

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, March 2, 2020

BOARD MEMBERS:

Valeriano Gomez, President
Anthony Serna, Vice-President
Lilia Ramos, Secretary
Monique Kurmis, Commissioner
Joanne Moricz, Commissioner
Douglas Sloss, Commissioner
William Allen, Commissioner
Lydia Lopez, Commissioner
Stacy Winfield, Commissioner

STAFF:

Belinda Bonilla
Richard Morrisroe, Legal

Reported for Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.

By: Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR RPR

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Present: Valeriano Gomez, Anthony Serna,
Lilia Ramos, Monique Kurmis,
Joanne Moricz, Douglas Sloss,
William Allen, Lydia Lopez,
Stacy Winfield

Motion to approve meeting minutes of Monday, February 17, 2020, as written, made by Monique Kurmis. Second by Lilia Ramos.

Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None
Opposed: None

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

New Business -- we have no new items. We'll go to the City Planner's report, Chapter 3, avoiding pitfalls.

MR. MORRISROE: Ladies and gentlemen, I have bad news for you. You are going to have to conduct your own meetings in April, because my wife is dragging me to our home in Puerto Rico. I just wanted you to know. It probably means they will not schedule any major projects as well that month. I'm not sure what will happen. Val and Belinda and I, will try and work that out for you.

So going back to the pitfalls, we

1 are on page 53. We don't want to avoid emotions. It
2 talks about good clear motions. We have not had the
3 kind of project where people are ready, willing, and
4 able to run to court after they don't like what happens.
5 We have an issue coming up before the BZA shortly, in
6 which they will looking at what was the dialysis center,
7 on Chicago Avenue, and not only are there offices
8 projected to be there, but possibly some units to
9 provide homes for women and children, for the homeless.

10 The last time we had that issue, it
11 was on the 5 or 600-block of Chicago Avenue. There was
12 a home that had been the boyhood home of Sam Singh, who
13 ran his laundry next door to there for many years. Some
14 doctors, physical therapists, notary, travel agency
15 objected to it, and it died 5 to 4. It did not happen,
16 and so they looked at other spaces. There are also
17 spaces in some industrial centers. It's down the street
18 from Beto's Tavern, and if you go down a couple blocks,
19 you are at Riley Park.

20 That hearing will come up within a
21 couple of weeks, and that might be controversial, and we
22 already had a couple people call to support it. We have
23 had one lady call and say, you are taking away my
24 property values. So that is kind of what makes things
25 interesting.

MS. MORICZ: We live in that area. We
are meeting on the 18th of March, but they are using
parking as the excuse.

MR. MORRISROE: Well, parking has become
one of the favorite tools of objectors is parking and
parking patterns. Homeless women and children don't
have a lot of cars, at least we find that to be the
case. And I don't think that the dialysis unit, which
probably had a lot more activity in terms of people
coming and going than a homeless shelter would have,
that was there and got along pretty well. Parking never
seemed to be an issue in terms of the way it operated.

MS. MORICZ: No, we never had a problem.
It seems that everybody knows their own spot over there
on our 4700-block of Carey. And when I go to bed, I
check on the neighbors, that everybody is home. Oh,
that one is out dating or not parking.

MR. MORRISROE: You know your block.

MS. MORICZ: I'm just an old busy body.

1 MR. MORRISROE: You've lived there a long
2 time and we know pretty well our community.

3 CHIEF SERNA: Community watch.

4 MS. MORICZ: It's over 50 years.

5 MR. MORRISROE: So that's where emotions
6 come in, that kind of thing, with that kind of issue.
7 The issue may not be the people who want to do it, but
8 some of the people who got the letters. They received
9 the letters because the law requires that they get
10 notice, that they be told.

11 In fact, I went over with -- Belinda
12 and I went over them with the attorney working with the
13 homeless shelter, and wanted to make sure that it
14 somewhere said homeless shelter. It didn't look like
15 some kind of a scam, as far as the way we sent out the
16 letter. We wanted the letters to basically say, this is
17 part of what is being proposed for the site. So, I
18 think, in my opinion, it's better to do that than to try
19 to have some stealth language that would later be
20 attacked as being an effort to deceive people.

