

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Tuesday, November 10, 2020

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

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

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

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

Staff Present: Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary
Telephonic: Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director

CHIEF SERNA: We have a quorum. Ms. Lewis via Zoom call, myself, Mr. Rodriguez, and Mr. Austin are here in person. I'd like to call to order today's Board of Parks and Recreation meeting for Tuesday, November 10th, 2020.

First item on the agenda is Administrative Matters. Approval of the October 27, 2020, meeting minutes. I'll entertain a motion to approve the October 27, 2020, meeting minutes.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: So moved.

CHIEF SERNA: Do I have a second?

MR. AUSTIN: Second.

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

CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

Next we have approval of the payroll dated October 30, 2020. I will entertain a motion to approve.

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve
the payroll.

2 CHIEF SERNA: Do I have a second?

3 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

4 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the
5 motion? (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?
(All signify aye.)

6 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

7 Next we have approval of Warrant
Report, 091820 PB, in the amount of \$38.92. Entertain a
motion to approve.

8 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve.

9 CHIEF SERNA: Do I have a second?

10 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

11 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the
12 motion? (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?
(All signify aye.)

13 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

14 Next item on the agenda is approval
of Warrant 110220 PB, in the amount of \$49.45. I will
entertain a motion to approve.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve.

16 CHIEF SERNA: Do I have a second?

17 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

18 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the
19 motion? (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?
(All signify aye.)

20 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

21 Next we have approval of Warrant
Report 111020 PB, in the amount of \$13,495.51. I will
entertain a motion to approve.

22 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve.

23 CHIEF SERNA: Do I have a second?

24 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

25

1 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the
motion? (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?
2 (All signify aye.)

3 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

4 Next, we have under Old Business two
items we had tabled. They are the request for Alpha
Kappa Kappa Sorority for the honorary bench and the Dora
Zepeda tree dedication. Would our Director want to
5 speak on this old business, these requests?

6 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes, I can speak
on it. I actually sent something to our attorney,
7 seeing as we passed the gift policy last meeting, I
would like to have -- I guess -- approval from the Board
8 to contact Alpha Kappa Kappa Sorority and give them two
options. One, if they would like to see a bench in
9 Washington Park in 2020, we do have a bench there that
we could possibly just be repainted and add a plaque,
10 saying that this is specifically dedicated to them. I
think then that the Alpha Kappa Kappa Sorority honorary
11 bench basically lives within the policy that was
approved by the Board.

12 So I could give them one more
option, or I could explain to them, if they would like
13 to wait for next Spring, they could bring in a new bench
that they would like to see in front of the Washington
14 Park Zoo, and that would be something that would go
along with our theme within Washington Park. The only
15 thing that would be different, that will be new and
there will be a plaque also that has the dedication to
16 the Sorority. With that being said, that Alpha Kappa
Kappa Sorority honorary bench lies within the policy
17 approved by the Board.

18 I do not feel that the Dora Zepeda
tree dedication does that, and because I feel like there
19 is more emotional attachment, as well as possible
personal attachment, and the fact that is more of a
20 memorial and we could open up more issues, because
unfortunately we live in a violent city and more people
21 might want to continue memorials in our city. I
personally do not feel comfortable -- do not feel like
22 it lies with what was approved by the Board. So I would
like to also have approved that I send a letter to Mrs.
23 Zepeda saying we deny the dedication to her or
dedication of the tree.

24 MR. SERNA: All right. I just want to
make clear, for the record, that we are denying the
25 request for the Dora Zepeda tree dedication and

1 approving the request for Alpha Kappa Kappa Sorority
2 honorary bench.

3 I would also like to note, for the
4 record, Director Hernandez-Orange, we are following the
5 policy. Keep in mind, please, that we are trusting you,
6 as the director, that as we move forward, when other
7 organizations see whatever it is that the bench looks
8 like for the Sorority, the fear that I have, I do not
9 want to see one bench out does another bench, out does
10 another bench, out does another bench. The uniformity
11 is the thing. You had mentioned before about colors and
12 different things like that. We are trusting you so that
13 we are not opening a can of worms to have competing
14 benches or something that doesn't fit in with the style
15 and the motif of all the parks. So we are trusting you
16 on that. Any comments Board members?

17 MR. AUSTIN: I'd like to add to what you
18 are saying, President, because for the simple reason I
19 think that we go forward with this and we decide to take
20 this opportunity, from then on they would have to give
21 us some kind of paper, in writing, what they want to do
22 next. They wouldn't be able to do it just because we
23 got one desk here, we're going to bring another desk.

24 CHIEF SERNA: And the process, Mr.
25 Austin, is the process we approved at last meeting; so
we do have a process. Vanessa, did you have anything
you'd like to say?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORGANGE: First and
foremost, I would like to state that I know the Board
entrusted me to make sure that we are thinking about the
overall aspect of our parks and to keep the uniformity.
I have heard the Board loud and clear. And actually I
am glad that we had this discussion to even further
understand why we don't want to make anything different.

I just go in different parks within
the community and you are correct, everything is
uniform. The only thing is that the plaque would be
different, the verbiage on the plaque, or it could be
dedicated by the plaque. But I did do my research on
that, and I know Attorney Dawn Dawkins and I discussed
about doing memorials. And we have explained to her and
looked into doing a memorial wall -- how should I say --
an area, walkway, possibly at Block Stadium. It's still
up in the air. But we had that in the back of our heads
to continue to strive to do something different, because
we know people from East Chicago want to put up a piece

1 of themselves somewhere. So it's up in the air, but
2 hopefully keep pushing to get that done.

3 And I know you are entrusting me and
4 I will make sure to get that done. Attorney Dawkins can
5 maybe work that out. I know we have the policy in
6 place, but maybe an MOU -- I don't know -- with the
7 group thing that we are going to be in agreement, that
8 this is going to be their bench. But we want to make
9 sure they understand that there isn't any writing or
10 anything on their bench specifically. They would be in
11 charge of it and they will not hold us accountable. I
12 guess you could further discuss that, if that's okay.

13 CHIEF SERNA: I would agree.

14 MS. DAWKINS: I think that's wonderful.
15 I'll get started on the MOU right now, not this minute,
16 but by the next meeting we should have something ready
17 for the Board to consider.

18 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: For the next
19 meeting I will make sure to contact Alpha Kappa Kappa
20 with the two options. Whatever option they come with I
21 will in turn let you guys know and then I will let the
22 attorney know. We'll come with an MOU as to what is
23 going to happen.

24 CHIEF SERNA: Great. Miss Lewis, any
25 comment?

MS. LEWIS: No, not really. But I don't
think we need to wait for them to give us an explanation
of what we want. I think that with the MOU, that's us
telling them, this is what can be done.

CHIEF SERNA: I totally agree.

MS. LEWIS: When you wait for other
people to tell you what they want, that might be outside
of our parameters.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORGANGE: I can understand
that, it is up to the pleasure of the Board. Do you
want me to give an option for the already established
bench?

MS. LEWIS: I wasn't talking about that
per se. I was talking about maybe the design of the
bench, waiting on something like that.

1 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No.

2 MS. LEWIS: I have no disagreement with
3 what you have offered us.

4 CHIEF SERNA: I think just speaking to
5 Miss Lewis about the MOU, we write the MOU. We write
6 the Memorandum of Understanding so they understand what
7 we expect. So there is not any, like we didn't know the
8 park would frown upon a canopy over the bench to keep
9 the sun off of us. We are not authorizing a canopy. It
10 would look like the same bench that is in the other
11 parks and there's the uniformity within the parks. I
12 don't want one organization, because they have money or
13 because they know a board member or know the director,
14 they are going to get the biggest bench, the brightest
15 colors or in the ideal location, that's what I'm
16 concerned with. I think as long as we regulate that, as
17 long as we have the Memorandum of Understanding and they
18 follow our guidelines, so that way everybody is treated
19 fairly. That's all.

20 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Agreed.

21 MS. DAWKINS: Agreed.

22 CHIEF SERNA: I'll entertain a motion to,
23 motion one, for first denial of the Dora Zepeda tree
24 dedication.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: So move to deny.

CHIEF SERNA: Do I have a second?

MS. LEWIS: Second.

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

CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

Next entertain a motion to approve
the Alpha Kappa Kappa Sorority honorary bench.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Make a motion to approve
bench.

CHIEF SERNA: Do I have a second?

MS. LEWIS: Second.

1 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on the
motion? (None) All in favor signify by saying aye?
2 (All signify aye.)

3 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

4 Next item is New Business. Vanessa?

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No new business
on my end.

6 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions for the
Director? (None)

7 Since our last meeting we had the
Trunk or Treat, The Nightmare, put on by the Special
8 Events Committee, of which Vanessa is a member and also
the Parks and Recreation Department played a big part in
9 a very successful event. As you know, due to the
pandemic, trick or treating tradition was canceled in
10 East Chicago and Parks and Recreation, and all the
Special Events Committee played a big role in a very
11 successful event. It was held Friday, October 30th, on
McShane Drive, which is right behind the fire station
there, and connected to Tod Park. It was a great
12 cooperation between not only all the city departments,
but with the school city, and, of course, the neighbors
13 cooperated. It was a tremendous event. Vanessa, would
you like to say anything about that?

