In The Matter Of:

EAST CHICAGO REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA

REGULAR MEETING

June 20, 2023

BOSS REPORTERS

Gary & Merrillville, Indiana

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Merrillville, Indiana 46410

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STATE OF INDIANA)
) SS:
COUNTY OF LAKE)

BEFORE THE EAST CHICAGO
REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS had at the meeting before the East Chicago Redevelopment Commission, reported by Kristen K. Stokes, CSR, Notary Public in and for the County of Lake, State of Indiana, taken via Zoom Video-Conferencing to be held at City Hall Council Chambers, 4525 Indianapolis Boulevard, East Chicago, Indiana 46312, on June 20, 2023, scheduled to begin at 5:00 p.m. in the evening.

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(219) 769-9090

APPEARANCES (IN PERSON):

Anthony Serna, Board President
Christine Russell, Board Vice President
Christopher French, Board Secretary
Delainah Valdez-Medina, Board Commissioner
Frank Rivera, Executive Director
Thomas Mesich, Financial Advisor
Debbra Gritters, Executive Secretary
Alysia Dunbar, Program Director
and
Members of the Public

APPEARANCES (VIA ZOOM):

Randall Artis, Board Commissioner
Shelice Tolbert, Attorney
Mike Long, Urban Design Ventures
Boss Reporters

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PRESIDENT SERNA: All right. It's 5:00 o'clock. I'd like to call to order the East Chicago Redevelopment Commission regular meeting of June 20th, 2023. It's now 5:02 p.m. If we could all please rise and renew our allegiance to the flag.

(PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.)

PRESIDENT SERNA: Mr. Secretary, roll call.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Randall Artis?

COMMISSIONER ARTIS: Here.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Delainah Valdez-Medina?

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Present.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Christopher French? Present.

Christine Russell?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Present.

SECRETARY FRENCH: And Anthony Serna?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Present.

We have a full board. Everyone is here. I'd like to ask the commission members -- Commissioners, please, if you would consider amending the agenda. We have an item to add to the agenda, which is the HOME-ARP allocation plan.

Director Rivera, could you speak about this so we understand?

DIRECTOR RIVERA: We're asking to add this to the agenda. The HOME-ARP Allocation Plan that's going to be sent to HUD for approval. And Design Venture, Mr. Michael Long, is going to explain this right now.

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Motion made.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Commissioner Valdez-Medina, she motioned to add that to the agenda. Is there a second?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Second.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Second by Vice President Russell. Any questions on the motion?

Mr. Secretary, roll call.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Randall Artis?

COMMISSIONER ARTIS: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Delainah Valdez-Medina?

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Christopher French? Yes.

Christine Russell?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Anthony Serna?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Yes. Motion carries. So we'll add that to the agenda, and that's going to be agenda item number one, our first thing.

So who's here to speak on that, Director Rivera.

DIRECTOR RIVERA: Yeah, Mr. Michael Long. He's here on behalf of Urban Design Ventures.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Mr. Long, would you please speak on this.

MR. LONG: Yes, absolutely.

Hello, my name is Mike Long. I'm with Urban Design Ventures, a consultant with a long relationship with the City of East Chicago and working with the Redevelopment Department. So I'm here to, of course, talk about the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan. I have a small presentation prepared just to give a little bit of background. I'm going to try to share this screen. Okay. Can you all see that?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Yes.

MR. LONG: Okay. Sounds good. So it's the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan. So HOME-ARP is $5 billion in total funds provided by the

American Rescue Plan intended to assist the homeless and those at risk of homelessness. And that is, of course, different than ARP funding and HOME funding. It uses a bit of both, but the funding itself does come from the American Rescue Plan and a little over $1 million was warranted to the City of East Chicago for this program.

(INTERRUPTED BY BACKGROUND NOISE.)

PRESIDENT SERNA: You can go ahead.

MR. LONG: Okay. Got it. Wasn't sure.

So there are specific types of eligible activities that that money can be used for and that is the production or preservation of affordable housing, tenant-based rental assistance or TBRA, supportive services including homeless prevention services and housing counseling and the purchase and development of non-congregate shelter.

And now, these four particular activities are meant to serve any of these four qualifying populations, which are the homeless, those at risk of homelessness, those that are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence or similar matters, and

others who do not qualify under those first three but might meet some more very specific criteria, for example, other families requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness.

So take, for example, a family that may currently be receiving some sort of aid or assistance, and if that assistance were to go away, then they would be homeless or at risk. And those at greatest risk of housing instability, you can think of that as being those who are at greatest risk of being at risk of homeless.

