CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, January 5, 2026

BOARD MEMBERS:
Valeriano Gomez, President
Lilia Ramos, Vice-President
Lydia Lopez, Secretary
Marino Solorio, Commissioner
Stacy Winfield, Commissioner
Jaylen Johnson, Commissioner
Grayling Gordon, Commissioner
Hashem Alhashem, Commissioner

STAFF:
Tracy Ailes
Eduardo Fontanez

Reported for Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.
By: Peggy S. LaLonde, court reporter

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Present in Chambers: Val Gomez, Marino Solorio, Stacy Winfield, Jaylen Johnson, Grayling Gordon, Lydia Lopez, Lilia Ramos, Hashem Alhashem

STAFF - Present in Chambers: Tracy Ailes

MR. GOMEZ: Good afternoon everyone. We do have a quorum. I would like to call to order the Plan Commission meeting for Monday, January 5th, 2026.

I would make a motion for approval of the minutes of the regular meeting of December 15th, 2025 as written.

MS. RAMOS: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

We have no Old Business. Under New Business, our first item is election of officers. So we have nomination for President, Vice-President, and secretary. I would open the floor for nomination for President. Anybody wishing to be president?

MR. SOLORIO: I nominate Val Gomez.

MR. GOMEZ: Any other nominations? (None) I accept.

Nominations for Vice-President.

MR. SOLORIO: I nominate Lilia Ramos.

MR. GOMEZ: Any other nominations? (None)

MS. RAMOS: I accept.

MR. GOMEZ: Now we come to secretary.

MS. Winfield: I nominate Lydia Lopez.

MR. GOMEZ: Any other nominations? (None)

MS. LOPEZ: I accept.

MR. GOMEZ: I make a motion to accept our new officers for 2026, Val Gomez as President, Lilia Ramos as Vice-President, Lydia Lopez as secretary.

MR. SOLORIO: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

That's our new Board officers for 2026.

MR. SOLORIO: Congratulations.

MR. GOMEZ: Now we'll move to our City of East Chicago Comprehensive Plan Section 4: Open Space. Marino, you have the floor.

MR. SOLORIO: My fellow Commissioners, this is the section of the Comprehensive Plan which talks about Open Space. Specifically it talks about the city parks, the types of city parks. It does have them broken down by the type of parks they are, whether they are community parks, a neighborhood park, a pocket park, or recreational facility.

Community parks are really kind of like certain acreage and higher. They are more kind of

like Kocski Park, Tod Park, Washington Park. These are the larger type of parks.

Then you have got neighborhood parks which are embedded in the communities, and then pocket parks, which really are kind of like small multi purpose spaces. Perfect example is like Kennedy Garden, they are smaller parks.

MS. WINFIED: Sunnyside.

MR. SOLORIO: Sunnyside would be under neighborhood park. It's on here. The problem is it's not on the map. The map has been cutoff. The issue is that the map is actually this big (indicating) and it only printed this portion. You are definitely on this list, Miss Councilwoman.

So, basically this gives you kind of an idea.

So there is a guide that tells you how many parks you should have in terms of acres, per how many people live in the city. We have always been -- it's different now because we have lost population -- but at the time we always were under the amount of park space that's required for a city our size. Now we are probably comparable because population has declined a little bit. But the difference, and it's in this section of the Plan where it talks about the location of the sites are pretty strategic.

So they kind of encompass that every neighborhood has a park, whether it is a pocket park or neighborhood park or one of the bigger parks, those are available to the people to use.

The section also talks about opportunities, including like bike trails. Which even though this says we have a bike trail, we don't have a bike trail. I mean it's not consistent to what this shows. We are working on a new bike trail map for the city, which our city engineer will be helping with, to kind of look into what are the best areas to install that or implement these.

And it also talks about opportunities of different spaces, whether they are enough. So many of you don't know that Roxanna Marsh is not an official park, but these are spaces that have been, for example, at the time they have cleaned up. Now at the time this Comprehensive Plan happened, they weren't cleaned. So what that is, there was potential space that could be redeveloped for public space.

So if you look at 4:20, it talks

about -- 4:20 and 4:19 -- talks about national resource areas. They bring up like for example the Lake shore, Lake Michigan shoreline, the beach. The way we see it now, it wasn't like that for a very long time. And so the improvements that have been done there, this identified that's an opportunity where we could actually do something, along with like Roxanna Substation, the Dupont site, the Grand Calumet. So these are opportunities of spaces that could be converted into public open space, but currently are not.

Obviously this is kind of old, as I mentioned before, this is kind of outdated, but open space is kind of very important when you are coming up with a Comprehensive Plan because outside of housing and outside of like schools and commercial, it's one of the other bigger things that people move into cities for, and it's called Work, Life, and Play. Life is housing. Work is commercial. And Play is like your spaces where you actually recreate and/or have common ground with people. So a good city has a good blend of these uses throughout not just one side of town, but throughout the whole city.

So any questions?

MR. GOMEZ: Any questions or comments?

MS. RAMOS: I have a quick question. Roxanna Substation, is that what is bordered by the Sanitary District? Is that the borderline of the site, the Sanitary District?

MR. SOLORIO: They are talking about -- this would be considered the Roxanna Marsh. It's not called Roxanna Marsh because at the time it wasn't called that per se. But it is pretty much what they have cleaned up over there behind Kocski Park, so south of it. Kind of like like an eye from the aerial vision, but between the Skyway and Indianapolis Boulevard and south of Kocski Park, and north of Knights of Columbus. It's that whole area there.

MS. RAMOS: That's where the Toll Road substation is?

MR. SOLORIO: Little bit passed the Skyway, yes, it's right there.

MR. GOMEZ: Any other comments? (None)

Thank you, Marino.

Any other Commissioners comments? (None).

There are no Public comments.

That concludes our agenda for tonight. Our next meeting is Friday, January 16, 2026, at 4:30.

I'd like to make a motion for adjournment.

MR. SOLORIO: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

Thank you. Meeting adjourned.

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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday, January 5th, 2026

Approved and signed January 16, 2026

Valeriano Gomez, President

Lilia Ramos, Vice-President

Lydia Lopez, Secretary

Marino Solorio, Commissioner

Stacy Winfield, Commissioner

Jaylen Johnson, Commissioner

Grayling Gordon, Commissioner

Hashem Alhashem, Commissioner

Tracy Ailes, 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 7th day of January 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde