CITY OF EAST CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF WATERWORKS
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Special Meeting Minutes
March 30, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.

BOARD MEMBERS:
Joseph Ochoa, President
Esteban (Steve) Hernandez, Vice-President
John Bakota, Member
Anthony Askounis, Member
Ray Lopez, Member

STAFF:
Joseph Allegretti
Winna Guzman
Allan Lee
Rebecca Sliger
Alysia Dunbar

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

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Present in Chambers: Joseph Ochoa, Steve Hernandez, John Bakota, Anthony Askounis, Ray Lopez

Staff Present in Chambers: Alysia Dunbar, Secretary
Winna Guzman, Director Water
Joseph Allegretti, Legal

Staff Present via Zoom: Allan Lee, Operations Director

Also Present: John Caruso, Christopher Burke Engineering

Also Present via Zoom: Andre Riley, Financial Consultant, BakerTilly

MR. OCHOA: The Special Meeting of the East Chicago Department of Waterworks Board of Directors will now come to order for March 30th, 2026.

MR. ALLEGRETTI: If I may, Mr. President, one of the conditions to successfully raise money and participate in the State Revolving Loan Fund Program is that there is certain boxes you have to check. Our consultant, Christopher Burke, by John Caruso, is here

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to speak to you tonight. He has filed an amendment to the PER, Preliminary Engineering Report, which describes the Public Works projects that are being financed by the State Revolving Loan Fund.

The rules require that prior to approval of the PER and submitting that approval to the State Revolving Loan Fund; one, we are required to hold a public hearing on that, to allow citizens and interested persons and taxpayers to discuss the projects or anything concerning the Public Works projects.

Two, that the appropriate statutory notices of the public hearing have been advertised in the local media as required by statute, by rules of the State Revolving Loan Fund and DLGF.

If I may, I would suggest that the Chair invite Mr. Caruso to come to the podium and briefly discuss the subject matter of the amendment to the Preliminary Engineering Report.

MR. OCHOA: Thank you. Mr. Caruso, you have the floor.

MR. CARUSO: Good evening, John Caruso with Christopher Burke Engineering. I am here to give the synopsis of the Preliminary Engineering Report, a summary.

As Joe pointed out, this is required for the SRF funding, a public hearing to be held to describe the contents of the Preliminary Engineering Report.

The PER is broken up into several chapters, including current needs, future needs, evaluation of alternatives, evaluation of environment impacts, and then description of the proposed projects. I will start a little bit into the existing conditions of the City of East Chicago's water system.

As you know, the water system consists of the Aldis Plant, the traditional plant that currently is out of service. They also have the Membrane Plant on Pennsylvania Avenue which consists of the two million gallon storage tank and 16 million gallon per day Membrane Filtration Plant. The Tod Booster Pump Station, behind City Hall, contains a four million gallon storage tank, as well as the booster pump. There is the 1.5 million gallon elevated storage tank across from the Water Department.

So the PER has been amended several times based on proposed projects being under construction in the last several years. The latest

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edition, Revision #3, came out on March 18th, of 2026, and within that revision we describe the six projects that are being proposed under the current loan. Those projects are the lead service line area one, lead service line area two, the elevated tank painting project, the elevated tank booster pump station project, the plate settler project at the Membrane Plant, and the raw water pump replacement installation project at the raw water pump station.

As you may know, the Lead Service Line Project is broken up into two projects with approximately 400 services in each project, totaling approximately $10,000,000.00, which was the loan amount provided by the SRF.

The Tank Painting Project consists of improvement to the piping and valves, painting the rails, the venting, and ultimately removing the existing coating and repainting the existing elevated tank.

The Booster Pump Station Project is a prefabricated building containing booster pumps and electrical devices to control those pumps. It will take water out of the elevated tank and pressurize that into the existing distribution system. As you probably heard me say many times, the elevated tank is too low for the current system pressure. So several years ago you may recall we had proposed a new elevated storage tank, which the cost was prohibitive at that time. We pivoted and created this booster pump station in lieu of constructing a new tank. You may recall it was somewhere in the neighborhood of $8,000,000.00 to build a new two million gallon tank. The booster pump station comes in at $1.8 million for the new booster pump station. So we are able to utilize the water in that 1.5 million gallon tank and pressurize that into the system.

The fifth project is a New Plate Settler Project at the Membrane Plant. There is an existing plate settler. It's nearly 15, 16 years old. There is room at its base, and the original design of the plant had accounted for the second plate settler. This plate settler will go in that designated space and this will allow the operations to take the initial plate settler out of service while the new plate settler takes its place. We will alternate operation of each one. While one is down for service the other one can handle the settlement of the solids coming out of the Membrane Plant.

The sixth project is the install, purchase and installation of a fourth raw water pump at

the raw water plant, which is complimentary to the Membrane Plant. The original design of that station accounted for four pumps and three pumps were installed at the original construction of that plant. So there is a space for it and some added flanges for this pump to be connected to the existing piping. The project involves a pump, the strainer, piping, and valves all to connect into the existing raw water pumping and piping system. There is room for it in the structure of the building, the wet well, so there is not a need to modify the existing structure and wet well and the concrete. It's just a blank pad, and, you know, a place for the installation of that fourth raw water pump.

Those are the six projects that are being proposed for this round of financing. And if there is any questions -- within the Preliminary Engineering Report, there were cost estimates, as well as some preliminary design memos, as well as the resolution that approved those projects and allowed those projects to be bid, publicly bid.

If there is any questions on those projects, I'm available to answer any questions you may have or any questions from the public.

MR. ALLEGRETTI: Mr. President, our financial consultant, Andre Riley from BakerTilly has joined the meeting remotely. With your permission may I ask Mr. Riley if he has anything to add to the proceedings. Andre, anything to add?

REPORTER: Mr. Riley has no audio, but he typed he has nothing to add.

MR. ALLEGRETTI: Mr. President, I think the next item is for you to bang the gavel and call the public hearing -- convene the public hearing.

MR. OCHOA: I would call the public hearing to order regarding the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to obtain assistance from the State Revolving Fund (SRF) Loan Program.

Anybody want to say anything? Any comments are greatly appreciated.

MR. ALLEGRETTI: Mr. President, looking around, the only people in the room are staff and no members of the public have come to the meeting.

If I may recommend, I think you can officially and formally close the public hearing portion

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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 31st day of March, 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde

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of our meeting.

MR. OCHOA: The public portion of this meeting is closed.

The next meeting date is Monday, April 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., here in The Chambers.

Do I have a motion for adjournment?

MR. BAKOTA: Motion to adjourn.

MR. HERNANDEZ: Second

MR. OCHOA: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. OCHOA: Motion carries.

Meeting adjourned. Thank you.

***** Meeting Adjourned *****

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Approval of the Special Meeting Minutes of
March 30th, 2026

Approved and signed 4/6/2026

Joseph Ochoa, President

Steve Hernandez, Vice-President

John Bakota, Member

Anthony Askounis, Member

Ray Lopez, Member

Alysia Dunbar, Recording Secretary

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