CITY OF EAST CHICAGO BOARD OF PUBLIC SAFETY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

BOARD MEMBERS

Milton Reed, President
Linda Thompson, Member
Frank Smith, Member

Public Hearing Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 24, 2026, at 5:00 p.m

Reported by Fissinger & Associates, Ltd.
By: Peggy S. LaLonde

Call to Order: 5:00 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance

Roll Call: Present: Milton Reed
Frank Smith
Linda Thompson

Staff Present: James Portalatin, Building Commissioner
Lee Watson, Building Department
Kevin Smith, Attorney Building Dept.
Shana Levinson, Board Attorney

MR. REED: Call to order the regular meeting of the Board of Public Safety for August 24th, 2026.

May we have a motion to approve the regular meeting minutes of August 10th, 2026 as written?

MR. SMITH: I move that we accept the minutes.

MS. THOMPSON: I'll second that motion.

MR. REED: Motion has been properly made and second. We'll take a vote. All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. REED: Motion carries.

There is no correspondence in front of us, we'll turn the meeting over to the Building

Department.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Good evening, Mr. President and Board, Kevin Smith on behalf of James Portalatin and the Building Department.

I do want to set the record, if I could, for all the properties that are before you this evening that have been determined to be unsafe buildings under the Unsafe Building Act of Indiana 36-7-9. The Building Department has under that Act provided proper service, and I believe the Board would be able to make a determination that reasonable attempts at service and notice were given to all owners, and also those of substantial property interest, have been served or attempted service via certified mail, regular mail, publication in the Northwest Indiana Times -- two times -- as well as notice placed on the property. And so we do have many people here this evening.

I would also indicate under the Act all these buildings are believed to be, by the Building Commissioner, to be unsafe and we'd request today that you would affirm those orders. Of course I know the Board will generally speak to the owners to explain the process that will begin. I do have a binder with the photographs, if I can approach.

MR. REED: Real quick, why don't we do the resolution first before we go to the new demolition orders.

I would call for a motion to adopt Resolution 2026-22, 25 locations and Release of Lien. Is there a motion?

MR. SMITH: I would make that motion.

MS. THOMPSON: I'll second that motion.

MR. REED: Any questions on the motion? (None)

Motion has been properly made and second. We'll take a vote. All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. REED: Motion carries.

As far as the demolition orders, if there is someone present, whatever order you would like to go in, based on who is here.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: We'll go in the order that I talked with individuals. The first one is 401

East Chicago Avenue. The owner, I believe, is Mr. Mike Garcia and his daughter, Naomi Garcia. The owner is Palafox Renovations LLC, they are the members and managers of that LLC. The photos show gutters falling off and disrepair of the brick chimney. Mortar and joints are cracked and in need of tuck pointing. Mr. Garcia spoke to Mr. Portalatin, I believe they were preparing a Rehab Agreement.

Again, given the condition of the property, we request the order be affirmed, if the Board would, the demolition order.

Mr. President, if you would like to explain what that means as far as moving forward, feel free to let everybody know. We would request this order be affirmed.

They are here and I don't know if they would like to speak.

MR. REED: They are not required to, but if someone from the property ownership would like to speak, I would ask that you state your name -- it's not required -- but come to the microphone.

MR. GARCIA: Good afternoon, Mike Garcia.

MS. GARCIA: Naomi Garcia, good afternoon.

MR. REED: Anything you'd like to comment?

MR. GARCIA: I'm not asking the Board to ignore the condition of the property. I am asking a reasonable opportunity to correct the conditions and bring the property into compliance, that's why we are here.

MR. REED: Okay. And as Attorney Smith mentioned, I'll say this for the benefit of all of those here today, this is typically what we consider the beginning of our process. The Building Department and the City of East Chicago will work with you, but there is definitely a timeframe that will be defined. And really success is met on showing activity and progress on your behalf.

I encourage you to stay in touch with the Building Department with your progress and whatever agreements you need to make, and be certain to be present if there are any concerns or issues. But

this is not the end of an automatic demolition, this is the beginning of saying, you have to get started on this right away.

MR. GARCIA: I understand.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: We would request a status for this of October 26th.

MR. GARCIA: Thank you.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Mr. President, next we'd move to 4215 Carey Street, Mr. Aurelio Huerta, Junior is here. This is tab 2. Photographs show a tarp on the roof. The house appears to be in significant disrepair, hanging siding, the windows are open to the elements, and the garage roof in disrepair with a tarp over parts of it. Siding appears to be rotting and paint peeling. Given the condition of the property we'd request the order be affirmed.

Mr. Heurta is beginning to remodel this property. I know Mr. Portalatin indicated he had spoken with him. And, again, we are just looking for progress on this. We would like to set it for status for October 26th and we'd like to have the order affirmed. Mr. Huerta is here if he wants to be heard.

MR. REED: State your name and address.

MR. HUERTA: Aurelio Huerta, Jr., 4215 Carey Street. We have proceeded with renovation of the garage and the roof of the house itself. We have pictures as well if you'd like the pictures, before and after. (Pictures produced to Board.)

MR. REED: Okay. Thank you for sharing these.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Looks like there's substantial work done on the property.

MR. REED: I would encourage you to proceed and make sure all of the boxes are checked that are required by the Building Department. This is a start and you want to bring it to completion. I appreciate you coming out for sure.

MR. HUERTA: Okay. Thank you.

MR. REED: We'll let our other members see them.

MR. HUERTA: You can keep those.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Thank you.

The next property that I spoke with was number 8, which is 4123 Ivy Street. This is for the garage. Miss Charteuce Harris is here, the owner of the property. The photos show the garage in disrepair, siding is broken and missing, paint chipping and peeling. Miss Harris has hired Galindo Construction for repairs and hoping to repair the garage. She also indicated that she made an insurance claim due to storm damage.

Since this is the garage, we would like to set this for shorter status date of September 26th and also request the order be affirmed as presented. I don't know if Miss Harris wants to be heard.

MR. REED: State your name and address.

MS. HARRIS: Charteuce Harris, 4123 Ivy Street. Basically I'm just trying to get it done as soon as possible, so I contacted the necessary people that are registered with the City here to do the work.

MR. REED: Okay. And you have the contacting information for James and the Building Department?

MS. HARRIS: Yes.

MR. REED: Reach out to them as appropriate and let them know the progress. If they see the progress, that's a big part of the story, taking initiative and getting steps to get it done. Appreciate you coming out.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: September 28th for status.

MS. HARRIS: I have a court date for October for the garage, down in City Court.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: That's a separate matter. Here will be September 28th, 5:00 o'clock.

MS. HARRIS: Okay. Thank you.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: All right. The next property up is going to be number 5, which is 4208 Drummond Street. The owners are here, Mr. Aguilar and his son. They are from Chicago. I would like the record to show there is fire damage to the second floor. The roof collapsed into the structure. The windows are boarded up. The garage is also in poor condition with the windows boarded and missing gutters.

Mr. Aguilar reported to the Building Department that he was attempting to get a loan and was unable to do so. There was no insurance on the property at the time of the fire unfortunately, and they have saved some money up and have a contractor lined up to convert the property from two story to one story property. I'm not sure if those plans have been approved yet. They don't look like they have.

Given the condition of the property and the fire, we'd like the demolition order be entered and set this matter for status for October 26th. The Aguilars are here, but I'm not sure if they want to speak or not.

MR. AGUILAR: Good evening, we had a fire --

MR. REED: State your name and address.

MR. AGUILAR: Alex Aguilar, I'm the son. We had a fire in the second floor and we try to get a loan, but they couldn't approve it because no insurance. So since then, for three months, we have been saving. We have $10,000.00 and we finally find a contractor willing to fix the damage because it's only to the second floor, and we had the money to pay for that. And my father has lived there 17 years and he really likes the town. My brother and I would like to fix the house for my father because he really happy here. So I am just asking for the time to fix it and do the repairs.

MR. REED: Okay. Thank you for coming out. I'm pleased your father likes it here. We'd like to -- this is a tough one. So you definitely need to stay in touch because this is a tougher one than what we normally see, and you need to be in touch with the Building Department, but you are getting really close. At some some point we have to be very aggressive if there's no effort to keep communication. Thank you for

coming out. The Building Department would like to work with residents like yourself, but you need the communication. I appreciate you coming out.

MR. AGUILAR: My father loves the City. He is really happy here. He's been here 17 years.

MR. REED: And we want to keep you around.

MR. AGUILAR: Thank you so much.

MR. REED: Thank you for coming out.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: October 26th is the next date, 5:00 o'clock.

The last property where someone is present is 1419 West 150th Street, that's number 1. Who's present today is Mr. Abdual Abunadi, who's here with his wife. They are tenants in the back of the building, this is tab 1. The owner is listed with an address in Chicago. The photos, as you can tell, show the north side top of the wall and windows in complete disrepair. The section of the roof has a visible hole in it. The east side upper windows are old and dry rotted, peeling paint, boarded up windows. On the photos you can see part of the brick wall is collapsing. This is on tab 1.

