

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
July 12, 2022

BOARD MEMBERS:

Grayling Gordon, President
Rick Rodriguez, Vice President
Gilberto Cantu
Eugene Austin

STAFF:

Ateria Allen
Dawn Dawkins
Vanessa Hernandez-Orange

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

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Present in Chambers: Grayling Gordon,
Rick Rodriguez, Gilberto Cantu,
Eugene Austin

Staff Present: Ateria Allen
Dawn Dawkins
Vanessa Hernandez-Orange

MR. GORDON: I would call the meeting of
the East Chicago Board of Parks and Recreation. We do
have a quorum.

First, under Administrative Matters,
we have approval of June 28th, 2022 meeting minutes, as
written. I'll entertain a motion to approve.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Move that we accept the
meeting minutes.

MR. CANTU: Second.

MR. GORDON: Any questions on the motion?
(None) All in favor signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

Motion carries.

Next approval and signing of payroll
dated July 8, 2022. Can I have a motion for approval of
payroll?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve
payroll.

1 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

2 MR. GORDON: Any questions on the motion?
3 (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

4 Motion carries.

5 Approval and signing of Warrant
070722 PB, in the amount of \$91.59. Can I have a motion
for approval?

6 MR. CANTU: I move.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Second.

8 MR. GORDON: Any questions on the motion?
9 (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

10 Motion carries.

11 Approval and signing of Warrant.
071222 PB, in the amount of \$17,935.93. Is this
something that came before us before?

12 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: You are talking
13 about all the items, all the checks? Is there one
specific item you're questioning?

14 MR. GORDON: Okay, it's a series. That's
15 what I was asking, it's a number of things.

16 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct, there
17 are a number things on there. Some of them are
recurring, others are not. It just depends on the item.
18 But you do have two funds for Parks, one is the Park
fund and one is Recreation fund. That's why you have
the separation, 0707 and 0712.

19 MR. GORDON: Is there a motion for
20 approval and signing of Warrant 071222 PB, in the amount
of \$17,935.93?

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve
22 the warrant.

23 MR. CANTU: Second.

24 MR. GORDON: Any questions on the motion?
25 (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

Motion carries. Now we'll move to

1 Old Business. Madame Secretary, is there any old
2 business?

3 MS. ALLEN: We have two items, contracts
4 on the kids summer camp and Resolution 2022-03, Vanessa
5 will explain that.

6 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Good evening,
7 everyone. I do have a couple of items that we need to
8 discuss. The first one being, I'm asking for approval
9 for our coaches for our summer camp. This year we did
10 not -- we are not able to get the city CBG funds for
11 this, they weren't allotted. So I made sure we ended up
12 going to the Council to ask for appropriations to get
13 camps for our kids.

14 It's been going a lot better than it
15 was last year. Last year we had to cancel some of our
16 summer programs unfortunately, the summer camps, because
17 we only had like one or two persons signed up.

18 With that being said, we have to pay
19 our coaches. What we did this year, I told you at the
20 beginning of the summer, we ended up asking the high
21 school coaches to come down and teach our kids, or our
22 children that wanted to sign up. My staff is there to
23 help supervise also, but mostly the high school coaches
24 are doing the instruction.

25 Before you, you have a couple of
contracts that were reviewed by our attorney. But the
only ones I am asking for approval are for the contract
for David Lane, Eric Kundich, Dante Dinkins, and Vanessa
Vasquez, and that's it at the moment. We are actually
going to have a different coach receive payment and he's
part of the high school staff. Also our head coach is
actually our Board president. So I was asking for
approval of these items.

MR. GORDON: You've got Dante for two?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct, he's the
golf coach, as well as football coach. And currently,
right now we have nine people who signed up for golf.
If we get one more by next week, then we are going to
allow the golf to happen. If not, he knows that he will
not get paid for that.

MR. GORDON: Okay. Sounds good. So can
I have a motion to approve the summer camp contracts?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: I have one question.

