CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
Monday, April 6, 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, Marino Solorio, Jaylen Johnson, Stacy Winfield, Hashem Alhashem

STAFF - Present in Chambers: Tracy Ailes

MR. GOMEZ: Good afternoon everyone. We do have a quorum. I would like to call to order the Plan Commission meeting for Monday, April 6th, 2026.

First on the agenda is approval of the minutes from March 16th, 2026. I'd like to make a motion to approve the meeting minutes of March 16th, 2026, as written.

MS. WINFIELD: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

We'll move on to New Business. We have the City of East Chicago Comprehensive Plan, Section 6, Facilities, and we have a quorum.

MR. SOLORIO: Thank you.

MR. GOMEZ: Let the record show that Lilia Ramos has joined the meeting.

MR. SOLORIO: This is an easy chapter. It's about community facilities. So this is pretty much any, like, institutional type of facility that are identified in the City and around the City. This could be anything from like Post Offices to like -- well, technically, it would be community centers, that's under kind of a separate, under Parks and Recreation -- but if there was no section like that, that would be a community facility also. City Hall is a community facility. So anything that is institutional, libraries, fire stations, police stations; those type of things are technically considered institutional, and so those are identified here.

So you have like the City Clerk's office, City Hall, Housing Department, Bus Transit, Human Rights, all those good things. Library, Post Office, anything, like, in the County, if it has any relevance in terms of City.

So, for example, something like North Township, you know, could be considered a facility. That serves not only just the City, but, you know, North Township in general, schools, again community centers.

And so what this does, it pretty much identifies the facility, the uses, and then their usability. So, for example, schools. If you look at just -- so we just kind of bring it up in terms of why this stuff is outdated -- you look at the public schools that it names and there is a total of 5,950, at the time, people that were in attendance or enrollment back in '07 to 8. That's probably like half now.

So these facilities have also turned over, meaning they are not necessarily being used as what they were initially being used for. Field School, for example, was one that got transferred over and then it transferred back to the School City, and then used for a different purpose. There are also -- they talk about here St. Mary's School, for example, these are private charter schools, parochial, that doesn't exist anymore; Saint Stanislaus, Greater First Christian Academy, and Urban Enterprise Academy.

What this does, it sets at least kind of a record in time of like the different opportunities that they are institutional wise, whether that is to be used for either growth challenge or any future developments.

For example, if you know that you are going to build new housing and the idea is to -- perfect example, Prairie Crossing -- build new houses there. Are there facilities in close proximity that these kids are going to be able to go to school? Or if they are teenagers, is there a high school in close proximity? You kind of start thinking about what that looks like and how to make those connections happen.

Also community facility could be like utilities. So what is underground, those are considered, even though it is not a shelf business, that's infrastructure underneath the streets that technically is used by residents and/or businesses in the City. And so knowing where they are at, whether they are being treated, whether it's well water. So we don't have this issue because we have City services, but say somewhere like Winfield or Crown Point, where they are building new houses, a lot of them are on septic systems. Identifying those septic systems in those cases or in the case of these other areas, the well water, that would be identified on here.

So this talks about the potential of how much treatment of water, how much treatment of sewer, sanitary. So that if any businesses or new house happens, they know what the capacity is of the current systems. So if that needs to be say updated, because now we are going to add 3,000 more homes, then they need to identify where they are going to get more water resources and capacity issues.

Thankfully the City has, you know, with the new filtration water system, I think we are only using maybe 30 percent of our capacity or 40 percent. So if we were to grow, we do have a capacity to provide water to the new businesses and/or new residents, along with being able to process sewage.

So, back in the day when the City was established and when it reached its peak in about 1950, the City used to have about 60,000 people. So we are down to about 26, 27,000. So that's almost little more than half of the population currently exists here. So at that time there was the capacity, a growing capacity for its residents. So we are below that and so that could deal with why we are under our amounts, but also we have obviously newly upgraded to the filtration system and that has increased capacity. That's where you also see the filtration plant or the big tanks that you see now, that's for water pressure, and for, in case of emergency, there's water. There is two new ones that have been built and so that increases capacity.

So there is a map that kind of just shows where those things are, utilities outside of just the City, NIPSCO, A T & T, and telecom pipeline. For those of you who don't know, pretty much our City, if you were to map out -- it would be interesting to show you the map -- if we were to map out all the oil lines that run through this City, you would be, like, shocked and all of this feeds to like airports, like O'Hare, Midway. So these were, as much as you see tanks kind of being there, there is pipes that go underneath that connect everything, and some of these pipelines directly go to these airports or different facilities that use this.

And so it's why you see in a lot of areas, like railroads, exchange, you see these like pipes, kind of PVC with yellow tops that has words, pretty much you can't dig in that area. There is major lines running through there where vibrations could damage the pipes and then cause underground oil spills and things like that. But those tanks are really just what houses the petroleum, not the mechanism, to get it from one place to another. So for the most part that is being done underground, even though there are tanker trailers, semi trailers, that move and transport this, majority of it is handled through underground pipes.

That's kind of important, because then you need to know where you are going to be able to build. If there is no NIPSCO, then you need to create NIPSCO for places that don't exist, knowing where the current, where the supply would be or where was the tie in going to be for water or telecommunication, etcetera. You start then kind of to begin to plan, whether it is a subdivision, redevelopment of current existing areas, or new plat, you begin to identify where those things are going to happen. So it does correlate to future development and how you plan to develop the City.

That's all I have for this section, if you have any questions.

MR. GOMEZ: Thank you, Marino.

MR. SOLORIO: No problem.

MR. GOMEZ: Are there any comments from the Commissioners or the Public? (None)

There being no further questions or comments, our next meeting is Monday, April 20, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.

That concludes all items on the

agenda, I'd like to make a motion for adjournment.

MR. SOLORIO: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries. Thank you everyone. Have a good evening. Meeting adjourned.

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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday, April 6, 2026

Approved and signed April 20, 2026

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

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 9th day of April 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde