

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
DEPARTMENT OF WATERWORKS

BOARD MEMBERS

Henry Ventura, President
Joseph Ochoa, Vice President
Anthony Askounis, Member
John Bakota, Member
Ray Lopez, Member

Regular Meeting Minutes
(Via Telephone Conference)
Monday, April 5, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.

Reported for Fissinger & Associates
By: Lisa Pena

CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Present in Chambers: Henry Ventura, John Bakota.

Present Via Telephone Conference: Joseph Ochoa,
Ray Lopez.

STAFF: Present in Chambers: Anthony Herrera, Winna
Guzman.

Present Via Telephone Conference: Joseph
Allegretti, Bill Biller, Abdul Zehraoui.

BID OPENING:

MR. VENTURA: First on the agenda we have the Bid
Opening. And this is in regard to the Water Main Slip Lining
Project at CSXT Railroad, 4506 Cline Avenue, for slip lining
repair of a 24-inch waterline that's leaking.

First bid is from Calumet City Plumbing, P.O. Box
150, Calumet City, Illinois. And this bid is contractor's
total lump sum calls for the project work and requirements
for \$198,950.

Second bid submitted is from Camco, Incorporated,
2125 Oak Leaf Street, Joliet, Illinois 60436. This bid is
for \$211,550.

The last bid we have submitted is from Hasse
Construction Company, Inc., 10 Lincoln Avenue, P.O. Box 300,

1 Calumet City, Illinois 60409. Amount of the bid from Hasse
Construction is for \$119,085.

2

3 This concludes the portion of the bids. These bids
4 will be submitted to the Engineering Department for review
for specs and recommendations and filings.

4

Any questions? Any comments?

5

6 MR. OCHOA: I have a bid here from Lockwood, Andrews &
Newnam, Incorporated.

7

MR. BAKOTA: They didn't present.

8

MR. HERRERA: That's the engineers.

9

MR. VENTURA: No. They're the engineering firm
representing the City.

10

MR. OCHOA: Okay.

11

MR. VENTURA: Any further questions or comments?

12

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: March 15, 2021.

13

Motion to approve March 15, 2021 Meeting Minutes made by John
Bakota. Second by Ray Lopez.

14

Questions/Comments: None.

15

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

16

17

APPROVAL OF WARRANTS:

18

MR. VENTURA: Approval of Check Warrant 040521 WB in the
amount of \$223,596.19.

19

Motion to approve Check Warrant 040521 WB made by Joseph
Ochoa. Second by Ray Lopez.

20

Questions/Comments: None.

21

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

22

MR. VENTURA: Check Warrant 031921 WF in the amount of
\$42,271.

23

24

25

1 Motion to approve Check Warrant 031921 WF made by John
Bakota. Second by Joseph Ochoa.

2
3 Questions/Comments: None.

4 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

5 MR. VENTURA: Next we have Check Warrant 031921 WB in
the amount of \$160,806.68.

6
7 Motion to approve Check Warrant 031921 WB made by Joseph
Ochoa. Second by Ray Lopez.

8 Questions/Comments: None.

9 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

10
11 APPROVAL OF PAYROLL WARRANTS:

12 MR. VENTURA: Next we have Approval of Payroll Warrants.
Payroll Warrant 031921 in the amount of \$37,547.61. And
that's for payroll 2/27/21 to 3/12/21.

13
14 Motion to approve Payroll Warrant 031921 Payroll 2/27/21 to
3/12/21 made by Joseph Ochoa. Second by Ray Lopez.

15 Questions/Comments: None.

16 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

17
18 MR. VENTURA: Payroll Warrant 040121 in the amount of
\$36,178. Payroll from 3/13/21 to 3/26/21.

19 Motion to approve Payroll Warrant 040121 Payroll 3/13/21 to
3/26/21 made by John Bakota. Second by Joseph Ochoa.

20
21 Questions/Comments: None.

22 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

23 MR. VENTURA: Payroll Warrant 031921 in the amount of
\$17,718.02. And this is for Utilities Payroll 2/27/21 to
24 3/12/21.

25

1 Motion to approve Payroll Warrant 031921 Utilities Payroll
2 2/27/21 to 3/12/21 made by Ray Lopez. Second by Joseph
3 Ochoa.

3 Questions/Comments: None.

4 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
5 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

6 MR. VENTURA: Payroll Warrant 040121 in the amount of
7 \$17,795.91. This is for Utilities Payroll 3/13/21 to
8 3/26/21.

9 Motion to approve Payroll Warrant 040121 Utilities Payroll
10 3/13/21 to 3/26/21 made by Joseph Ochoa. Second by Ray
11 Lopez.

12 Questions/Comments: None.

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

15 FILTRATION REPORT:

16 MR. VENTURA: Filtration Report, Dr. Abdul Zehraoui.

17 DR. ZEHRAOUI: Please listen, Members. The situation,
18 I'm working on two things. We have two pumps. And one pump
19 is continuous. And this has never been used for many years.
20 So I am working on getting at least that pump so we can use
21 efficiently the three pumps.

