

CITY OF EAST CHICAGO
ECONOMIC BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
October 28, 2021

BOARD MEMBERS:	STAFF:
Jesse Avitia	Richard Morrisroe, Legal
Leon Valdez	Douglas Powers, Planner
Ezell Foster	Ateria Allen, Secretary

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,
October 28, 2021 to order.

Next, approval of minutes. Motion
to approve the minutes of Thursday, August 26, 2021.

MR. FOSTER: Make a motion.

MR. AVITIA: Second. Roll call.

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

MR. AVITIA: Motion carries.

We don't appear to have any old
business on the agenda. Under new business, I think we
have one, facade for Big Frank Sausage. What do we have
on that, Mr. Powers?

MR. POWERS: So the proprietor of Big
Frank's Sausage had submitted a petition requesting some
facade improvements. These improvements consisted of
like a new sign, as well as some fascia, downspouts,
gutter renovation in that regard as well. There are

1 issues with the building that he is trying to renovate
2 and improve, so it can last for years to come.

3 MR. AVITIA: Have all the improvements
4 been done already?

5 MR. POWERS: No, they have not. This was
6 presented -- well, it was suppose to be on the agenda
7 for the previous meeting, but they are in the process of
8 getting those done.

9 I believe that in regards to the
10 fascia support, they have opened up a permit request for
11 that. However, the work is not completed to-date and
12 the signage has not been started. However, they should
13 be completed prior to our next scheduled meeting.

14 MR. AVITIA: Now I saw several receipts
15 on this, but not a final price on this total.

16 MR. POWERS: Absolutely. So what these
17 are that you've seen submitted, those are quotes that
18 they have for the work. So typically what is done is
19 that we would approve the lowest bid, and then if they
20 choose to go with someone else, they would still have to
21 show that they are completing that amount of work. But,
22 for example, if the lowest bid was for \$1,000, being
23 this is 50/50, we would pay \$500, even if the total cost
24 came to several thousand dollars.

25 MR. AVITIA: The lowest bid was Sanchez
Construction.

MR. POWERS: That is correct. So we need
to approve this. There is actually two items that were
requested; one for the Sanchez Construction and the
other was for Nis -- Northwest Industrial Specialists --
for the signage. The petitioner has since requested to
not move forward with the additional mural that was
being requested as well. So we'd be looking for a
motion to approve those items.

MR. AVITIA: I need a motion to approve
the application from Big Frank Sausage, at 918 Carroll
Street.

MR. FOSTER: So move.

MR. AVITIA: Second the motion. Roll
call.

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

2 MR. AVITIA: Motion carries.

3 MR. AVITIA: Now we have Redevelopment
4 meeting minutes for review. Ezell, you have anything on
that?

5 MR. FOSTER: No.

6 MR. AVITIA: I do have a couple questions
7 on those minutes. The NVAH holding was discussed at the
minutes. Can you give an update on that?

8 MR. POWERS: So what that was is, we
9 presented before about the potential for building, you
know, new homes in East Chicago. That petition was
10 presented in front of you, as well as it was presented
in front of the Redevelopment Commission too. That
11 seems to be receiving favorable support to-date.
However, we wouldn't know whether that is awarded or not
12 until -- I believe the official date is November 16th --
so after November 16th, we'll know whether that is
13 something that could possibly move forward. Mind you
this still has to be presented to the Common Council.
14 So, until the Common Council has motioned that they are
in favor of or make a favorable recommendation, we don't
15 know for certain whether this will be moved forward.
This is just something in the works to allow them the
16 opportunity.

17 MR. AVITIA: Please clarify something for
me, in the minutes they are talking about buying each
18 lot for \$1,000 and picking up 55 lots. If the
Redevelopment Commission approves that, where does it go
19 from there?

20 MR. POWERS: So that is not one hundred
percent technically correct. They are not purchasing 55
21 lots for a thousand dollars each. What has occurred,
they submitted a prospective sales agreement that they
22 would not be interested in purchasing any properties
that did not meet the zoning and environmental issues.
23 Most likely that number is going to be far less.

24 What happens is that the
Redevelopment Commission has the authority to approve
those transactions. However, in order for NVAH or
25 groups like them in their regard to move forward, they

1 need to finalize and have a mechanism in place as well
2 that they are most likely going to be asking for tax
3 abatements, to which the tax abatement would have to be
4 approved by the Council. So they are receiving -- they
5 are investigating whether they can receive State and
6 Federal funds, which they will have final determination
7 on that mid November. Then they will have to reach out
8 to the Council and see whether they can get what other
9 financial things they are requesting to be able to fully
10 build these homes in place.

11 Once that is approved, then, you
12 know, they would submit plans for plan review. That
13 would go in front of Plan Commission. After Plan
14 Commission has approved it, those plans, they would be
15 able to issue permits.

16 MR. AVITIA: Okay. It's a process that
17 we are going to follow then?

18 MR. POWERS: Absolutely. So the process
19 differs depending on the scope of work. If people are
20 asking for tax incentive, their tax abatements, that's
21 going to have to be approved by the Council. If
22 variances are needed, it does not meet our development
23 requirement or use requirement I should say, that would
24 go to Council as well.

25 Other projects that are not seeking
funds, tax assistance, they originally contact the
Planning Department; then they have to submit plans that
are in line with our development plan requirements and
those are reviewed by the various parties that consist
of Technical Review Committee. Once all technical
corrections are provided, if they are needed, it goes to
the Planning Commission. And after Planning Commission
has approved, they start pulling permits.

MR. AVITIA: Because he also mentions
here the Comprehensive Plan of East Chicago. We talked
about that some time back and I think you brought that
back.

MR. POWERS: Absolutely. So the
Comprehensive Plan, I'm glad you mentioned that, because
currently we are investigating whether we can do
revisions to what the scope is for next year. So that
will be a conversation for us to discuss in one of these
upcoming meetings. But beyond that, the important
aspects of the Comprehensive Plan, especially that NVAH
partners proposal, is that what divisions have been over

1 the past 20 years for that portion of the community. So
2 there are some areas that are not as detailed versus,
you know, Carey and Michigan Avenue.

3 There were several aspects that
4 touch base on this project. One of those it clearly
5 states that there is a need for fill in the
Carey/Drummond area. This was originally mentioned in
2008 and has been something that is, you know, just has
not been fulfilled to-date.

6 So there is several reasons to go
7 through the Comp Plan, and mind you the Comp Plan isn't
8 just through us, but that's also through community
9 input. There would be various participatory meetings of
10 community stakeholders trying to get feedback as to what
11 is needed in this community. What they think this
12 community would or should look like in the future. So
that way, whenever there is financial incentives or
capital improvement projects being done by the City,
whatever in large scale, Economic can refer to that, as
well as the variances I mentioned and need for rezoning.
They all have to refer back to the Comprehensive Plan
and that is one of the primary reasons as to why one of
those requests would be likely to be approved or denied.

13 So even if the public does not come
14 to the public hearings, since some people may be
intimidated by City Hall, their voices are still heard
throughout that document.

15 MR. AVITIA: So my understanding is that
16 this project is in the very early stages then basically?

17 MR. POWERS: Yes.

18 MR. AVITIA: We have a long process. So
19 you have any estimate of how long this will take,
generally?

20 MR. POWERS: So if this receives Council
21 approval, it would depend on us. They stated before
22 that they could, you know, complete this in fiscal year
2022 or potentially could be staggered '22 and '23. So
23 that would depend on, you know, our finances, whether it
made sense to do all of this in the fiscal year,
depending on what funding sources were being used.

24 MR. AVITIA: Is that, any of that put in
the area that's going to be used?

25 MR. POWERS: Absolutely. So we are at a

1 very unique time. There are a lot of financial
2 mechanisms out there that weren't out there in the past.
3 So that's why we are seeing more people that are
4 interested in doing development in this area.

5 MR. AVITIA: Well, that's a pretty big
6 project for East Chicago, that kind of a project. I
7 mean especially being single family homes.

8 MR. POWERS: And this developer has also
9 mentioned that they are interested in looking into next
10 year, if it's possible, building a senior facility too.

11 MR. AVITIA: Okay.

12 MR. MORRISROE: If I may. Now, the City
13 thought it had State money to develop Safe Haven, was to
14 be a partner, and a lot of time and energy
15 was put into it and it fell through. These were to be
16 homes in the west Calumet area, so they are working on
17 other mechanisms now. This may address some of that,
18 but it's touch and go. You don't know what you want to
19 do, but whether it falls in place. For instance, that
20 kind of notice they received in mid November is of the
21 essence.

22 MR. POWERS: These are two completely
23 separate projects.

24 MR. MORRISROE: I understand that.

25 MR. POWERS: There has been, you know, a
project trying to develop housing in West Calumet.
That's at a different stage. If you are interested, we
can gladly discuss that at the next meeting. I may have
some additional updates on that. However, this was --
that was somewhat quasi public down at State and City,
along with a private party that, you know, has since
changed. The project that we were discussing in the
Harbor would have been private. This is a private
developer who is seeking State and federal assistance.
And a lot of times when large scale development comes to
your community, there is a development agreement. What
all is in that agreement is tax incentives, abatements,
I can't say everything because it's theoretical.

But in this regard, that's what they will
be trying to achieve, you know, getting that agreement
in place. And that will be our contribution to this
project.

1 MR. AVITIA: So, Mr. Morrisroe, West
2 Calumet, I think you mentioned seven single family
homes.

3 MR. MORRISROE: That was to be the first
4 phase, with the hope to do more. They were to be kind
5 of ranch style homes. And as I say, I went to some of
6 the early meetings, but James Portalatin, the Building
7 Director, and Frank Rivera, the Redevelopment Director,
8 spent really almost countless hours working on that
trying to get it together. It turned out that some of
the comparables were way out of line for East Chicago,
and the financing per unit had almost doubled what
originally was being talked about, and that brought an
end to that particular project.

9 MR. AVITIA: That's all the comments I
10 have on that. Let's move on to Public Comments. We
11 have no public. Commissioner comments - Ezell, any
comments at all?

12 MR. FOSTER: No.

13 MR. AVITIA: My comments were basically
14 dealing with the subject that we already covered and
that information about the West Calumet. So that's all
I have on this one.

15 Our next meeting will be on
16 Wednesday, November 17, 2021. Can I have a motion to
adjourn?

17 MR. FOSTER: So moved.

18 MR. AVITIA: Second. Roll call.

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

20 MR. AVITIA: Motion carries.

21
22 ***** Meeting Adjourned *****
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Approval of the Meeting Minutes of Thursday
October 28, 2021

Approved and signed November 17, 2021

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 1st day of November, 2021.

Peggy S. LaLonde

Peggy S. LaLonde, CSR, RPR



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