And so given the condition of the property, we'd request the order be affirmed. You know, as tenants, obviously, they have some transitory type of interest in the property and I am sure they'd like to be heard on it.

MR. REED: Sure. If you'd like to come forward and speak. You mind giving us your name, for the record.

MR. ABUNADI: Abdual Abunadi, 1419 West 150th Street. Okay -- we are tenants since '09 and we are registered tenants. I try -- we message my landlord but no response. Told him what is going on. He's overseas. We both retired and on Social Security. Our income 1500, we can't afford to move. We are in tight situation and really what we need, we need to know -- I did go to Ivy Tech for heating before and I have degree from Ivy Tech. I know about safety. I know about electrical code safety. The building is safe. Yes, it does need a few tuck point spots. It needs a few

windows re-glazed, but as far as safety, I'm aware of that. I'm educated. I got degrees here. All that we need, please, at least like possible to be there. We been there since '09, one more year. We hope the landlord show up and I am going to keep sending him message. It's really worth repairing, not demolishing. I know that's a strong building.

MR. REED: Okay. Again, thank you for coming out. This is again a bit of a unique situation because typically the owner is -- obviously the building owner is responsible. And I know, it seems like you are not in the best situation and I don't know, the City has done their part to reach the owner. And at some point -- boy, that's tough. There is really nothing that we can do outside of the owner complying with the request, and so I don't know. This one is set for status in October?

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Yes, October 26th for status.

MR. REED: The only thing I can tell you, there is time, but nothing is going to happen like in the next 30 days or the next even 60 days, but there is a time clock that has begun. So, you know, you might want to get very aggressive, because if the demolition does stand, what will be your plan B, because we would have some obligation to have you vacate the premises.

Again, this is day one. You have some time. Maybe there are other services. Maybe you can reach out to start taking other steps. I appreciate you coming out. I know you are in a bad situation, but if anything, if you do get in touch with the owner, have him call the Building Department right away. It's his responsibility and we are going to hold him to that. We appreciate that.

MR. ABUNADI: Okay, thank you.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Related to the other properties, I would mention on number 4, which is a garage. I received an e-mail from the owner that lives out in Schererville, he has applied for a permit and plans on self demo-ing the property. We believe he is going to do that. We'd request that the order be affirmed given the condition of the property, as you can see, substantially in disrepair.

Otherwise, that leaves us with

number 6, 4918 Indianapolis Boulevard. The owner is listed as Lakeside Trust, with a Schererville address. You can see the condition of the property is such that it is suitable for demolition.

Number 7, 3723 Ivy Street. The owner is listed as Felix Arroyo Jr.. There was an emergency board up on 3/9/26 due to a break in. There is significant damage inside as well, and we would request the order be affirmed. They failed to appear today.

And finally, number 9, 411 Prospect, in Marktown. The owner is listed as Equity Trust Capital LLC, with a Highland address. As you can see, significant disrepair for this property and unsafe condition. We'd ask the demolition order be affirmed also.

That covers all the properties on the agenda under the Unsafe Building Act. On behalf of the Building Commissioner, Mr. Portalatin, we request the orders be affirmed.

MR. REED: Anything else you need for the property -- I mean --

MR. KEVIN SMITH: We are going to bid it out right away. So we are kind of dealing with folks next door as well.

MR. REED: All right, understood.

With that, is there a motion to accept the new demolition orders upon recommendation of the Building Department?

MR. SMITH: I would make that motion.

MS. THOMPSON: I'll second that motion.

MR. REED: Are there any questions?

(None)

Motion has been properly made and second. We'll take a vote. All in favor?

(All signify aye.)

MR. REED: Motion carries.

MR. KEVIN SMITH: Thank you.

MR. REED: Thank you very much. We have no audience here for participation.

Our next meeting is Monday,

September 24th, at 5:00 p.m.
Is there a motion to adjourn?

MR. SMITH: I'll make that motion to adjourn.

MS. THOMPSON: I'll second the motion.

MR. REED: Motion has been properly made and second. We'll take a vote. All in favor?
(All signify aye.)
MR. REED: Motion carries.
Meeting adjourned.

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Approval of the Public Safety Minutes
of August 24th, 2026
Approved and Signed, Monday, August 24th, 2026.

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Milton Reed, President

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Linda Thompson, Member

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Frank Smith, Member

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Olga Cosme, 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 25th day of August, 2026.

Peggy S. LaLonde