22 I start communication. But they never came back to
23 me with proposals. So I am waiting for that.

24 So I am working with Engineering so we can get it
25 done so we can review the amount of sludge that we send to
the Sanitary.

So all the plans, maybe there is direction from the
City, but we have the plans. I am working with some
engineer. But he will come and visit the plant and give me
proper report.

So this is the main thing that we have. Thank you.

MR. VENTURA: Thank you, Dr. Z.

WATER REPORT: None.

1 DISTRIBUTION REPORT: None.

2 NEW BUSINESS WATER:

3 MR. VENTURA: New Business Water. We have Resolution
4 WD 21-04. And this is for Resolution of the Board of
Trustees of the East Chicago Water Department authorizing the
5 transfer of appropriations into different budget categories.

6 Motion to approve Resolution WD 21-04 made by Ray Lopez.
7 Second by Joseph Ochoa.

8 Questions/Comments: None.

9 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
10 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

11 MR. VENTURA: We have a Rate Sheet for Northwest Indiana
12 Ford Service Department. This is for 2021. And this is
13 included in your packet. And this is for basic information.

14 MR. HERRERA: We need approval.

15 MR. VENTURA: We need a motion to approve.

16 Motion to approve Northwest Indiana Ford Service Department
17 2021 Rate Sheet made by John Bakota. Second by Joseph Ochoa.

18 Questions/Comments: None.

19 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
20 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

21 MR. VENTURA: Next we have Past Due Accounts. The first
22 one is from Mills Electric for \$4,439. The reason for the
23 delinquent is invoices were sent to the previous secretary.
24 And I received a call from them on March 21, 2021. So the
e-mail was given to them.

25 Motion to approve Mills Electric Past Due Invoice made by
Joseph Ochoa. Second by John Bakota.

Questions/Comments: None.

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

MR. VENTURA: Next we have Communication Company. And
this is for \$45. And the reason for delinquency is invoice

1 was received on March 16, 2021.

2 Motion to approve Communication Company Past Due Invoice made
3 by Ray Lopez. Second by Joseph Ochoa.

4 Questions/Comments: None.

5 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
6 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

7 MR. VENTURA: Past Due Thermo Fisher Scientific for
8 \$785.23. Reason for delinquency is invoice was not sent to
9 me. Had to call them when they sent a statement with past
10 due on it.

11 Motion to approve Thermo Fisher Scientific Past Due Invoice
12 made by Joseph Ochoa. Second by Ray Lopez.

13 Questions/Comments: None.

14 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
15 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

16 MR. VENTURA: Next Past Due is from CSX Transportation.
17 Amount is for \$175. And the reason for the delinquency is
18 Department first received invoice in March 2021.

19 Motion to approve CSX Transportation Past Due Invoice made by
20 Ray Lopez. Second by Joseph Ochoa.

21 Questions/Comments: None.

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

24 MR. VENTURA: Next we have Bakertilly for \$8,150. And
25 the reason for this delinquency is the Department first
received the invoice on 3/17/21.

Motion to approve Bakertilly Past Due Invoice made by John
Bakota. Second by Joseph Ochoa.

Questions/Comments: None.

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

MR. VENTURA: Ace Exterminating Invoice of \$120. Reason
for delinquency is Department first received invoice in March

1 of 2021.

2 Motion to approve Ace Exterminating Past Due Invoice made by
3 Joseph Ochoa. Second by John Bakota.

4 Questions/Comments: None.

5 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
6 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

7 REPORT FROM LEGAL COUNSEL: None.

8 FINANCIAL REPORT: None.

9 UNFINISHED BUSINESS: None.

10 PUBLIC COMMENT:

11 MR. HERRERA: Carmen Cervantes and Jesus Leo, 4202
12 Euclid Avenue.

13 MR. VENTURA: Can you state your name and address and
14 then your reason?

15 MS. CERVANTES: My name is Carmen Cervantes. And my
16 address for business is 4202 and 4204 Euclid Avenue. It's
17 the LalyLand Laundromat. And this is my son, Jesus.

18 MR. LEO: I'm Jesus Leo. I'm actually the operations
19 manager there for same address and business.

20 MS. CERVANTES: The reason why we here because we have
21 since long time when they decide to change the water meters
22 they found a by-pass.

23 So the water in that time was under Mr. Lopez. And
24 what I hear, you know, long time he was talking to Winna,
25 talking about the issue. And he refused to pay.

To make the long story short the day when I went
with the title because I was buying under the contract, the
day when I had the title to put water in my name they don't
let me. They say I have to pay the bill.

So I keep saying it's not my bill. It's Mr. Lopez.
Well, we have to follow the process. If you don't pay, we're
going to cut the water off.

