

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
April 27, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS:

Anthony Serna, President
Rick Rodriguez, Vice President
Valda Lewis, Secretary
Gilberto Cantu
Eugene Austin

STAFF:

Ateria Allen
Dawn Dawkins-Legal
Vanessa Hernandez-Orange

Reported by: Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR
Fissinger & Associates

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Present: Anthony Serna, Eugene Austin
Telephonic: Valda Lewis, Gilberto Cantu
Staff Present: Ateria Allen
Vanessa Hernandez-Orange

MR. SERNA: We do have a quorum. Rick Rodriguez advised me he would not be able to attend tonight's meeting.

First, under Administrative Matters, we have approval of April 14, 2021, meeting minutes. I'll entertain a motion to approve.

MS. LEWIS: I move for approval.

MR. AUSTIN: Second.

CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)

Motion carries.

Next we have approval of payroll dated April 16, 2021. Entertain a motion to approve the payroll dated April 16, 2021.

MS. LEWIS: I move for approval.

1 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

2 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
3 saying aye?

4 (All signify aye.)

5 Motion carries.

6 Next we have approval of Warrant
7 042721 PB, in the amount of \$12,625.24. Entertain a
8 motion to approve.

9 MS. LEWIS: I move for approval.

10 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

11 CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
12 saying aye?

13 (All signify aye.)

14 Motion carries.

15 Move on to Old Business. Madame
16 Secretary, any old business?

17

18 MS. ALLEN: No.

19

20 MR. SERNA: Move on to New Business.
21 Vanessa Hernandez Orange, Director of Parks and
22 Recreation. Vanessa?

23

24 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Good evening.
25 Before you, you have actually two past due invoices for
Garden Trends Inc., and these items -- I could not tell
you how they got through my office without getting paid
immediately, but they did. Basically they are just to
plant. One of the items is from December and I feel
like just because the books were already closed was one
of the reasons why we couldn't pay it in time. As well
as, the second one was February 12th, so the books were
still not open at that time. So this is the reason we
need to approve these items.

26

27 MR. SERNA: All right. Any questions on
28 the past due invoices? (None) Entertain a motion for
29 payment of the two invoices to Garden Trends, one in the
30 amount of \$10 and one in the amount of \$16.20.

31

32 MR. AUSTIN: Make a motion.

33

34 MS. LEWIS: Second.

35

1 MR. SERNA: All in favor of the motion
signify by saying aye.

2 (All signify aye.)
Motion carries.

3
4 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Next, I am asking
for approval of 2021 Parks and Recreation rental fees.
5 So what I noticed in our department we had a couple of
mix ups as in how much the pavilion was at one point, on
6 paper it said a different amount. We also had Riley
Park included, plus the gazebos. We have corrected the
7 amounts of rental for our shelters, our gazebos, the
pavilions, that is already added on here. Also we added
8 some information in regards to how many hours for the
rental.

9 Also, I notice in our registration
forms, you have to have the event prior to 5:00 o'clock,
because after five, you have to have security. So it's
10 evident for staff to know when people call and ask,
basically this is what it is.

11 Again, we are not renting out Riley
Park at this point in time.

12
13 MR. SERNA: Any questions? (None)

14 MR. AUSTIN: I'd like to know how many --
if they want to rent it -- how long is the time. When
they have to put the deposit down, you know, if they put
15 the deposit down and then like a week or two before time
they decide not to have it, what is the penalty on this?

16
17 MR. SERNA: That's a good question.

18 MRS. HERNANDEZ ORANGE: So basically
first and foremost, in order to save the space -- the
date -- you have to have a deposit of \$200.00 put down
19 in order to make that happen. Now, the other amount
that you have to pay for the rental space, you could
20 wait on that. Again, this is all on the application
portion. If you are paid in full for the date -- and
21 last year we approved a rain day, if cancelation was
because of inclement weather, we would give a year for
22 you guys to be able to do it on a different date. Other
than that, the deposit and the amount is all lost.

23
24 MR. SERNA: So you lose the deposit. You
would lose it if you change your mind, if you put a
deposit down and change your mind. If you needed to
25 change the date, you could maybe try and find another

1 date that might be open.

2 MRS. HERANDEZ-ORANGE: Like right now I
3 have things already scheduled in August. We have things
4 already scheduled in June. So people are trying to
5 schedule out the shelters and the pavilions that we
6 have.

7 MR. AUSTIN: The reason why I said that,
8 we would have a problem because sometimes people write a
9 check -- you know -- and then I seen a lot of problem
10 with the checks. And that's one thing that I think we
11 should have some answers for that. You know what I'm
12 saying? If the checks go in -- you know -- they write
13 you a check, so they got the money there, but they got a
14 month before they have it and then you stall around
15 putting the check, now there's no money there.

16 MR. SERNA: What do we do with NSF
17 checks?

18 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: We don't take any
19 personal checks. It's solely, cash, money order. We
20 have done cashier's checks. You can pay with your debit
21 card.

22 MR. SERNA: So cash or debit card, or
23 cashier's check.

24 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Correct.

25 MR. SERNA: Any further questions on the
rental fees? (None) I'll entertain a motion to approve
the 2021 rental fees for Riley Park Hall, park permits,
gazebos and pavilions.

MS. LEWIS: I move for approval.

MR. AUSTIN: Second.

CHIEF SERNA: All in favor signify by
saying aye?

(All signify aye.)
Motion carries.

MRS. HERANDEZ-ORANGE: I just wanted to
let you guys know that on April 30th we'll be having our
Arbor Day -- our Earth and Arbor Day celebration, and
that is in conjunction with ASCIA and that Roxana Park

1 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. We also are dedicating
2 the planting to the nurses of East Chicago. So we have
3 contacted St. Catherine's Hospital to let them know that
4 we are interested for them -- we would like for them to
5 come and partake with us as we are planting for rebirth
6 and they kept our community alive. So that's the main
7 reason for that.

8 I also want to let you guys know,
9 that our plants will be on sale starting Monday. I know
10 we have been planting here and there, but the hours for
11 the plant sale are Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday from
12 9:00 a.m. to 11, and from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. And
13 seniors only will be able to shop every first Friday of
14 the month starting May, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.,
15 and that's until we are out.

16 So my suggestion is, if you want
17 flowers, come early. I think we have sent out fliers
18 for the type of flowers we have. I'll send our
19 secretary the fliers for the type of flowers we have,
20 just so you know and can come in to purchase.

21 MR. SERNA: I'll definitely try to get
22 there. It seems to be in my later years, my wife and I
23 are into gardening in our backyard and I'd appreciate
24 that price list. I've been telling people to go there,
25 I don't know if anybody has gone. Everybody who I know
is into flowers and plants, I've been telling them
Monday through Friday, 9 to 12, and then they take break
from 12 to 1, even if it's just to go see the
Greenhouse. I want people to go see the Greenhouse. In
telling them the story, it's hard for them to imagine.
They think I'm exaggerating that they have got tomatoes
growing up the walls.

19 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So for that, I
20 actually had a phone call today from someone from
21 Noblesville, Indiana. They had graphics -- I think the
22 site is trying to go into their community -- but they
23 said, you know, we look at all your parks, google maps
24 and the square space or whatever, for how many parks we
25 have to how big our city is, that they are just like in
awe. Because we have 17 parks for the small space that
we have that is East Chicago. And they want to come up
and see what we have to offer. I mean, I was excited to
hear that, to have compliments from someone close to
Indianapolis on what we do here. I think that's a great
job.

1 MR. SERNA: Obviously -- you know --
2 these parks have been around since before us. So it was
3 the City Planner's way in the beginning to see a vision.
4 They must have saw, hey, we are surrounded by industry.
5 Smoke is billowing from all these smoke stacks. Let's
6 try and preserve some green space. I think that people
7 know for our size, say 13 to 15 square miles of actual
8 city of East Chicago, we have a lot of parks. We have a
9 lot of square footage or square miles or acres --
10 however you want to comment -- of parks, and that's why
11 it's such a hard job to maintain and that's why it's a
12 focal point.

13 Some people complain about parks.
14 Some people really are appreciative. I think one thing
15 that stands out is over the past ten years or so, under
16 this administration, the amount of money that has been
17 put into parks and recreation centers to the Greenhouse,
18 to these gazebos. So it's one thing to have the land,
19 but you can see that this administration, through the
20 Parks Director, through everyone on the Board here, has
21 been managing it very well.

22 So having someone from Noblesville
23 interested and I'm telling you, everyone I run into I
24 tell them, go see the Greenhouse -- just to see it.

25 Let me ask Rick Rodriguez's
26 questions that he text me. One was, did you find out
27 about the repainting of the walking trails at the parks?

28 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I did. I thought
29 I sent him a message. I apologize if I didn't. What
30 happened, he said there was a warranty. I checked and
31 it's one year. So none of the locations are under
32 warranty anymore.

33 MR. SERNA: To get repainted?

34 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Even for cracks
35 in the trails, they are not warranty for other than a
36 year. So I went -- myself and the rest of my staff --
37 we went to go look at all of the trails. And actually I
38 contacted Perm-A-Seal because we are looking to have
39 them do the basketball courts, as well as some of the
40 trails that have actual cracks. If you walk all the
41 trails, there is some that are like the roots are kind
42 of coming up. So we have them coming to just give us a
43 quote for all that, so we can fix that.

1 MR. AUSTIN: I would like to know, the
2 weather is getting nice and what do you think people are
3 going to be allowed to do. Most people, they might say,
4 hey, let's go to the park and let's have a bar-be-que
5 with the kids. Can they do that? Can they just go out
6 there with the kids? So, I mean are you going to have
7 something that says they can do these things?

8 I'd like to have something in my car
9 because a lot of times you can stop an argument if you
10 are driving by and you see something, you can easily go
11 and say, hey, this is the rules. Maybe you haven't seen
12 this. That's what I'd like to know.

13 MR. SERNA: That's not a bad idea.

14 MR. AUSTIN: Especially the members here,
15 if they have that in their car. If they see an
16 altercation, they can easily go to the car and cool it
17 down. Hold it, let's get something straight -- that's
18 what I'm saying. Like what people is doing now, man,
19 they're crazy.

20 MR. SERNA: One thing I notice when we
21 first got the gazebos because of the electricity, that's
22 where they were charging phones, plug in their boom
23 boxes. And people -- I even saw cars in Washington
24 Park, I'm talking late at night. So that is not a bad
25 idea to have the rules. Maybe you can e-mail that,
or -- you know -- we are old school, print it out so we
can pick that up at the office maybe.

26 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That's fine.

27 MR. AUSTIN: You know, I would just like
28 to bring it up with the members, because simple reason,
29 this is where we try to put things together, right here,
30 instead of out there with them, because they ain't
31 listening.

32 MR. SERNA: We know that's right. Rick
33 Rodriguez's second question was, when does the grass
34 cutting start? He feels that Riley Park needs to be
35 cut.

36 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I'm a hundred
37 percent with him. And we have to wait for funding from
38 the Council in order to give that to Public Works. The
39 goal was suppose to be the first week of May. I think

1 from the last night's meeting, everything was approved
2 to go, so it should be happening. Again, I don't know
3 exactly when. I'll have to call Public Works to make
4 sure that they are cutting. I did reach out to Public
5 Works last week because I wanted to know the list of
6 people who were cutting, just in case I had complaints
7 from anyone, just who I should talk to.

8 MR. SERNA: You should know.

9 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So we did that,
10 but again, we'll have to wait for the funding to come in
11 so they can start cutting the grass. I'm waiting for
12 that and I think it happened on Monday. Then it's two
13 weeks before you actually get the funds into your
14 account. So, I don't know if they are going to wait for
15 all that to happen, I couldn't tell you that.

16 MR. SERNA: Okay. I'll let Rick know and
17 that is the major problem of this zeroing budget out
18 contracts. This is directly where the Council zeros out
19 the contractual funds out across all line items. If the
20 grass is growing on Riley, I'm sure the grass is growing
21 at all the other parks. It's only a matter of time
22 before we get more complaints in about long grass and be
23 able to answer people and say, talk to your local
24 council person and ask them why the grass isn't being
25 cut in a timely fashion.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That's what my
staff does, as well we explain -- we understand because
it's something for sore eyes -- we do try to keep our
parks as clean as possible. The Public Works Department
hears from my office once a day. I feel bad, but -- you
know -- we have to try to do our job too.

MR. SERNA: Those are the two questions
that Rick had and I will text him the answers. Thank
you.

Any other questions for Vanessa?

(None)

Next item is Public Comments, do we
have any public comments? (None)

All right. Our next meeting is
Tuesday, May 11, 2021, right here at the City Hall
Council Chambers, at 5:00 p.m.

I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

MS. LEWIS: I so move.

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MR. AUSTIN: I second it.

MR. SERNA: All in favor signify by saying aye?

(All signify aye.)
Motion carries. Meeting adjourned.

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

Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Tuesday
April 27, 2021

Approved and signed May 11, 2021



Anthony Serna, President



Rick Rodriguez, Vice-President

Valda Lewis, Secretary

Gilberto Cantu, Member



Eugene Austin, Member



Ateria Allen, Recording 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 4th day of May, 2021.

Peggy S. LaLonde

Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