1 Most of these coaches I know, but do they get background
2 checks and stuff like that?

3 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: They get
4 background checks for the school.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That's fine.

6 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: All our coaches
7 get a thorough background check for the school.

8 MR. CANTU: I move that we accept.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Second.

10 MR. GORDON: Any questions on the motion?
11 (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?

12 (All signify aye.)

13 Motion carries.

14 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The other item we
15 have is Resolution 2022-03, and this is in regards to
16 our in-person meetings. We received a memo in April and
17 we were just asked to have a resolution to follow-up.
18 Before you, you have the resolution, as well as you have
19 the memo that was given by the City. So I am just
20 asking for formal approval of the resolution for the
21 Park Board.

22 MR. GORDON: Okay. Now I have a question
23 or two on this, because at one time we were told you
24 must be in-person, but as I read it, it says for
25 emergency or if there is a need, you can do it
electronically.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: You can come to
the meeting, yes. But you cannot be the one to vote or
lead the meeting on zoom.

MRS. DAWKINS: You can't vote.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: You can vote and you can
make a motion.

MS. DAWKINS: Okay, I am just talking --
I guess I am skipping ahead of you guys to the last
paragraph -- final action on certain things, they can't
vote. That's the bottom of page 1. The Governor's
declaration was more stringent and now the City is

1 moving to making it lighter and it's according to a
2 statute. You can also make it more restrictive, but you
3 can't make it less restrictive. It's on your own as a
4 Board. If you want to make the change as to the number
5 of times you need to be in-person or change some of the
6 participation rules, you can make it more restrictive,
7 but you can't take any of these off.

8 MR. GORDON: I understand, but what I am
9 saying, Attorney Dawkins, I think the question we are
10 asking is, are we -- from what I am reading -- other
11 than leading the meeting, you have all the same
12 authority, that you can vote, unless I'm mistaken.

13 MS. DAWKINS: I'm sorry, I was going down
14 to the last paragraph. At the first paragraph it says
15 they can vote during the meeting.

16 MS. ALLEN: The only time you can't vote
17 on zoom are those bullet points.

18 MR. GORDON: There are situations where
19 you can't vote?

20 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Budget and
21 something else, and they are final votes that you can
22 not vote on.

23 MS. DAWKINS: The ones listed on the
24 bottom.

25 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: For those items
we can not, correct. So the only reason for this, at
the last meeting, we received the memo about adopting a
resolution to go back to what it was previously. Now
they have passed it and we have gone to the restrictions
that are before you.

MR. GORDON: I understand, okay.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I think the only
thing is budget.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: You didn't get the
e-mail?

MR. GORDON: I got the e-mail. This part
wasn't there.

1 MS. ALLEN: I'll make you a different
2 copy.

3 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That was the memo
4 attachment. The memo wasn't attached.

5 MS. DAWKINS: The one I sent didn't
6 attach?

7 MS. ALLEN: Right. I'll make a copy.

8 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: On that e-mail I
9 ended up saying the memo wasn't attached. You received
10 that probably in April some time.

11 So, moving forward, those are the
12 only things you can not vote on via zoom. And it's
13 mostly -- I know how it was explained to me for the
14 School Board -- was for budgetary purposes, in a sense
15 it's all budgetary items.

16 MR. GORDON: Okay. So when we are
17 approving a final warrant, if the person was not here,
18 they cannot have a say?

19 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The warrant is
20 already an established budget, right. That's already
21 budgeted and what you are doing, you are approving a
22 warrant. You can approve warrants because we already
23 have a budget. You are taking out the warrant. Am I
24 correct?

25 MS. DAWKINS: Yes. The bottom line is
that there was strict, more strict measures under the
Governor's -- less restrictive of the Governor's
declaration. It made where you could do anything from
zoom because of the Pandemic. But now you can't,
because the statute -- he was superseding the statute.
Now the statute, Indiana Code controls. And so that's
just kind of like a reminder of what the Indiana Code
says you can and cannot do.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Basically we are going
back to normal.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Basically going
back to normal is the main point. And then how many
times you can miss, if you are missing an amount of
times. So that is the best way to put it.

