

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Tuesday, October 27, 2020

BOARD MEMBERS:	STAFF:
Anthony Serna, President	Ateria Allen - Secretary
Rick Rodriguez, Vice President	
Valda Lewis, Secretary	Dawn Dawkins, Legal
Gilberto Cantu	Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director
Eugene Austin	

Reported by: Trixie L. Schuzer, CSR
Fissinger & Associates

Call to Order: 5:02 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Present: Anthony Serna, Rick Rodriguez,
Eugene Austin
Telephonic: Valda Lewis, Gilberto Cantu

Staff Present: Ateria Allen, Vanessa Hernandez-Orange
Staff by Telephonic: Dawn Dawkins

CHIEF SERNA: I'd like to call to order today's
Board of Parks and Recreation meeting for Tuesday,
October 27, 2020.

We have a quorum. Usually, Mr. Cantu
joins us via telephone, but we do have Ms. Lewis on the
phone and Mr. Austin and Mr. Rodriguez here with me.

We'll move on to the next item on the
agenda which is administrative matters. We have
approval of the October 13, 2020 meeting minutes.

I'll entertain a motion to approve the
October 13, 2020 meeting minutes.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: I make a motion to approve the

1 minutes.

2 MRS. LEWIS: I'll second it.

3 CHIEF SERNA: Motion made by Rick Rodriguez.
4 Second by Ms. Lewis.

5 All those in favor of the motion signify
6 by saying aye.

7 (All signify aye.)

8 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

9 Next we have approval of the payroll dated
10 October 16, 2020.

11 I'll entertain a motion to approve the
12 payroll dated October 16, 2020.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I make a motion to approve the
14 payroll, signing the payroll.

15 MR. AUSTIN: I'll second.

16 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor of the motion
17 signify by saying aye.

18 (All signify aye.)

19 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

20 Next, we have approval of Warrant Report
21 102720PB in amount of \$29,564.50.

22 I'll entertain a motion to approve Warrant
23 Report 102720PB.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I make a motion to approve the
25 signing of the warrant report.

1 MR. AUSTIN: I second it.

2 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor of the motion
3 signify by saying aye.

4 (All signify aye.)

5 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

6 We'll move onto old business. Old
7 business, Vanessa, we have two items under old business
8 and they will both be discussions that we had at the
9 last meeting. After presenting the information to the
10 board, I believe Attorney Dawkins was able to get that
11 information to the board.

12 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes.

13 CHIEF SERNA: And so did you have anything
14 further that you would like to add?

15 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I think that before we
16 even make a decision as to what we will do with this, we
17 probably need to go to the new business so that we could
18 adopt whatever new resolution or policy in regards to
19 this.

20 Again, we've gone through just the
21 whole -- both items and because of the reasoning of why
22 Mr. Zepeda would like to have the tree dedication. I am
23 on the fence still. And I think regarding the
24 resolution it states that -- and if I'm not mistaken, I
25 want to reread it -- how it references the values of the

1 Parks and Recreation Department. And mind you,
2 obviously, we feel like the life of an individual is
3 important, but then how do we pick and choose whose life
4 is important or, you know, how can we say someone who
5 was shot because of gang life is not important but the
6 other person is. So I think that kind of draws a
7 conflict. So I do believe that we need to establish
8 are -- the resolution and the policy prior to us moving
9 forward with the request.

10 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. I'll entertain a motion to
11 table the request from Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority
12 Honorary Bench and the Dora Zepeda Tree Dedication.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I'll make a motion to table.

14 MR. AUSTIN: I'll second it.

15 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the motion? All
16 those in favor signify by saying aye.

17 (All signify aye.)

18 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

19 MS. DAWKINS: Excuse me.

20 CHIEF SERNA: We'll move onto new business.
21 We'll follow where the agenda -- is that Mr. Cantu that
22 we --

23 MS. ALLEN: No, he's not on the phone.

24 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Ms. Dawkins, was that
25 you?

1 MS. DAWKINS: Yes, I was just -- I didn't -- I
2 was muted and I didn't realize I had muted my phone
3 because I did want to make -- bring some things to mind
4 to the Board. Is that something I should just talk to
5 Vanessa with?