So someone at risk might be, you know, two or three missed paychecks away from becoming -- going on the street. Whereas, someone with say greatest risk of housing instability might be say four or five payments away.

(INTERRUPTED BY BACKGROUND NOISE.)

MR. LONG: And so as part of this process, we spoke to any number of local stakeholders in and around East Chicago and the surrounding area, places like Hammond and other northwest Indiana. And these were the

major priorities that were developed as part of this plan. There was a need for more permanent supportive rental housing. That seemed to be the one issue that kept coming up over and over again in all of our consultations.

There's also a need for supportive services, such as counseling, life skills training, case management, child care, transportation, legal services and job training, as well as the need for transitional housing, need for more available shelter beds, need for funds to rehabilitate emergency shelters, SROs, transitional and permanent housing. And as well, there was also, I mentioned, a need for a day shelter, as well, in the area.

So to give a little bit of context, as well, homelessness is, in fact, a serious issue in and around East Chicago and Lake County specifically. There were 272 homeless individuals identified in Lake County, and there's many of them sheltered, but many unsheltered as well. As well as some more significant issues with the other

demographics with regard to the homelessness in the area.

And also, I should also mention that this is -- these are based on the 2022 point-in-time counts, and compared to the 2021 point-in-time count there was a significant increase in the number of homeless individuals in the county. Just showing that there is a growing need and that's -- a program like -- something that HOME-ARP can definitely help with.

Domestic violence was also a significant factor. Part of the reason for this meeting is because of -- we had to add more domestic violence information to the plan. For example, there was 23 homeless individuals who identified themselves as victims of domestic violence in Lake County, and that is nearly double that of the previous year, Haven House, the local shelter, for domestic violence and other violence issues, between April and February, they served 33 East Chicago residents, and they were the second largest single municipality served by that one shelter.

0and it's difficult to find proper data for this considering East Chicago, as well as kind of more sensitive data. But broadly, this is a very wide-spread problem for domestic violence and sexual violence with 42.5 of Indiana women and 27.9 percent of Indiana men experiencing some sort of domestic violence, sexual assault or stalking in their lifetimes, which is very much in line with national estimates for that.

In terms of housing statistics, there are around -- a little under a third of the residents of East Chicago live at 30 percent or below the HUD area median income level. And of those, over 65 percent have a number of housing problems which can be a cost burden, but also incomplete kitchen facilities, incomplete plumbing facilities, overcrowded.

And there was also a significant number of households on the public housing waiting list. So this just goes to -- and not to mention that, but the housing -- there were a 139 housing choice vouchers that expired in the year 2022. And that indicates to us that

there is a sheer lack of housing. We can give as many vouchers as we want, but if there's not enough housing for people to move in, then you have a problem.

And through HOME-ARP -- and for that reason, that's why we decided to put the bulk of this allocation into the development of affordable rental housing as well as supportive services, as mentioned earlier, with an administration cut-out as well.

And the point of this presentation is for the annual -- or not the annual -- the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan, which essentially tells HUD what we are trying to prioritize with the community and what things are needed. So as you can see with this dollar breakdown, we do believe that affordable rental housing is a very important feature and as well as supportive services.

As far as services, it can include a very wide range of services, child care, education services, employment assistance, job training, substance abuse counseling and many other different features like that. As well as the other two major pillars of this would

be the development of affordable rental housing, which can be acquisition, construction, rehabilitation, development costs, relocation and operating costs and reserves, as well as administration spending as well as part of this allocation.

So that is the primary information we have. If you have any more questions that may come to mind after this meeting, you may contact Mr. Rivera with the City of East Chicago Department of Redevelopment.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Thank you.

Commissioners, do you have any questions for the presenter?

(NO RESPONSE.)

PRESIDENT SERNA: All right. Thank you very much.

Director Rivera, what is it that you need this Commission to do today?

DIRECTOR RIVERA: Nothing at all. It's just for the public hearing.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Is there anything further, Mr. Rivera, that we need?

DIRECTOR RIVERA: No.

All right. Thank you, Mike.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Thank you.

We'll move on to our agenda. The next item is approval of the regular meeting minutes of June 6th, 2023. I'll entertain a motion to approve those minutes from June 6th, 2023.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Motion to approve.

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Second, Valdez-Medina.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Motion made by Secretary French, second by Commissioner Valdez-Medina. Any questions?

Okay. Mr. Secretary, roll call.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Randall Artis?

COMMISSIONER ARTIS: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Delainah Valdez-Medina?

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Christopher French? Yes.

Christine Russell?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Anthony Serna?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Yes. Motion carries.

Next we have approval of the dockets. Mr. Rivera.

DIRECTOR RIVERA: Thank you so much, Mr. President and Commissioners for being here tonight, and our Attorney Ms. Tolbert and Mr. Lewis from RQ&W and, of course, Ms. Debbra Gritters and Ms. Alyssa.

We'll start off the day with the warrant, which is a City of East Chicago accounts payable warrant report, which is dated 6/14/2023, and that number is 062023RD, in the amount of $43,917.06. If I could have a motion.

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: So moved.

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Second, Valdez-Medina.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Motion made by Secretary Russell, second by -- excuse me, Vice-President Russell, second by Commissioner Valdez-Medina. Any questions on the motion?

Mr. Secretary, roll call.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Randall Artis?

COMMISSIONER ARTIS: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Delainah Valdez-Medina?

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Christopher French?

Yes.

Christine Russell?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Anthony Serna?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Yes. Motion carries.

DIRECTOR RIVERA: Thank you. I think that's the last of any of our --

(INTERRUPTED BY BACKGROUND NOISE.)

THE REPORTER: Can you please mute yourself, Mr. Artis.

PRESIDENT SERNA: There's a lot of background noise from someone.

DIRECTOR RIVERA: Now we go on to our Harborside Apartments, which is on the agenda, for the Aging Report. The total amount, and this aging report is based on the billing date of 6/6/2023 for a total of $8,735.44. If I could have a motion.

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: So moved, Valdez-Medina.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Second, Christopher French.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Motion made by Commissioner Valdez-Medina, second by Secretary French. Any questions on the

motion?

Mr. Secretary, roll call

SECRETARY FRENCH: Randall Artis?

COMMISSIONER ARTIS: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Delainah Valdez-Medina?

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Christopher French? Yes.

Christine Russell?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Anthony Serna?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Yes. Motion carries.

DIRECTOR RIVERA: We'll go to our only action item for the night, which is a motion to approve payment of the past due invoice from Federal Protection Agency, Inc.

The East Chicago Department of Redevelopment received invoices dated January 2, 2023, and February 20, 2023, from Federal Protection Agency, Inc., for security services at Harborside Apartments that are over 60 days past due. The total amount of the past due invoices is $7,211.60.

Action is recommended to approve payment of past due invoices and to authorize the

Executive Director to sign the necessary documents. It is recommended that the following motion be adopted verbatim.

PRESIDENT SERNA: I'll entertain a motion to approve payment of the past due invoices from Federal Protection Agency Incorporated in the amount of $7,211.60 and to authorize the executive director to sign the necessary documents.

(INTERRUPTED BY BACKGROUND NOISE.)

PRESIDENT SERNA: Motion was made by Vice President Russell, second by Commissioner Valdez-Medina. Any questions on the motion?

Mr. Secretary, roll call.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Randall Artis?

COMMISSIONER ARTIS: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Delainah Valdez-Medina?

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Christopher French? Yes.

Christine Russell?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Anthony Serna?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Yes. Motion carries.

Next item on the agenda is public

expression. Do we have any public expression? Public expression? Any public expression?

All right. I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Motion.

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Second.

PRESIDENT SERNA: Motion made by Vice President Russell, second by Commissioner Valdez-Medina.

Mr. Secretary, roll call.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Randall Artis?

COMMISSIONER ARTIS: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Delainah Valdez-Medina?

COMMISSIONER VALDEZ-MEDINA: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Christopher French? Yes.

Christine Russell?

VICE PRESIDENT RUSSELL: Yes.

SECRETARY FRENCH: Anthony Serna?

PRESIDENT SERNA: Yes. Motion carries. Meeting adjourned.

(MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 5:16 PM.)

STATE OF INDIANA)
) SS:
COUNTY OF LAKE)

BEFORE THE EAST CHICAGO
REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA

REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, KRISTEN K. STOKES, CSR, Notary Public in and for the County of Lake, State of Indiana, do hereby certify that I reported in machine shorthand the foregoing proceedings had in the above-entitled matter, at the time and place herein set forth; and I do further certify that the foregoing transcript, consisting of 21 (twenty-one) typewritten pages, is a true and correct transcript of my said stenographic notes.

Signed this 26th day of June, 2023.



KRISTEN K. STOKES
CSR# 084-003723
My Commission Expires: 8/27/23
Notary Public: Lake County, Indiana

APPROVAL OF THE REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
OF TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023
APPROVED & SIGNED TUESDAY, JULY 5, 2023

Anthony Serna
President

ZOOMED
Christine Russell
Vice President

Christopher French
Secretary

Delainah Valdez-Medina
Commissioner

Randall Artis
Commissioner

Frank Rivera
Executive Director

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