

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
ECONOMIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
June 24, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS:

Jesse Avitia
Leon Valdez
Ezell Foster

STAFF:

Richard Morrisroe, Legal
Douglas Powers, Planner
Ateria Allen, Secretary
Carla Morgan, Legal

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

Call to Order: 4:30 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Present: Jesse Avitia, Ezell Foster

Staff Present: Richard Morrisroe, Legal Counsel
Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary
Douglas Powers, City Planner

MR. AVITIA: I'd like to call the
Economic Development Commission meeting of Thursday,
June 24, '21 to order.

Next, approval of minutes. I make a
motion to approve the minutes of Thursday, May 27, 2021.

MR. FOSTER: Second.

MR. AVITIA: Roll call.

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

MR. AVITIA: Motion carries.

We move to Old Business. And we
have Lakeshore Railcar & Tanker Services LLC.

MR. POWERS: Thank you. So after the
previous meeting we looked into both sides of west and
east side of Euclid, those properties located there. I
believe it's 4901 Euclid Avenue. The only recent
transactions there has been a demo permit on each
property. Beyond that, there has been no change in
ownership or no other transactions.

1 MR. FOSTER: What was that address?

2 MR. POWERS: So as you are driving down
3 Chicago Avenue, you turn down Euclid Avenue, the
4 railroad --

5 MR. FOSTER: You turn left.

6 MR. POWERS: Yes, beyond the railroad
7 tracks. Then they had demo -- because I know that was a
8 recent question of what was going on there because there
9 have been movement -- you know -- of various items on
10 the property. They had pulled a demo permit from the
11 Building Department to demo an accessory structure on
12 that property. And other than that, there hasn't been
13 any recent transactions.

14 MR. FOSTER: That's kind of the yellow
15 building?

16 MR. POWERS: Yes.

17 MR. FOSTER: That's the newest building
18 inside that whole lot.

19 MR. AVITIA: I don't have any other
20 questions on that. I think next is Mr. Morrisroe,
21 moving on to New Business.

22 MR. MORRISROE: I was not going to do the
23 presentation. Mr. Powers will do that.

24 MR. POWERS: I'd be more than happy to,
25 that's fine. Today we are talking about Chapter 10,
26 Site and Development Plan Review.

27 So, something important in this
28 section to look at, is one, define what a site plan is.
29 And that would be on page 54. The next one, define a
30 development plan.

31 How those pertain to the City of
32 East Chicago is that we have the right to evaluate site
33 plans, as well as development plans when someone is
34 trying to do business within the city. So we have
35 various site plan requirements that you will see in the
36 city code ordinances, which is 156.011, where there is
37 an itemized list that is similar to what you find in
38 this Citizen Planner, where -- you know -- we talk about

1 traffic regulations, landscaping; those type of things.
2 So that's all in there.

3 How that process works is that the
4 petitioner has to submit application, including the
5 development plan requirements, to the Planning
6 Department. That petition then is evaluated and placed
7 on the Technical Review Committee agenda and the various
8 departments within the city; Building, Sanitary, Water,
9 Engineering, will evaluate those for technical
10 correctness. That means that whatever their field of
11 expertise is, that there is development plan
12 requirements that coincide with that. So if they find
13 any issues with the proposed development plan in regards
14 to what our ordinances require, they can then say they
15 are not technically correct. They need to be deemed
16 technically correct prior to being able to go to the
17 Planning Commission.

18 So after the Technical Review
19 Committee has said the drawings were acceptable, in the
20 way that they were presented, that will then be placed
21 on the upcoming Plan Commission agenda, as to where the
22 Plan Commission can then make the determination to
23 approve or deny for that use.

24 Now, I am leaving a few things out
25 because it pertains to Planning. It may have to go to
the Board of Zoning Appeals if variances are required or
conditional use. It may need Council approval as well.
But the general process is that they submit the
development plan, that it goes through the Tech Review
Committee, and then goes to the Planning Commission.

So this, if you find yourself -- if
you are interested in seeing what the requirements are
for businesses that come to the community, what my
advice would be to you is to look through this chapter,
evaluate it, and then compare it to what you see in
section 156.001 and correlated chapters mentioned
therein. And -- you know -- see what types of comments,
concerns, or feedback you have from that so you can
evaluate according.

MR. FOSTER: Is the Health Department
part of Tech Review?

MR. POWERS: It is. Generally speaking,
from planning background, usually what you see is a lot

1 of building stuff is more going to deal with inspectors
because of the IC codes that get approved down State.
2 The building doesn't really have much in regards to the
technical review aspects. Fire and Health may be
3 similar. But the inspectors, there are various things
they look for and we want to see if those concerns are
4 addressed or get them addressed prior to moving
forwards. Because the ideal scenario is that we want to
5 minimize the amount of resources that are needed to
potentially start a business that may not be able to be
6 started. So reducing that, while protecting the
community, is the ideal outcome.

7
8 That's pretty much what I have to
say about that. Like I said, if you read through the
chapter, it cites the stuff I mentioned. You know, who
9 conducts the plan review. This really is -- it's a
valuable tool to familiarize yourself with the approval
10 process and see how our process aligns with Indiana
Statutes in regards to what we can and can't do.
11 Because after the Planning Commission has approved those
drawings, as long as they have got the permit
12 requirements, they can start pulling permits basically
at that point.

13
14 MR. AVITIA: I have a couple of
questions. They talk about development plan and then
comprehensive plan, which hits the community,
15 encompassing everything that's going on in the area.
Now, does East Chicago have the development plan that
16 aligns with the comprehensive plan?

17 MR. POWERS: So, yes and no. So --

18 MR. AVITIA: The reason I ask the
question, seems like everything we are doing is
19 haphazard. There is a lot of empty lots. The
development plans come before us and I don't see a
20 specific motion towards a certain something being done.

21 MR. POWERS: So, you are correct. The
development plan requirements are clearly listed in the
22 City code of ordinances, which was approved in 2011.
The actual comprehensive plan was done in 2008. So
23 there has been changes -- and we certainly do need to
look into areas that may need to be addressed, and that
24 is something that the Planning Department is currently
reviewing, whether we need to modify or potentially
25 adopt a new Comprehensive Plan.

1 MR. MORRISROE: If I may, the
2 Comprehensive Plan is something the City does usually
3 with consultants. The Plan Commission inputs from
4 different departments, different parts of the City.
5 These Development Plans however come from the individual
6 developer or the person who owns the lot, either a
7 larger lot or maybe a small commercial lot, and what he
8 wants to do. So those are kind of scattered because
9 they are not -- it's not so much we ask they be done in
10 sync with the Comprehensive Plan -- which the City
11 has -- but they are coming with that planning document
12 and all the requirements. Those are requirements that
13 Doug, with the Plan Commission and the other
14 departments, make of the developer when he proposes his
15 plan.

16 So an example might be right across
17 the street. We talked about a few times it was suppose
18 to be a Dunkin Donuts. The big question is the traffic.
19 Are they going to tie up Indianapolis Boulevard by
20 people making left turns trying to get into their
21 parking lot in the morning? Or are they down around
22 Magoun and come around the block and park on the north
23 side of the tracks. We want them to do their business
24 as well as they can, but on the other hand, we don't
25 want them tying up all the north/south traffic that you
have in the morning because of other businesses.

MR. AVITIA: For the example, development
plans, I know for a fact we did signage which
corresponds and meet certain standards for the City.
Those are at certain parts. I don't see any
consolidation of all those development plans into a
comprehensive plan that will fit the City. I don't see
something that is generally accepted for the City
itself.

MR. POWERS: Would you be asking that we
have one design for a whole block?

MR. AVITIA: No.

MR. POWERS: I might be able to clarify.
The departments -- there are different departments that
have comprehensive focus on areas. Redevelopment does
have goals in certain areas on how the community's
redevelopment moves forward, as well as the Parks has
plans too. What the comprehensive plan is, it's a
vision, including all those aspects, for 20 years

1 through the future.

2 MR. AVITIA: I understand that.

3 MR. POWERS: Being that it hasn't been,
4 but by statute it should be, reviewed at a minimum of
5 every ten years, should be revisited every five. But
6 ours has been out-of-date, that's why the Plan
7 Department is currently looking into what potential
8 changes need to be done. Because from the Comprehensive
9 Plan, like what Mr. Morrisroe mentioned, traffic
10 implication is part of the Development Plan requirement.
11 Whether certain areas should have greater focus toward
12 business, residential, mixed use; those are the types of
13 things that we see within the Comprehensive Plan that
14 doesn't generally focus on specific parcels, but who or
15 what could be developed there and whether or not
16 variances are required is really when it comes in play.
17 Because if the request for variance is not in line with
18 the comprehensive plan, that is when the officials who
19 are making the final determination would unfortunately
20 have to recommend denial of that request.

21 MR. AVITIA: One of things I am
22 questioning, you are young enough to have comprehensive
23 plan to say five years, 10 years from now, what the City
24 is going to look like 10 years from now. That's my
25 understanding. I want to see East Chicago move into
something that is better than what we are now. There is
movement, but seems to be haphazard, not being guided or
percentage that is not guided.

MR. POWERS: What I'm telling you, as you
move forward with a new comprehensive plan, there would
be various entities. For example, the committee would
initially be comprised of you and a handful of people,
but the actual review committee would consist of people
appointed from ECD president or their representative,
along with Redevelopment, quite possibly Plan
Commission, BZA representatives, along with the Mayor's
representative and Common Council president's
representative. There may be other key stakeholders
within the community that would play critical roles in
regards to -- you know -- legal, to guide that aspect,
to make sure whomever it is that we potential went with,
truly understood what it is that we were looking for and
how we felt here. So that way -- you know -- it's not
coming from any vaneer approach I guess we'll say.

1 MR. AVITIA: As Economic commissioners we
2 want to see economic development in the City that makes
3 the City better than what it is. You only see that if
4 you have some sort of guideline and plan and timelines
5 that are going to be taken care of, and that's all I
6 have.

7 MR. POWERS: And one other thing too, I
8 can tell you that one of the key points, if we were to
9 do a new comprehensive plan, would be that they would
10 have to help with giving us the tools in regards to --
11 you know -- being able to allocate additional grants and
12 resources to encourage further economic development.

13 MR. AVITIA: Ezell, any questions?

14 MR. FOSTER: No.

15 MR. AVITIA: Next on the agenda we have
16 review of Redevelopment minutes for May 4th and 18th,
17 June 1, 2021. I do have some questions on it, just
18 informational questions.

19 There is a comment in there with
20 Main Street and Broadway meeting with the bank and the
21 land around it. Some sort of something that is coming
22 across there. Is there any hints on this or what is
23 going to happen to the area? It's right in the middle
24 of the main area of our development plan.

25 MR. POWERS: So -- absolutely. The
intersection of Broadway and Main Street there has been
multiple proposals over the years. As I am sure you are
well aware, that two of them -- two of the properties on
the corners have been redeveloped and have since been
occupied. And actually we are hoping to have a grand
opening for a business called Nina's Sweets Bakery. I
don't have the exact date as of yet, but that will be
coming soon to that location.

The other structures, Dr. K and the
PNC, you know, that mold remediation has been completed
on the PNC Bank as to where we can try to work with
setting this out, whether we are looking at specific
individual cost and what the potential use is. There is
some implication that property, because the actual PNC
Bank has two parcels that could potentially be used or
split for different uses. But at this time there has
not been any public notice and those properties aren't

1 accepting bids. The cleanup has just occurred at this
2 time.

3 MR. MORRISROE: If I may, one of things
4 that was confusing in here is that PNC is almost the
5 entire block. There's five different sets of lots. So
6 when they were transferring -- when there was discussion
7 in here about that, they were talking about five
8 different lots. The oldest one is the one right at the
9 corner that the bank itself sits on, but they expanded
10 to the east when they put in their drive-in. They took
11 down -- there was some stores or different kinds of
12 businesses that were there also where the alley is.
13 They go over even behind the courthouse, from the
14 courthouse alley to Pulaski. They have that as well.
15 So that's one of the confusions about that.

16 Now they are looking -- they have
17 been looking whether it could be public use or whether
18 they want to sell it. It's a little bit uncertain.

19 MR. POWERS: They're just not getting at
20 that point where a decision can be made. But first we
21 need to figure out what makes the most sense for the
22 community. It's just that prior to today there was a
23 lot of mold remediation and various cleanup on both
24 those properties actually.

25 MR. MORRISROE: And before the mold,
addressing the mold, there were serious problems with
water in the basement.

MR. POWERS: Just as well. In Dr. K's
building there is a lot of pharmaceuticals left over,
various items that needed to be cleaned up.

MR. AVITIA: That area has possibility
for development, right?

MR. POWERS: Absolutely. I can even
share with you some of the old plans we have. Most
certainly, you know, right there is the heart of the
north harbor. You have the entrance point on Columbus
and you have that area. Everything else, you know, is
the glue that holds it together.

MR. AVITIA: Ezell, any questions?

MR. FOSTER: No.

1 MR. AVITIA: I think you were trying to
2 answer the question. Those properties are being sold,
3 whether to homeowners --

4 MR. MORRISROE: The properties I was
5 talking about were being transferred from the City
6 ownership to Redevelopment because it will be
7 redeveloped with the kind of expansion that it has, that
8 will be the lead department in the City for developing
9 that, if it were just to be kept by the City as special
10 space.

11 What I have told Doug and others,
12 that they managed to take five floors out of that
13 building and yet maintain a pretty classy look to the
14 old bank building. That was quite an architectural feat
15 to have done that, because most of the doctors, lawyers,
16 business, accountants, whatever, were no longer there.
17 The elevator was horrible and it really was a lot of
18 empty space and was a big liability. So the PNC people,
19 fortunately they did that before deciding to just move
20 out of it.

21 MR. AVITIA: They maintain the beautiful
22 interior of the bank?

23 MR. MORRISROE: Yes.

24 MR. AVITIA: One of the things I am
25 seeing is that I am seeing some very low valuation for
some of these homes and empty lots. People are actually
interested in buying the empty lots like that? And then
do we have control on what is going to be done with some
of those empty lots? That was my main question right
there.

MR. POWERS: We do. As I mentioned,
generally there is a few programs for the area. If
someone was to be eligible for those programs, they
would demonstrate whether they were putting a garage on
it or a fence; we have regulations for that.

Now in regards to the typical -- if
they want to sell a home or build a home, let's say --
on those properties, we could potentially have control
in regard to how long they have to obtain the IOP. Or
if they were trying to remodel or renovate the homes --
this is not through the Unsafe Board because they are
completely separate, if they are working on a program

1 through them. If they are acquiring a property, we
2 could place similar conditions in regard to timelines.
3 And I believe that's something that the Legal Department
4 is currently evaluating.

5 MR. AVITIA: That's the end of my
6 question. Ezell, do you have anything?

7 MR. FOSTER: No.

8 MR. AVITIA: Let's go to public comments.
9 since we don't have public here, we'll move on.

10 Commissioner comments, I think we
11 exhausted all the Commissioner comments.

12 Our next meeting will be on
13 Thursday, July 22, 2021. I would make a motion to
14 adjourn.

15 MR. FOSTER: Second.

16 MR. AVITIA: Roll call.

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

19 MR. AVITIA: Motion carries. Meeting
20 adjourned.

21 ***** Meeting Adjourned *****
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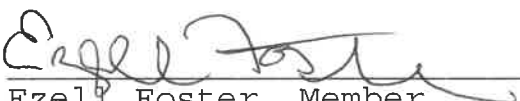
Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Thursday
June 24, 2021

Approved and signed _____



Jesse Avitia, President

Leon Valdez, Vice-president



Ezell Foster, Member



Ateria Allen, 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 30th day of June, 2021.

Peggy S. LaLonde

Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR



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