CITY OF EAST CHICAGO BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD MEMBERS

Milton Reed, President
Linda Thompson, Member
Frank Smith, Member

Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, April 13, 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
Linda Thompson

Staff Present: Shana Levinson, Attorney for Board
Olga Cosme, Recording Secretary
James Portalatin, Building Commissioner
Lee Watson, First Group Engineering
Kevin Smith, Attorney for Building

MR. REED: Call to order the regular meeting of the Board of Public Safety, April 13th, 2026. We'll follow the agenda in front of us.

I would first welcome our new member, Linda Thompson to the Board. Mr. Trembzyncki has stepped down and was an asset to the Board for many years. He will be missed and we wish him well.

With that being said, may we have a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of March 23rd, 2026 as written?

MR. SMITH: I'll make a motion.

MR. REED: I'll second the motion.
Motion has been properly moved and

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

second. Any questions? (None)
Hearing no questions, we'll take a vote. All in favor?
(Mr. Reed and Mr. Smith signify aye. Ms. Thompson abstained.)
MR. REED: Motion carries.
We have no correspondence, we'll move to New Business.
Fire Department Absentee Report for March 2026, Equipment Report for March 2026, and Training Report for March 2026.
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.
Now we'll turn over to the Building Department. This is kind of hanging over from the last couple of meetings and we'd like to address this now, 3938 Catalpa.
MR. KEVIN SMITH: Good evening. As you may recall this has been continued twice. This is the Building Department's request for affirmation of its demolition order. Mr. Arafat has appeared on both occasions and the Board reset -- I believe it was last before the Board on March 23rd -- and it was set over for a short period of time to allow Mr. Portalatin and Mr. Arafat to try to figure out kind of why we are having a little bit of discrepancy of information.
It continues to be the Building Department's position that the demolition order is proper given the history on the property going back all the way to when we had a demolition order on the garage back in 2024. There's been continued lack of follow through on behalf of Mr. Arafat regarding the property, the condition, and we believe it is such that it does require the affirmation of the order of demolition.
As I mentioned before, this property was also sold at tax sale. Mr. Arafat, when he's been up here, indicates he's going to redeem the property and I have no belief that he won't, but I just want to throw it out there. It's under -- there is a tax certificate that was sold on this property.

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

You know about the south wall, we've talked about that. The pictures are such that you can see there is a gaping hole on that south wall. If you have any questions, Mr. Portalatin is here to answer them. I know that was part of the issue with James not being at the last meeting.

MR. REED: Sure. If you would like to speak, James. I will say, if you want speak, that's fine, but the information you provided us seems to be very thorough to me as a Board member, but if you would like to speak, that's fine with me.

This information speaks volumes of what I have in front of me.

MR. PORTALATIN: I mean if you want me to read the report --

MR. REED: Well, what would be appropriate --

MR. KEVIN SMITH: I just want to make sure the Board has all the additional information. If Mr. Arafat needs it, if the Board has the information that James has in addition since last meeting, I'm satisfied that just adds to the situation.

MR. REED: Well, I think -- I don't know if this needs to be read into the record, but I understand this fully as it's pretty good documentation.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: With that being said, I'd like to make sure it's made part of record.

MR. REED: It's in all of our Board packets. We have print outs of everything that was presented as far as images, which we already had. And the timeline is dated with a timeline in the packet, so it's a part of the record for sure.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

MR. REED: Now, we can given Mr. Arafat a chance to speak. I think you did speak the last couple of times, so if you --

MR. ARAFAT: Siad Arafat, I own 3938 Catalpa. I bought the deed for taxes. The first time when it was discussion of demolition, it was only about

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

the garage. I bought permit on the garage. I got the new siding fixed, the facia, and everything. It was not about the wall that got collapsed.

You can see here on my e-mail -- this is from November 25, 2025. I seen here, I was at the front desk. I told him, look, I put the permit back in August for the tuck pointing. The garage was fixed already and everything; is that correct?

MR. PORTALATIN: That is not correct.

MR. ARAFAT: So I didn't pull the permits back for garage that day and fix it?

MR. REED: There's protocol here. If you want to address the Board, address the Board. And then if we need Mr. Portalatin to respond, we'll do that as well. You can proceed.

MR. ARAFAT: The first order of demo was only for the garage, it was not about the house. I bought permits. I showed them my ownership. I fixed it up. And then I did request another permit, which it shows here I sent e-mail November 25th. I told them I did drop the permit in August for the tuck pointing. No response or anything. Then he call me. See, he left me a voice mail on December 10th. I have it on my phone. Can I do the recording on the phone so everyone can hear?

MR. REED: I would ask our attorney.

MS. LEVINSON: It's not necessary.

MR. ARAFAT: He called December 10th to discuss the property and give me permission to pay the lien of $1,000 for the plywood. And then he told me, once you paid, you will be able to buy the permit.

MR. REED: Stop right there because I don't want to get too deep in the weeds here.

Two things, and this is not about the garage at this point. However, it is clear to me that you did some repairs on the garage, but there was an overhead door on the garage and there was a citation related to that; so that is not a completion to the city of East Chicago.

This is -- when I say this it's to let you know the way we do this. What if it was our

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

next door neighbor? What if it was someone that we care about that lived next door? They deserve a neighborhood that is to certain standards for everyone.

MR. ARAFAT: I agree with you.

MR. REED: I am saying this timeframe. I am going back to '23. Let's put the garage aside. If you just said that it was whatever the fees were for the board up on the building, that you said you totally paid those fees. Have you paid those fees?

MR. ARAFAT: I went for --

MR. REED: That's a yes or no.

