CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, February 2, 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, Lilia Ramos, Lydia Lopez, Hashem Alhashem, Grayling Gordon, Jaylen Johnson, Marino Solorio, Stacy Winfield

STAFF - Present in Chambers: Tracy Ailes

STAFF - Present via Zoom: Eduardo Fontanez

MR. GOMEZ: Good afternoon everyone. We do have a quorum. I would like to call to order the Plan Commission meeting for Monday, February 2nd, 2026.

I would make a motion for approval of the minutes of the regular meeting of January 16th, 2026 as written.

MR. GORDON: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

We have no Old Business, so we'll move on to New Business. We have East Chicago High School, 1100 West Columbus Drive - HVAC improvement project.

MS. AILES: There is somebody here to speak on the project.

MR. STRICKLEY: I'm with the General Contractor, Pangere. We have the engineer, Valdez, is also here. The first phase, as the President spoke, that's the budget. Over the course of two years it will be close to anywhere from 30 to 35 million. It's replacement of all air handlers throughout the school, new control, new HVAC system. We are looking at doing some lighting replacements and ceiling replacement in areas inaccessible as we go through the project, which will be beneficial to the school. We will also be updating the sprinkler heads which are currently out of code to quick response.

MR. GOMEZ: Is that throughout the whole building?

MR. STRICKLEY: It would all be in the corridors, the emergency exit areas.

And then the other item I was going to say in the first phase is the academic area. That's where they really want to target to make sure we got the student area done first. As you are aware there's an inconsistency with trying to keep temperature in there. So they finally got onboard to get a plan together here.

So, be patient. Hopefully by next Summer we'll have things back in order. We should be starting some time soon with the control work. Actually once this gets approved, we'll be starting ahead of time, not like previous projects, you know, that we have done out there, that have been very tight with the timeline of Summer. The idea was to come forth on this one a little sooner and get the controls working ahead of time. So we're looking at ten weeks during the Summer.

If there is any questions, anything I can't answer as the general contractor, probably the more technical questions the engineer can respond.

MR. GOMEZ: I understand this last part doesn't have to go before Tech Review?

MR. SOLORIO: Correct. Because it's HVAC, that has to do with the Building Department. It has to come before this Board because it's more than $10,000.00.

MS. WINFIELD: So you are saying as soon as this is approved, you plan on working. And the estimated time, are you saying maybe like June? Summer school goes on in June and there's the issue of that coming up.

MR. STRICKLEY: So the plan is, once we get an approval, to start immediately on the control work without interrupting students. And then when they do get in the classroom, work with Mr. Brown, the principal over there, and we'll be working evenings going through the classrooms getting all the control wiring done. And then when Summer hits, that's when we really start removing everything so we can get all the new equipment installed, new air handling system.

To answer your question, it will be done by the next school year. No pressure -- but, yeah, that's the plan.

MR. SOLORIO: When was the last time a project like this was done, I guess for those units?

MR. STRICKLEY: For that particular school?

MR. SOLORIO: Yes.

MR. STRICKLEY: I don't think there has been. This would be the first. I believe they are original and highly overdue at this point. If you go take a look at the air handlers, they have water damage, the coils are froze. Some of them, you know, they are just, like I said, they are an old control system. They pump out really hot heat. There is times it's 90 plus in there, so it's time.

MS. WINFIELD: The school is 40 years old this year.

MR. SOLORIO: They have reached beyond their prime. Those normally last 20, 25 years.

MR. STRICKLEY: They got their use.

MR. SOLORIO: So my question is, these units are obviously rooftop units, correct?

MR. STRICKLEY: They are prepackage and will be in the mechanical equipment room, inside.

MR. SOLORIO: Inside? I thought they go outside and the cost includes roof reparation, but that's a whole separate issue.

MR. STRICKLEY: No roof repairs. We did provide a budget to the school and they want to proceed with trying to get the ceiling done, so that's going to be added. Also the lighting, again fire suppression, so that's a good thing.

MR. SOLORIO: I guess that's a question for some one else. I know where the swimming pool is and there's sacks of sand sitting there.

MR. GORDON: I want to make a comment. Right now we have our CFO just walked in, so if there is a question, you can go ahead and ask her, I'm sure she can answer.

MR. STRICKLEY: Am I good?

MR. SOLORIO: Yes.

MR. GOMEZ: We are just concentrating on the HVAC. If there any more questions or comments on the project? (None)

There being no further questions or comments, I'd like to make a motion approving East Chicago High School HVAC Improvement Project.

MR. SOLORIO: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor? I vote aye.

MS. RAMOS: Yes.

MS. LOPEZ: Yes.

MR. ALHASHEM: Yes.

MR. GORDON: I will abstain.

MS. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. SOLORIO: Yes.

MS. WINFIELD: Yes.

MR. GOMES: Motion carries.

Marino, do you want to go forward with the Comprehensive Plan?

MS. SOLORIO: No, I think we should do that when there is nothing else on the agenda. It can wait till next meeting.

MR. GOMEZ: Okay. In that case, any other comments from the Commissioners or Public? (None)

No further questions or comments, our next meeting will be Monday, February 16, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.

That concludes all items on the agenda tonight, I'd like to make a motion for adjournment.

MR. GORDON: 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,
February 2nd, 2026

Approved and signed FEBRUARY 16, 2026

Valeriano Gomez, President

Livia 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 5th day of February 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde