

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO  
BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

BOARD MEMBERS

Steven Segura, President  
Lilia Ramos, Vice-President  
Cathy Wojas-Serrano, Representative  
Monique Kurmis, Representative

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

Reporter for Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.

By: Peggy S. LaLonde

Call to Order: 4:40 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

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

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

MS. RAMOS: Good evening. I'm  
going to go ahead and call to order the Board of Zoning  
Appeals meeting for today Wednesday, March 4, 4:40 p.m.

For today, New Business, we have  
approval of minutes for Thursday, January 30, 2020.

Motion to approve minutes of meeting January 30, 2020  
made by Monique Kurmis. Cathy Wojas-Serrano second.

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

MS. RAMOS: Next, we have a petition for  
"Special Use" within an R4 Zoning District (Multifamily  
dwelling 3-story or less), on the property commonly  
known as 5001 Indianapolis Boulevard, East Chicago,  
Indiana. The variance is for a daycare/after school  
tutoring program for children.

I will call the Public Hearing to  
order, on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, on the petition for  
5001 Indianapolis Boulevard, "Special Use" variance to  
operate a daycare/after school tutoring program for  
children.

1                   Has a quorum been  
established?

2                   MS. BONILLA: Yes.

3                   MS. RAMOS: What staff is present?

4                   MS. BONILLA: The following staff are  
5 present, Richard Morrisroe, Acting Director, and Belinda  
6 Bonilla, recording secretary.

7                   MS. RAMOS: The purpose of this hearing  
is defined by the Zoning Code in accordance the  
8 following sections that I will read:

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

14                   Ordinance number 0-00-0016 states:

15                   WHEREAS, the Plan Commission and Common  
Council of City of East Chicago have determined  
16 that proposed use of proposed location within the  
community should promote the public interest,  
17 promote public health, safety and welfare, and  
promote public convenience and adversely effect  
property values.

18                   AND WHEREAS, the Plan Commission and  
Common Council of City of East Chicago have  
19 determined that proposed use, which are not  
permitted use within the zoning classification  
20 should conform to the proposed purpose, intent,  
and spirit of the zoning ordinance, be compatible  
21 with the surrounding areas, and should not be  
detrimental or injurious or create excessive  
22 nuisance in surrounding area.

23                   WHEREAS, it is in the best interest of  
the City of East Chicago to amend the zoning  
24 ordinance text to provide for certain use to be  
classified as "Special Use" and allowed in certain  
zoning classifications only upon showing that the  
25 above criteria have been met.

1                   AND WHEREAS, Indiana code requires that  
2                   the Advisory Board of Zoning Appeals hold a public  
3                   hearing and make findings of fact to determine  
4                   whether the above criteria have been met before  
5                   forwarding a "Special Use" permit request to the  
6                   Common Council.

7                   In accordance with the above, a  
8                   petition has by filed for "Special Use" variance at 5001  
9                   Indianapolis Boulevard, to permit a daycare/after school  
10                   tutoring program for children.

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

13                   (Mr. Segura has joined the meeting.)

14                   MR. MORRISROE: Good evening, ladies and  
15                   gentlemen, I'd like to invite all of you, before you  
16                   leave, especially the principle owner and yourself, Miss  
17                   Dixon, as the head of the university, to sign in here so  
18                   we have that for the record, and you may sign in as  
19                   well. I assume you are here to watch, but are you here  
20                   to speak as well?

21                   MR. RODRIGUEZ: I'm not sure yet. I'm  
22                   here to watch.

23                   MR. MORRISROE: Be sure to sign in before  
24                   leaving.

25                   So we have here the proposal, which  
is spelled out by Miss Sharita Dixon, who I assumed to  
be in her early twenties and she told me she's almost  
40, and has had 20 years experience to early childhood  
care with her work in the south suburbs, both in early  
learning and in business; which is in a way both a  
benefit for our community and for the State of Indiana.

As you know, more and more  
requirements are that parents work and they have the  
need to work, often both parents are working. The  
program that Miss Dixon has successfully had in the  
Maywood School area and the Kenwood School area, in  
Hammond, she has had for 6 years, one center and for two  
years another. She staffs it primarily with parents and  
with teachers. I presume parents are willing to get up  
at 5:30 in the morning with their kids, and more likely  
teachers in the late afternoon. So this kind of  
envelopes a working day.

People don't work just five,  
six hours, the time that their kids are in school, but  
often have to leave to go to work before 6:00 o'clock in

1 the morning and to get back home sometimes close to six  
2 in the afternoon. And so Miss Dixon has spelled out for  
3 you the KidZSpace University -- creative title.

4 We have talked to her about other  
5 sites. She has spoken to us about staffing and how long  
6 it had been open. She, as myself and some others in the  
7 City, is an Illinois immigrant. I was very proud not  
8 too long ago to tell some people in Indianapolis that I  
9 was an immigrant to Indiana. That I couldn't say I  
10 lived here forever, but some time in my early thirties,  
11 had moved to the world that is East Chicago, and I  
12 managed to stay here for 40 years since.

13 So, I think the internal workings of  
14 the site are, it was formerly a convenience store. It's  
15 catty corner from St. Stan's rectory and school. Her  
16 experience in Hammond has been to have both the public  
17 schools and the private schools, including the  
18 Montessori School, St. John Bosco, which are in that  
19 part of southwest Hammond. So I will have her to speak  
20 shortly.

21 I would see this as an asset for our  
22 community and would favorably recommend the change.  
23 There are other apartments in the building. We have the  
24 landlord here as well to -- I didn't get your name.

25 MS. ISON: G. Ison Properties, just the  
name of the business.

MR. MORRISROE: So we have both the  
landlord and the prospective tenants. The prospective  
tenant is the one asking for the variance for the use.  
And they have to, however, have the landlord be part of  
that. And so both are here today, this afternoon. Are  
there any questions that you have?

MS. RAMOS: Not at this time.

MR. MORRISROE: We'll give them an  
opportunity -- you will be given an opportunity to  
speak.

MS. RAMOS: We'll move on to required  
documents. Have all required public notification  
documents and receipts been completed and received for  
this variance petition?

MS. BONILLA: Yes. I certify the  
following documentation as exhibits, receipt for funds  
to cover public notices, published notice receipts from

1 local press, and receipts from certified mail.

2 MR. MORRISROE: And Mr. Rodriguez can  
3 testify that at least one citizen received that mailing.

4 MR. HENRY RODRIGUEZ: Yes, I did.

5 MS. RAMOS: The next section of this  
6 hearing is for testimony and exhibits. The order of the  
7 hearing shall be as follows: The petitioner's  
8 presentation, acceptance of written comments or  
9 petitions, and comments from those present in the  
audience with regard to giving testimony or exhibits.  
At the appropriate time, please come forward and state  
your name, spell your last name, state your address,  
spell the street name -- if unique -- sign the sign-in  
sheet found on the podium.

10 I call forth the petitioner and any  
11 associates.

12 MS. DIXON: Good evening. I'm Sharita  
13 Dixon. This is my first time doing this, so I'm a  
14 little lost. I just want to bring something positive to  
15 the community. An up-skilled after school program for  
16 the children in the area. I do pick up, the transport  
17 of children at McKinley, as well as right across the  
18 street. So I think this will be a great benefit for the  
19 community and for the children, and parents as well.

20 MR. MORRISROE: Would you give us your  
21 address?

22 MS. DIXON: Address is 6337 Garfield  
23 Avenue, Hammond, Indiana 46324.

24 MS. RAMOS: Are you done? Is there  
25 anything else you'd like to say?

MR. MORRISROE: You can rely on your  
documents. You all have copies of this, have you not?  
Is there anything you want to highlight in your  
brochure?

MS. DIXON: No, I pretty much -- I  
provided you guys with a copy of the proposed KidZSpace  
University and I am just here today seeking that you all  
approve it, so we can become something positive for the  
community of East Chicago, Indiana.

1 MR. RAMOS: Thank you. If we have  
2 questions, we will definitely ask them in a little bit.

3 At this time I call forth any  
4 written petitions or comments? (None)

5 Requests of staff, if any have been  
6 received at the Plan office.

7 MS. BONILLA: None.

8 MS. RAMOS: We would request any persons  
9 present that have written petitions or comments for the  
10 record come forward. (None)

11 MR. MORRISROE: I should mention we have  
12 the landlord here, the manager of the property. Would  
13 you simply come forward, introduce yourself, your name  
14 and address as well. And if you are willing to do this,  
15 provided we pass this through the Zoning Board and  
16 Common Council.

17 MS. ISON: Nicole Ison, manager of G.  
18 Ison Properties. We purchased the property a couple  
19 years ago. We revamped the whole thing, spent a lot of  
20 money trying to bring something nice back to the  
21 community. If anybody remembers the building, it had  
22 been hit, I guess years ago, before I purchased it, and  
23 I guess they made some changes. So we put the window  
24 back into it, just to make it look more presentable for  
25 having, you know, a storefront, to make it look like  
back what it's suppose to be. We are trying to do  
positive things with the community. We totally  
renovated the whole thing. Everything is rented out.  
Our tenants are really happy with their new places, and  
now we are just trying to bring something nice to the  
community, as far as putting in businesses.

19 MR. MORRISROE: Can we have your address,  
20 Nicole?

21 MS. ISON: We are from Illinois. My  
22 address is 14423 Dorchester, Dolton, Illinois 60419.  
23 That's all I have.

24 MS. SERRANO: The daycare, is that just  
25 for the storefront part? It doesn't connect to the  
apartments.

MS. ISON: No, it's about 650, 700 square  
foot, has a bathroom, and everything is totally

1 renovated. It's an open space to do homework or  
2 whatever she wants to put into the space as far as that.

3 MS. SERRANO: The pictures look really  
4 nice. I didn't understand the kindergarten to 3rd  
5 grade. Is that in one room or separate rooms?

6 MS. ISON: I'm just the landlord.

7 MS. SERRANO: I was just wondering.

8 MS. RAMOS: Thank you. As part of  
9 audience participation portion, I will ask again that  
10 each person desiring to be heard, sign in on the forms  
11 provided, state your name and address. Anyone else?  
12 (None)

13 I call forth citizens supporting the  
14 petition. (None)

15 At the appropriate time, please  
16 indicate any support or opposition to the proposal for  
17 the Board to better coordinate. The hearing format,  
18 persons will be called to speak by the president. If  
19 the comment is in the form of a question or questions,  
20 please state the question as clearly as possible. The  
21 petitioner and associates at the end of the public  
22 hearing process will address any responses to the  
23 questions.

24 I call forth citizens supporting the  
25 petition.

MR. MORRISROE: You are welcome, if you  
want to say anything at this time or simply rest with  
what you presented already.

MS. RAMOS: I call forth citizens  
opposing the petition. (None)

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

Are there any questions from the  
Board at this time, for the petitioner?

MS. SERRANO: I was just wondering how  
you are going to put kindergarten and 3rd grade  
together. On the pictures that you provided us, it  
shows that bunch of classrooms or something,  
kindergarten to 3rd grade. All the pictures have  
different seating arrangements and stuff. Is it one big  
room?

1 MS. DIXON: It's one big open space, and  
2 the tables and equipment will be age appropriate. The  
3 children, kindergarten to 3rd grade will have their own  
4 seating and from 4th grade up will have their own  
5 seating.

6 MS. SERRANO: All in one room?

7 MS. DIXON: We'll be in one room, yes.

8 MS. RAMOS: Any other questions?

9 MR. SEGURA: I just had a concern of the  
10 parking in that area. There is not a whole lot, but  
11 most of it will be just drop off -- correct -- and  
12 picking up?

13 MS. DIXON: Yes.

14 MR. SEGURA: And my only concern, because  
15 it's a busy street -- you know -- so if you are going to  
16 be transporting, how are you transporting the kids from  
17 school, across the street?

18 MS. DIXON: I transport from the local  
19 school, McKinley. So I do transport and pick up and  
20 drop off. And most of the parents, they walk the kids  
21 to the local schools, so they are in the area.

22 MR. SEGURA: Okay. I was just concerned  
23 about parking.

24 MS. DIXON: There is a crossing guard on  
25 that corner as well.

MS. RAMOS: I have a couple questions.  
So you have your own vehicle to pick up and drop off  
children?

MS. DIXON: Yes.

MS. RAMOS: Would that pick up and drop  
off site be on 143rd versus Indianapolis Boulevard?

MS. DIXON: It will not be directly on  
Indianapolis. The drop off will be on the corner, which  
I believe that's 149th.

MS. RAMOS: Like Steve -- Board President



1 -- mentioned that Indianapolis Boulevard --

2 MR. MORRISROE: 150th, I'm sorry.

3 MS. RAMOS: It's very busy with the other  
4 school.

5 MS. DIXON: The side street will be the  
6 drop off because that's where the door is at, on the  
7 side.

8 MR. MORRISROE: We can attach conditions  
9 that that space be marked and that it be no parking  
10 during these hours, Monday through Friday; so that that  
11 space will be available for you, rather than having cars  
12 there and having the kids kind of, you know, have to  
13 park in the street. At least ideally there will be a  
14 space when you cross Indianapolis Boulevard, take a  
15 right or left off Indianapolis Boulevard, there will be  
16 a parking space at that door between Indianapolis  
17 Boulevard, and approximately 20 to 25 feet from the  
18 corner.

19 MR. RAMOS: I would probably suggest  
20 that, because I think that would be something that we  
21 can do. It would be the safest thing for children and  
22 all involved because you already have St. Stan's kitty  
23 corner and the traffic from the school there. That  
24 would be a good idea to do that. Is that something she  
25 would have to apply for?

MR. MORRISROE: We can do that with the  
Engineering Department.

MR. SEGURA: Now, speaking from  
experience, when we opened our business, is there a  
certain amount of parking spaces required by the City  
when they open up a business?

MR. MORRISROE: The City is, for most  
places, terribly short of what its ordinance requires,  
simply because these buildings have been built before  
the Code was ever enacted. And other than on street  
parking, there is nothing available. I assume that that  
may be a problem for some.

If your workers are coming in the  
morning, because most of the people will still be in  
bed, not everybody gets up at that hour; so there may or  
may not be a problem. That's why at least we mark for

1 your vehicle, your pick up and delivery vehicle, that  
2 that space hopefully will be reserved.

3 MR. SEGURA: I'm concerned she may have  
4 enforcement issues, because you have apartments and they  
5 are going to try and take her parking all the time. It  
6 may be something you may have to call the police  
7 regularly.

8 MS. DIXON: I don't see any concerns or  
9 problems. There is plenty of parking. I pass there  
10 every day, on a daily basis, and there is plenty of open  
11 spaces in the morning, afternoon, during the day. I  
12 don't think parking and pick up and drop off will be an  
13 issue.

14 MR. SEGURA: Also I do like your diagram.

15 MS. DIXON: Thank you.

16 MS. RAMOS: What is the maximum capacity  
17 of children that you are going to be serving?

18 MS. DIXON: 16 at the most.

19 MR. MORRISROE: Miss Dixon, may we have  
20 copies -- at least to see -- your licensing from the  
21 State and your contract with the State, so we better  
22 understand that?

23 MS. DIXON: Yes. Sure.

24 MR. MORRISROE: Council may have  
25 questions about that as well.

MS. DIXON: Okay. All right.

MR. MORRISROE: You said your hours of  
operation are 6 to 6?

MS. DIXON: Yes. I'm thinking of doing  
6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., that gives the parents enough  
time to drop off, and I get the kids to school before  
9:00 o'clock. And then again -- we'll probably be  
closed throughout the day -- and then open up again from  
3 to 6, which is the after school hours.

MS. RAMOS: So you are not going to be  
open for someone that wants to drop off a child when

1 school is closed?

2 MS. DIXON: Well, on the school closing  
3 days, we'll be open. But majority of the time, it will  
4 be 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., and then open back up again  
5 when the kids get out of school, till close.

6 MR. MORRISROE: You can provide full day  
7 services on those school closing days?

8 MS. DIXON: Yes.

9 MR. MORRISROE: What about snow days?

10 MS. DIXON: Yes.

11 MR. MORRISROE: The kids better get along  
12 with one another.

13 MR. SEGURA: Daycare is much needed in  
14 East Chicago. Thank you for considering us and doing  
15 what you are doing.

16 MS. DIXON: It is a big deal.

17 MS. RAMOS: I'm certain you have certain  
18 criteria you need to meet with teachers.

19 MS. DIXON: The ratio 5 to 1, with the  
20 State.

21 MS. RAMOS: Are there any other  
22 questions? (None) Thank you, good luck.

23 I'd call forth any questions from  
24 the Attorney -- Mr. Morrisroe.

25 MR. MORRISROE: The attorney has spoken.  
I have asked and I'm all asked out.

MS. RAMOS: So your recommendation is?

MR. MORRISROE: My recommendation is that  
we recommend to the Common Council their approval.  
However, we ask that with the City Engineer that some  
arrangement be made for drop off spot during the hours  
that they are open, Monday through Friday, from --  
really throughout the day -- from 6:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.  
And I am open to any other conditions that you would  
think appropriate.

1 MR. SEGURA: One other question. Your  
2 signage that you are going to put on the building, are  
3 you basically using this area --

4 MS. DIXON: I will be using the window.  
5 It will be a decal of this logo.

6 MR. SEGURA: Okay.

7 MS. RAMOS: Okay. With no other  
8 questions, I close the public comments at this time.  
9 I'm going to call for a motion to close the taking of  
10 public comments.

11 Motion to close the taking of public comments made by  
12 Monique Kurmis. Second by Cathy Wojas-Serrano.

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

15 MS. RAMOS: Motion passes. I declare no  
16 other comments will be heard.

17 Since we have already heard the  
18 Attorney's recommendations, I call for a motion on the  
19 petition with -- I don't know if it's a condition, Mr.  
20 Morrisroe.

21 MR. MORRISROE: I believe it to be a  
22 condition. I put it in that format because that's the  
23 opening that the law allows us to put it in, and also  
24 recommendation to the City Engineer as well.

25 MS. RAMOS: Okay. I call for a motion to  
approve the KidZSpace University, with the condition  
that arrangements be made with the Engineering  
Department, for a drop off parking spot on 150th Street,  
on the side of the building, as well as recommendation  
with the Common Council.

Motion to approve petition for KidZSpace University,  
with condition of having parking spot designated by the  
Engineering Department, made by Monique Kurmis. Second  
by Cathy Wojas-Serrano.

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

MS. RAMOS: Motion passes.  
Congratulations.

1 Was the State license a condition?

2 MR. MORRISROE: We'd like that to be  
3 presented before -- in the next 48 hours, to get that in  
4 to Belinda.

5 MS. RAMOS: Mr. Morrisroe, I just would  
6 put this on record, that the petitioner bring their  
7 State license within the next 48 hours to the office.

8 MR. MORRISROE: Is that reasonable, that  
9 time?

10 MS. DIXON: Yes.

11 MS. RAMOS: Thank you.

12 MR. MORRISROE: I don't know that I can  
13 get this on the agenda for Monday night's Council  
14 meeting; I'll let you know. It may, but unlikely, so it  
15 would be the next Monday -- two weeks from Monday.

16 MS. DIXON: Okay.

17 MR. MORRISROE: They meet the 2nd and 4th  
18 Monday, at 6:00 p.m. and you should be at that as well.

19 MS. DIXON: Thank you.

20 MS. RAMOS: Now I'd call for a motion to  
21 adjourn.

22 Motion to adjourn meeting made by Monique Kurmis.  
23 Second by Cathy Wojas-Serrano.

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

MS. RAMOS: Motion passes. Meeting  
adjourned.

\*\*\* Meeting Adjourned at 5:05 p.m.\*\*\*

Approval of the Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, March 4, 2020

Approved and signed \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Segura, President




\_\_\_\_\_  
Lilia Ramos, Plan Commission Representative



\_\_\_\_\_  
Cathy Wojas-Serrano, Representative



\_\_\_\_\_  
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 5th day of March, 2020.

*Peggy S. LaLonde*



Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

