

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
BOARD OF PARKS AND RECREATION
July 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

Staff Telephonic: Dawn Dawkins

MR. SERNA: We do have a quorum. Rick Rodriguez called me earlier and said he would not be able to attend.

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

MS. LEWIS: I move for approval.

MR. AUSTIN: Second.

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

(All signify aye.)

Motion carries.

Next, approval of payroll dated July 23, 2012. Entertain a motion to approve the payroll dated July 23, 2021.

MS. LEWIS: Move for approval of payroll.

MR. AUSTIN: Second.

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

2 (All signify aye.)
Motion carries.

3 Let the record reflect Mr. Cantu has
4 joined us.

5 Next item, approval of Warrant
Report 072721 PB, in the amount of \$30,899.98.
Entertain a motion to approve.

6 MS. LEWIS: Move for approval of warrant
7 report.

8 MR. AUSTIN: Second.

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

10 (All signify aye.)
Motion carries.

11 Any Old Business, Madame Secretary?

12 MS. ALLEN: No old business.

13 MR. SERNA: Next item on the agenda is
14 New Business. Vanessa Hernandez-Orange, Director of
Parks and Recreation.

15 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Hello. I really
16 don't have too much new business, other than I wanted to
introduce my manager, who has been part of our Parks and
17 Recreation Department for about three years. And when
we had a lot of shifting going on, Genesis has stepped
up and literally been the backbone to the Department. I
18 am all about rewarding individuals who go above and
beyond, and definitely have each other's back; and she
19 has done that. She has proven leadership, even though
it's taken a little time to kind of get her to tell the
20 rest of the staff that -- hey, you got to listen to me
this time. She has done great for the short time and I
21 continue to expect great things from her. So sometime
if I am not here, she might be here. For sure the next
22 meeting because I am actually on vacation -- finally --
so she will be here. And if there any questions, you
23 can contact the Park Office, contact her or myself for
anything that's needed. Do you want to say anything?

24 MS. GARRY: No, nothing to say.
25

1 MS. LEWIS: I'm sorry, what did you say
her name was.

2 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: It's Genesis
3 Garry.

4 MS. LEWIS: Thank you.

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Overall, Parks
6 Department, I think our staff has been doing a marvelous
7 job. We have gotten out to the parks. We are doing
8 more of the pruning now at park locations. If you see
9 things that are not pruned, please give us a phone call.
10 We cannot always be everywhere. I think we have had our
11 park staff go out to do a lot of pruning.

12 We are trying to get a hold on
13 everything at the Unity Center. As you all know, we had
14 an extreme week. We have been working with Larson
15 Danielson, as well as meeting with Skillman in regards
16 to the location. Unfortunately they are doing quick
17 fixes right now. So we'll do a major repair later is
18 what I have been told, but we are -- it was recommended
19 to allow people to go back in, especially since it
20 hasn't been raining. We are waiting for the rain to see
21 if it's going to get worse or not. We did find out
22 there is some damage to some of the equipment that's in
23 there. To-date I was told the electrical is okay.
24 Obviously with the Unity Center we will continue to push
25 to make sure that the company rectifies this.

And that's really it -- wait --
baseball, Block Stadium. I sat in on a meeting last
Tuesday, and I had been told that we will receive the
keys to Block Stadium on August 17th. That is the date
that we will have keys to the building. We still have
to furnish it. We'll be doing a walk through to get it
furnished, but overall the construction will be done.
Now that's it.

MR. SERNA: Any questions for Director
Hernandez-Orange?

MR. AUSTIN: I have one question. It
seemed like the baseball team will be finished for this
year, I believe.

MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Yes, it will.

1 MR. AUSTIN: The Stadium at Guthrie took
2 two years. So we should be increasing on our jobs.

3 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Block Stadium
4 will be done this year. Now games being held there --
5 we are probably passed that boat. And I think the
6 overall vision would be to open it up with our East
7 Chicago High School baseball team to be the first game
8 there. Solely because at the end of the day, they are
9 the ones that have the most use out of the facility. I
10 understand what it means to the school. I understand
11 what it means to the community. They all play there. I
12 would like to see it happen next year with them. Plus
13 we'll be done hopefully furnishing and just doing a walk
14 through, soften things I would have to put in there. So
15 that's kind of pitching to the Mayor and see if he likes
16 it now.

17 It's a great facility. It looks
18 beautiful. We want to make sure it's complete use and
19 ready when we open.

20 MR. AUSTIN: One more question I'd like
21 to ask. Is there going to be a crossover on the bridge?
22 I know we are not attached to that. People are
23 questioning me, are we going to be able to cross the
24 bridge on Columbus Drive.

25 MR. SERNA: I know that I listened to the
City of East Chicago radio, on WJOB, Friday. And they
did an interview with William Allen, in the Engineering
Department, and Keith Selvie, Director of Projects.
They did say that new bridge is coming. Did they give a
date? No, they didn't give a date it's going to be
started on, but they did say a new bridge is coming and
that thing has been in the works for at least two or
three years to take it down and put a new one in. We
were past demolition and everyone is asking where the
new one is at. Unless you have different information, I
did hear on the East Chicago radio show Friday, that
there is a new bridge coming. Just don't have a
concrete date set yet.

26 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: You are correct.
27 That is what we have all been hearing. And, again, just
28 like everything else, we are at the hands of the
29 Council. They have to allow that money to be passed. I
30 think on this past Monday they sent a couple of items
31 before the Council for funding for different projects
32 throughout the City, as well as giving our City of East

1 Chicago employees, a stipend or bonus. Unfortunately
2 that stuff was not passed completely. It was just
3 passed on first reading. So I think the Mayor is doing
4 a great job looking out for his employees and we are
5 trying to get stuff done within the City.

6 I would say talk to your Council people
7 and make sure they get everything passed as quickly as
8 possible, get all the projects in, as well as give our
9 employees their due stipend.

10 MR. AUSTIN: The reason I am speaking of
11 this -- you know -- a lot of people are questioning.
12 Now that school is opened up -- we don't know exactly --
13 is that next month?

14 MR. SERNA: School, I believe, opens on
15 the 16th is when everybody returns.

16 MR. AUSTIN: I was just going to let the
17 people know that school will be open because they ask
18 me. I don't know what to say, so that does make you
19 feel unhappy.

20 MR. SERNA: What is the website for the
21 schools? I go to it all the time. What is the address
22 for School City website?

23 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: Since I know,
24 it's www.scec.k12.in.us.edu.

25 MR. SERNA: It's a little tough, but all
that information is there on the website if people have
access to a computer or on their phone. That shows when
school is opening. As far as COVID and everything like
that, that's up to the School Board and the State, but
school -- I believe school is opening on time.

MR. AUSTIN: The reason, like I said
this, a lot of people do not look at that much because I
don't. Sometimes my wife says, you look, that's your
job, not mine.

MR. SERNA: We do know school is starting
on time. Ms. Lewis, Mr. Cantu, any questions for the
Director?

MS. LEWIS: No, not tonight.

1 MR. SERNA: All right, Vanessa. I'd like
2 to agree with you on Genesis and the hard work. I have
3 seen you in action and seen what you can do. We'll have
4 all of our questions written down for next meeting.

5 MRS. HERNANDEZ-ORANGE: I'm sorry -- FYI
6 -- the last week of August will be our last week of our
7 camps, in general. And then July 30th we added on a
8 camp in conjunction with Parks Department and Spark,
9 Science in the Park, to do a camp at Washington Park,
10 and that will be at 9:00 o'clock. I can send everyone
11 the correct information, but there will be special give
12 away. I just talked to Angie Williams and they're going
13 to do a science experiment and everyone is going to get
14 a coat. We are pushing for the team and what other
15 amazing things to do at the park. So our Special Needs
16 camp, our activities worked out amazingly. It's
17 actually on the ECTV news. I think this is going to
18 work out too.

19 MR. SERNA: All right. Thank you,
20 Vanessa. We'll move on to the next item, which is
21 public comments. Do we have any public comment? (None)

22 Our next meeting is Tuesday,
23 August 10, 2021, right here at the City Hall, at
24 5:00 p.m.. I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

25 MR. CANTU: I move to adjourn.

MS. LEWIS: Second.

MR. SERNA: All in favor signify aye?
(All signify aye.)

Motion carries. Meeting adjourned.

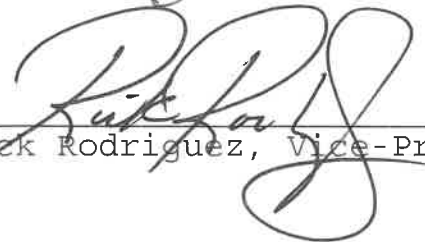
***** Meeting Adjourned *****

Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Tuesday
July 27, 2021

Approved and signed _____



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 28th day of July, 2021.



Peggy S. LaLonde

Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR

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