6 CHIEF SERNA: Yes.

7 MS. DAWKINS: Separately?

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

9 CHIEF SERNA: Yes, please.

10 MS. DAWKINS: About that --

11 CHIEF SERNA: Yes.

12 MS. DAWKINS: -- the policy and the gift?

13 CHIEF SERNA: Yes, you would talk with Vanessa.

14 MS. DAWKINS: Okay. That's fine.

15 CHIEF SERNA: So we'll onto new business
16 following the agenda. Vanessa Hernandez-Orange,
17 Director of Parks and Recreation.

18 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The first item we have
19 is past due invoice from Ace Exterminating Company.
20 This actual invoice is from June. There is two invoices
21 that we have. One for 195 and one for \$55. As you
22 know, we have extermination for all of our buildings.
23 Somehow this just got missed within the pile so we're
24 just asking for approval to pay the past due invoice.

25 CHIEF SERNA: I'll entertain a motion to

1 approve payment of the past due invoice for Ace
2 Exterminating for a total of \$160.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I'll make a motion to --

4 MRS. LEWIS: I'll move for approval.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Second.

6 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor of the motion,
7 signify by saying aye.

8 (All say aye.)

9 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

10 Vanessa.

11 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next, we have a request
12 for use of Lake County Board of Elections. On
13 November 3rd the general election is occurring, and we
14 have the Lake County Board of Elections that would like
15 to use the following locations: It's the Roxanna
16 Center, Riley Park, Sunnyside Hut[sic], Unity Center,
17 Martin Luther King Center. And they left out the
18 Heritage Recreation Center but I know that, that is one
19 of the locations that they always use. So I made sure
20 to contact someone from Lake County to make sure that's
21 what they needed and that is another location that was
22 needed. I can have this updated and sent to us if need
23 be, but as of right now, I would like to have it
24 approved because we don't have another meeting scheduled
25 prior to the election.

1 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. So they just omitted
2 Heritage Hall but they do need Heritage Hall.

3 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct.

4 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. So it's Roxanna, Riley,
5 Sunnyside, Unity, MLK and Heritage Hall.

6 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct. And I just
7 want to make note on how we're going to do this for
8 November 3rd because I am actually on the ballot and I
9 cannot go into our centers. I will not hold the keys or
10 be able to go in and out the centers. So I have my
11 staff member Genesis Gary Jones, she's actually going to
12 be the one in charge to give keys out to the individual
13 that need to get into the buildings which it would be on
14 the night before which is on Monday.

15 And then on Tuesday of the election,
16 Mr. Frank Rosado will receive all the keys and bring
17 them back to us. Again, just because it's a conflict, I
18 wanted to separate myself.

19 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. All right. I'll entertain
20 a motion to approve the request for use from the Lake
21 County Board of Elections for Roxanna Center, Riley
22 Park, Sunnyside Hut, Unity Center, MLK Center, and
23 Heritage Hall.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I'll make a motion to approve.

25 MR. AUSTIN: I second it.

1 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor of the motion,
2 signify by saying aye.

3 (All say aye.)

4 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

5 Vanessa.

6 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next we have resolution
7 2020-04. And that one is in regards to the accepting
8 of ...

9 MR. CANTU: Hello.

10 CHIEF SERNA: Mr. Cantu, is that you?

11 MR. CANTU: Cantu is here.

12 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. Mr. Cantu has joined us.

13 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Resolution 2020-04 is a
14 resolution of the Board of Parks and Recreation of the
15 City of East Chicago, Lake County, Indiana. And it is
16 for the governing policy for gift acceptance for the use
17 and/or display of any park, public playground, swimming
18 pool, beach, or public recreation facility. This I
19 think at one point was already brought to the Board a
20 while ago.

21 This is just, like I stated, we do have
22 people asking to donate to the parks. We have people
23 asking to memorialize individuals within our parks. So
24 I think from our last meeting, we just established that
25 we wanted to bring something to have parameters as to

1 what can and cannot be accepted.

2 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. So the resolution is
3 adopting the policy, and the policy is the next item on
4 the agenda.

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct.

6 CHIEF SERNA: So if we could all look at the
7 policy it says, City of East Chicago, Indiana Board of
8 Parks and Recreation Gift Acceptance Policy. Now is
9 this something that you have looked over, Vanessa?

10 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes, I have looked over
11 it. I did not -- again my thought was that this was
12 already established. You guys already kind of -- the
13 Board already went through this. I have no issues with
14 this. I'm not sure how Ms. Dawkins feels. I -- my most
15 important part that I feel is very important is item
16 number one where it states the reasoning for accepting
17 of gifts and that's values compatibility relationships,
18 primary reliefs and consistency and form of gift
19 effective for the future giving, I think that's very
20 important. Because the fact that everything is related
21 to Park and Recreation and how this could affect us in
22 the long term. And to make sure that it's actually
23 something that we, Parks and Recreation, will always
24 represent. So these items are why I believe it's
25 important. I don't know if Ms. Dawkins could speak on

1 this policy a bit more.

2 CHIEF SERNA: Ms. Dawkins, Attorney Dawkins.

3 MS. DAWKINS: I drafted this policy when
4 another person whose child had been killed by gun
5 violence had wanted to participate in some type of
6 memorial for them. I don't recall the details about it
7 at all. However, at the time that I had drafted this,
8 the Board had already decided -- the Board decided at
9 that meeting to decline -- no, to deny the person's
10 request. So it doesn't really -- it was an initial
11 draft that I prepared just in case to give the Board
12 room to accept or not.

13 CHIEF SERNA: Okay.

14 MS. DAWKINS: However, I do have a
15 suggestion --

16 CHIEF SERNA: Yes. What is the suggestion?

17 MS. DAWKINS: -- to resolve the issue. If -- I
18 don't know what other land that the Park Board may own
19 or some land that the City may own to give to the Park
20 Board, but I was thinking that if we wanted to have a
21 memorial park for people that want to do these kind of
22 things whether it's plant a tree, you know, have bricks,
23 you know, those -- they have different bricks where they
24 can make a walkway or something. That might be
25 something that we could do where they could sign some

1 kind of release and the park could always be open, the
2 memorial park, or have it, you know, locked up either
3 way.

4 But the policy that I wrote with the
5 resolution was more inclined for things that -- of a --
6 separate from memorials because that's how this even
7 came into being because someone had asked about
8 having -- I can't recall what it was they wanted to do
9 but it was similar to the Zepeda request. So I'm just
10 going to leave it up to the Board. Whatever, you know,
11 you want to do and I'll draft a document, more
12 specifically at the direction of the board.

13 CHIEF SERNA: You think that the documents that
14 you've already drafted, the policy and the resolution,
15 do you think they need to be more detailed?

16 MS. DAWKINS: Well, that's up to the Board. I
17 was trying to make it -- I think in number two where it
18 says, Potentially controversial gifts will be made by
19 the Board in consultation with the Executive Director.
20 And so that -- I put that language in there because of
21 the controversial nature of the last request. I don't
22 remember when it was. I don't remember it was six
23 months or a year ago but a request was made similar to
24 the Zepeda request. It was not a tree, though. It was
25 something else. I can't recall.

1 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Can I suggest that I
2 think this more so acceptance of -- the gift acceptance
3 policy would be more towards the Alpha Kappa Alpha bench
4 because that's more so the gift. I think the memorial
5 is something that we probably need to still discuss more
6 in detail or I guess -- I don't know. Maybe do a
7 different type of policy or make a -- some type of -- I
8 don't know. Maybe you know, Ms. Dawkins, in regards to
9 memorials for -- I think that's just something
10 different, I agree. And after the last meeting, I
11 looked at some things that counsel had sent me in
12 regards to ashes, someone's remains. And so it's
13 definitely something that I do not think that this Board
14 should entertain when it comes to those kinds of
15 memorials with involving remains, cremation remain.

16 But as far as benches and things like
17 that, I think that that's something that we can look
18 into. Something that beautifies the park, you know,
19 planting of a tree. A gift -- a gift of a tree. If an
20 organization wants to plant a tree that's really
21 expensive that maybe the Park Department would never
22 have bought because it's really expensive but it's a
23 beautiful tree and an organization wants to donate that
24 or a water fountain. Of course something that, you
25 know, if an organization wants to raise money to put up

1 a shelter or shade for something, you know, I think it's
2 something that we should be able to look at accepting
3 those kind of gifts.

4 But you're right, it is separate from
5 memorials. I think we need to steer clear of memorials
6 and things like that. So at this time, Board members,
7 what do you think about the gift acceptance policy and
8 the resolution? Any questions on that?

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No.

10 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. So, once again, Vanessa,
11 you would recommend that we accept this and approve the
12 resolution and accept the gift acceptance policy.

13 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes.

14 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. All right. Well, I'll
15 entertain a motion to approve both Resolution 2020-04
16 and the Gift Acceptance Policy.

17 MRS. LEWIS: I move that we accept the
18 Resolution 2020-04 and also the Gift Acceptance Policy.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Second.

20 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor of the motion
21 signify by saying aye.

22 (All signify aye.)

23 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

24 Do you have anything more Vanessa.

25 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I do. I just wanted to

1 give the Board just a kind of FYI what's happening in
2 the Parks Department.

3 First and foremost, we have the curbside
4 market that is continuing still at our park office, and
5 we actually changed it to two days per month. So
6 because we don't have enough sun, we kind of don't
7 produce as much leaves. So we've now gone to two days
8 per month. But the Catholic charity is still on board
9 with helping us give donations to our community.

10 They see -- actually, they have brought
11 more food. They see how many people -- individuals that
12 come. We literally every week run out of food. We
13 service about 60 plus cars now. And if they have more
14 food, we probably would get rid of it. So they are
15 happy that they are able to help in some way. So I
16 think the curbside market has actually been something
17 extremely great for our community especially our senior
18 citizens because those are the ones who really come.

19 Next, we have our golf course is
20 officially closed. Everything there is winterized. We
21 have now moved our golf course into our recreation
22 centers. Our recreation centers are open as of right
23 now so we have allowed them to go -- there's two
24 individuals who are in school. So it kind of works out
25 because they now are going face-to-face for their

1 colleges. So the hours work out for them even more.

2 And then, finally, all of our staff will
3 be participating on our Nightmare McShane on October
4 30th. So it is a touchless trunk or treat. We have
5 adjusted hours. We are closing down the recreation
6 center for that day so that they could all participate
7 in, first of, the decorating part of it and then the
8 evening part where they're able to do the gift -- the
9 giveaway. It's between 5:00 and 8:00 p.m. and it is
10 on -- it's at Tod Park so that's another thing that
11 we're going to be able to do show off our parks.

12 And it's from 5:00 to 8:00 p.m. and it is
13 going to be just down McShane Drive. You don't have to
14 get out your car. You don't have to worry about that.
15 You just go through and the kiddies will get their
16 treats.

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: When is that again.

18 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It's on the 30th.

19 CHIEF SERNA: This Friday.

20 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: October 30th, this
21 Friday, yes.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you.

23 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: And, finally, at Tod
24 Park, we unfortunately are seeing a lot of vandalism
25 going on. I am in constant contact with Public Works.

1 We have had multiple graffiti-ing going on. I have
2 talked to our Chief of Staff, and they are aware also.
3 So we're going to see what we can do to stop that,
4 because we have one big building and they all -- whoever
5 it is continuously vandalizes it.

6 It is unfortunate but our Public Works is
7 on top of it. And it was Saturday morning and I gave
8 them the location, the pictures, and that evening it was
9 already taken care of but that's about it. We're going
10 to try to keep our parks nice and clean.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Two questions.

12 CHIEF SERNA: Yes, sir, Mr. Rodriguez.

13 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Vanessa, the ice rink, are we
14 going to have the ice rink this year?

15 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: We are not having the
16 ice rink due to COVID. It is because it's a contained
17 space, we're just afraid of how can you really separate
18 anyone six feet apart so, no, we will not be doing that.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And one more thing -- well,
20 actually how is that coming along? It's another year
21 on.