So I said I don't think it's properly because like

1 I said they said the by-pass, whatever, who going to take
2 over they're going to pay the previous bill. And I was
paying the water services.

3 MR. LEO: We weren't past due on the services. And we
4 got one of these in the mail. If you read this notice, it
5 says you can go in and make an agreement for two weeks or
6 whatnot. And it's dated March 12. So two weeks from March
7 12.

8 They came in and cut off the water on the 18th
9 without notice. And they caused damage to one of our
10 machines.

11 MS. CERVANTES: I went before, two days before. And I'm
12 please, Winna, let me know if you decide to cut the water
13 because the customers, they don't deserve that.

14 That day I was off. My employee called me, no
15 water. People there, we had to pay them to go to another
16 laundromat. All the machines, they were out of cycle. One
17 there was big damage.

18 So the people was very upset. I've lost. Of
19 course, you know, we lost the money, the business that day.
20 And the going down and down because one of the biggest
21 machine we call the moneymakers, we were down.

22 So like I said there was a lot of ways to avoid
23 this. And like I say I asked Winna please let me know.
24 Without notice, boom, they cut the water.

25 MR. LEO: I also looked on the State Page from what
rights were granted. And it says that we should have been
notified in person. Also that if some employee went to shut
it off should have at least give us the professional courtesy
to let us know that they're shutting the water off especially
during business hours.

We weren't given no notice. No one knocked. We
could have said, hey, wait until the machines are done
cyclling out or whatnot.

And the machine that was broken is a \$10,000
machine. It's not, you know, something that we can go pick
up at Best Buy for a couple hundred dollars.

And the thing is phone calls were made to the Water
Department. And I think two weeks was it before I got a call

1 back.

2 So my complaint is there's a lot of stuff that it
3 looks like there is no order or due process or that, you
4 know, things were just done. And, you know, it's confusing
because even with us paying -- we paid the bill.

5 We paid whatever fee it was that they were
6 changing. And we asked for a breakdown. I got the receipt
7 here. It doesn't match up to what the services that were
8 rendered that were on another paper. The numbers don't add
9 up.

10 So we asked for an explanation. We don't get a
11 solid explanation or a breakdown or an itemized bill other
12 than this receipt.

13 This receipt doesn't say anything other than the
14 size of the meter, some penalty and then the repair fee.

15 There was no repair, you know. That by-pass wasn't
16 ours. And I understand that they try to say ignorance isn't
17 an excuse for the law or whatnot. We had nothing do to with
18 that.

19 If you look at the payment history, we paid for the
20 usage. We were just disputing that because at that time we
21 were still in contract. We didn't own the property outright.

22 So I feel like it was done in retaliation because
23 when we went in we paid. We had bought out the contract. We
24 paid the property. We had all the paperwork done. So the
25 very next day from her going into the office, the very next
day it was cut off without any notice.

And it actually goes against this notice that was
mailed to us with the previous bill that was due for March.

20 MS. CERVANTES: But like I said it was like during this
21 time notice and notice. And I know Mr. Lopez was talking to
Winna, but nothing resolved.

22 And what I hear the last time when he came he feel
23 offended because they accused him for something.

24 Anyway like I said on the day when I went with the
25 title of the property they told me that title is no good. I
had to go and look for the deed. I had to go and bring the
proof and the LLC, all of the details.

1 So when I'm there after few days I got all of that
2 in order to put in my name.

3 Still there's two properties because one is the
4 lot. And that's when the 4204 meter catch that the part of
5 the lot. The other one is 4202 where there's the house. So
6 there are two meters.

7 So in order to put two meters they want me to bring
8 another deed. I said no. The two numbers right there and
9 the lot. So they don't believe. I have to go to Crown Point
10 and make all of that in order to put in my name.

11 And I go how Mr. Lopez, the water was in his name
12 when the property wasn't in his name. Never in his name. So
13 we have to pay for something I don't feel is --

14 MR. LEO: This doesn't belong to us. But we paid it
15 because we got strong-armed. You know, we got cut off water.
16 And I believe everybody in here knows how a laundromat runs.
17 You need water to operate that business.

18 So I feel like, you know, we were almost extorted
19 into paying that 1,800 because we didn't even get a chance to
20 do any type of payments, payment arrangements. Or say, hey,
21 let's meet half because what that fee is was the cost to
22 exchange the water meter that was done, you know, while it
23 wasn't in our ownership. It was in the previous ownership.

24 MR. BAKOTA: What was your average water bill while you
25 were paying it?

26 MR. LEO: I don't have that with me, sir. But I can
27 guarantee you that it is higher because when we bought that
28 place we put in all brand-new machines.

29 MS. CERVANTES: We put 17 machines. No. No. 21
30 machines. I put 21 washing machines.

31 MR. BAKOTA: As soon as you bought the business?

32 MS. CERVANTES: Yes. And 17 dryers.

33 MR. LEO: We had four large capacity machines that are
34 above the regular, you know.

35 MR. VENTURA: So you're not contesting the water use?

36 MR. LEO: No. I mean the thing is the water use is

1 going to go up period because of the new machines. Yeah. I
2 mean if you look at it, if you look at the -- we were given a
packet of information. If you look at it, the use went up.

3 MR. BAKOTA: What I'm saying is that by-pass was in
4 operation when you started.

5 MS. CERVANTES: No. No. Mr. Lopez had the by-pass.
6 But in that time he had only like three or four machines.

7 MR. LEO: We didn't know anything about the by-pass
8 until they came and changed out the meter. We didn't know.
9 We didn't know. And what I am saying is we were not owners
at that time. We were still operating under contract.

10 MS. CERVANTES: And the thing is I feel so bad because
11 it's the second issue with Water Department. I don't know if
you remember 5529 at my house I had damage in the basement.

12 MR. LEO: She still doesn't have her money.

13 MS. CERVANTES: Still I don't have the money. I keep in
14 contact with my insurance.

15 MR. BAKOTA: Insurance never paid?

16 MS. CERVANTES: No. They said it's still the request
17 for another investigation. I don't know what I have to wait
for.

18 Number 1 my insurance went up of course, you know.
19 And I still holding my \$1,000 deductible.

20 In that case I feel like the Water Department be
21 responsible. But I use my insurance. And about this point
22 now another issue with the Water Department. You know, I
feel bad.

23 MR. LEO: I thought there was some type of clauses under
Covid Protection that we could avoid the shut off of water.

24 MR. VENTURA: Attorney, do you know in reference to what
25 he's saying?

MR. ALLEGRETTI: The moratorium has long since expired.

26 MR. LEO: But still I mean again so you're saying
basically you guys don't stand behind your notices that you
send in the mail.

1 MS. CERVANTES: The only thing is collecting money.

2 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Just to clarify are you saying that you
3 had no understanding that Mr. Lopez -- is Mr. Lopez in the
4 room?

4 MR. LOPEZ: Yes, I am.

5 MR. VENTURA: Yes, he is.

6 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Well, he was the spokesman for this
7 customer last time. And we have lengthy minutes from the
8 stenographer detailing everything that was said.

8 MR. LEO: I am talking about the yellow piece of paper
9 that they put in our bill.

9 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I understand. But Mr. Lopez
10 fundamentally said that the problem with the undisclosed or
11 undetected by-pass was the City's problem because they did
12 not -- because of their lack of diligence they did not
13 discover that persons were stealing the City's water and
14 by-passing the meter and not paying for the water that they
15 were consuming. That was his theory.

14 It was determined to be not a particularly
15 compelling argument. I think it was kind of rejected by the
16 Board. That's what was said the last time.

15 I think the story had changed dramatically this
16 time. That's okay.

17 MR. LEO: I am calling because we paid. You guys can
18 get a copy of the check that was paid. We're asking for an
19 explanation of processes and policies and when do they apply
20 and when they do not.

19 And I also want to find out who do I give the
20 complaint or who do I give the bill to for the damage that
21 was caused to my machine because I don't feel that that was
22 in my right and fairness.

22 And like I said when I called downstate they said
23 that there was some processes that you should have knocked on
24 our door and let us know.

24 I'm talking about when they shut off the water.

25 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I understand. The water was shut off

1 for failure to pay for the repair of the by-pass.

2 MR. LEO: It doesn't matter. The fact that it was shut
3 off and we weren't announced. They didn't tell us like that
4 day because on your paper it says you got two weeks to make
5 an arrangement or do something about it before it gets shut
6 off.

7 And on the State Page it says you can actually go
8 in there and talk to the person shutting it off if you have
9 any type of proof of arrangement or any of that sort.

10 But to go in and shut it off during business hours
11 without announcing it causing failure to my machines and
12 embarrassing me to my customers making it look like we don't
13 pay our water bill I don't think that's acceptable anywhere.

14 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Well, you were apparently not present
15 at the last public meeting where Mr. Lopez, he identified
16 himself only as the owner of these premises and this
17 business. Maybe not the business.

18 MR. LOPEZ: No. He is not the owner.

19 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Let me finish. But he said
20 unequivocally under no circumstances was he paying this water
21 bill and invited, I don't know, the Board to send him to
22 jail.

23 So if the Board and if the Department was
24 specifically unequivocally told by the customer that under no
25 circumstance would they pay for this water bill and knowing
26 that the cutoff was imminent, I think that's pretty good
27 notice that your wounds, whatever you're complaining about
28 are entirely self-inflicted.

29 MR. LEO: Not really, sir, because these notices we been
30 getting for the past year.

31 So you're telling me every night I had to worry
32 about when they're going to cut off the water? Is that what
33 you're telling me?

34 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Which you've ignored.

35 MR. LEO: No. It has not been ignored.

36 MR. ALLEGRETTI: You've been stealing water from the
37 utilities for years.

1 MS. CERVANTES: No.

2 MR. LEO: No.

3 MR. ALLEGRETTI: For at least three years.

4 MR. LEO: Sir, that is not --

5 MR. ALLEGRETTI: You could say what you want.

6 MR. LEO: Like I said it still doesn't -- you're still
7 dancing around the question about who do I take my complaint
8 and my bill to because you inflicted or not you personally,
9 but whoever worked at the Water Department inflicted damage
10 to my machine. I didn't deserve that.

11 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Your wounds are entirely
12 self-inflicted.

13 MR. LEO: You're entitled to your opinion.

14 MR. ALLEGRETTI. It's not my opinion. Mr. Lopez
15 unequivocally said clearly and specifically that he under no
16 circumstances was he paying this bill.

17 MR. LEO: Right. And I believe he has a lot of --

18 MR. ALLEGRETTI: No one had any alternative.

19 MR. LEO: I believe he has been going to the Water
20 Department every time these notices come in to work out a
21 resolution. And according to --

22 MR. ALLEGRETTI: No. His resolution was I am not paying
23 it and it's your fault that you didn't catch me stealing your
24 water. That the Board found to be unacceptable.

25 MR. LEO: You're saying you have that on record that he
stated those exact words? Is that what you're saying, sir?

MR. ALLEGRETTI: They were just approved. You can make
a request and someone will give you a copy of those minutes
and what Mr. Lopez's comments were. He said it on the record
with a stenographer.

MR. LEO: Okay. But my question is where can I get
answers without getting the runaround. I want a direct
answer where I can take my complaint to about my broken
machine.

1 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I have no responsibility for your
broken machine. The responsibility lies with you and/or
2 Mr. Lopez. As I said all of your complaints --

3 MR. LEO: I am going to take him to small claims court.
But that's outside the issue.

4 MR. ALLEGRETTI: You do what you want.

5 MR. LEO: I know. I know I have to.

6 MR. ALLEGRETTI: All of your wounds are self-inflicted.
7 Well, you're here.

8 MR. LEO: Right.

9 MR. ALLEGRETTI: What are you asking? You think that
the repair of your machine is the responsibility of the City
10 Water Department?

11 MR. LEO: Sir, do you own a car? Do you own a car? Do
you run your car without oil? Exactly. So my machine loads
12 water.

13 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Don't ask me questions. Are you saying
that your damage or your loss are our responsibility?

14 MS. CERVANTES: Yes.

15 MR. LEO: Yes. Because we were not notified that it was
16 being shut off on that day. On the notice --

17 MR. ALLEGRETTI: You were totally notified that it was
going to happen.

18 MR. LEO: I am going to give this notice to one of your
19 Board Members to read. And it says there you got two weeks
from March 12. It was cut off on the 18th right after the
20 day that she tried to switch it to her name.

21 When we ran the title search, there were no liens
on the property. We went through a title company. We did
22 everything the way it's supposed to be done.

23 MS. CERVANTES: Even I talk to Winna. And I ask her
please if you planning to do this let me know because my
24 customers, they don't deserve that.

25 MR. LEO: We were trying to figure things out with

1 Mr. Lopez. And at the end of the day we got strong-armed
2 into paying it. So you got your money. My question again
3 goes back to --

3 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Strong armed into paying your rightful
4 bill and not paying three years of unmetered water.

4 MS. CERVANTES: No.

5
6 MR. LEO: Sir, the bill that was given was for the work
7 of the meter, not underpaid water. There's nowhere on there
8 that says it's unpaid water.

9 It says, it's on there for the meter, for the meter
10 change, the labor that Calumet plumbing did. And it was for
11 \$1,777 or something along those lines. And we have a receipt
12 here for 1,833. And I'm still trying to get an explanation
13 of why, what was so different.

14 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I don't know how I can make it any more
15 clear.

16 MR. LEO: We can sit down in a meeting if you'd like.

17 MR. ALLEGRETTI: No.

18 MR. LEO: I'm not the smartest guy in the room. But I'm
19 also not a dummy.

20 MR. OCHOA: Who owns the property as of now?

21 MS. CERVANTES: Carmen Cervantes.

22 MR. OCHOA: How long have you owned that property?

23 MS. CERVANTES: I got that under the contract about
24 three years ago.

25 MR. LEO: No. No. March 8.

MS. CERVANTES: March 8.

MR. LEO: Of 2021.

MS. CERVANTES: 2021 they change in my name.

MR. OCHOA: You have an issue with Mr. Lopez. You do
not have an issue with the Water Department.

25

1 MS. CERVANTES: To be honest with you the by-pass I hear
2 through Water Department employee, he say when he hired in he
3 used to go and read the meter. And the by-pass was right
4 there when Hellen and her husband was owner. These people
5 are dead already.

