

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
Tuesday, August 11, 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
Telephonic: Valda Lewis, Gilberto Cantu,
Eugene Austin

Staff Present Telephonic: Dawn Dawkins, Legal Counsel
Staff Present: Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary
Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director

CHIEF SERNA: Rick Rodriguez advised he
wouldn't be able to make it. Everyone else is here. We
have Attorney Dawkins on the line as well?

ATTORNEY DAWKINS: Yes, you do.

CHIEF SERNA: So, we'll move on to the
next item, which is Administrative Matters. We have
approval of July 28th, 2020, meeting minutes. I'd
entertain a motion to approve July 28, 2020, meeting
minutes.

Motion to approve minutes made by Valda Lewis. Second
by Gilberto Cantu.

CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

Next we have approval of payroll
dated August 7, 2020. Entertain a motion to approve the
payroll dated August 7, 2020.

1 Motion to approve payroll of August 7, 2020 made by
2 Valda Lewis. Second by Eugene Austin.

3 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
4 saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

5 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

6 Next, we have approval of Warrant
7 Report 081120 PB, in the amount of \$36,763.47.
8 Entertain a motion to approve Warrant Report 081120 PB.

9 Motion to approve Warrant Report 081120 PB made by
10 Gilberto Cantu. Second by Valda Lewis.

11 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
12 saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

13 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

14 Old Business, do we have any Old
15 Business, Madame Secretary?

16 MS. ALLEN: No.

17 CHIEF SERNA: We'll move on to new
18 business. Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director of Parks
19 and Recreation. Good afternoon, Vanessa.

20 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Good evening. We
21 have a couple of items that I would like to seek for
22 approval. If I am not mistaken, the first item that was
23 on your list is the Resolution Addendum 2020-03. And
24 the reasoning for this resolution, prior to it being
25 read, currently we have had many issues at the Parks
with people who are just randomly gathering, not calling
to receive a permit or anything. They are just kind of
gathering together. It's hard to control that -- again,
no park ranger -- we can't tell them no. It's first
come first serve with the shelters. We can't really say
no or tell them to stop.

But the issue that we see is the
fact that no one is wearing protective equipment, as in
the mask. So I know we are moving towards making sure
anyone in the Parks has a mask. I just saw two events
this weekend where at one event, we had a picnic for
East Chicago Washington Centers, and you probably saw
maybe ten percent of people who had masks on at that. I
also saw firefighters having a softball game at Tod Park
and you could maybe count on one hand how many masks
were being used.

1 CHIEF SERNA: When was that?

2 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: On Sunday.

3 CHIEF SERNA: This past Sunday? I wasn't
4 aware of that.

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So, again, I
6 guess the final straw happened over the weekend with
7 people just kind of showing up. We had a memorial
8 service, and while we respect what happened with this
9 individual who passed away, we also need to protect our
10 community and make sure we are wearing our mask. So,
11 overall, this resolution is going to make sure that you
12 wear masks or we have a right to escort you out.

13 A couple of things with that. What
14 we are doing, we are going to put 30 by 30 signs within
15 the case at the entrances of all park locations and it
16 will state, that masks must be worn in the park or you
17 will be escorted out of the park. We'll also have
18 something, when it comes to our renters of the location
19 itself, the pavilion, that will state if they choose to
20 allow people to not wear masks at the location, at the
21 event; then we have the right to shut the event
22 completely down, with no refund basically. And they
23 will fill that out when they come in to rent locations.

24 So, before you -- again -- is the
25 resolution. I have worked with Mrs. Dawkins in regards
to this and we are definitely putting her suggestions in
place about making sure that you have to have it
written, saying that you are playing at your own risk,
have a mask on. And I know I have talked to the Mayor
and he's in conjunction with us and the police stating,
that if we see big crowds with no masks on, the police
will actually have people escorted out of the park. We
have to find a way to protect our community.

And while I understand you are going
to tell me, let's shut the parks down; I do believe that
we have to think about the general well-being of the
children in our community, as well as even adults that
kind of walk in the parks. We have to think about that.
And I think by shutting it completely down, we kind of
take that away from them. So this is our solution for
the time being. If you'd like me to read it --

CHIEF SERNA: I'll read it into the
record.

City of East Chicago, Board of Parks and
Recreation. Resolution number 2020-03

1 Recreation Governing the Recovery/Reopening
2 Plan of the Department of Parks and
3 Recreation for Use of COVID Mandatory Mask
4 Policy.

5 WHEREAS, that on June 11, 2020, Indiana
6 Governor Eric J. Holcombe ordered that the
7 state accelerate its phased reopening
8 pursuant to Executive Order 20-32; Back on
9 track Indiana; And

10 WHEREAS, on June 16, 2020, the Honorable
11 Anthony Copeland, Mayor of the City of East
12 Chicago, issued Executive Order 20-06, in
13 accordance with the Governor's Executive
14 Order 20-32; And

15 WHEREAS, in response to the Mayor's Executive
16 Order 20-06, the Department of Parks and
17 Recreation has developed a Recovery/Reopening
18 Plan: Which plan is subject to change at any
19 time due to several internal and external
20 impacts; and to be re-evaluated every thirty
21 days; And

22 WHEREAS, over the course of the last thirty
23 days, park activity has increased to the
24 extent that park participants have failed to
25 wear a mask when utilizing the parks'
facilities; And

WHEREAS, it is the intent of the East Chicago
Department of Parks and Recreation to adopt a
Mandatory Mask policy and the use of ejection
from the park by local law enforcement
officers, if necessary, for failure to
wearing a mask when accessing and/or
participating in any East Chicago Department
of Parks and Recreation Programs and/or City
of East Chicago facilities, property and
equipment used in the Parks and Recreation
Programs;

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Parks and
Recreation hereby accepts and approves such
Mandatory Mask policy and the use of ejection
from the park by law enforcement officers, if
necessary, which policy is hereby adopted and
certified.

CERTIFIED AND ADOPTED by the Board of Parks
and Recreation of the City of East Chicago,
Lake County, Indiana on the 11th day of
August, 2020.

The question I have, Vanessa, here
in fifth paragraph, it is the intent of your department

1 to adopt a Mandatory Mask policy and using law
enforcement to eject people.

2 Here's where I have a question, for
3 failure to wearing a mask when accessing and/or
4 participating in any East Chicago Parks programs and/or
5 City of East Chicago facilities, property and equipment
6 used in the Parks and Recreation Programs. So just to
be clear -- Attorney Dawkins -- this means the programs
7 that we run or does this mean at any time you are in a
8 park, because I'm looking at this and it kind of leans
9 towards only recreation programs.

10 ATTORNEY DAWKINS: No, it's for the
11 failure to wear a mask when accessing and/or
12 participating in any of the Parks, Department of Parks
13 and Recreation programs and/or utilizing the facilities,
14 properties, and equipment.

15 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So it's and/or,
16 programs and/or City of East Chicago facilities.

17 ATTORNEY DAWKINS: Would you like for it
18 to be modified to say --

19 CHIEF SERNA: No, I think as the intent
20 is clear, I just wouldn't want anybody to try and throw
21 this back at us, that we thought you only meant
22 programs. We know that that intent is for any
23 gathering, correct?

24 ATTORNEY DAWKINS: Correct.

25 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. As long as we
understand that.

ATTORNEY DAWKINS: It does specifically
say ejection from the park. So I could modify, if you
prefer, to change that paragraph and make it more
Specific, but I was saying the park and then any
programs under that.

CHIEF SERNA: Okay. As long as it's
passing the eye test and we know that we are talking
about anything in the park, any gathering, not
necessarily something sanctioned as a Parks and
Recreation Program, but we mean any gathering. As long
as we understand that.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: And I have to

1 say, where it says, Be It Resolved, that paragraph. It
2 says, hereby accepts and approves such Mandatory Mask
3 policy and the use of ejection. So basically in our
4 recreation centers, regardless, we have where we mandate
5 that anyway when people come in. So it's justifying why
6 we are just doing an ejection from the park.

7 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. All right.

8 MS. LEWIS: I have a question. If I'm in
9 the park as an individual, not necessarily at a
10 gathering, say if I am running on the track or walking
11 around the track; am I required to have a mask on?

12 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Per this
13 resolution that's going to be passed; yes, you are
14 required to do so. I am going to be brutally honest,
15 the police are not going to look at every single
16 individual to escort them out. But, yes, you are
17 suppose to wear a mask.

18 CHIEF SERNA: I believe the intent, as
19 described by Vanessa -- our Director -- is based on
20 large gatherings. She mentioned the firefighters
21 gathering. She mentioned the memorial services. She
22 mentioned a picnic reunion. So we know that the intent
23 is for the large gatherings.

24 I'm pretty sure that police officers
25 aren't going to take the time to escort one jogger or
one walker out of the park, but we do want to have
something in place for those large gatherings. So I
would say that that's what the intent of this resolution
is, correct?

18 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct.

19 MS. LEWIS: Okay.

20 CHIEF SERNA: Any further questions Board
21 members?

22 MR. AUSTIN: I have something to say. I
23 would like to know, why can't we organize -- check with
24 our attorney to make sure -- that as we have given some
25 on the inside, they would have to have a card. We would
give them a card to recognize that difference between on
the outside and on the inside. What about that?

ATTORNEY DAWKINS: They need to wear a

1 mask period, that's the bottom line.

2 MR. AUSTIN: Okay.

3 ATTORNEY DAWKINS: Whether or not they
4 are going to be ejected, I think it's at the discretion
5 of the police. But I think the problem is wearing a
6 mask -- period -- in the parks, in the buildings.

7 MR. AUSTIN: Any place on City property?

8 ATTORNEY DAWKINS: Under the Parks
9 Department, yes.

10 MR. AUSTIN: Okay.

11 ATTORNEY DAWKINS: If somebody goes in
12 there where we are having a doing -- I don't think
13 there's anything right now over at Carnegie Hall -- but
14 if they come in there, they need to have a mask on.

15 MR. AUSTIN: I agree with that, but I was
16 speaking about outside. Because, you know, that's going
17 to be kind of hard. Maybe get them some kind of
18 difference on the inside and outside. The School Board
19 is having a problem with that now. On the news, I was
20 listening to that, because the hallways are so crowded,
21 that people would be separated from coming in the
22 hallway for simple reason, they are so crowded with
23 kids. That's the only thing I was going to bring up.
24 Let -- you know -- what the difference is and what we
25 are going to do at the park. That's all.

CHIEF SERNA: All right. Any other
questions, Board members? (None) There being no
further questions, I'll entertain a motion to approve
Resolution 2020-03, the Resolution of the Board of Parks
and Recreation Governing the Recovery/Reopening Plan of
the Department of Parks and Recreation for Use of a
COVID Mandatory Mask Policy. Is there a motion to
approve?

MR. AUSTIN: I make a motion to approve
Resolution 2020-03, with the question it can be changed
at a later date.

CHIEF SERNA: And just for point of
reference, yes, in the third paragraph it says, the plan
is subject to change at any time due to several internal

1 and external impacts.

2 Motion made by Mr. Austin. Is there
a second?

3 MS. LEWIS: I second the motion.

4 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
saying aye?

5 (All signify aye.)

6 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.

7 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The next thing I
have to be approved is the Park Permit Application. And
8 basically we have had a couple situations where we had
someone come in with discussion or been upset because of
9 the fact they couldn't use the shelter, and there was no
rain date, and they wanted to know if they could use the
10 shelter on a different date. Again, with the policy --
not the policy -- what previously the procedure was,
11 there is no refunds, no change of date. I did call
around the area. I did ask. They did have a clause in
12 regards to rain dates. No refunds are given out, but
you do have a rain date credit, and it's basically one
calendar year.

13 So I felt like -- I personally had
to go through the experience and I understand what
14 people are feeling -- so I wanted to see what we could
do, and the rain credit I felt was the best thing. So
15 as you can see, item G, in the Parks and Recreation
Application, it states, that no refunds/rain credit. If
16 you do not have an event due to rain on the day of
reservation, you can contact the Park Office within two
17 business days of your reservation date and inform them
of your cancellation and request a rain credit date. A
18 rain credit date will be given, to be used within one
year of scheduled picnic date.

19 Item 2, rain credit will only be
applied to rental of general picnic areas and shelters.
20 Rain credit does not apply to any pavilion.

21 I also have added on to the Park
Permit, because of the fact of the Pandemic, I thought
22 that it was very necessary to make sure that people who
are renting out our parks abide by our ordinances within
the City of East Chicago, as well as the State of
23 Indiana. So, any permit may be revoked for
misrepresentation in the application or violation of
24 terms and conditions of the application concerning the
policy, ordinances, rules, or regulations and laws of
25 the State of Indiana and the City of East Chicago.

1 For instance, if people do not wear
2 their mask, once we pass this resolution, they can get
3 kicked out.

3 CHIEF SERNA: Where is that stated at in
4 here or is it?

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Not stated here,
6 but it's stated, that if any policy, ordinance, rule, or
7 regulation are violated from the State of Indiana or
8 City of East Chicago; it's on there in item 9, and under
9 B, Procurement of Permit.

8 CHIEF SERNA: Okay. So you didn't add
9 item 9, did you?

9 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes, we did.
10 Item 9 was added, just like G was added

11 CHIEF SERNA: Any questions on that Board
12 members? (None) All right. I'll entertain a motion to
13 approve the updated 2020 Park Permit Application.

14 Motion to approve updated 2020 Park Permit application
15 made by Valda Lewis. Second by Eugene Austin.

16 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
17 saying aye?

18 (All signify aye.)

19 CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.
20 Anything further?

21 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: No, that's all
22 from my end.

23 CHIEF SERNA: All right. Any questions
24 for the Director, Board members? (None)
25 Any Public Comment? (None)
Our next meeting date is August 25,
2020, right here at the City Hall Council Chambers, at
5:00 p.m.

I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

Motion to adjourn made by Valda Lewis. Second by
Gilberto Cantu.

CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
saying aye?

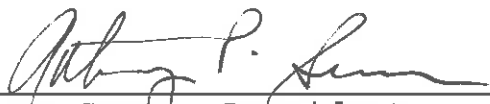
(All signify aye.)

CHIEF SERNA: Motion carries.
Meeting adjourned.

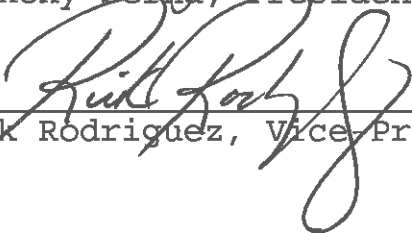
***** Meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.*****

Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Tuesday
August 11, 2020

Approved and signed August 25, 2020



Anthony Serna, President



Rick Rodriguez, Vice President

Valda Lewis, Secretary

Gilberto Cantu, Member



Eugene Austin, Member



Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary

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 12th day of August, 2020.

Peggy S. LaLonde



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR