

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
June 7, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS:

Valeriano Gomez, President
Anthony Serna, Vice-President
Lilia Ramos, Secretary
Joanne Moricz, Commissioner
Chanthini Fowler, Commissioner
Douglas Sloss, Commissioner
William Allen, Commissioner
Lydia Lopez, Commissioner
Stacy Winfield, Commissioner

STAFF:

Mireya Huizar, Secretary
Richard Morrisroe
Douglas Powers
Ateria Allen

Reported for Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.

By: Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR RPR

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Present in Chambers: Valeriano Gomez,
Anthony Serna, Chanthini Fowler, William
Allen

Present Via Telephone Confererence: Lilia
Ramos, Joanne Moricz, Douglas Sloss, Lydia
Lopez, Stacy Winfield

STAFF: Present in Chambers: Ateria Allen, Mireya
Huizar, Richard Morrisroe, Douglas Powers

MR. GOMEZ: We have approval of minutes
of the regular meeting, Monday, May 17, 2021. Entertain
a motion to approve as written.

MR. SERNA: So moved.

MS. FOWLER: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: Roll call.

Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None
Opposed: None

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

Next we move on to new business. We
have the City Planner's report. We have two items on
the agenda for tonight. Mr. Powers?

MR. POWERS: Thank you, Commissioners.

1 So the first item on the agenda is 300 West 151st
2 Street. And before we go any further -- Burnie Taylor,
3 is someone going to be bringing the mylar today or
4 something to be signed at a later time?

5 MR. TAYLOR: We can get the mylar any
6 time you like. What we have gotten so far is the
7 subdivision plat themselves. We can bring the mylar
8 over any time.

9 MR. POWERS: Today what we are presented
10 with, Commissioners, if you look at the site plan for
11 this location, that is a proposed re-plat that they are
12 adjusting the property boundaries between lot 1 and lot
13 2 from where the property line previously was, and this
14 is for the proposed split between the property owners
15 that are here today and their partnering group. If you
16 don't have any questions for me, if it will be all
17 right, I'll introduced the group.

18 MR. GOMEZ: This is approval of re-plat?

19 MR. POWERS: They are asking for approval
20 of re-plat, that's correct. Within -- you know --
21 probably 3 to 6 months, I believe is when we'll start
22 looking at the design drawings.

23 MR. TAYLOR: Approximately.

24 MR. GOMEZ: Okay. This presentation of
25 re-plat, does it have to go anywhere else?

MR. POWERS: No.

MR. GOMEZ: No zoning issues or anything
else?

MR. POWERS: The property, zoning,
everything is good. There is no issues with that. The
only reason that they are doing this is so they can have
this legally separated because there's going to be two
different clients procuring these lots, that way each of
them can do their development at separate times.

So one stage we will see the Agile,
the lot 1, which is listed as West Agile. The people
that are here with us today will be presenting those
design drawings at a separate time. Lot 2, which they
will presenting those drawings at another time.

1 MR. GOMEZ: Are gentlemen going to speak
2 to us on the project?

3 MR. POWERS: There is a few gentlemen
4 here. There is Wayne Torrenga -- and I don't know if
5 you guys want to introduce yourself, answer any
6 questions. I'm not sure who all wants to speak. I know
7 Burnie Taylor, he was from Agile, and Bob Ulliman are
8 the engineering architectural firm that helps work with
9 Agile in local issues.

10 MR. GOMEZ: I don't know if the
11 Commissioners are aware of what is going on. Can
12 someone give us a little background?

13 MR. TAYLOR: Agile proposed the work. We
14 are a third party logistics company in the chain. We
15 operate mostly industrial appraisers and we are looking
16 to re-plat this property in East Chicago. And then over
17 the next year and a half will be filling out a cold
18 storage facility on that lot. We have engaged Torrenga
19 Engineering, with Gary, and his team, who will be on
20 this call tonight. Certainly any technical questions he
21 would be able to answer. This is to kind of start the
22 process being re-platted first.

23 MR. GOMEZ: Okay. Anyone else with this
24 project like to make any comments?

25 MS. WINFIELD: Mr. President, I would
like to ask a question.

MR. GOMEZ: Yes, Stacy, go ahead.

MS. WINFIELD: Well, I don't know if this
is the point where the fire department comes in with
this, but have they inspected or is this not time for
them to go for inspection?

MR. GOMEZ: That would come at a later
date. Right now we are going to consider the
re-platting of the property.

MS. WINFIELD: Okay. Great, thank you.

MR. MORRISROE: Everyone knows where the
property is.

MR. POWERS: Does anyone have any

1 questions where this property is located? I know you
2 were provided with the site plan, but is there anyone
3 that's not certain of this location, needs any
4 clarification.

5 MS. WINFIELD: I'm not for sure where
6 this property is.

7 MR. TORRENGA: The property is located on
8 the north side of 151st Avenue, the east side of
9 Railroad Avenue, and immediately just west of the
10 waterway. So it's a fairly isolated piece. It's been
11 empty for quite awhile. We have platted it a number of
12 years ago, at least 10 or 12, for Mike Goines, but Mike
13 didn't really want to build apparently, so he did not.
14 So now we are platting for these gentlemen so they can
15 build a cold addition.

16 MR. MORRISROE: This is formerly Union
17 Tank.

18 MR. TORRENGA: It's got sanitary. It's
19 got water mains. It's got outlets already that we'll be
20 using going out in the waterway. Everything is there.
21 But these gentlemen seem to be serious about wanting to
22 build on it as opposed to the former client. Thank you.

23 MR. POWERS: So this property may be
24 better referenced as the former sight of the Union Tank
25 for anyone who's familiar with the area and it's
26 history.

27 MS. WINFIELD: Okay. Thank you.

28 MR. GOMEZ: Are there any questions or
29 comments for these gentlemen?

30 MR. SLOSS: Mr. President, I have a quick
31 question. Once that facility is built will there be any
32 job opportunities for our citizens?

33 MR. TAYLOR: I'll speak to that. On the
34 parcel 1, our lot 1, on the south end, will be somewhere
35 between 80 and 100 employees for that facility. And for
36 the other two could be upwards of 100 to 200 potential.
37 So somewhere in the 300 total head count for employees
38 is what we would need and would add to the City.

39 MR. SLOSS: Thank you for that

1 information.

2 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir.

3 MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions or
4 comments?

5 MS. RAMOS: I'm sorry, is that the site
6 -- the old sight of Union Tank or is that across the
7 street?

8 MR. GOMEZ: It's the old sight of the
9 Union Tank.

10 MS. RAMOS: Thank you.

11 MR. GOMEZ: Any other questions or
12 comments? (None) There being no further questions or
13 comments, I'd entertain a motion to approve the
14 re-platting of the property.

15 MR. SERNA: So moved.

16 MR. ALLEN: Second.

17 MR. GOMEZ: Roll call.

18 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None
19 Opposed: None

20 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

21 MR. POWERS: Thank you, gentlemen. I
22 will touch base with you later so we can coordinate our
23 next steps.

24 Next item on the agenda today is
25 East Chicago Rail Terminal LLC, 3800 Michigan Avenue.
So this site was presented in front of the Plan
Commission a little over a year ago. And now in view of
the site plan, they are proposing the additional rail
that was discussed at that time. And if you have any
questions for me, I will gladly entertain those. We
have a few gentleman that are here with us too to speak
on this topic.

MR. GOMEZ: Does anybody need an update
on the project? It's been awhile since they were here
before. Any questions or comments? (None) It says
here today to approve.

1 MR. POWERS: Today they are adding the
2 additional rail line as shown on the site plan, that
3 they have coordinated with the various departments to
4 make sure they are able to meet our tech requirements.
5 There are no proposed changes to the actual building for
6 the land use. However, they are adding additional
7 railways or -- you know -- change terminal, becomes like
8 a change terminal. If it's all right I'd like to
9 introduce William Marsh. He can speak on this a little
10 more too.

11 MR. MARSH: Thank you for bringing me
12 back. I recognize most of the people. I don't know if
13 I know everybody. Does everybody recognize me?

14 MR. GOMEZ: Since you were here last time
15 we had some new commissioners.

16 MR. SERNA: Last time we were talking
17 about the fruit trees.

18 MR. MARSH: The peaches and plums are
19 going to be good. So you want to get background on me
20 and the property, what we are doing over there for the
21 group?

22 MR. GOMEZ: Maybe you should, we have
23 some new commissioners.

24 MR. MARSH: I moved American Bar Products
25 from southeast Pennsylvania to East Chicago in 2015.
And the reason that we left was because the
manufacturing base of the U.S. is under a lot of
pressure, mostly from foreign countries. A lot of
Chinese goods have come in. I don't have to tell you
things you probably know. We are one company operating
in the East Coast that it proved difficult because our
suppliers were shutting down and our primary supplier
used to be the largest steel mill in the world, had a
really strong, good, deep water port, and they closed it
and they built a casino. And that really kind of got me
because that's not the direction we should be going.

Imbedded as I was in the community,
I did a lot of things to try to support the industry out
there. The writing was on the wall. We had to move.
So we needed to decide where to move. So I started
looking seriously for property in 2007, that's a long
time ago, 2007. And it was going to be either somewhere

1 down south or somewhere in the Midwest. We looked at
2 places like Alabama. If I was speaking to you in
3 January, I would tell everybody I would move to Alabama.
4 A lot nicer than East Chicago in January. Not
5 withstanding the weather, we decided to come to East
6 Chicago for a couple of reasons.

7 First of all, our biggest market,
8 majority of our suppliers and our customers are here.
9 The industrial base has got such a strong history that
10 even though we are still under pressure out here in the
11 Midwest, there is still a lot of good people with a lot
12 of industrial knowledge. Even though a lot of
13 infrastructure in the south is growing, it didn't have
14 what we have, which is the people and the history. That
15 counts for a lot. Especially if we are trying to
16 rebuild our community and the state on our country, and
17 that's what we are trying to do.

18 We met with the City many times, and
19 this was back probably starting before 2010, as we
20 looked for a facility, just to meet and talk to the
21 people that were here, and always had a really good,
22 positive response. 2015 we bought the property at 3600
23 Michigan Avenue and some of you remember what it used to
24 look like. It was pretty rough. The building was in
25 disrepair. The lot was overgrown with weeds. And it
26 looked like it needed a little bit of TLC. And that's
27 what we did, we bought it and we moved our small steel
28 operating company in there.

29 We took about 35,000 square feet out
30 of 100,000 square feet available -- and I probably
31 shouldn't tell you, I'm sure if you knew, it would get
32 you in trouble. I don't like to get anybody in trouble.
33 I actually lived there. I actually lived on that
34 industrial facility for three years because I'm a small
35 guy. I'm not a big corporate business. I'm
36 conservative. I'm cautious with my money. I don't
37 spend on things I don't have to. And to make the
38 project work and make it fly, I lived in one of the
39 office buildings there for three years to make this
40 work. When you drove home at night, you probably would
41 see a guy out there with a spreader and that was me. I
42 was spreading fertilizing on slag. And I'm one of the
43 few guys who can grow grass on slag.

44 Once we got the grass growing, I
45 planted some raspberries and some rose bushes. I also

1 planted apple trees, peach, plum, persimmon, mulberry
2 and cherry trees. I've got a patch of blackberries in
3 the ground. We have got a flower garden. In about a
4 month you'll be able to see it out front, and we do that
5 by a special gardening technique. The local tree
6 service companies generate the wood mulch out of wood
7 chips. After a year and a half to two years it turns
8 into a really good sub soil that plants grow in, but
9 only if you provide them with -- you've heard this
10 presentation before, so know the answer -- nitrogen
11 sources. One of the best nitrogen sources God gave us
12 is --

7 MR. GOMEZ: Chickens.

8 MR. MARSH: Right. So we got chickens
9 out there. I got 13, two roosters and 11 girls. People
10 ask me, how many eggs do you get? The girls lay about
11 five eggs per week per bird, and I got 11 girls. You
12 can do the math, which we give out to our church or in
13 the community. I go to Grace Mission Baptist church.
14 We bring them in their sometimes. We bring them to
15 meetings. We use the fertilizer generated on the site
16 to rehabilitate the property.

17 What we are trying to show is that
18 we have a property that fits well in the community,
19 that's pretty healthy, that's green, that supports life,
20 because I like nature and I like steel. Two different
21 things and they don't have to be apart. They can do
22 some good together. We built the last building last
23 year. We were required to put in a swale at the back
24 end of the property. I thought what would be nice,
25 instead of a swale, dig a little deeper to make it a
pond. So now we want to put fish in there. We are
going to have water plants in there. Now we can get
some water fowl coming back in.

Even though this is an industrial
area, it can be a green area place where you pick
raspberries, a place where you grow tomatoes, and have
chickens walking around. The City says you can't have
chickens, but then I went into my speech. You have
heard my speech about chickens, how important chickens
are. And the City, to its credit, said keep them off
the road, keep them contained, you can keep your
chickens. I said thank you.