1 MR. GORDON: All right, can I get a
2 motion?

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I make a motion to adopt
4 the Resolution because we have got no choice in the
5 matter.

6 MR. CANTU: Second.

7 MR. GORDON: Any questions on the motion?
8 (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?

9 (All signify aye.)

10 Motion carries. Do we have any New
11 Business?

12 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes. I just
13 wanted to bring before you something that is in the
14 works. It's called Elite Soccer for the City of East
15 Chicago, Parks and Recreation Department.

16 I don't know if you have gone to the
17 parks, but at Tod Park we have a beautiful new soccer
18 goal. It's used every day. So I went to the gentleman
19 who's using it and I said, hi, you are using this and
20 it's not free, you have to pay for it, but how about we
21 partner with a program so we can do this for our East
22 Chicago kids. And he actually used to do the one at
23 Hammond Sports Plex and found he was one of the founders
24 of the league there.

25 I asked him, can you do a proposal
of what you would like to see, what you did there, and
let's work together to bring it to the community. I
said, my main goal, the Mayor does not like to have
extreme cost for our kids, so can you see what we can do
together. So I asked him to give me a proposal and that
you could see a couple of options, as well as the
proposal.

The main thing is that we want to do
in-house recreation league where East Chicago residents
children could come play at that field, possibly play at
the rec center or Roxana once it gets cold. And the
second option would be within that league, we are going
to take probably the better individuals and we are also
going to put them into like an All Star League. Those
individuals are going to play against the other
recreation centers around Northwest Indiana.

With that being said, their cost is
going to be higher. We would let them know we have to
pay for more stuff. We'll be paying fees and so forth,
that will be paid out of their league fees. So I am

1 going to charge them whatever X amount we decide, that
2 would go to league fees, that would be paid for them.

3 Equipment, he talked about splitting
4 the cost for equipment because of the fact it's going to
5 be two separate things, indoor recreation league and All
6 Star League.

7 So the reason why I am bringing it
8 before you today is just to give you a heads up that it
9 is coming. We would have to do a different fund from my
10 understanding because we'll be charging a different
11 account for Elite fees, and then we'd have to do an MOU
12 for the league because they are going to be the ones
13 basically running it. I wanted you to be aware we are
14 in the works of doing this. We want to show that we are
15 making use of that field and making people pay for it.

16 I think this is a win win. We seen
17 that it works at Hammond. He said at his highest point
18 he had over 300 kids participating and we hope to see at
19 least that or close to that. So if there is any
20 questions about the proposal, please feel free to let me
21 know so I can continue to ask him as I work through the
22 MOU, as well as the options for him because I have to
23 bring it before the controller's office and they are the
24 ones that I have to let know that we need to have this.
25 That these payments would come in and they possibly pay
for league fees, possibly pay for extra coaches that
they have, and some of the equipment.

So I just kind of have to put it on
record, so that was that. Is there any questions now or
if there is any questions later, please feel free to
reach out to me.

MR. GORDON: I guess the question I would
have, are we going to try to tie any of our coaches from
the high school with that, like our soccer coach or
anything; would they play a role? Because I know with
it being a program, that it could truly be beneficial to
our soccer coach.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I could,
definitely, request for them to reach out to them so
they have some type of input with coaching. The plan is
to have more than five teams obviously. So they might
be able to get in. But how their coaches come about is,
their coaches or their players are from like Purdue Cal
or Cal College, that is who usually comes and helps the
coach. But I mean I could definitely ask that question
for him to reach out to our coaches to see if they will
come.