21 MS. WINFIELD: I'm familiar with the area
22 also, but my concern is the bar. You have a homeless
23 shelter for women and children right next door to a bar.

24 MR. MORRISROE: That issue will come up.
25 Although, how do you see it? I mean it's not -- it's
better than being on the street though.

MS. WINFIELD: Yeah, but you are having
children -- people live next to bars and stuff like
that.

MR. MORRISROE: Or above them.

MS. WINFIELD: You are living in a
shelter, they cannot be in contact with the father and
they are in this shelter; but with it being next to a
bar, I'm not sure --

MR. MORRISROE: That will be one of the
issues that will come up. And we'll leave it to the
people opposing that to address that and see what kind
of security they propose for the women and children who
are there.

1 MS. WINFIELD: That was just a concern.

2 MR. MORRISROE: I think their concern has
3 been, if the other site wasn't acceptable, where they
4 were looking at a former church on Baring -- that maybe
5 was available to them -- but that was in the middle of a
6 residential block. So they have chosen not to present
7 that. We'll see what happens.

8 I mentioned it because when it talk
9 about emotion, most of what we do here is not very
10 emotional, except getting excited about something. We
11 haven't had any -- I wouldn't say -- any emotional
12 issues in the last six months that I can think of.
13 Whereas this issue is before the BZA and then it goes
14 before the Common Council. It not only has to go before
15 the BZA, Board of Zoning Appeals makes a recommendation,
16 but it's the Common Council that authorizes or does not
17 authorize this use. And so I think they have been in
18 some contact with the Council for that area, and I know
19 you are familiar with the area to the east. So that's
20 as far as emotions.

21 Basic principles and beware of tags.
22 Tags is a Fifth Amendment word. If somebody takes your
23 property, you have to be reimbursed in this country. On
24 the other hand, there are times when correct element or
25 for other kinds of use, the government does have a right
26 to -- through emanant domain -- to try to get your
27 property; although you have to be reimbursed for it.

28 There is a famous fight about this
29 in Connecticut not too long ago, where the case went all
30 the way to the Supreme Court. And then it turned out
31 that after the property was given to the chemical
32 company that wanted it, that two or three years later,
33 they bailed out. And the one pink house that had
34 questioned and fought against this, still remained.

35 So now, as far as impact fees -- I'm
36 on page 56 -- impact fees, where there are extensive
37 subdivisions. For instance, we have St. John, Dyer,
38 Merrillville, Hobart, where you have large subdivisions;
39 there are often impact fees, sometimes for parks,
40 sometimes for the roads, sewers, other kinds of
41 activities that the municipality has to somehow provide
42 the roads, has to provide water and sewer services. And
43 so they, in effect, pass on all or most of those fees to
44 the developer, who benefits from the sale of the homes
45 that will be in that area. So there is some discussion
46 of that.

47 Commitments and conditions, we have
48 spoken about that. The Board of Zoning Appeals, more

1 than the Plan Commission, at least in recent experience,
2 seems to add conditions to their recommendations. For
3 instance, if a parking lot is going to go -- Mr. Allen
4 can help me on this one -- a parking lot at 602 West
5 144th Street, where the lot is 25 feet. However, since
6 it's on the corner, there is an additional 10 or 12 feet
7 going down to the street. And so we are able to
8 recommend that the church have use of that lot for
9 parking, but to do so, have them to adjust the sidewalk
10 and to make it accessible and to make it lit. And those
11 become conditions that are attached to the Board of
12 Zoning Appeals recommendation, as it goes to the Common
13 Council.

14 Any questions up to that point or
15 any observations? (None)

16 We still have at least five minutes
17 before your husband and his group can throw us out. So
18 we have the tools for avoiding pitfalls, to have a set
19 plan of work. We try to do that to the extent we can.
20 We have Belinda Bonilla's help, and occasionally some
21 others in Administration to prepare for these minutes
22 and to keep minutes and keep a file. Sometimes having
23 inquiry going back two or three years where something
24 didn't quite happen the way it was proposed, and we need
25 to go back to the file and see what was done at that
time, and see whether or not we simply go forward, or
whether we will require another Board of Zoning Appeals
hearing.

Planning documents. This has been a
problem for the City. We have been -- we sent a lot of
documents to South Bend to be recorded. But the way --
they not only need to be recorded, digitized, put on
computers, but they need to be retrievable. You have to
be able to lay your hands on it when you need it or
having it in some kind of immense digital file is really
no help.

So one of the issues that Marino
left us with, that we are still looking at, has to do
with not only digitizing, but then making it
retrievable. And then at what point do we kind of pull
the trigger and allow them to destroy old documents,
because they take up an immense amount of space,
especially the drawings from various buildings. And
again it's no good just to have them, if you can't find
them when you need them and locate what it is that you
are looking for.

So -- I'm on page 59 -- looking at
the way we keep our comprehensive plans. Now the last

1 plan, as you know, was 2008. The Mayor may, with your
2 consideration and your enterprise, in the next year or
3 two decide it is either time we update the entire City
4 plan or at least certain communities within the City.
5 Redevelopment, for instance, does a five-year plan. The
6 last year's plan I'm told had some technical problems.
7 They are hoping to do another technical plan. Certainly
8 part of that will be the three Superfund zones -- zones,
9 1, 2, and 3 -- where there has been so much activity,
10 and also parts on the South Shore are being looked at.
11 From the South Shore up really to about 149th, and
12 looking not only from the White Oak city limit, but as
13 far as zone 1, what will be in that area.

14 The Regional Development Authority
15 is willing to at least talk to us about possible
16 development in that area, and financially support some
17 redevelopment in that area.

18 I mentioned about conditions and
19 written commitments. We have looked at that.
20 Subdivisions, we generally -- the closest we have to a
21 subdivision is that zone 2 sometimes is called West
22 Calumet, roughly from Huish Drive to where zone 1, the
23 project line was along McCook. That area we hope to put
24 a number of single family homes during the next year,
25 one year to 5 years really. And however, it's not in
the nature of kind of what you'd call a Greenfield
subdivision, where you have 20 acres and you decide to
put 40 homes. It's more filling in lots that have been
vacated, where homes have been demolished and assembling
those lots, 2 and 3 of them, to be able to put up a
home.

We are about at our time, in terms
of we try to aim for 4:45. Are there any questions or
comments before we move forward? (None)

I would simply say that wherever we
will be, we will not be in Chapter 3 the next time. We
certainly have done more than was reasonable.

I think it is important for you too,
as you have done pretty well at this meeting and the
last two meetings, to bring up questions, bring up your
observations, because this is all of our community. And
as professionals, as sometimes some of us try to be,
this is a citizen -- as it says -- a Citizen Planners
Guide. You are citizen planners, and as such, we can
bring information to share with you and to get your
feedback is really what I think this Planning Commission
and my work with it is about. Thank you.

MR. GOMEZ: Thank you. Old Business?

1 (None) Commission Comments, any comments? (None)
Public Comments? (None)

2 Next meeting will be Monday,
March 16th, at 4:30 p.m. That concludes our business.
3 I'd entertain a motion to adjourn.

4 Motion to adjourn meeting made by Monique Kurmis.
Second by Joanne Moricz.

5 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None
6 Opposed: None

7 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries. Meeting
adjourned.

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9 **** Meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.****

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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday
March 2, 2020

Approved and signed _____




Valeriano Gomez, President

Anthony Serna, Vice-President



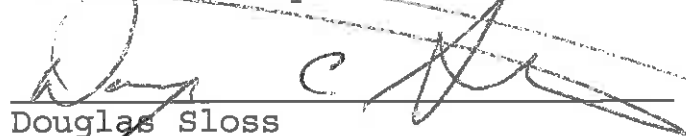
Lilia Ramos, Secretary



Monique Kurmis

Joanne Moricz

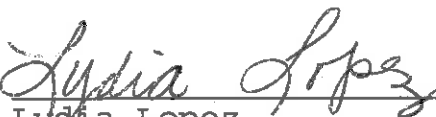
Christine Vasquez



Douglas Sloss



William Allen



Lydia Lopez

Stacy Winfield



Belinda Bonilla

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 5th day of March, 2020.

Peggy S. LaLonde



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