6 So whenever he used to go and read the meter, they
7 know that piece of metal was there.

8 By the way they cut the ground. We found out now
9 when the guy is repairing the machines there was no ground.

10 MR. LEO: That was removed by Calumet Plumbing or
11 whatnot. When they removed the by-pass, they never put that
12 back on.

13 MR. OCHOA: Well, the owner is responsible for the
14 property. Any repairs to the property the owner is
15 responsible.

16 MR. LEO: Okay, sir. Thank you for stating the obvious.
17 But again we're still not getting to a resolution of what our
18 issue is.

19 MR. OCHOA: Well, your issue is with Mr. Lopez. It's
20 not with the Water Department.

21 MR. LEO: That's what I am saying. I am not arguing the
22 \$1,800. I've already paid that. I am arguing the
23 consequences of you shutting off the water without announcing
24 it and without doing it the way you guys originally stated on
25 your paperwork.

MR. OCHOA: That water was known to be shut off at a
certain point.

MR. LEO: What I'm trying to figure out what determined
that point because on paperwork it doesn't match to what
you're saying.

MR. ALLEGRETTI: We're talking in circles here. I think
the purpose of any further discussion, there's no further
purpose for it if I may say, Mr. Ventura. I suppose the
Board can entertain the request by the customer.

His request is that we send an invoice, present an
invoice to the Department for repairs. And if the Board
wants to entertain it, I guess the Board can.

25

1 Then the Board can ask me what my opinion is as to
2 what liabilities the Department may have for the
3 consequential damages of these events which we are all
4 totally familiar with, more familiar with than the gentleman
5 speaking now because he was not here at the last meeting.

6 MR. LEO: I couldn't be here, sir, for something that
7 didn't happen.

8 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I don't know what that means.

9 MR. LEO: They hadn't cut off the water by then. My
10 machine wasn't damaged.

11 MR. ALLEGRETTI: For the tenth time Mr. Lopez was here
12 challenging and questioning and denying his responsibility
13 for discontinuing and disconnecting and reconnecting the
14 meter and the water service after the by-pass was discovered.
15 The Board rejected that argument as being frivolous and not
16 serious which it was not.

17 Suggesting that it was the Water Department's own
18 fault for not finding out that a customer was stealing their
19 water for years, that argument was totally rejected. And he
20 was unequivocally told that his service would be terminated.

21 He said fine, terminate it. He walked out. And he
22 insisted that we were accusing him of improper conduct. And
23 he was angry. So that's what happened the last time.

24 MR. LEO: Okay.

25 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Knowing that nobody did anything until
the water was terminated. And then you and your mom came in
and paid the bill. That's the way it works.

 MR. LEO: But we paid the bill and the water was shut
off. You don't dispute that, correct?

 MR. ALLEGRETTI: No. Your water was shut off. It
should have been shut off months before.

 MR. LEO: But I wasn't asking you that, sir. What I was
trying to ask you is it was shut off. And it was shut off
during operating certain hours. There was customers' clothes
in that machine. And it caused the machine to stop working.

 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I don't know what your operating hours
are. My understanding is laundromats are open like 24 hours

1 a day. But we shut off during business hours when we have
2 our staff and our manpower.

3 MR. LEO: Right. And I checked on the State of Indiana
4 Government Page where it says that you have to knock on the
5 door and let them know that you're shutting it off.

6 MR. ALLEGRETTI: This is not shut off for the
7 traditional nonpayment of a bill. This was shut off --

8 MR. LEO: It doesn't matter. The point was it was shut
9 off. And so you're saying that we're only getting certain
10 rights?

11 MR. ALLEGRETTI: President Ventura, you're conducting
12 the meeting. I am done talking.

13 MR. VENTURA: Any other questions from any of the Board
14 Members?

15 MR. LOPEZ: Mickey Lopez. Look, I had bought that or
16 my kids bought this building in the year 2000 or thereabouts.
17 I rented it from them.

18 I went down and got the meters, two meters put in
19 my name. They came down and got two meter readings. From
20 there on I have been paying the bill. It's been in my name.

21 These folks bought it three years ago. They
22 increased the water usage.

23 Somewhere in these minutes it said that I was
24 getting non-metered water. It's a lie. I was called a liar,
25 a thief. I am not a liar. And I am not a thief anybody that
26 knows me.

27 I paid many other water bills in East Chicago. Why
28 would I want to steal water from a laundromat that I had
29 three machines running?

30 These folks came in. They bought it. The usage
31 went up. It wasn't because we were stealing water. That's
32 absurd.

33 And then I got called a thief at the last meeting
34 and I defrauded the City and I could go to jail. That's why
35 I kind of got out of line. I had to defend myself.

36 I didn't steal water. I didn't put a by-pass in.

1 I don't even think Marilyn Miller put that by-pass in.

2 From what I hear that by-pass was in there way
3 before Marilyn Miller got in there.

4 MS. CERVANTES: I don't even know.

5 MR. LOPEZ: I'm upset with the accusations. You make
6 these people feel --

7 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Mickey.

8 MR. LOPEZ: Go ahead, Joe.

9 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Mickey, I know you and I like you. We
10 know there's only one purpose for a by-pass. And I don't
11 know why anyone would do it. Water is not that expensive.

12 MR. LOPEZ: Joe, you know me. Why would you tell me I'm
13 stealing.

14 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I did not accuse --

15 MR. LOPEZ: Somebody did. Somebody on this Board or
16 somebody accused me. And that's what really ticked me off.

17 MR. ALLEGRETTI: The problem is, Mickey, you said that
18 you would have been happy to disconnect and do the repairs
19 and install the meter properly and eliminate the by-pass
20 yourself.

21 MR. LOPEZ: I got the meetings. I got the minutes here.
22 I said I probably could have done it.

23 MR. ALLEGRETTI: We did that.

24 MR. LOPEZ: You did what? I know you did the by-pass.

25 MR. ALLEGRETTI: We did it for you. We sent you a bill.
So why are we arguing?

MR. LOPEZ: I am arguing because, number 1, I am being
charged for the removal when I didn't install it. I didn't
install it.

I had it for 20 years. That meter was running.
That meter was running until the day it was removed. We
didn't do anything. We invited you in to remove it, Joe.

25

1 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Then it's not a by-pass --

2 MR. LOPEZ: It may not have been.

3 MR. ALLEGRETTI: -- if it's not by-passing.

4 MR. LOPEZ: Maybe it wasn't by-passing. I have no clue.
Do you? Does anybody in here have any reason? I don't know.
5 But I have to defend these folks and I have to defend myself.

6 I mean you think I would steal water? Come on.

7 MR. ALLEGRETTI: No.

8 MR. LOPEZ: Man, I do so many things for free in this
City and I'm going to steal water. Hell no.

9 MR. ALLEGRETTI: No, I don't.

10

MR. LOPEZ: But it sounds like you think I stole water.

11

12 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I answered your question. No. I don't
think you stole water. But you weren't running this
operation over there. There was a by-pass of the meter. And
13 it was eliminated because by-passes are unlawful and a
violation of your contract for usage with the Water Utility.

14

15 MR. LOPEZ: I know that, Joe. Joe, I know that. If I
had of known that --

16 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Somebody has to pay it.

17 MR. LEO: So my question is it's been eliminated for
over a year. It's been eliminated over a year. And the bill
18 has been paid. So that's not a question of us paying or
stealing or robbing.

19

20 But I want know who the hell is going to fix my
machine or who is going to cover me and help me out with that
because I didn't do it. It wasn't self-inflicted.

21

22 MS. CERVANTES: Losing business for that, you know.
Losing money for that.

23 MR. VENTURA: Well, I think that we should stop this
meeting here and give Winna a chance to see because he's
24 asking for what, rules?

25 MR. LEO: I'm just saying I looked up what's the process

1 when you cut off water regardless of the situation, if it's a
2 bill or any reason. And the first thing it says is they
3 should let you know. They should knock on the door and let
4 you know.

5 MR. VENTURA: Give her a chance to see what she's got
6 regarding what you're requesting. And then maybe the Board
7 can meet.

8 MR. LEO: I did reach out to her. And she did say that
9 she would help me file the paperwork. But initially she sent
10 me to the Law Department. I called the Law Department. I
11 haven't got a call back.

12 My mother's issues have been over a year. And she
13 still can't get her \$1,000 deductible. She still can't get
14 her money back.

15 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I am the Law Department.

16 MR. LEO: Okay. I didn't get a call back, sir.

17 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Well, I didn't know you called.

18 MR. LEO: I spoke to someone there.

19 MR. ALLEGRETTI: You know my feelings on the subject.
20 I'm also the City Attorney. Now you know exactly what the
21 Law Department thinks about your claim.

22 MR. LEO: Well, then there you go. So you're telling me
23 my answer then, that you guys are not going to help me
24 recover the cost of my damages?

25 MR. ALLEGRETTI: I don't get a vote. However my opinion
is that this Utility bears no responsibility for any loss you
sustained as a result of this whole unhappy episode. That's
my opinion.

MR. LOPEZ: Joe, I have one other question. It sounds
like these folks have to come after me and I have to go
after the people my kids bought this building from, right?
They happen to be dead. So what happens now? It stops with
me?

MR. ALLEGRETTI: Nobody is going after anybody.

MS. CERVANTES: What is he saying?

25

1 MR. LEO: I'm not going to go away quietly, sir. I will
2 talk to everybody that will listen. I'll bring Channel 5
3 News if I have to. I don't care.

3 MR. ALLEGRETTI: If Channel 5 News --

4 MR. LEO: Actually if you check on your Google Reviews
5 for the Water Department it says your practices are criminal.

5 MR. ALLEGRETTI: Mr. Ventura, I'm done talking.

6 MR. VENTURA: Let's give her a chance to get any
7 information, whatever she needs to get together.

8 MS. CERVANTES: She got the whole information. She
9 knows.

9 MR. LEO: Can I get my little card back?

10 MR. VENTURA: Yeah.

11 MR. LEO: You can take a copy of the receipt if you guys
12 want. Do you want a copy of this?

13 Like I said we're just asking for answers which are
14 apparently hard to get.

14 MR. VENTURA: Any other questions from the Board?

15 MR. BAKOTA: You're going to have to come back at the
16 next meeting then, our next meeting.

17 MR. VENTURA: You could come to the next meeting and
18 we'll see.

18 MR. LEO: Okay. So can I go on the record is it going
19 to have some type of resolution or are we going to do the
20 same thing we did today because I don't want to do the same
21 thing?

21 MR. BAKOTA: We don't know.

22 MR. VENTURA: I'm not sure because there's a couple
23 Board Members not here.

23 MR. LEO: I got you. I'm just asking because I don't
24 want it to be a repetition. I'm trying to get results. I'm
25 not trying to go back and forth.

1 I think I've made my argument clear. My issue is
2 it's not about the by-pass or \$1,800. It's about where the
3 \$1,800 went, a breakdown of that and my damage to my machine
4 which I've since repaired.

5 Actually I got it going. I spent my Easter Sunday
6 when we were closed fixing it. I finally got it going.

7 MR. BAKOTA: Then we're going to consult with the Legal
8 Department because that's where you went.

9 MR. LEO: Yeah. And I got no response.

10 MR. BAKOTA: We haven't heard anything. So we're going
11 to have to go to them and see what judgment they think
12 because you already approached the Legal Department whether
13 you got an answer or not.

14 MR. LEO: Right.

15 MR. BAKOTA: So that will be part of our solution.

16 MR. VENTURA: Because we have consultants.

17 MR. LEO: I understand. I understand there's a process
18 to everything. Like I said I'm just trying to show that, you
19 know, I understand. I'm not getting into the argument of
20 that. But I also believe that there's processes in place
21 that were not honored and things weren't done correctly.

22 I don't care any issue -- I don't care if anybody's
23 opinion if it's self-inflicted or not. Bottom line is things
24 weren't done right. At this point we're paying the
25 consequences. We're a small business, you know.

26 I had the opportunity to put my money in Whiting,
27 in Hammond, other areas. I chose East Chicago because I am
28 actually a recipient of Foundations of East Chicago Scholar
29 from when I graduated Central High School. So I decided to
30 give back to the community. That's what they instill.

31 But it definitely leaves a bitter taste in my mouth
32 when you don't get the support or, you know, you don't get at
33 least an option to find a resolution to this because why
34 would I afford \$1,800 on top of another \$1,000 plus repair.

35 MS. CERVANTES: Plus the repairman.

MR. LEO: Exactly.

1 MS. CERVANTES: Plus losing money because those machines
2 are the moneymakers. It's a 60-pound machine. And every
time when they start working they locked.

3 So they cut the water, full of water, full of
4 clothes. So electricity, we have to wait in order to open
all the machines that went out of cycle, the ones that were
working.

5 And like I said people, they called us all kind of
6 name because they had to go with wet clothes looking for
another laundromat. Losing that day the business plus the no
7 work because that machine is not running. You know, all of
that.

8 MR. VENTURA: We'll continue to give her a chance to see
9 with the Law Department.

10 MS. CERVANTES: And like I say I feel bad, you know,
11 because him and me we try to call Winna. And waiting for
phone call to avoid all of that, make some kind of agreement.
12 Uh-uh. She never responded.

13 MR. LEO: She got another chance. So let's go. So
we're done? We can leave?

14 MR. VENTURA: Yeah.

15 MR. LOPEZ: Mr. President, we can be here all day and
16 nothing is going to get settled. I make a motion that we
refer this to the Legal Department and let's take his
recommendation.

17 Motion to Refer Matter to the Legal Department for
18 Recommendation made by Ray Lopez. Second by Joseph Ochoa.

19 Questions/Comments: None.

20 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
21 Opposed: None Motion Carries.

22 * Next Regular Meeting Date: April 19, 2021
@ 5:00 p.m.


23 Motion to adjourn was made by John Bakota. Second by Joseph
24 Ochoa.

25 * Meeting ended at 5:56 p.m.

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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of
Monday, April 5, 2021
Approved and Signed _____

Henry Ventura, President


Joseph Ochoa, Vice President


John Bakota, Member


Anthony Askounis, Member


Ray Lopez, Member


Anthony Herrera, Board Secretary


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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, LISA PENA, 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 said proceedings taken at said time and place, so ordered to be transcribed.

Dated at Portage, Indiana, this 16th day of April, 2021.



Lisa Pena
Notary Public, Porter County
Certified Shorthand Reporter
License Number 084-003484