1 MR. GORDON: Sounds good.

2 MRS. HERNANDEZ: Okay. Any other
3 questions for right now?

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I have three. I know the
5 beach is done, I've seen it on social media, the beach
6 is done. Is there still swimming now? Can you go --

7 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yeah, you can
8 swim at your own risk. They have where it shows how far
9 you can go out, because I don't know if you know, they
10 ended up bringing in sand for restoration and you
11 actually have a little more leeway to walk before it
12 dips down. You are able to go out and swim.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Do we still need passes
14 to get in?

15 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: You need passes
16 for parking.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: You can just walk in.

18 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: If you don't drive, you
20 can just walk in?

21 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Right. We are
22 not charging you to go to the beach.

23 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I thought it was five
24 bucks.

25 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That's for
parking.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: What about the skate
park, nothing?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: We are working on
it. So, I did start working on that. Actually I did
update that, you must have been absent. So I ended up
looking at the Tony Hawk funds which gives to under
privileged communities, they give up to \$100,000.00. So
it's a grant that I am looking into.

With that being said, it's approved
for me to move forward. I'm working with a grant

1 writer. We have to do, like, community meetings, so
2 forth and so on. With the summer, we kind of -- she is
3 working on some stuff and I will work on some stuff. We
4 haven't done those meetings, but the plan is to see if
5 we can capture that money and then eventually, probably
6 ask for that to be put in our budget to see what I would
7 need.

8 I haven't done the meetings for it,
9 but there is the conversation. And the main
10 conversation I am having, I showed the Mayor I am trying
11 to get this funding to make sure that this happens. And
12 he's onboard to making it happen.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Let me know when you have
14 the public meetings so the people that keep asking me, I
15 can have them attend.

16 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Absolutely. I
17 think we have to have so many she said when we read the
18 document. So as soon as I get all that, I will let you
19 guys know.

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: One more thing, why
21 weren't the pools opened again this year? I know last
22 year because of the Pandemic and something was wrong
23 with the pool, the walls or something like that.

24 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: First and
25 foremost, it cost five hundred thousand plus to have one
pool repaired. That was in 2019. We don't know what
other cracks, what other filtration issues that we have,
if there is anything with the pipes. So that was the
cost that we had and actually 520 something, and I know
that because I look at those numbers all the time. I
see it on Facebook how they look at the Parks and
Recreation Department. We are doing it for safety,
number one.

The second thing is it cost \$38.00
per hour for one lifeguard in Northwest Indiana. I
don't know if you notice, but even Deep River has
actually changed their schedule to minimize the amount
of days because there are no lifeguards. The City of
Chicago is giving bonuses of \$500 plus to even get
lifeguards to go through and they don't have all their
pools open. So those are the two things that we have.

I presented to the Council to get
splash pads. Splash pads are the way of the urban
community at this point in time. Why? Because we
cannot afford or we cannot get the lifeguards.

1 Second thing is the maintenance and
2 the cost of pools are so extreme. We have an MOU with
3 the school district where we can go and use their pool,
4 both of their pools, at any time. We just have to get a
5 program together, or have a family night like they used
6 to back in the day. All we had to do was put the plan
7 in, but then everything was kind of shutdown on the
8 Council standpoint. I met with the Council and I asked
9 them, you know, if they could support the fact that I
10 needed funding for this. I was denied.

11 I ended up getting some renderings
12 of splash pads. I also have the video I can show you
13 right now how amazing it would look, but the point of
14 these splash pads is that no one has to work them. They
15 are just on. You go in, you get the water, blah, blah,
16 you go back out. It's on a two-hour code. So you take
17 your phone, put it there on the start and that's what
18 starts the water, or there is weight base. So like 2 or
19 3 kids, you go on their weight, that's what starts the
20 water.

21 One of the items that I ended up
22 putting on there is like an arch and the waterway comes
23 down, it could say, Happy Birthday, Rick. We are trying
24 to find new, fun ways of life there. This is totally
25 brand new and the cost would be two million dollars to
have these done, but at least it's sustainable for
awhile. We will be using a lot of items that the pool
has. You can still use the pool house, it's not gone
away. But the cost can either go up a little bit or
down a little bit. Like some of the items that we have
at the pool house, like the pipes are working or not,
that will change.

 So I have had this conversation with
whoever wants to hear it. You know, they say negative
things all the time about the Parks. There was a plan I
have been trying to get in place and I am still going to
ask for money again. If we don't get on the schedule
some time soon, we'll not have everything for the
upcoming year and it's not on the fact that we are not
trying to get it done.

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you.

22 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No problem.

23 MR. AUSTIN: Do we have anything similar
24 to that around this area?

25 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The splash pad?

1 Absolutely. Munster is the only city at this point in
2 time that has a pool. Hammond, no pools, all splash
3 pads. Whiting doesn't have anything, no pool, no splash
4 pads, but they use the Lake and use the splash pad in
5 Hammond. Gary had a pool up, I don't know if they had a
6 splash pad. Highland, splash pad. Schererville, splash
7 pad. Schererville just built a brand new complex with a
8 splash pad.

9 Again, the way of the world is not
10 the pool. It's too much money, too much maintenance --
11 it's a splash pad -- and you can't get lifeguards. So
12 it's a trend that's happening in Parks and Recreation
13 and we're trying to get onboard and follow-up.

14 MR. GORDON: Sounds good.

15 MR. AUSTIN: I haven't never seen
16 anything like that work, you know, that's more age
17 group. Is it any kind of age group that would fit,
18 would it fit with middle age, teenage, older people,
19 what?

20 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So the design
21 that I made, and I will pull it up, the design that I
22 made or we worked on, it had -- it wasn't like the
23 beach, where it had the little pipes. It was actually
24 something that comes up from the ground and it's
25 different colors. And then on one side it's like a
light spray and the other side is a strong spray up for
the older kids. We do the older or the younger, but
also we have the lights. I mean it's able to be
accessible through with wheelchairs, so wheelchair
accessible. I couldn't tell you what age groups would
like to use it because on a hot day, any teenager would
want to go in there. It just depends on the
individuals.

I am working on pulling it up right
now so you guys can actually see it.

MR. AUSTIN: Maybe get a film and let us
see it, maybe get more input how this works and then it
may benefit for us to get involved in it. But I'd like
to see some, like, that on a film, maybe five minutes of
film to get some kind of idea which way to go with this.
That's brand new with me. I don't know about the rest
of you.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Oh, yeah. It's
totally brand new.

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MR. GORDON: Okay. We'll be able to see it afterwards, so we can close out our meeting now.

So our next meeting is Tuesday, July 26, 2022, right here in City Hall Council Chambers, at the appropriate time of 5:00 p.m.

All right, if there is nothing else, can I have a motion for adjournment?

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MR. CANTU: Second.

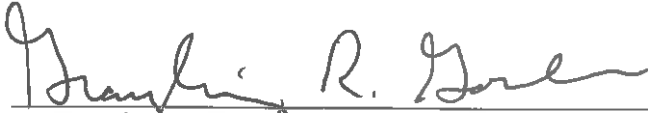
MR. GORDON: All in favor signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)
Motion carries. Meeting adjourned.

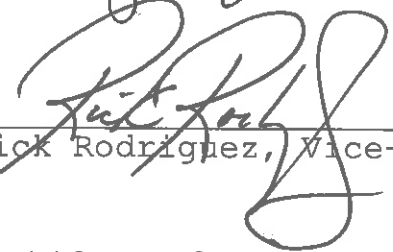
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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Tuesday
July 12, 2022

Approved and signed July 26, 2022



Grayling Gordon, President



Rick Rodriguez, Vice-President

/s/ Gilberto Cantu

Gilberto Cantu, Member



Eugene Austin, Member

Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary

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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 Valparaiso, Indiana, this 15th day of July, 2022.

Peggy S. LaLonde

Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR



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