

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION

BOARD MEMBERS

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

Regular Meeting Minutes
(Via Zoom Conference)
Tuesday, July 13, 2021 @ 5:00 p.m.

Reported for Fissinger & Associates
By: Lisa Pena

CALL TO ORDER: 5:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

ROLL CALL: Present in Chambers: Rick Rodriguez, Eugene
Austin.

Present Via Zoom: Gilberto Cantu, Valda Lewis.

STAFF: Present in Chambers: Ateria Allen, Vanessa
Hernandez-Orange.

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:

Approval of Minutes: June 22, 2021

Motion to approve June 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes made by Valda
Lewis. Second by Gilberto Cantu.

Questions/Comments: None.

Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

Approval & Signing of Payroll: June 25, 2021

Motion to approve June 25, 2021 Payroll made by Eugen Austin.
Second by Valda Lewis.

Questions/Comments: None.

1 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

2 Approval & Signing of Payroll: July 9, 2021.

3 Motion to approve July 9, 2021 Payroll made by Valda Lewis.
4 Second by Gilberto Cantu.

5 Questions/Comments: None.

6 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

7 Approval & Signing of Warrant: 070721PB \$270.20

8 Motion to approve Warrant 070721PB made by Eugene Austin.
9 Second by Valda Lewis.

10 Questions/Comments: None.

11 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

12 Approval & Signing of Warrant: 071321PB \$54,319.25

13 Motion to approve Warrant 071321PB made by Valda Lewis.
14 Second by Eugen Austin.

15 Questions/Comments: None.

16 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
Opposed: None Motion Carries.

17 OLD BUSINESS: None.

18 NEW BUSINESS:

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Vanessa Orange, Director of Parks and
20 Recreation.

21 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Good evening. I really don't
22 have any New Business that we have to have approved. I did
23 want to give you guys a couple updates as to what's going on
at our recreation centers.

24 So as we've discussed previously we've had the
25 leaks at our centers, Heritage and Unity both. Unity being
the worse one.

1 We ended up doing an emergency fix because some of
2 the pipes, the exhaust pipes were actually bent over. So we
3 had a hole where water would seep in. That was fixed. But
4 with this past rain we found even more water seeping in.

5 So we have been in contact. I talked to the person
6 in charge of the project, Will, from Engineering as well as
7 Keith Selvie.

8 We contacted that company who put on the roof just
9 because this for me being here one year they came out three
10 times already to see water, so many leaks.

11 Right now I have garbage cans all throughout the
12 gym area at Unity and some at Heritage.

13 So I actually just sent an e-mail to Larsen. And I
14 explained to them how I feel like we're doing an injustice to
15 our community because I cannot keep it open.

16 It's very unfortunate. I know our legal team, the
17 Mayor's Office has been put on notice about this because the
18 severity of what is in the Unity Center, we have buckets
19 where they're almost halfway full everyday.

20 One of our employees came into work and the ceiling
21 had collapsed. So today we just noticed that the ceiling
22 collapsed at Unity in the bathroom. So it's just getting
23 worse and worse.

24 So for a brand-new building it should not be like
25 this. So we're definitely taking action. We are checking it
26 on the daily especially with the rain coming. Pray a lot for
27 no rain. We're trying to stay on top of it as much as
28 possible.

29 I do want to report that being short staffed in the
30 greenhouse and by no means is it because we don't want to
31 hire. We were at the summer program. We have one person who
32 is actually working for that summer program. I had two
33 people quit. Others fulfilled the rest of the items that
34 needed to be fulfilled.

35 But I have great staff. Parks and Recreation has
36 great staff. And they all contributed. I had our Rec staff
37 go out. Since Unity closed they're going out doing the
38 planting also all around the parks and always pruning up
39 everything.

1 So the parks if you kind of go look it looks a lot
2 better. I am very thankful for the staff that I have because
3 they are going above and beyond.

4 And that's really it.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Are you looking to get a new roof on it,
6 just to redo the whole thing or just patchwork all the time?

7 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So I think that's more of a
8 discussion with the Mayor's legal team at this point.

9 What we would like to ask for -- I know what Larsen
10 is trying to do right now is patch. I think we're past that.

11 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Right.

12 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: And we're actually past that
13 company because you came out and you patched and you patched.

14 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And it's still in the same spot?

15 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Same exact spot. Then they said
16 possibly the caulking because of the air because of the steel
17 mill is reason why the caulking is tearing. Well, that is
18 something that you should have done the research on prior.

19 The last thing to announce is E'Twaun Moore and the
20 Phoenix Suns are in the NBA finals. So in an effort to start
21 doing some type of events we are going to have the game at
22 Washington Park on a big screen.

23 And we're going keep everyone socially distant.
24 Have the staff there telling me how many people we have. And
25 we're going to checker up that whole area. Have everything
straightened out.

 You're going to have to wear your mask. But we're
going to support our hometown guy by playing this game and
hopefully celebrating on Saturday a championship.

 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Where are you planning, the pavilion
there?

 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So we actually tried it today.
We have the screen that's ready to go. Across the pavilion
is like the steps.

 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Right.

1 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So we'll just square it out so
people could sit every other and kind of space out.

2 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Have you ever thought about that? I
3 mean that's a good idea. But how about making that real nice
4 in the future like building it up. I mean that's a good
idea. That's great.

5 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I think as we start to move maybe
6 that could definitely be something we look into because it is
a good spot.

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It used to look nice back in the day.
I'm showing my age.

8 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: By the way it's something we can
9 look into. Thank you.

10 MR. RODRIGUEZ: No problem.

11 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: That's it.

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any questions for the Director?

13 MR. AUSTIN: The only thing that I have to say is I
14 think you said you were losing some employees. You said
something about that?

15 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: We have lost employees, yes.

16 MR. AUSTIN: They just quit or what?

17 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: They have resigned, yes.

18 MR. AUSTIN: So do you think you're going to replace
19 them or are you just going to wait it out for awhile?

20 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I hope to. Actually we have an
ongoing position that's open for the Parks and Recreation
21 Department.

22 And we're actually working right now with the Human
Resource Department to fill the greenhouse supervisor and
23 actually make a job description that's completely for the
greenhouse supervisor.

24 So they can tie in all the fliers that they have
with all the job duties and descriptions. So there won't be
25 any confusion now we'll have it. And then we'll post it. So

1 hopefully it will be soon.

2 MR. AUSTIN: Because we have a nice outfit of flowers.

3 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes. We're keeping it up. We're
4 trying.

5 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I have a question, Vanessa. I seen in
6 that pamphlet that comes with the water bill, what's the bike
7 road or whatever they're trying to connect?

8 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: The bike trail?

9 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. Kind of briefly I just read it
10 right before I left.

11 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: So the bike trail, this one, is
12 an effort to just kind of bring cities together. They're
13 proposing a bike trail that goes like north towards Michigan
14 and south towards the neighboring cities.

15 It's going to be where Kosciuszko is at. So the
16 back part of it used to be just all grass area. That in turn
17 is now a bike trail.

18 So they're putting -- they just knocked down the
19 trees. And they're proposing to put just a trail to connect
20 it to Hammond so it could go to Wolf Lake.

21 So we got our portion. Waiting for Hammond to
22 finish theirs. And now travel I think down Indianapolis to
23 go to the back road of Kennedy, something like that.

24 I don't know the specs for the south side. But I
25 know we are doing our part through Kosciuszko.

And it's also for any parking for the baseball
fields that are over there.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: You're talking about the south side of
the park where the baseball field is all the way to
Indianapolis Boulevard?

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yeah. So the baseball field is
that area of the bike trail and behind that will be --

MR. RODRIGUEZ: So all those weeds are coming on down?

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: All the weeds are out now. If

1 you go over there you could see all the weeds out. And
2 actually it's a nice view because you see that river there.

3 So I never even honestly knew it was back there,
4 that river. I mean it's actually really beautiful. The
5 scenery is nice.

6 MR. AUSTIN: Excuse me. I'd like to know what's going
7 on Kennedy. They're going back before you cross going back
8 in before you get to the Hammond line before you go across
9 the canal. They're hauling something out of there. Is that
10 waste?

11 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Trucks?

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yeah. 151st and Kennedy. I saw trucks
13 coming out of there.

14 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Not Amazon. I don't remember
15 what company it is. But there's like a warehouse that's back
16 there. And they like distribute from that. I don't know
17 what it is for sure.

18 MR. AUSTIN: Nobody knows.

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: It has nothing to do with us.

20 MR. AUSTIN: Right. So I just wanted to know if trucks
21 go in and come out and then they have police in there. Some
22 people had stopped and asked me. I said, well, I don't know
23 whose land it is. That's still in East Chicago, right?

24 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

25 MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes.

MR. AUSTIN: Because everything on this side of the
canal that's supposed to be East Chicago. So I told them
that this side of the canal that's still in East Chicago.

MS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I wouldn't even know who to
direct that question to.

MR. AUSTIN: I saw that in the paper where they joined
with Hammond.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Any other questions for the Director?

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

1 * Next Regular Meeting Date: Tuesday, July 27,
2021 @ 5:00 p.m. City Hall Council Chambers.

3 Motion to adjourn was made by Eugene Austin. Second by Valda
Lewis.

4 Roll Call: "All in Favor": All Abstain: None.
5 Opposed: None Motion Carries.


6 * Meeting ended at 5:17 p.m.

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1 Approval of the Meeting Minutes of

2 Tuesday, July 13, 2021

3 Approved and Signed July 27, 2021

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5 Anthony Serra, President

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9 Rick Rodriguez, Vice President

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11 Valda Lewis / Zoom
12 Valda Lewis, Secretary

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14 Gilberto Cantu / Zoom
15 Gilberto Cantu, Member

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18 Eugene Austin, Member

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21 Ateria Allen, Recording Secretary


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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Lisa Pena, 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 said proceedings taken at said time and place, so ordered to be transcribed.

Dated at Portage, Indiana, this 24th day of July, 2021.



Lisa Pena
Notary Public Porter County
Certified Shorthand Reporter
License Number 084-003483

