



## Minority hiring complaints brought before school board;

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EAST CHICAGO - The local chapter of the NAACP has requested that renovation on the Franklin Elementary School be stopped if the School Board determines the site is not in compliance with a city minority hiring ordinance.

The issue will be discussed at a private meeting Thursday between representatives of the school city, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the project's general contractor, Hunter Construction of Illinois.

The Rev. O.C. Comer, president of the East Chicago chapter of the NAACP asked members of the school board Monday to adopt the language of a city ordinance regarding minority hiring. Although the board did not want to act on the issue at the meeting, board President Sanford Spann said members would consider written requests.

Comer, who will attend the Thursday meeting, called the issue an emergency and pressed the board to consider adopting the resolution at its next meeting. Members were reluctant to commit to passing a resolution until they could look at its legal ramifications.

"You're dancing with us now," Comer said and told the board he would be happy to mail a resolution for their consideration. He added that he doesn't want the construction work to be finished before the issue is resolved.

The hiring issue came to Comer's attention in November after he received calls from black and Hispanic citizens who said they would have liked to work at the site.

"My point is this: There are people in this community that want this work,"

he said, adding that community leaders were brought together to create the ordinance in an effort to fight unemployment. "If we don't give our people jobs, the crime rate will rise."

Comer, who said he has visited the construction site, does not believe the contractor is in compliance with city regulations. Regulations that minorities receive 50 percent of the jobs any contract awarded by the city for more than \$25,000.

In its notice to bidders, the school city says it will only consider bids from contractors willing to comply with "all related sections of the Indiana Civil Rights Law and the Human Relations Ordinance of the City of East Chicago."

If it is determined that the general contractor and its subcontractors do not have the appropriate number of minority workers, they will have to prove they attempted to find and hire qualified individuals.

However, at Monday's meeting, nobody seemed to know exactly what the ordinance said or if it covered the actions of the school city.

Spann was not sure if the ordinance was written to reflect school board policy. But Councilman Joe De La Cruz, D-at large, who was on hand at the school board meeting to lend his support to Comer's appeal, said the ordinance was meant to be a measuring stick for all municipal, school, sanitary district and water department public works projects.

"This community has a large percentage of black and Hispanic people," De La Cruz said. He added that many people are unemployed and indigent.

"Give them a little pride. Give them a little job," he said.