22 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So it's on -- if I'm
23 not mistaken the fifth phase at this point.

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: How many phases?

25 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It continues to add.

1 So when I first got on, it was four and now it's five.
2 But I think what it is, is that they had to add -- you
3 see it's a very unforeseen items that are happening,
4 right? So if we're trying to get different ball clubs
5 in, sometimes one person wants more, another person
6 wants something else. You kind of see something through
7 somebody else's eyes and say, Oh, wow, that is a smart
8 idea. So it's just -- I think that's what takes the
9 process. And then you also have to find money and with
10 COVID, it's kind of hard to find money when our budget
11 is going to be taken down to a minimum.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: That's not gaining any money?

13 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It is gaining money if
14 I'm not mistaken. But at the same time, it's just -- we
15 all are taking from that pot, all of our departments at
16 some point. So it's not done. It's not completed. I
17 know there's going -- they're supposed to be working up
18 until October but I see that the -- if the weather is
19 nice enough they're supposed to keep going. But if you
20 ride by there, you can see a lot has been done. A lot
21 of the outer spot areas have been done. I know they
22 were putting the concrete on the inside where the poles
23 are at. There's like square rooms that one team wanted
24 one thing to be done with it and another team wanted --
25 so it's just kind of just up in the air at this point

1 when it's going to be actually finished. But when we
2 did talk to Public Works and, you know, the company the
3 generic companies, they stated that we will be able to
4 have our high school baseball team possibly play on
5 there for next year. So the goal day is to have it done
6 for spring time next year to be played on. Now the
7 other stuff around the surrounding area, the outside
8 area is probably questionable.

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Okay. Thank you.

10 CHIEF SERNA: Thank you, Vanessa.

11 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: And I forgot to
12 mention, on November 3rd for voting, our recreation
13 centers because of the voting will be closed also.

14 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. Yes, sir, Mr. Austin.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, I see that we made some
16 suggestion about our little -- I drove by the park it
17 look a lot different since they put that fence around --
18 the giraffe and all.

19 CHIEF SERNA: Oh, the animals at Washington
20 Park?

21 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah, that was a real nice
22 thing you do because I think it would be much safer for
23 the kids and a lot of grown people, you know, we -- our
24 ego, you know, kick in sometimes.

25 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That elephant is over

1 1,000 something pounds so they're carrying it. I don't
2 know how they're carrying it.

3 MR. AUSTIN: I mean, you know what I'm saying,
4 we not going to take him. We'll ride it and take a
5 picture. So the CEO did a good job on that. Mr. Austin
6 said something about it. You know what I'm saying?

7 CHIEF SERNA: Yes, he did. Anything else,
8 Vanessa.

9 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No, that's all for me.

10 CHIEF SERNA: Moving on to Public Comments.
11 Are there any public comments? Public comment? Public
12 comment.

13 Our next meeting date is Tuesday, November
14 10th 2020 right here at the City Hall Counsel Chambers
15 at 5:00 p.m. I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

16 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I make a motion to adjourn the
17 meeting.

18 MR. AUSTIN: Second it.

19 CHIEF SERNA: All those in favor of the motion
20 signify by saying aye.

21 (All signify aye.)

22 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carried. Meeting
23 adjourned.


24 *** Meeting Adjourned at 5:27 p.m. ***

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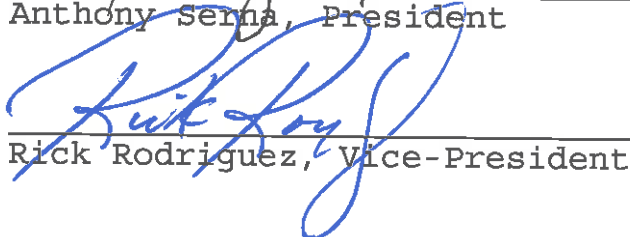
Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Tuesday

October 27, 2020

Approved and signed November 10, 2020




Anthony Serna, President



Rick Rodriguez, Vice-President

Valda Lewis, Secretary

Gilberto Cantu, Member



Eugene Austin, Member



Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary

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