14 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I have to say
15 first and foremost, it was definitely a group effort.
We had over 500 cars that attended. We had over 1300
16 kids who ended up coming to our event. We did have to
close at exactly -- I want to say it was 7:00 o'clock --
17 because we had so many people waiting in our park
waiting area to get through the vendors that
18 participated. They stayed for 2 to 3 hours. It was
amazing. The fact that we were able to show off our
19 park people didn't even know McShane was back there. We
have such a beautiful park, a huge park. We did have
20 the neighbors in the area come out and just film and
want to partake in the event.

21 With that, actually the Special
Events team is now currently working on something for
22 Christmas so that senior citizens, as well as children,
are able to find some joy during this pandemic.

23 Some of you may know, our schools
once again are shutting down, going virtual, so we as
24 Special Events Team, the Mayor, the Parks and Recreation
team, we are trying to find things to do for this
25 community to find some type of cheer, some type of joy

1 during the hard time, because not getting out and not
2 being able to do what you normally do is very hard.

3 So, I am extremely ecstatic with the
4 fact it turned out so great. Go on the East Chicago
5 website or Facebook page and they have -- Mr. Segura
6 ended up doing a video. You can see all the cool things
7 we did that day, as well as the sign-in sheet for the
8 registration for our toy drive-thru that's going to
9 happen.

10 CHIEF SERNA: So it was great job done by
11 Vanessa, you and your staff, and the Parks and
12 Recreation and Special Events Committee. Did you say
13 there is something coming up for Christmas?

14 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: First off we are
15 going to have the normal -- December 4th -- the lighting
16 of the Christmas tree in front of City Hall and it's
17 going to be done virtually. And on December 11th we are
18 planning a toy drive for up to 500 kids. You can
19 register online to receive a free gift and registration
20 is happening now. We made it live today and we already
21 have 101 children who have signed up. So if you know
22 children, then let them know to sign up, or families,
23 let them know to sign up.

24 We also are planning something for
25 our senior citizens. It's not solidified, but we have
to think about our whole community and our senior
citizens get to enjoy something also. So we are working
diligently and we'll let our Board know as you are part
of the team too.

CHIEF SERNA: Where can we sign up for
families and what are the rules for sign up for those
free gifts for children?

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So, you can go
sign up now. I know it's on our website at this current
time. I will probably send you all a link, just to let
you know exactly where it is at, or I can send you guys
the sheet and let you guys know where that's at. I
don't know off the top of my head. It's on our website.
There is only one rule, you have to be an East Chicago
resident. You have to register on the day of the
drive-thru. You will have to show your ID once again,
like you did for EC Halloween, to be able to
participate.

CHIEF SERNA: Okay. So it sounds like

1 information right now is on the www.eastchicago.com
2 website; is that correct?

3 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct.

4 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. We would go to that
5 website. And, yes, if you can help out the Board
6 members by sending them either actual hard copy of a
7 registration form or something, so that way at least the
8 Board members here that have any family or citizens that
9 they know, that have children, that can sign up,
10 hopefully.

11 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Not a problem.

12 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions for --

13 MR. AUSTIN: Make sure you put the age
14 group on there, if there is an age group.

15 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The age group is
16 zero to 14.

17 CHIEF SERNA: So, newborn baby to
18 14 years old.

19 MR. AUSTIN: I would make sure it's from,
20 say maybe 5 to 14. You don't want zero -- you know.

21 CHIEF SERNA: The Special Events
22 Committee, that Vanessa is a part of, and I actually try
23 to help out when I can, the Special Events, they are the
24 ones coming up with the rules, not necessarily Parks and
25 Recreation. I want to make sure that us, as Board
members, get that information. If you have any family
or friends that have children, you can get that
information. Any questions? (None)

Thank you, Vanessa

Next is Public Comments. (None)

Our next meeting date is Tuesday, November 24, 2020,
right here at City Hall Council Chambers, at 5:00 p.m.

I would entertain a motion to
adjourn.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: So moved.

MR. AUSTIN: Second.

CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by

1 saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

2 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.
3 Meeting adjourned.

4 **** Meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m. ****

5
6 Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Tuesday
7 November 10, 2020

8 Approved and signed November 24, 2020

9
10 _____
11 Anthony Serna, President

12 _____
13 Rick Rodriguez, Vice-President

14 _____
15 Valda Lewis, Secretary

16 _____
17 Gilberto Cantu, Member

18 Eugene Austin
19 Eugene Austin, Member

20 Ateria Allen
21 Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary

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23
24
25

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 25th day of September, 2020.

Peggy S. LaLonde



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR