CITY OF EAST CHICAGO BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD MEMBERS

Milton Reed, President
Richard Trembczynski, Vice-President
Frank Smith, Member

Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m

Reported by Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.
By: Peggy S. LaLonde

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Present: Milton Reed
Frank Smith

Staff Present: Lee Watson, Building Department
Kevin Smith, Attorney

MR. REED: Call to order the regular meeting of the Board of Public Safety, March 23rd, 2026. We'll follow the agenda in front of us.

May we have a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 9th, 2026 as written?

MR. SMITH: I'll make a motion.

MR. REED: I'll second the motion.

Motion has been properly moved and second. Any questions? (None)

Hearing no questions, we'll take a vote. All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. REED: Motion carries.

We have no correspondence, we'll move to New Business. Resolution 2026-05, Disposal of Real Property - 4828 Melville.

Would you like to come forward, Attorney Smith?

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MR. KEVIN SMITH: Yes. Good evening to the Board. 4828 Melville, this is a property that was obtained by the City through tax deed donation from the County. The Resolution, as you can see, 2026-05, specifically references, I think 36.7-14.9 as the disposition statute that allows the City to -- maybe it's 36 -- I don't want to miss-site -- it's 36-11-5.9, I might have got that wrong. Sorry. But it allows the City to dispose of the property via a process with the abutting landowner if it is acquired by tax deed. We anticipate there to be the ability for the City to allow the abutting, one of the abutting landowners to acquire that property. We request its approval to allow the process to move forward, that's what we'd like to do. We are requesting you approve the Resolution.

MR. REED: Is there a motion to approve Resolution 2026-05?

MR. SMITH: I'll make a motion.

MR. REED: I'll second the motion.
Motion has been properly moved and second. Any questions? (None)
Hearing no questions, we'll take a vote. All in favor?
(All signify aye.)
MR. REED: Motion carries.
Next we have a status update from the Building Department.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Yes, Kevin Smith on behalf of James Portalatin, Building Commissioner. We are here on the status of property at 3938 Catalpa. I have got some photographs I'd like to present to the Board.
So you may recall back in February, on February 23rd, this Board met and continued this matter for status. Mr. Arafat was here. He's here again tonight. At that time he had mentioned that he had talked to James or e-mailed James and called him back in December, in fact December 10th he mentioned. He also said that James said he could pull the permit and that he would pay the lien. Just FYI, this also was bought on tax sale. Mr. Arafat mentioned he was going to redeem the lien.
There is concern on the City, as you can see, I think it's the south wall or one of the walls, the brick is collapsed. Mr. Watson has indicated

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to me that there are also wood boring insects there. That's a concern. There is structural issues.

At this point we would request, based on the condition of the property, we have given good notice to everybody, that the demolition order be affirmed so that we can move that process forward. Mr. Arafat does have a plan for the property. Of course he can meet with Mr. Watson and Mr. Portalatin, but at this point there have been no permits pulled from the last meeting that I know of.

If Mr. Arafat would like to present other information, he's welcome to do that. The Building Commissioner's position is that we request the order be affirmed.

MR. REED: Okay. Would you like to speak to this? You can come up and state your name.

MR. ARAFAT: Arafat, 3928 Catalpa. Mr. Smith mentioned that no permits were pulled for that building, that's true, because my application has been in the Building Department since August, not since December. If he got me the permits back in August, we wouldn't be here and wasting all this time. I wouldn't waste the engineer's time either. So can I go and pull a permit tomorrow? I don't think so.

I can't even ask do anything at the building, there can be five inspectors there to stop me. Can I go to tomorrow and pull the permits is my question. He's saying I didn't pull the permit and this is why they are going to demolish. Can I go tomorrow and pull the permit? I don't think so. So what do you want me to do?

August of last year, it's been seven months. Since the last time until now I have done 13 roofs in Hammond, in Crown Point, and Schererville. This is the only City, it's like disaster. I'm roofing and construction. I did 13 jobs from February till now, over six, $700,000.00. I am not sure what is complicated with this building. What do I need to do? It's been a nightmare. It stresses me out. I want to finish. I want to fix this, what needs to be done.

MR. REED: Okay. Well, you know, we really typically don't specifically address those concerns when all the parties are not here.

MR. ARAFAT: Last time he wasn't here.

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MR. REED: I'm not sure if you spoke to James in the last 30 days or the last two weeks -- or 30 days actually. But if you would like to speak briefly to it, I don't want to get into deliberations of the issue here.

MR. ARAFAT: I met the engineer. He told me now he wants drawings and he --

MR. REED: Okay.

MR. ARAFAT: My permit has been since August. Since August it's there.

MR. REED: Okay. Well, why don't we -- let me just ask Kevin. Is it appropriate to address his concerns in this venue or his comments, or not necessarily to be addressed here?

MR. KEVIN SMITH: I think you can take whatever evidence you can to make your decision to affirm the demolition. That's our order. I want to give Mr. Arafat the opportunity to present anything he wants. He sounds like he wants -- maybe Mr. Watson can answer his question, that would be appropriate.

MR. WATSON: My name is Lee Watson. I am a consultant to the Building Department and I did meet with Mr. Arafat last month and let him know he needs to get a contractor in there to give him some kind of idea what needs to be done. Have you done that?

MR. ARAFAT: We know what needs to be done, the bricks and the wood. Of course we know that. If you give me permit, this will be all done.

MR. WATSON: So did you ask the contractor? The contractor needs to submit the application for permits.

MR. ARAFAT: The permits are done in your office in August of last year. Jim said, pay the lien and you will get the permit. We can't even pay the liens because of this. I'm confused right now.

MR. REED: So here's -- this is the second meeting with this total conflict of understanding, and that happens. So that's not really the end of the world, but there are some truths we would

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be able to determine. Is there a permit in the Building Department now?

MR. WATSON: Not to my knowledge, that's yes or no check box.

MR. ARAFAT: It's been there since August.

MR. REED: Has it been submitted by X, Y, Z? The first thing to determine, there's like a chart. If there is, it should be evaluated and responded to. If there is not, one should be completed.

So, if you can, at the next meeting I think -- wow, this is a tough one. I don't know because the information is so conflicting.

MR. SMITH: Can we table it for two weeks?

MR. REED: We can table this one more time because this almost -- I know you have been around for several properties. There is no hardship. This is just bizarre that the stories are so opposite.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: I think Mr. Portalatin -- I think at last meeting he wasn't here either.

MR. ARAFAT: Can we do e-mail? I understand he is busy. He has my e-mail and everything like that.

MR. REED: I'll tell you what, we will table this. We don't need a month, we'll put this on the next agenda.

MR. ARAFAT: At the same time can I do something with the building --

MR. REED: I can't grant you that.

MR. ARAFAT: -- or is he going to call inspector -- five inspectors, like I'm doing a crime on my building?

MR. REED: I can communicate via e-mail with Mr. Portalatin, have some direct communication with him and I think that is the first step.

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MR. KEVIN SMITH: I would request if there is an application that's filed, if we could have a copy. Maybe a copy could be placed to the Board so you could see that. Mr. Arafat mentioned e-mails. If he could bring them with him because I know we are going on his word. Mr. Portalatin is telling me that we'd like to move forward with the demolition order is where we are at.

If you have, Mr. Arafat, if you have e-mails, obviously print them out and bring them so you can present them to the Board.

MR. REED: We'll give you a couple more weeks and then we'll know finally what is going on. I appreciate everyones patience. These things do happen from time to time and miscommunication. So we can circle the wagons and get this figured out.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: I would ask the Board to instruct Mr. Arafat that if he would like to present these items, because right now it's he said/she said, which is difficult; if he's got documentation, contact Mr. Portalatin, bring it, print it out. Not just on your phone, bring it printed out so you can show the Board, that will be very helpful. That would be helpful with everything that he's requested.

MR. WATSON: I would interject for Mr. Arafat's benefit, be sure that your application that you are bringing in -- I haven't seen you addressing the structural issues, in addition to the brick vaneer, which is not a structural issue completely.

MR. ARAFAT: This permit from last year, so I didn't have all these things now with everything.

MR. WATSON: You and I talked recently.

MR. ARAFAT: More has been happening.

MR. WATSON: This wood boring insect problem didn't just happen. It's been going on.

MR. ARAFAT: The brick has water coming off all winter. If I go there, you are going to call the City inspectors on me and my permit has been on hold.

MR. REED: I think the result is clear,

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bring whatever evidence you have within two weeks. There needs to be permit, updated permit of all the work that needs to be done. And if that satisfies the Building Department, fine. If it doesn't, we'll enter the order. In two weeks we'll have answers from everyone and know exactly what do do.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: May I mention one more thing, I mentioned this at the last meeting, this property, Mr. Arafat is the title owner, but it was sold at tax sale in November. He's mentioned twice it's going to be redeemed. I don't know when it's going to be redeemed.

MR. ARAFAT: I'm still the owner.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Yes, sir.

MR. ARAFAT: We don't have to worry about that.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Last date to redeem is September. Just an FYI, I'm making that part of the record.

MR. ARAFAT: Hopefully it doesn't take into September.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Hopefully you don't take to September to redeem.

MR. REED: With that being said, we'll table this 3938 Catalpa.

There is no other audience participation.

The next meeting is Monday, April 13th, 5:00 p.m., please be here. We'll deal with this once and for all.

Is there a motion to adjourn?

MR. SMITH: I'll make a motion.

MR. REED: I'll second the motion.

Motion has been properly moved and second. We'll take a vote. All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. REED: Motion carries. Meeting adjourned.

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Approval of the Public Safety Minutes
of 23rd, 2026
Approved and Signed, Monday, March 23rd, 2026.

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Milton Reed, President

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Richard Trembczynski, Vice President

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Frank Smith, Member

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Olga Cosme, Secretary

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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 27th day of March, 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde

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