

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

BOARD MEMBERS

Steve Segura, President
Lilia Ramos, Plan Commission Representative
Cathy Wojas-Serrano, Representative
Monique Kurmis, Representative

Regular Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 30, 2020 @ 4:30 p.m.

Reporter for Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.

By: Peggy S. LaLonde

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Present: Steve Segura, Lilia Ramos,
Cathy Wojas-Serrano,
Monique Kurmis

Also Present: Belinda Harris, Recording Secretary
Richard Morrisroe, Acting Director

MR. SEGURA: Has a quorum been
established?

MS. BONILLA: A quorum has been
established.

MR. SEGURA: The purpose of this hearing
is to identify and to define the zoning code in
accordance to the following section that I will read.

Ordinance 2752 states: WHEREAS, the
Common Council of the City of East Chicago,
Indiana, deems it necessary, in order to conserve
the value of property in the City of East Chicago,
and to the end, that adequate light, air,
convenience of access and safety of fire and other
dangers may be secured. The congestion of public
streets may be lessen or avoided, and the public
health, comfort and convenience, morals and
general welfare may otherwise be promoted in
accordance to the general plan, for the use and
the development of all property throughout the

1 City of East Chicago.

Ordinance 0-00-0016 states:

2 WHEREAS, the Plan Commission and Common Council of
3 the City of East Chicago have determined that the
4 proposed use at proposed location within the
5 community should promote the public interest,
6 promote public health, safety and welfare, should
7 promote public convenience, and should not
8 adversely affect property values.

9 And WHEREAS, the Plan Commission and
10 the Common Council of the City of East Chicago
11 have determined that proposed use, which are not
12 permitted use with a zoning classification, should
13 conform to the proposed purpose, intent, and the
14 spirit of zoning ordinance, be compatible with the
15 surrounding areas and should not be a deterrent or
16 injurious, or create excessive nuisance in the
17 surrounding areas.

18 And WHEREAS, it is in the best
19 interest of the citizens of the City of East
20 Chicago to amend the zoning ordinance text to
21 provide a certain use, to be classified as
22 "special use" and allowed in certain zoning
23 classifications, only upon showing that the above
24 criteria have been met.

25 And WHEREAS, Indiana code requires
that the Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals have a
public hearing to make findings of fact to
determine whether the above criteria have been met
before forwarding a "special use" permit request
to the Common Council.

In accordance with the above, a
petition has been filed for a variance at 602 West 144th
Street, to permit extra parking for existing church,
Temple Evangelistic Shalom.

I shall now ask the staff to explain
the nature of the hearing.

MR. MORRISROE: Good afternoon BZA
members. Richard Morrisroe, Acting Planning Director.
You have received materials that were sent to you within
this last week. However, I consulted with the City
Engineer about the project and he had two very important
points.

One, is that in exiting the parking
lot, that one enter from the alley -- which was
presumed -- but that one only may make a right turn in
exiting from the parking facility. This was a home at

1 one time. It became a vacant lot through the City's
2 Demolition Program. The church is just around the
3 corner, and this seemed to be relief for parking
4 problems that hopefully would benefit the neighbors, as
5 well as the church members.

6 The second item, which the engineer
7 brought to my attention, and which I just brought to the
8 attention of the Pastor of the church, is that a 25-foot
9 lot is insufficient to have a parking lot, that they
10 need 32 feet. And the proposed solution to that by the
11 City Engineer is that -- at the cost of the church --
12 the sidewalk would be moved six feet from where it
13 currently is, and the six feet that would be vacated
14 would then become part of the parking lot, and the new
15 sidewalk would be in accordance with American for
16 Disability Act standards and would be done through the
17 church. The church already has parking on the north
18 side of the church, and that is concrete. And they
19 would be willing to not only -- at least are going to
20 explore certainly -- that the sidewalk will be concrete,
21 which will be required by City code. It will be paved
22 either concrete or asphalt, but the sidewalk clearly
23 would be concrete.

24 So the staff would recommend that
25 the BZA vote positively in terms of this project and
that it so recommends to the Common Council. This would
probably take place during the second Monday of their
meeting -- their biweekly meeting -- the second Monday
in February.

Are there any questions that you
have? I apologize for bringing this to your attention
at the last minute, it was only brought to my attention
at the last minute.

MR. SEGURA: Will this be blacktopped?

MR. MORRISROE: That's what I was saying
to Pastor Navarro. He thought it might be concrete, but
he's going to have his engineer get in touch with us.
It will be paved either way, either asphalt or concrete.
That will be one of the conditions that I am
recommending for an addition to your approval and what
you transmit to the Common Council.

MR. SEGURA: And I understand there is
going to be an eight-foot fence that will accompany
this.

PASTOR NAVARRO: When we drew up the

1 plans, as Mr. Morrisroe talked, he just brought that
2 situation up to me about the 25 feet, so we could work
3 with it because in our church -- same thing -- same
4 scenario. What we pave, it would be concrete. So the
5 whole front of church is concrete. We have to do that
6 decision on the lot right now, which will be all
7 concrete, including where this grass is at right now.
8 So you guys can see this picture -- the picture right
9 here. I brought copies. So he just brought it up, and
10 what we will do is pave it all, and where the grass part
11 is at, we'll pave that too.

12 MR. MORRISROE: Four feet of grass
13 between the sidewalk and street, but there is currently
14 ten feet.

15 PASTOR NAVARRO: The way it is now, there
16 is pavement, grass, sidewalk, and then grass; that's
17 where the empty lot is built right now. So we'll
18 organize it where we have the City code and all that, it
19 will be there. We also want to put a fence up so the
20 cars wouldn't be by neighbors. We talked to the
21 neighbor and the neighbors know what is going on. We
22 also want privacy.

23 MR. MORRISROE: Usually a city fence
24 along the side of a home is limited to six feet and four
25 feet from the front of the building. We'll have to
26 check with that. It may be six feet and then four feet
27 for the last 15 feet, which is our usual standard. But
28 all of that is subject to you putting a condition that
29 the fence comply with the City standard. An eight-foot,
30 while they are offering to put eight-foot fence, it may
31 be too high and we need to check with that.

32 PASTOR NAVARRO: We'll do whatever is
33 code. We'll follow the codes, follow the rules. We
34 already contact a company, contracting company, that
35 will come here to get all the codes and all the permits
36 from you guys, and letting us know, this is the way it
37 needs to be built. This is what you guys have to do.
38 We'll follow that.

39 MR. MORRISROE: You can see the church
40 right behind that.

41 MR. SEGURA: Now, I know this is probably
42 not to scale either, but how many cars do you anticipate
43 fitting in this area?

44 PASTOR NAVARRO: It's pretty long, we

1 don't know.

2 MR. MORRISROE: It's 185 feet from the
3 street, totally. At ten feet, they might have as many
4 as 12 cars.

5 PASTOR NAVARRO: That's what we estimate,
6 12 cars.

7 MR. SEGURA: That looks about right. I
8 was trying to count. I have no further questions.

9 MR. MORRISROE: Any other questions?
10 (None) Thank you.

11 MR. SEGURA: The required documents; have
12 all the requirements, public notification documents and
13 receipts, been completed and received for this variance
14 petition?

15 MS. BONILLA: I certify the following
16 documentation as exhibits, receipt for funds to cover
17 public notices, published notice receipts from local
18 press, receipts from certified mail.

19 MR. SEGURA: This next section of the
20 hearing is for testimony and exhibits. The order of
21 hearing shall be as follows: The petitioner's
22 presentation -- which we already did. The acceptance of
23 written comments or petitions. Comments from those
24 present in the audience. Are we doing that?

25 MR. MORRISROE: My understanding is that
everyone who is here is a member or supporter of the
church. I would ask, would you want to have at least
one or two of your parishioners speak in favor?

MR. SEGURA: You don't have to. (None)
We are going to continue. With regard to giving
testimony or exhibits at the appropriate time, please
come forward. We are not going to have anybody.

I call forth the petitioner and any
associates -- which we already did.

I call forth any written petition or
comments.

MR. MORRISROE: We have the written -- if
I may -- standards from the City Engineer. We can have
Belinda hold these if you feel you need these, or may I
hold onto them?

1 MR. SEGURA: You can hold onto them.

2 As part of this audience
3 participation portion, I ask now that each person who
4 desires to be heard sign in on forms provided -- which
5 we already did.

6 MS. BONILLA: I did have one person come
7 in, but they said they approved parking for the church.
8 A person who lives near, Conrad Cortez, he came up here
9 and signed a paper that he approves parking for the
10 church. That was on 12/20/19.

11 MR. SEGURA: At this time please indicate
12 any support or opposition to the proposal so the Board
13 can better coordinate in hearing format. I think we
14 have done that.

15 Persons can be called to speak by
16 the president. We have already done that.

17 I am going to move forward. I call
18 forth citizens supporting the petition. (None)

19 I call forth citizens oppose the
20 petition. (None)

21 I call forth citizens having
22 questions about the petition. (None)

23 I call forth the petitioner to
24 respond to audience questions. That's not necessary.

25 I call forth questions from the
Board. Anyone? No questions.

I call forth questions from staff
and/or attorney.

Staff recommendations.

MR. MORRISROE: As stated earlier, I
recommend that this be passed on -- with your
approval -- and with the necessary conditions to the
Common Council.

MR. SEGURA: I call for motion to close
the taking of public comment.

Motion to close public comment on petition made by Lilia
Ramos. Second By Monique Kurmis.

MR. MORRISROE: I have one question from
Mr. Henry Rodriguez. He asked about lighting. Is there
anywhere in your plan for lighting or have you given any
thought to that?

PASTOR NAVARRO: The person that came out

1 to do the drawing for me and came out to look into the
2 lighting, and kind of try to see where and do the
3 measurements. There is two lines there. There is one
4 at the church, really close to it, and we have lighting
5 there. Once we turn that light on, it will reflect into
6 the parking lot, because he also brought that up to me,
7 where will there be lighting. And then I kind of
8 pointed to church. You can probably see in the picture,
9 the light there reflects into the parking lot, that
10 should be good. And he kind of said, you should be good
11 to go with that lighting right there.

12 MR. MORRISROE: And we would simply put
13 that down as another condition, subject to the approval
14 of the Building Department.

15 MR. SEGURA: If the lighting isn't
16 adequate, then you have --

17 PASTOR NAVARRO: Where the stop sign is
18 at, there is a pole right there. We'll try to figure
19 something out for the lighting.

20 MR. MORRISROE: But again, that will be a
21 condition subject to the review and approval of the
22 Building Department.

23 MR. SEGURA: I call for a verbal vote,
24 roll call. No other comments will be heard.

25 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None
Opposed: None Motion carries.

MR. SEGURA: Can we have the
recommendations of the Attorney to the BZA for
recommendations that can be made to the Common Council?

MR. MORRISROE: Again, Richard Morrisroe.
If I may, the recommendations are that people enter from
the alley, go through the parking lot south, but only be
allowed to take a right turn as they leave the parking
lot facility. So that's the first condition. That it
be a right turn only posted at the exit of the parking
facility.

The second condition is that the
sidewalk be moved -- with the approval of the Building
Department -- some six feet closer to the curb, leaving
approximately four feet of grass, and expanding the
parking lot from 25 to 31 feet, almost 32 feet in width.

1 And the third recommendation is that
2 the parking lot not be allowed to be used until it be
3 properly paved. And the option would be either concrete
4 or asphalt for the parking part. The sidewalk will have
5 to be restored at concrete.

6 MR. SEGURA: They will place a sign that
7 says "right turn only" correct?

8 MR. MORRISROE: Yes.

9 MR. SEGURA: My worry, how do you enforce
10 it?

11 MR. MORRISROE: Well, we are aware of
12 that problem, but we think that believers will follow
13 the law, at least most of the time.

14 MR. SEGURA: Put "this way to heaven".

15 MR. MORRISROE: Any other questions?

16 MR. SEGURA: I call for a motion on the
17 petition with conditions.

18 Motion to approve petition for variance, with
19 conditions, to be recommended to the Common Council,
20 made by Monique Kurmis. Second by Lilia Ramos.

21 MR. SEGURA: Roll call.

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

24 MR. SEGURA: Motion carries.

25 Next we have election of officers
for 2020. I would open up the floor for nominations for
Vice-President.

 MS. RAMOS: I would make a motion to
nominate and elect Cathy Wojas-Serrano, as
Vice-president.

 MR. SEGURA: Second. Nominations closed.
Now for President.

 MS. RAMOS: I would make a motion to
nominate and elect Steve Segura, as President.

 MS. WOJAS-SERRANO: Second.

1 MR. SEGURA: Roll call vote on nomination
and election of Steve Segura, as President, and Cathy
2 Wojas-Serrano, as Vice-president.

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

5 MR. SEGURA: Motion carries.
I'd call for a motion to adjourn the
6 meeting.

7 Motion to adjourn meeting made by Monique Kurmis.
8 Second by Cathy Wojas-Serrano.

9 MR. SEGURA: All in favor signify aye?
(All signify aye.)

10 MR. SEGURA: Motion carries. Meeting
11 adjourned.

12 *** Meeting Adjourned ***

13 Approval of the Meeting Minutes
14 Thursday, January 30, 2020

15 Approved and signed _____

16 
17 _____

18 Steve Segura, President

19 
20 _____


21 Lilia Ramos, Plan Commission Representative

22 
23 _____

24 Cathy Wojas-Serrano, Representative

25 

Monique Kurmis, Representative



Belinda Bonilla, 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 3rd day of February, 2020.

Peggy S. LaLonde



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR