

EAST CHICAGO WATERWAY MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING
CITY OF EAST CHICAGO, ENGINEERING/ANNEX BUILDING
4444 RAILROAD AVENUE
EAST CHICAGO, INDIANA
February 19, 2026
THURSDAY 5:00 P.M.

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS had in the
above-entitled matter on the 19th day of February, 2026
at 5:00 p.m. held at the City of East Chicago
Engineering/Annex Building, 444 Railroad Avenue, East
Chicago, Indiana.

A P P E A R A N C E

MR. JOHN FEKETE, PRESIDENT (VIA ZOOM)

MR. JALAN ROBINSON, VICE PRESIDENT

MR. JOHN BAKOTA, BOARD MEMBER

MR. HENRY RODRIGUEZ, BOARD MEMBER

MR. RAY LOPEZ, BOARD MEMBER

MR. FERNANDO TREVINO, FMT CONSULTING

MS. ELLEN GREGORY, ELLEN GREGORY LAW

ALSO PRESENT:

MS. VANESSA VARGAS, CLA (VIA zoom)

MR. VAUGHN COOLMAN, ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS (VIA ZOOM)

MR. BOB SANTORI, CLA

MR. STEVE BARKER, Representative of NIPSCO

MS. CAROL NEESON, TETRA TECH (VIA ZOOM)

MS. SHANNON FLANAGAN (VIA ZOOM)

MR. TIM DAHL (VIA ZOOM)

MR. BILL O'NEILL (VIA ZOOM)

MR. ADAM MITTERMEIER (VIA ZOOM)

MR. CHRISTIAN BACO (VIA ZOOM)

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. ROBINSON: Ready? Okay. I would like to
3 call to order the East Chicago Waterway Management
4 District Board of Directors Regular Public Meeting.
5 The time is 5:05 and today is February 19, 2026. I,
6 Jalan Robinson, Vice President, will be running today's
7 meeting and our President, Mr. Fekete, is joining us
8 online.

9 First order of business is roll call. John
10 Fekete?

11 MR. FEKETE: Here.

12 MR. ROBINSON: Ray Lopez?

13 MR. LOPEZ: Here.

14 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Here.

16 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

17 MR. BAKOTA: Here.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson? I am here.

19 Next order of business is the Executive
20 Director's Report.

21 MR. TREVINO: Yes. Fernando Trevino with FMT
22 Consulting. I'd like to start off by going over the
23 contents of your Board packet.

24 You have a copy of today's Board meeting
25 agenda. You have a copy of the public meeting posting

1 for today's meeting.

2 You have the Board minutes for January
3 15th Board meeting.

4 You have the three Clifton Larson Allen
5 statement of works or contracts that were emailed
6 earlier today and are part of this board packet.

7 You have a spreadsheet showing my 2025
8 year-end cash balance calculations and the 2026 budget
9 trust and non-trust transfers that are necessary for
10 the 2026 budget.

11 You have two Letters of Authorization
12 related to the 2026 budget transfers, one to BMO and
13 one to First Merchants. Both are dated today's date,
14 February 19, 2026.

15 You have a copy of the Clifton Larson
16 Allen financial report dated January 31, 2026 for the
17 month of January, which was emailed earlier today and
18 hard copies provided at today's meeting.

19 You have today's claim docket dated
20 February 19, 2026 along with copies of the purchase
21 orders and the check register.

22 You have a copy of the First Merchants
23 bank statements for the month of January 2026 for
24 accounts ending in 616 and the one user fee deposit
25 made in January.

1 You also have First Merchants account
2 ending in 608, along with copies of the checks that
3 were processed during the month of January.

4 You have the BMO Non-Trust Report
5 summarizing our CDs and you have the BMO Trust Reports
6 dated January 31, 2026.

7 You have an email dated February 12,
8 2026 from AECOM regarding the Brownsfield Grant update
9 and copies of the major portions of the Brownfield
10 Grant application.

11 You have a copy of Tetra Tech's monthly
12 progress report, invoice and budget summary for the
13 month of January. The report's dated February 5, 2026.

14 You have presentation slides from EPA
15 regarding their update report on the Grand Cal River
16 Junction Reaches project.

17 You have copies of EPA's Press Release
18 on the \$200 million Great Lakes Legacy Act Project
19 Agreement press releases dated January 22, 2026.

20 You have a copy of the Chicago Tribune
21 article dated January 25, 2026 regarding the same
22 project.

23 You have copies of two letters to
24 Senator Jim Banks and Senators Todd Young, both of
25 Indiana, and both letters are dated February 18, 2026

1 requesting their support for the reauthorization of the
2 Great Lakes Restoration Initiative as proposed in the
3 GLRI Act 2025 SB528.

4 You have a copy of Army Corps' Report to
5 the Board dated February 19, 2026 copy of Attorney
6 Ellen Gregory's monthly report to the Board with a
7 revision date of February 17th. Copies of the district
8 submittal of the 2025 annual 100R Gateway Report.

9 And last but not least, you have a copy
10 of Attorney Weiser's unpaid user Fee demand letter
11 dated February 18, 2026 regarding the one unpaid user
12 fee.

13 To go over a couple items, regarding the
14 action items on today agenda, we have the two routine
15 monthly action items, the approval of the Regular Board
16 Meeting Minutes of January 15th and today's monthly --
17 and the monthly claim docket with today's meeting. And
18 then you have three additional action items, the
19 election of officers and then there's three 2026
20 Clifton Larson Allen Statement of work or contracts.
21 Then the third is the trust and non-trust dollar
22 transfers related to funding the 2026 operating budget.

23 Regarding the District's finances,
24 around this time of year, we calculate the prior year's
25 ending cash balance for each budget line item. The

1 goal is to determine how much of that balance belongs
2 to the trust funds versus the non-trust fund based on
3 how each line item was originally funded.

4 For 2025, each budget line item was
5 funded either 100% by trust, 100% by non-trust funds,
6 or through a 20/80 split, which is 20% trust and 80%
7 non-trust. And we apply those same proportions when
8 allocating any remaining 2025 cash balances back to the
9 trust and non-trust funds which then carry forward into
10 the 2026 budget.

11 I completed this analysis and Vanessa
12 Vargas, our accountant with Clifton Larson Allen,
13 reviewed my calculations and confirmed they were
14 accurate.

15 The final outcome shows that there's
16 \$38,490.77 should be transferred from the Trust Funds
17 and \$277,191.52 from the non-Trust Funds. These
18 amounts are reflected in the two Letter of
19 Authorizations for approval. One to BMO for the Trust
20 Funds and one to First Merchants for the Non-Trust
21 funds.

22 Regarding our 2025 User Fees, we have
23 one unpaid account. The total amount unpaid is \$4,438
24 and that's with Duke 425 Holdings LLC. The initial due
25 date for the 2025 User Fees was November 30, 2025.

1 Then the Board approved extending the deadline to
2 January of this year and we had still not received
3 payment. I contacted Attorney Weiser to initiate legal
4 collections process which he has started and as I
5 mentioned, the copy of Attorney Weiser's demand letter
6 to the company is in your packet.

7 Regarding the Great Lakes Legacy Act
8 projects, the Lake George Canal East and Middle
9 projects, the design for the South Tank Farm Barrier
10 Wall Groundwater Management System is ongoing. ARBP
11 has reported the design is at 60%.

12 Regarding the Lake George Canal East
13 Section, the Corps is managing this dredging project
14 for EPA. The design work is ongoing. Phase II of the
15 Lake George Canal East dredging is scheduled to be done
16 in 2026. The project is currently planning to use the
17 local CDF to dispose of the materials dredged for this
18 project.

19 You might recall that the last board
20 meeting the Board approved that it had no objection to
21 use of the East Chicago CDF for this project. And that
22 letter was signed and forwarded to the Army Corps of
23 Engineers.

24 The Cleveland Cliff CEP dredging is now
25 forecasted to be done in 2027.

1 Regarding the Lake George Canal Middle
2 CAP project, the Army Corps of Engineers is also
3 managing that portion of the project. The CAP
4 construction has been completed. ECO Construction
5 activities are periodically ongoing. The Corps
6 recently submitted an updated adaptive management plan
7 to address the oil sheens in this section of the
8 waterway.

9 Regarding the Lake George Canal West
10 Remediation Project, that project is between BP and EPA
11 based on the latest site characterization data for that
12 section of the waterway. BP recommended no further
13 action is necessary. The Corps and EPA continue to
14 assess BP's "no further action" recommendation which is
15 currently expected to include additional sampling.

16 Regarding the Grand Cal River Junction
17 Reaches Project Tetra Tech remedial design work is
18 ongoing. We're currently reviewing and incorporating
19 comments to the 90% design. Ongoing project activities
20 include completing the remedial design, junction marsh
21 coordination, coordination with the former city dump
22 site, coordination with the Marquette Trail project,
23 community engagement, property access coordination
24 including agreements. Various permits necessary for
25 construction. A few weeks ago EPA informed us that

1 they've had a change in their policies on signing
2 certain permit applications and lease agreements. So I
3 asked EPA to attend today's meeting so they can
4 introduce themselves, give a brief update on the
5 project and present their new policy on lease
6 applications and permits. And the Board can ask any
7 questions they may have. And that update will be under
8 the Grand Cal River Project update later on the agenda.

9 Also, Carol Neeson of Tetra Tech is also
10 in attendance and may provide additional updates.

11 Regarding the Great Lakes Legacy Act
12 work in kind, in October of last year I submitted a
13 letter report to EPA requesting the City's work on the
14 City Dump project count as work in kind for the Great
15 Lakes Legacy Act project. EPA is in the process of
16 completing their assessment. I continue to work on
17 putting together another work in kind request related
18 to the city CSL project. I've started working on the
19 District's 2025 year-end work in kind report. EPA
20 review continues on the 2024 and prior year reports.

21 Almost done. Regarding the Brownfields
22 Grant application, also on today's agenda is an update
23 on the application. You may recall that at last
24 month's Board meeting the Board approved the delegation
25 of authority for me and Ellen to work on and submitting

1 a Brownsfield Grant. So AECOM, the consultant who
2 helped with the submittal, will give a short project
3 update later on the agenda.

4 I'm also recommending that we consider
5 entering into an MOU with the City of East Chicago
6 affiliated with the Management coordination of the
7 grant, including the Economic and Recreational
8 Development Assessment. So I have mentioned this to
9 the City and they're in agreement that that would be a
10 good idea. So Ellen and I will be working on an MOU
11 for Board consideration.

12 The Army Corps of Engineers report to
13 the Board is in your packet. Project Manager, Vaughn
14 Coolman will providing an update to the Board.

15 And last but not least, Attorney Allen
16 Gregory will give an update on various legal matters.
17 And that concludes my report.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Any questions for Mr. Trevino?

19 Next we have election of officers.

20 MR. BAKOTA: I make a motion that we maintain
21 the same Board member officers for 2026 that we had in
22 2025. John Fekete as President, Jalan Robinson as Vice
23 President, Ray Lopez as Treasurer and Fiscal Officer,
24 Henry Rodriguez as Secretary, and John Fekete as
25 investing Officer.

1 MR. ROBINSON: Is there a second?

2 MR. LOPEZ: Second.

3 MR. ROBINSON: There's a second. Roll call
4 vote. John Fekete.

5 MS. GREGORY: I had muted him before, so let
6 me -- let me get him unmuted. Can you unmute yourself,
7 John?

8 MR. TREVINO: You gotta unmute, John.

9 MR. BAKOTA: Take that as a yes.

10 MS. GREGORY: Unfortunately, we have to get
11 an audio because the electronic, you know, the statute
12 says that it has to be able to communicate. It just.

13 MR. TREVINO: It just beeped. What was that?
14 All right. May we come back to him?

15 MR. BAKOTA: Just call him on your phone.

16 MS. GREGORY: Oh, you could do that. Oh,
17 wait, he's unmuted now.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Okay. Can you say we're
19 voting on election of officers, John?

20 MR. BAKOTA: Frozen.

21 MR. TREVINO: You vote yes?

22 MR. BAKOTA: Okay, we got you, John.

23 MR. TREVINO: Okay, I think we can hear you
24 on the computer now.

25 MR. FEKETE: Can you hear me?

1 MR. TREVINO: Yes. We're just voting on the
2 elections of officers. How do you vote?

3 MR. FEKETE: I vote yes.

4 MR. ROBINSON: Ray Lopez?

5 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

6 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

7 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

8 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

9 MR. BAKOTA: Yes.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson? I vote yes.

11 Next, we'll pass it over to Mr. Trevino
12 for appointment of Finance Committee members and
13 Chairperson.

14 MR. TREVINO: Yes. So I did speak with Board
15 President Fekete and he recommended that the Finance
16 Committee members and Chairperson remain the same as
17 2025, which he would be the Chairperson and the Finance
18 Committee members would be himself, Jalan Robinson and
19 Ray Lopez. So you want to -- someone want to make a
20 motion to that effect?

21 MR. LOPEZ: I make the motion.

22 MR. BAKOTA: Second.

23 MR. ROBINSON: All right. Moved and properly
24 seconded. Roll call vote. John Fekete?

25 MR. FEKETE: Yes.

1 MR. ROBINSON: Ray Lopez?

2 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

3 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

4 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

5 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

6 MR. BAKOTA: Yes.

7 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson. Yes.

8 Next we have approval consideration of
9 Board meeting notes for January 15, 2026.

10 MR. BAKOTA: Motion to approve.

11 MR. LOPEZ: Second.

12 MR. ROBINSON: Moved and properly seconded.
13 Roll call vote. John Fekete?

14 MS. GREGORY: If you can hear us, let
15 Fernando call you and we'll do the audio through the
16 phone.

17 MR. ROBINSON: There he goes.

18 MR. TREVINO: Hey, John. Yeah, we'll do the
19 audio through the phone. So just mute yourself. Okay.
20 All right. Can you hear me?

21 MR. ROBINSON: So, John, we're voting on
22 approving consideration for Board meeting notes on
23 January 15th. How do you vote?

24 MR. BAKOTA: Okay, I've got you on the phone.

25 MR. FEKETE: Look, this communication thing

1 is ridiculous. Absolutely ridiculous. So I'm going to
2 bow out right now rather than try to fight this.

3 MR. TREVINO: Okay.

4 MR. FEKETE: I've appointed the Finance
5 Committee. We have the electional officers. And at
6 this point in time, I'm just going to have to excuse
7 myself and hope we can get a better connection.

8 MR. TREVINO: Yeah, I think that's a good
9 idea because we have a quorum. So we're good on this
10 side. And I'll just update you, John. I'll send you
11 the meeting notes.

12 MR. FEKETE: This is crazy.

13 MR. TREVINO: All right. Thank you, okay.

14 MR. FEKETE: Take care.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Ray Lopez?

16 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

17 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

18 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

19 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

20 MR. BAKOTA: Yes.

21 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson. I vote yes.

22 Next we have the Accounting Consultant
23 Report.

24 MS. VARGAS: Good evening, everyone. Vanessa
25 Vargas.

1 MR. TREVINO: It works.

2 MS. VARGAS: All right. Before I start with
3 the financial statements, I just wanted to repeat what
4 Fernando mentioned. So he did go through the exercise,
5 the transfer needed for the budget and the trust
6 transfer for 2026. I did review his calculations. As
7 part of our month end process we monitor the budget as
8 well as the outstanding cash balance and we calculate
9 how much is needed in terms of the transfer. Our
10 transfer needed again this year tied to the penny to
11 what Fernando calculated. So the \$315,682.29 made up
12 of the Trust Fund and the Non-Trust that we're going to
13 mention. So I just wanted to make that known as well.

14 In front of you, you do have the
15 financial statements on a cash basis dated January 31,
16 2026. If you turn to Page 2, we will begin with the
17 Statement of Cash Receipts and Cash Disbursements for
18 the one month ended January 31, 2026.

19 You received interest income in the
20 amount of \$7,351.63 as well as deposited User Fees in
21 the amount of \$44,110.50, bringing your total receipts
22 to \$51,462.13.

23 Your cash disbursements totaled
24 \$71,798.50. This brings you to a decrease in cash in
25 the amount of \$20,336.37.

1 Your cash balance as of January 1, 2026
2 totaled \$14,951,631.66.

3 Your cash balance as of January 31, 2026
4 totals \$14,931,295.29.

5 If you turn to Page 3, we will continue
6 with the schedule of Cash Account Activity for the one
7 month ended January 31, 2026. Your Operating Account
8 began a year when the cash balance on January 1st in
9 the amount of \$1,308,102.21. You've earned interest in
10 the amount of \$2,964.73 as well as had cash
11 disbursements totaling \$71,798.50, which brings your
12 Operating Cash Balance as of January 31, 2026 to
13 \$1,239,268.44.

14 Your User Fee account began the year
15 with a cash balance on January 1st in the amount of
16 \$1,900,236.71. You earned interest in the amount of
17 \$4,386.90, as well as deposited User Fees in the amount
18 of \$44,110.50. This brings your User Fee account
19 balance as of January 31st to \$1,948,734.11.

20 You began the year with CDs in the
21 amount of \$11,743,292.74. You have not earned any
22 interest through January 31st, which brings your total
23 CD balance as of January 31st to 11,743,292.74.