MR. ARAFAT: His assistant, Ms. Rodriguez, she went three times. I don't know about it. We have to talk to James first before we can accept the payment. It shows here. And, Mr. James said, you cannot touch the property or garage until you get another permit. And the second permit was pulled on August. It's been going since August this time.

MR. REED: So here's what I suggest --

MR. ARAFAT: I have a voice mail from him. We were in three-way discussion on December 10th, before Christmas. He told me, Siad, go ahead, pay the $1,000.00, and then you can get the permit. It's been two months. And then Mr. Engineer come in and start another story. You can't do it. You need to get the drawings. We are going to demo the building. And Mr. James is not answering calls. He's on vacation or he can't answer phone call, can't answer e-mail. Every time I call he is not here. He is going to call you back. He is going to call you back. What can I do?

MR. REED: Let me say -- here's where you are now. Based on the timeline and what information we have, I am not going to get debating, like, did you pay the fees? Did you not pay the fees? Because of this deterioration where you have an open hole in the building, this is quite a different scenario now than what it might have been.

All of this needs to kind of start maybe even with a fresh conversation. We can't go back in the past, that won't change. I can guarantee that you come forward, we appreciate that you come here

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

because you are on point coming forth, but now, outside of this packet, this is what we need to do.

We need to establish, number one, what will be the new standard from the Building Department, that is going to required. As you heard me say many times, the demo order is not the end of the process. It's the start of the clock. You have ample time to do everything you need, including your demolition before the actual demolition takes place. So the order is like day one. That gives you plenty of time. Take all the past out of this and act like this is a brand new situation.

You have to connect with James and Mr. Watson to get a full agreement to put all that in place, to show active repairs, active efforts. And then if he comes to me and says that has not happened, then that's a different scenario. He comes to me then and says, I cannot pay, I won't receive permits; that's a different scenario.

Now we are starting from scratch and we have a time clock on everything. We are going to accept this order. Everything you said, put all that to the past. This is not a kill strike, it's let's start the clock. And then after time, adequate time to get it done, but I want to be very aggressive. This has been going on with the garage since '23. That's a good stretch of time.

I think we can all come together and move forward. Is that agreeable?

MR. PORTALATIN: Yes.

MR. REED: Let's try that, and then we'll enter our order. Thank you for appearing. And in all fairness, there is a process for everything.

MR. ARAFAT: What would be the next step?

MR. REED: The next step is to connect with James, go to the office, or Mr. Watson, have a full understanding, on paper, of what it takes to get this off of the demolition list. That's a pretty standard process, but you have done it before.

So again, I am just advising. This is going in be fresh. All the things that happened, for whatever reason, there's no need to blame or he said she said. Let's go in fresh. Get a new agreement and understand what this is to start the work. Start to pay whatever needs to be paid. The old cost, pay that right

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

away. Take it in when you have the agreement.
I hold everyone accountable. We are on camera here and that's what we'll do. That starts as early as tomorrow morning.
Is that fair enough?

MR. ARAFAT: You can get communication from them. I am letting you know last meeting I did replace 11 roofs in Lake County. This is nothing for me. I just --

MR. REED: I think you said that before. I think there's bad history and miscommunication. We are moving forward.

MR. ARAFAT: Thank you so much.

MR. REED: Thank you for coming out.

MS. LEVINSON: I recommend that there be a motion entered.

MR. REED: At this time we would entertain a motion to enter the demolition order for 3938 Catalpa.

MR. SMITH: I will make that 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.

MS. LEVINSON: By way of discussion, the materials that were submitted by the Building Department and also by this gentlemen, be admitted in evidence, so to speak, be made part of the record.

MR. REED: I comment, these will be put in the record. He did present us with e-mails that he sent back in last November, that's also part part of record.
So any other discussion?

MR. KEVIN SMITH: May we request a status date for 90 days?

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

MR. PORTALATIN: Let's do it next month.

MR. REED: I don't want to push it out too far.

MR. PORTALATIN: The regular Board of Safety meeting, the last one.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: The second meeting in May.

MR. REED: That would be fine.
Hearing no further questions --

MS. LEVINSON: I would just point out that's Memorial Day is when we would be meeting so we'll probably have to adjust it a little. The next meeting will be May 11th, unless there's a special date.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: I want to make sure to send notice out to Mr. Arafat as well. May 11th is the only date or it would go to june. It's up to the Board.

MR. REED: What do you want to do? This is just a status update.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: I think Mr. Portalatin would like the 11th to get some status from Mr. Arafat and let the Board know what is going on.

MR. REED: That's close to 30 days and he says he's ready.

MR. PORTALATIN: Whatever your meeting in May, I'm fine with that.

MR. REED: We would have to change the date and we aren't sure if we can have the conference room because the normal date is Memorial Day.

MR. PORTALATIN: That's fine, the 11th.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: May 11th.

MR. REED: We'll send notice to Mr. Arafat for May 11th. Okay, thank you.
Olga, is that okay?

MS. COSME: Yes.

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

MR. REED: Is there audience for participation? (None)
Our next meeting date is Monday, April 27, 2026, at 5:00 p.m..
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.

* * * *

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

Approval of the Public Safety Minutes
of April 13th, 2026
Approved and Signed, Monday, April 13th, 2026.

_____
Milton Reed, President

_____
Linda Thompson, Member

_____
Frank Smith, Member

_____
Olga Cosme, Secretary

* * * * *

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb

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 20th day of April, 2026.



Peggy S. LaLonde

Electronically signed by Peggy LaLonde (301-364-327-3860) 00e80bbb-4891-4790-a8ad-f31f6e6bfcbb