if you
would like to have that done.

MR. GORDON: You're already talking to Planning about
that, right?

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I have talked to Planning about
that. I don't know if they've done the actual work. But if
my Board would be the one to like that to happen I can ask
the Planning Department.

I still need approval for the maintenance
agreement.

1 Motion to approve Sportsfield, Inc. Revised Maintenance
2 Agreement made by Gilberto Cantu. Second by Eugene Austin.

3 Questions/Comments: None.

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

6 PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

7 * Next Regular Meeting Date: Tuesday, May 10, 2022
8 @ 5:00 p.m. City Hall Council Chambers.

9 Motion to adjourn was made by Gilberto Cantu. Second by
10 Eugene Austin.

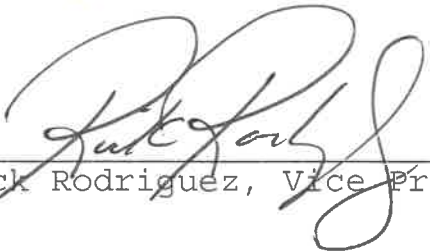
11 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
12 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

13 * Meeting ended at 5:33 p.m.
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1 Approval of the Meeting Minutes of
2 Tuesday, April 26, 2022

3 Approved and Signed May 10, 2022

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5 _____
6 Grayling Gordon, President

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8 _____
9 Rick Rodriguez, Vice President

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11 Valda Lewis, Secretary

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14 Gilberto Cantu, Member

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17 Eugene Austin, Member

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20 Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary

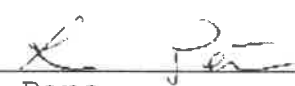
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C E R T I F I C A T E

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 May, 2022.



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