24 If you turn to Page 4, we will continue
25 with the schedule of 2026 available budget. As of

1 February 19, 2026. Your 2026 budget appropriation
2 totaled \$1,553,089.00. Accounts payable dated
3 12/31/2025 in the amount of \$70,695.50. Brings your
4 2026 total appropriation to \$1,623,784.50.

5 Cash disbursements for the one month
6 ended January 2026 totaled \$71,798.50.

7 The claim docket dated February 19th,
8 2026 for your approval totals \$74,177.71. This brings
9 your unused budget for 2026 to \$1,477,808.29.

10 Are there any questions?

11 MR. ROBINSON: No.

12 MR. BAKOTA: No questions.

13 MR. TREVINO: Thanks, Vanessa.

14 MR. ROBINSON: Next we have the approval
15 consideration for the CLA 2026 Statement of Work
16 contracts. Is there a motion?

17 MR. RODRIGUEZ: I make a Motion to Approve.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Is there a second?

19 MR. BAKOTA: Second.

20 MR. ROBINSON: Moved in properly seconded.

21 Roll call vote. Ray Lopez?

22 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

23 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

24 MR. TREVINO: Yes.

25 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

1 MR. BAKOTA: Yes.

2 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson. I vote yes.

3 Next we have the approval consideration
4 for the 2026 Budget Trust and Non-Trust transfer
5 authorization memos. Is there a Motion for Approval?

6 MR. BAKOTA: Motion to Approve.

7 MR. LOPEZ: Second.

8 MR. ROBINSON: Moved and properly seconded.
9 Roll call vote? Ray Lopez?

10 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

11 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

12 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

13 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

14 MR. BAKOTA: Yes.

15 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson? I vote yes.

16 Next we have the approval considerations
17 for his account payable voucher register February 19,
18 2026. Is there a Motion?

19 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Motion to Approve.

20 MR. ROBINSON: Is there a second?

21 MR. BAKOTA: Second.

22 MR. ROBINSON: It's been moved and properly
23 seconded. Roll call vote. Ray Lopez?

24 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

25 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

1 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

2 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

3 MR. BAKOTA: Yes.

4 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson. I vote yes.

5 Next we have the BMO Trust and
6 Non-Trust reports.

7 MR. TREVINO: Mr. Santori.

8 MR. SANTORI: Good evening, everybody. Yes,
9 I'll go over the trust information. Sorry about that.

10 The first report is the Money Market and CD
11 Holding for the trust accounts and the value on
12 January 31, 2026 was \$4,218,483.06. There was no
13 interest earnings on the CD. And for the Money Market
14 account, there was an interest earning of \$458. The
15 second page of the Trust Report is showing the
16 historical values of the distributions being the
17 beginning of the year. It's showing a zero dollar
18 amount for the year 2026. But that looks like that
19 will be changing shortly. The second report is the CDs
20 for the District itself. Again, with this
21 particular -- with these particular CDs, there were no
22 interest earnings in the month of January. So the
23 total balance on January 31st was \$11,743,292.74.

24 The next interest earning on those CDs will
25 actually be a few days on February 23rd. So you'll see

1 some interest earnings on next month's report.

2 I believe that covers it. If there's any
3 questions. Happy to answer those for you.

4 MR. TREVINO: You'll be getting that Letter
5 of Authorization and transfer of funds probably
6 tomorrow related to the 2026 budget.

7 MR. SANTORI: Sounds good.

8 MR. ROBINSON: Any questions?

9 Next we have the Brownfields grant
10 application project update.

11 MR. TREVINO: Yes. So as I mentioned earlier
12 in my updates that in January we submitted the
13 Brownsfield Grant Application. It was a really good
14 team effort between some of Mayor Copeland's staff from
15 the City of East Chicago and AECOM put a really nice
16 project team together. We were able to submit that in
17 a very short time frame. And I thought AECOM did a
18 really good job of kind of taking the lead on that. So
19 I asked them to attend today's Board meeting, give a
20 brief update and introduce themselves. And I believe
21 Shannon and Tim Dahl are on. So who wants to take the
22 lead?

23 MS. GREGORY: I wonder if I should move this
24 back so people can see the screen. Should I do that or
25 not?

1 MS. FLANAGAN: Yeah. Thanks, Fernando. I
2 met you all virtually last Board meeting and I guess
3 I'll start by saying thank you for trusting us in, you
4 know, empowering Fernando and Ellen to have the ability
5 to move forward and prepare this grant. And as
6 Fernando mentioned, truly a team effort to get this
7 done. I think at one point you said when we were
8 submitting it, like we'd had two months to do this, it
9 would have been a pretty incredible feat, but we worked
10 together and were able to get it done and submitted
11 successfully in two weeks.

12 At the last Board meeting, we talked
13 about kind of a few of the strategies we were going to
14 look at to submit the grant. One of them was
15 partnering with the coalition that was and did end up
16 submitting a grant themselves. This was led by RDA and
17 NERPC was part of the participants in that. And then
18 the second option was to submit the Communitywide
19 Assessment Grant from East Chicago Waterway Management
20 District. We actually did something slightly different
21 than that. And there's a few reasons.

22 I think we looked -- we coordinated with
23 the team that was working on the coalition. So NERPC
24 and RDA and the goals of their grant were really
25 complementary to the vision that our team had in the

1 East Chicago and East Chicago Waterway Management
2 District, but distinct. And so I think for a few of
3 those reasons, the determination was to submit a
4 Communitywide Assessment Grant separately, but
5 connecting the relationships through Steering
6 Committee, stakeholder engagement relationship. So it
7 was something we made the decision on pretty quickly.
8 And I think that the strategy made great sense.

9 And then I guess kind of other piece was
10 one of the aspects of submitting a federal grant
11 requires something called a Unique Entity ID Number.
12 And so I have to give a special thanks to Ellen and
13 Fernando working together, kind of trying to work
14 through how the East Chicago Waterway Management
15 District could obtain this. It was something, I think
16 early on we thought we would, you know, a party was
17 available. And we found out as we were preparing the
18 grant itself, it wasn't available and would take kind
19 of a bit of time to receive from EPA.

20 So we were able to, because we've been
21 in great conversations and coordination with the City
22 of East Chicago, worked together with them for them to
23 be the actual applicant and to submit the grant itself.

24 So yeah, I guess that's sort of the
25 administrative side of things. And I think submitting

1 it that way not, you know, not only allowed us to move
2 forward. Fernando mentioned the kind of relationship
3 and advancing the MOU with the City itself. But I
4 think it really helped us to pretty quickly and in
5 depth understand the goals, both long term and short
6 term of the City of East Chicago and where those great
7 connections are with the goals of East Chicago Waterway
8 Management District.

9 So I really think, and Fernando, you can
10 speak to it too, that it ended up being just such a
11 special way to be able to move this grant forward in
12 alignment with the goals of the City, with the goals of
13 East Chicago Waterway Management District. And
14 hopefully EPA sees in the grant that I really recommend
15 you guys, when you have time, read through it. I
16 helped, you know, obviously I've read through the
17 pieces of it many times and working with our team to
18 prepare it. But top to bottom, I read through it after
19 we submitted. I was tearing up just thinking about how
20 important and special the community of East Chicago
21 really is and what this could open up in terms of
22 opportunity when thinking about what the future could
23 look like. And so, yeah, I really recommend you look
24 at the package. You'll see, you know, part of the
25 package is the grant itself. So, you know, it outlines

1 kind of -- you want to tell the story, you know. You
2 want to like really create -- it's supposed to make you
3 tear up. You want to really create the story. And
4 then it talks through the scope of the work. I'll say
5 in our experience working with EPA, you need to outline
6 a scope, it needs to be very, very specific. But as
7 you move through it, there's opportunities to adjust
8 the details of it based on what you're learning in
9 early phases of it. So just that kind of caveat when
10 you read through that scope, that requirement of being
11 detailed is there. But, you know, they want you to
12 understand, you know, they want you to learn from
13 earlier phases to then build into the later phases.

14 And then the other piece I'll point out
15 in the packet you have is the map itself. So you'll
16 see kind of the target area. So EPA likes you to
17 define that target area. That's all the area within
18 the jurisdiction of East Chicago Waterway Management
19 District. And the City of East Chicago kind of helped
20 identify and formulate the priority zone, sort of
21 thinking through, you know, which particular portions
22 to look at first with both the planning studies and
23 economic studies, as well as the more targeted
24 Brownfield kind of early environmental phases.

25 And then the other item I highlight is

1 just kind of that stakeholder engagement piece. And
2 we've had some kind of initial discussions which we,
3 you know, can talk more about as it makes sense, but
4 how to like, keep the momentum of the initial
5 conversations we've had with some of the stakeholders,
6 you know, whether it's NERPC, whether it's, of course,
7 you guys in East Chicago and kind of keeping that
8 momentum going. So just having those relationships
9 start building. So hopefully when EPA says yes to the
10 grant, and that's something I want to touch on, they
11 usually announce the awards in late spring, early
12 summer. So hopefully we'll hear good news about that.
13 And then, you know, just kind of keeping all those
14 stakeholders in the loop between now and then so that,
15 you know, the work itself can move forward really
16 nicely.

17 That's kind of the overview. But again,
18 I really recommend you do a read through of what
19 Fernando provided in the packet. And again, thank you
20 so much for the trust from the Board to, you know,
21 believe in us to be able to submit this. And it was
22 just what a gift to be able to work with Fernando and
23 East Chicago and Ellen and you all on kind of
24 submitting this. So thank you very, very much.

25 MR. TREVINO: Yeah, thank you. Yeah.

1 Thanks, Shannon. And again, I thought AECOM did a
2 phenomenal job there. The team that they put together
3 to help submit this grant were definitely experts in
4 the field. To be able to put something this
5 comprehensive and so many moving parts together in a
6 short time frame, I think is representative of their
7 expertise. So thanks, Tim and Shannon, for attending
8 and for all your efforts in putting this grant
9 application together. Anything else, Tim, did you want
10 to add anything?

11 MR. LOPEZ: Yeah, I'm Ray Lopez. I'm a Board
12 member and I've been here a long time, John, and all of
13 us. When we started off, we don't know where we're
14 going to go if we can get this much done. But there's
15 so many people to meet. So many hurdles to go over.
16 There's so much paperwork and all that, but a lot of
17 cooperation. And it did pay off. Fernando, our
18 attorney and the Board putting up with it. And we're
19 on their back and pushing. But we thank you for
20 everything. And all the people here, we thank them
21 too, because they worked with us, they answered our
22 questions, they cooperated. Again, thank you very
23 much.

24 MR. DAHL: Yeah, thanks. I'll just add that
25 I think it was just a great team effort all around.

1 Fernando, Ellen, City of East Chicago. And then
2 Shannon and her team put it together and I think it's
3 really exciting to build off of the other work that
4 you're doing in the canal. I think the economic
5 development piece will be a nice thing to follow after
6 you get a clean riverway. Hopefully we'll get some
7 good news in June, July.

8 MR. TREVINO: All right.

9 MR. BAKOTA: Good work. Thank you.

10 MR. ROBINSON: Fernando, thank you.

11 Next we have the Great Lakes Legacy Act
12 and the Grand Cal River Junction Reaches Project
13 update.

14 MR. TREVINO: Yes. So I gave a brief update
15 during my report, and usually we ask Carol Neeson of
16 Tetra Tech to give an update, but I'm going to let EPA
17 take the lead and then we'll circle back with Carol if
18 she wants to add anything. EPA folks. Ben, who wants
19 to take the lead? Introduce yourselves and --

20 MR. O'NEILL: Sure. I'll start here. I'm
21 Ben O'Neill, Project Manager over here. That's my
22 phone, the Special Program Office. I'm joined in the
23 office today --

24 MR. TREVINO: Yeah, you sounded faint. You
25 were sounding good and then it went faint on us.

1 MR. O'NEILL: I'll speak up. Will they
2 introduce themselves? Adam, could you give me sharing?

3 MR. MITTERMEIER: Good evening, members of
4 the Board. My name is Adam Mittermeier. I'm the
5 attorney for EPA that represents -- on the Great Lakes
6 Legacy Act project in East Chicago. Thank you for
7 giving us time on your agenda this evening.

8 MR. BACO: Yeah, thanks for letting us join
9 your meeting. I'm Christian Baco, also Great Lakes
10 Legacy Act, Project Manager, with EPA GLNPO, working
11 with Ben, Caitlin, Adam, Carol and Fernando on the
12 Junction Reaches project.

13 MR. O'NEILL: Great. Can you guys hear me
14 okay?

15 MR. TREVINO: Great.

16 MR. O'NEILL: Adam and I were talking earlier
17 this week and we realized this was the first time we
18 had an opportunity to meet with you since awarding the
19 project agreement here. Since as Fernando mentioned
20 right up front, we just signed to clean up the
21 waterways. We are very, very excited about this. Huge
22 congratulations to the Board, to everyone on this call
23 right now. Fernando was instrumental in getting this
24 pass through. As you all know, years in the making,
25 and at the end of the day, I think all of the parties

1 walked away with this, thinking he came out with
2 something really special. So as Fernando would say,
3 win, win, win, win, knocked it out of the park.
4 Without Adam, Adam is our attorney extraordinaire here.
5 He was also obviously very instrumental. Adam,
6 anything you want to say just regarding approval of the
7 \$200 million project agreement here?

8 MR. MITTERMEIER: Sure. I just want to echo
9 what Ben said, that we're very excited about the
10 Junction Reaches project being included in the project
11 agreement that we've been working with you on for over
12 a decade. We're grateful for your long partnership on
13 this project and your support for the Great Lakes
14 Legacy Act. And we're really looking forward to
15 implementing both the project in the canal and the
16 Junction Reaches.

17 MR. O'NEILL: Great. So let's talk about
18 Junction Reaches in particular here. So just, you
19 know, a quick status update. You may hear in a moment,
20 Tetra Tech is weeks away from finishing the engineering
21 design, right. We're right at the finish line, what
22 I'll call the final mile of the design here, wrapping
23 up 90% completion. And at this phase, really what we
24 want to do is we want to start running full speed
25 towards getting real estate agreements and obtaining

1 permits. That's the phase we're at right now is as
2 we're ready to just hit the ground running. And one of
3 the reasons, or the reason we wanted to talk to you all
4 today, to the Board, is there's some synergies we want
5 to just sort of talk about to help us really stick the
6 landing on awarding this contract. Our goal is to
7 award this construction contract here at the end of the
8 year so that we can start constructing hands down in
9 2027.

10 So one of the first synergies we'll sort
11 of talk about here is real estate. So when we talk
12 about real estate, we talk about a few different types
13 of agreements that we need. One of them might be a
14 more long term agreement. So good example of that is
15 going to be like our marsh work where we're doing a lot
16 of ecosystem restoration there. It's going to be very
17 critical to maintain this ecosystem restoration in the
18 future. You know, past the time when EPA, GLA walks
19 away from the site, the community is going to own this
20 and really make this successful. We need some
21 agreements in place to make sure that representatives
22 have access and continue to monitor and maintain that
23 ecosystem.

24 Another type of agreement that we are
25 going to explore are temporary access agreements. So

1 an example of that might be where we set up a staging
2 or storage area or maybe some real estate parcels where
3 we need access to the canal. This is a very
4 constrained canal. We're going to have to go through
5 some properties to just get our equipment out there.
6 So right now as a team, we're developing a real estate
7 plan and we're really developing or we're really
8 looking into identifying the appropriate legal
9 instruments and the parcels that we need. I'm not --
10 we're not coming here today with any specific parcels
11 or legal instruments in mind. But we are coming here
12 today with the knowledge that we're entering this next
13 phase full speed. We want to have some agreements in
14 place very soon and that's going to require us to be
15 relatively nimble during negotiation. And so that's
16 where, you know, the NFETAL sponsor comes in and can
17 help us support. So, you know, the Great Legacy, the
18 Great Lakes Legacy Act, we've had a lot of success in
19 working with non-federal sponsors in obtaining real
20 estate agreements.

21 There are certain, there are certain
22 situations where EPA has a little more difficulty
23 entering into an agreement with private landowners.
24 Examples might be if there's indemnification language
25 including EPA sometimes needs to balk at that language.

1 And then there's a protracted back and forth between
2 the parties while we continue to negotiate that
3 language. Another example might be for a dewatering
4 area. We're still identifying which dewatering area is
5 most appropriate for us. But that being said, there
6 may be a situation that arises where we, the EPA, don't
7 have a construction contractor on board. In fact, we
8 need to have a real estate agreement before we can
9 advertise this contract. If we start negotiating now
10 and the landowner wants some sort of agreement ahead of
11 time, EPA can't enter into that. So in those
12 situations we usually turn to our non-federal sponsor
13 to help us bridge that gap between what we need right
14 now and when we actually have a construction contractor
15 on board.

16 So we're coming to you today just to
17 sort of, I would say grease the wheels and say we're
18 going to start this process now. There may be Board
19 meetings in the near future where we come to you with
20 specific real estate needs, specific real estate
21 instruments that we're hoping ECWMD, the Board can help
22 us enter into those by signing those agreements and
23 holding those agreements during construction. I'm
24 gonna pause for a moment and see if Adam or Christian,
25 anything you want to add, just discussing real estate

1 agreements and potential needs or wants for Junction
2 Reaches?

3 MR. MITTERMEIER: Nothing for me.

4 MR. BACO: Yeah, I think that's a good
5 summary and just want to emphasize that's, you know,
6 the current situation is that EPA is planning to award
7 this contract in October. And when we solicit the
8 contract, we need to have a viable path to successfully
9 completing the project. And that viable path includes
10 allowing our contractors to have a known areas where
11 they can deploy their equipment to the waterway to
12 actually do this dredging and capping work that's shown
13 in the figure on the screen. And if there's a lease
14 payment involved in an agreement, EPA doesn't have a
15 mechanism to make that payment to a private landowner
16 until we have the contractor on board, which wouldn't
17 come until October. And so that's the current
18 situation is that we're coming to the Board and asking,
19 you know, preparing to let you know that we're, you
20 know, entering conversations with private landowners
21 and would be seeking support from the ECWMD to bridge
22 that gap between where we're at now and until October
23 when we do have a contractor on board that could be the
24 mechanism to provide those payments.

25 MR. O'NEILL: With that in mind, you know,

1 the next bit of synergy is very much related to real
2 estate and that's permitting. So similar story here,
3 right, where there's certain language in the permits,
4 conditions could be added, say to some of these permits
5 that federal permittee, we as a federal entity can now
6 abide by. So there are certain permits we know aren't
7 going to be a problem. Those are listed in the first
8 bullet here. Those are things that the EPA is going to
9 run with and then sign the permits and hold the permits
10 for.

11 There's a few other typically state
12 permits that we might have some conditions associated
13 with it that will -- that the Board or the District, I
14 should say, ECWMD, could really help us with these
15 interviews. So the 401 Water Quality Certification,
16 the Floodway Permit, 404 Dredge Fill. We're still
17 going through the process of applying for these
18 permits. One of the things we found again, you know,
19 in Great Lakes Legacy Act and some of these other
20 projects that we've completed over the years is the NFS
21 can really expedite the permitting process by being the
22 signatory in holding these permits.

23 Tetra Tech, on behalf of ECWMD is of
24 course preparing some of these permit applications now
25 and has begun the process of investigating whether

1 ECWMD could potentially hold them temporarily until we
2 transfer them to a construction contract during the
3 future.

4 So you know, as that process plays out,
5 as we identify what the conditions are and whether they
6 can be transferred, we may identify some permits that
7 again, to capitalize on our synergies and our
8 efficiencies that we would approach the Board to help
9 assign all those. And, you know, just some food for
10 thought here too is we at GLNPO, we're right now
11 developing an oversight contract with potential
12 engineering firms to oversee the Junction Reaches
13 contract. We're developing a separate contract, of
14 course, that we've been talking about for the
15 construction. The technical contract for oversight, we
16 would include in the scope of work for that technical
17 oversight of the permit. So you know, maybe to fill in
18 some, some gaps on the Board's behalf in terms of
19 technical oversight, we would make sure that our
20 engineering contractor, when they come in, they would
21 help assist with monitoring compliance and all the
22 technical needs that might come with both.

23 So you know, again, just closing thought
24 here is we're really just greasing the wheels for
25 synergies ahead of maybe some specific requests that

1 will follow once we develop our real estate plan, as
2 well as finish the permitting application process for
3 some of these permits. I'll stop one more time, see if
4 there's anything else from EPA that they want to add
5 here. Christian or Adam or Caitlin.

6 MR. MITTERMEIER: Yeah, Ben, you alluded to
7 the constraints on the federal agencies as a permittee
8 or as a holder of real estate interests. Mostly what
9 we're talking about there is the federal
10 Anti-Deficiency Act, which prohibits EPA or any federal
11 agency from spending or obligating funds in excess of
12 appropriations by Congress. So if we have a specific
13 appropriation to bill a specific need, we can go
14 forward. But if we don't, then we're constrained and
15 we need our non-federal sponsors to help us out with
16 those things.

17 MR. O'NEILL: Thanks, Adam. Any questions or
18 concerns from the Board?

19 MR. TREVINO: This is Fernando. I wanted to
20 highlight that you know the part of your presentation
21 that if we did enter into permits that Tetra Tech,
22 through your contract with them for construction
23 oversight would be able to manage the permits and on
24 our, you know, for us, but through your contract,
25 correct? Yeah.

1 MR. O'NEILL: The only clarification I'll add
2 there is we haven't made any contracting actions yet.
3 GLNPO, Great Lakes National Program Office, we have a
4 pool of contractors that we will provide this scope of
5 work to, generally speaking, and I think it's, you
6 know, Tetra Tech is among that pool and it seems like
7 they would have a lot of efficiencies for that
8 contract. I just can't say to you today who that
9 contractor would be with any certainty. Certainly
10 though, the scope of work will include that oversight
11 component. I just -- I can't confirm who the
12 contractor might be here.

13 MR. TREVINO: Right. Yeah, fair enough.
14 Good point.

15 MR. O'NEILL: Otherwise, that's totally
16 correct.

17 MR. TREVINO: Good. Hey, thanks, Ben,
18 Christian, Adam. And did you -- was someone else on
19 your side for EPA?

20 MR. O'NEILL: Caitlin.

21 MR. TREVINO: Oh, thank you, Caitlin. Thanks
22 everyone.

23 MR. ROBINSON: All right. Next we have the
24 U.S. Corps Engineering Report.

25 MR. TREVINO: Vaughn, you still on?

1 MR. COOLMAN: Yep, I'm here.

2 MR. TREVINO: All right. You're a trooper.

3 MR. COOLMAN: One of the last ones in the
4 office it looks like. We work hard. Yeah, I'll be
5 pretty quick.

6 Water treatment should get start around
7 April. But with this contractor, they've had some
8 equipment, kind of switches, you know, something they
9 think is going to work and then they replaced it. So I
10 wouldn't put that down as a concrete date necessarily.
11 They're still working out some of the kinks to make
12 sure that it works efficiently and effectively. They
13 have the whole system up, but I think they're still
14 replacing and kind of tweaking the configuration a
15 little bit. So probably April, April/May and then that
16 will operate for about five years.