So that's kind of the relationship

1 we have with the City, great relationship. The latest
2 project that we have is to extend the rail. As you
3 probably know there's been rail on-site for 100 years or
4 so. It's connected to the IHB. The IHB is a national
5 assets and it's one of the things in this area I can
6 tell you about, you know. This is the largest remaining
7 switch operator in the country, and we are connected to
8 it. So it's a great asset. So what we are trying to do
9 is, leverage what is in the region to make the region
10 more healthy, more economical, take advantage of what we
11 have got.

12 Heavy industry and industrial
13 knowledge, and industrial resource already have rail in
14 there. The rail operation in the current building, we
15 are going to have a track in the back to support that.
16 If anybody is in the shipping business, you know that
17 shipping today is extremely difficult and expensive
18 because it's really hard to find trucks, really hard to
19 find drivers, and I expect that to continue. Plus a lot
20 of trucks on the road are really bad for the
21 environment. They are what they are. What we're trying
22 to do is take more traffic from the trucks, relieve the
23 congestion and put it on rail.

24 So I'm a green guy. I love animals
25 and plants. If that's true, I'm doing my part for that
too or we are doing our part for that too. So we are
not going to be adding any impermeable surface, not
going to be requirements, no new structures, no new
power requirements. I think we pretty much run up the
flag pole to make sure we are not stepping on the toes
of anybody at the City. I think we are looking good to
make sure everybody knows what we are up to and there is
no surprises. And we are grateful for your support and
we very much like being a part of this community. Happy
for any questions on comments?

I've just got another comment. I
don't think you have come to my site to visit me. I am
looking -- I'm not sure I recognize any of you being on
my site. So I am there, I'm available any time. In the
meantime I didn't mean to interrupt. Any questions?

MR. GOMEZ: Any questions or comments?

MR. MORRISROE: Mr. Marsh, is this
primarily to be a storage area or transfer area or
loading, what is the function of all those rails?

1 MR. MARSH: Combination of both. So in
2 the industry there is what is called a sit yard, storage
3 in transit. Shipping something from the east coast to
4 west coast, or almost anywhere in the country, one side
5 through the other, you got to come through Chicago. And
6 you know how things never go smooth. If you have got a
7 bunch headed to the west coast and the customer says,
8 wait a minute, we need another week to get that lumber
9 to where it's going. IHB, we got a big problem. We got
10 to keep this load on the tracks. That's a really bad
11 thing for IHB and all the different counter parts. We
12 need a place to put them for a week or ten days.

13 MR. MORRISROE: Is this almost a joint
14 venture between yourself and IHB?

15 MR. MARSH: It's not a financial joint
16 venture. IHB has been integral and very supportive. In
17 the beginning we worked the logistics over at IHB. We
18 can't operate without that good relationship.

19 MR. MORRISROE: Would they be your
20 primary source of rail cars?

21 MR. MARSH: A hundred percent. Nothing
22 on our property without IHB.

23 MR. GOMEZ: Any other comments? (None)
24 There being no further comments, I'd entertain a motion
25 to approve the rail terminal extension project.

MR. SERNA: So moved.

MR. ALLEN: Second.

MR. GOMEZ: Roll call.
Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None
Opposed: None

MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries.

MR. MARSH: I'm grateful. Please come
visit me.

MR. GOMEZ: That concludes new business
for tonight. We have no old business on the agenda.
Any comments from the Commissioners? (None) Any
comments from the public? (None)

Next meeting is Monday, June 21st,
at 4:30 p.m.. That concludes our business for tonight.

1 I'd entertain a motion for adjournment.

2 MR. SERNA: So moved.

3 MR. ALLEN: Second.

4 MR. GOMEZ: Roll call.

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

7 MR. GOMEZ: Motion carries. Meeting
8 adjourned.

9 *** Meeting is adjourned at 4:50 p.m. ***

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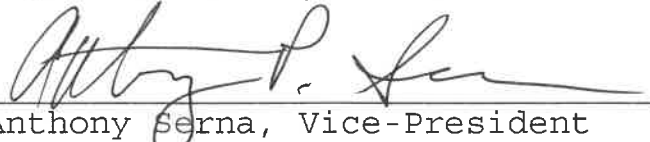
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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Monday
June 7, 2021

Approved and signed June 21, 2021



Valeriano Gomez, President



Anthony Serna, Vice-President

Lilia Ramos, Secretary

Joanne Moricz, Commissioner

Chanthini Fowler

Douglas Sloss



William Allen

Lydia Lopez

Stacy Winfield



Mireya Huizar, 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 15th day of June, 2021.



Peggy S. LaLonde

Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

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