17 The dyke raise, we're still working on
18 closing out some of the documents. There's still some
19 contractor claims outstanding that we are working on.
20 And for dredging, we're still going through the
21 contract award process for the solicitation from
22 December. We did have two bidders and we're working
23 with them to award a contract. We think there's a very
24 high likelihood that we will be able to award the
25 contract.

1 Sediment sampling. I don't really have
2 any updates on that. We don't have a final report from
3 the University of Florida and the ERDIC team yet, but
4 we are making progress on that. We've had a couple
5 meetings with them recently. And then we're going to
6 overlay that over some of the data that we already have
7 from the borings and from historical dredging logs and
8 things like that so that we can, you know, attempt to
9 have the best information possible for our dredging
10 contractors when they're out there so that they're not
11 running into unexpected materials and just so that they
12 can be as efficient as possible as well.

13 Oil boom coordination. That's still
14 ongoing with the contractor and we're still doing the
15 CDF parkway maintenance.

16 And that's about it. Does anyone have
17 any questions for me?

18 MR. TREVINO: Yeah, I have a question.
19 Vaughn, you mentioned that you guys were working
20 through and one of these, the dredging proposals and
21 one may be awardable. When would you know -- do you
22 guys have an idea, you'll know by next week, next two
23 weeks?

24 MR. COOLMAN: Well, we should definitely know
25 by the next Board meeting. But as far as how long the

1 little, the processes that we have to go through for
2 this particular situation could be a few weeks before
3 we have anything concrete. And there may be
4 negotiations with one of the bidders.

5 MR. TREVINO: Any idea on when you might
6 mobilize if it works out?

7 MR. COOLMAN: Yeah, that would be up to the
8 contractor. A period of performance was during 2026.
9 So I mean, they'll be out there this, you know, spring,
10 summer, fall. They'll be out there this year. But
11 other than that, it would be to propose their schedule
12 and they might already have, you know, jobs out there
13 that they have to work around. So we can't really say
14 with any certainty.

15 MR. TREVINO: Okay. Just curious. Thank
16 you.

17 MR. ROBINSON: Next we have Attorney Ellen
18 Gregory's Report.

19 MS. GREGORY: Ellen Gregory with Ellen
20 Gregory Law. In terms of the legal matters that have
21 been ongoing in the past month, includes the CLA
22 contracts which I reviewed, and Fernando and I put
23 together some red lines which were in large part
24 adopted by CLA in the final contracts that you've
25 received today. The one User Fee assessment that has

1 not been paid, primarily Jim Weiser is taking the lead
2 on that. I have a little bit of input on the demand
3 letter.

4 And then in terms of the Great Lakes
5 Legacy Act in relation to some of the things that were
6 just discussed, going forward I'll be working with
7 Fernando on the permitting and real estate agreements
8 that require the input of the Waterway Management
9 District.

10 Also been working with Fernando on the
11 Tetra Tech Change Order which will likely be in next
12 month's Board packet.

13 And then finally, as Fernando mentioned,
14 we will likely be entering into an MOU with the City
15 with respect to the Great Lakes Legacy Act project.
16 And I'll be working with Fernando and the City to put
17 that together for next month. That's it.

18 MR. ROBINSON: Any questions? Mr. Trevino?

19 MR. TREVINO: Yeah, I apologize. I was going
20 to ask, when EPA completed their presentation, I wanted
21 to ask Carol, the Project Manager from Tetra Tech,
22 Carol Neeson, if she had anything to add or any other
23 updates. Carol?

24 MS. NEESON: Yeah, no other updates. Nothing
25 to add. You all covered the project very well. We are

1 working on permit applications and property access as
2 they mentioned. Thank you.

3 MR. TREVINO: Yeah. And Carol, I was
4 planning on having your Change Order and the --
5 probably corresponding budget amendment affiliated with
6 the Change Order at the March Board meeting. I think
7 Ellen also mentioned that.

8 MS. NEESON: Yeah. Thank you very much.

9 MR. ROBINSON: Any other business, new
10 business or announcements from anybody? Any public
11 comment? The next Board meeting will be March 19, 2026
12 at 5:00 p.m.

13 Is there a Motion to Adjourn?

14 MR. BAKOTA: Motion to Adjourn.

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Second.

16 MR. ROBINSON: All right. Roll call vote.
17 Ray Lopez?

18 MR. LOPEZ: Yes.

19 MR. ROBINSON: Henry Rodriguez?

20 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Yes.

21 MR. ROBINSON: John Bakota?

22 MR. BAKOTA: Yes.

23 MR. ROBINSON: Jalan Robinson. I vote yes.
24 Meeting adjourned.

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(WHEREUPON the meeting was adjourned
at 6:05 p.m.)

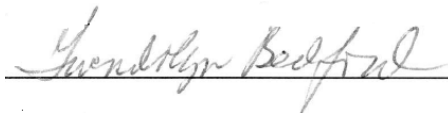
1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
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3 COUNTY OF C O O K)
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5 C E R T I F I C A T E
6

7 The within and foregoing meeting was taken
8 before GWENDOLYN BEDFORD, Certified Shorthand Reporter
9 in the City of Chicago, County of Cook and State of
10 Illinois, and there were present at the meeting Counsel
11 as previously set forth.

12 The undersigned is not interested in the
13 within case, nor of kin or counsel to any of the
14 parties.

15 IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my
16 hand this 16th day of March, 2026.

17 
18

GWENDOLYN BEDFORD, C.S.R.

No. 084-003700