

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on January 12, 2015 in the Hammond City Council Chambers.

Council President Michael Opinker presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Invocation by Councilwoman Venecz

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Opinker

ABSENT: Kalwinski, Hinojosa

TOTAL: 7

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Councilman Spitale nominated Councilman Opinker for President.

A YES:
ALL

Councilwoman Venecz nominated Councilman Spitale for Vice President.

A YES:
ALL

READING OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to accept the minutes of December 15, 2014 and place on file.

A YES:

ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Markovich, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved to accept the claims from December 10, 2014 through January 7, 2015. Claim #1 through claim #316, inclusive.

Councilman Markovich, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to amend in claims:

#317	Towle Theater	City Clerk	\$ 175.00
#318	Ron J Prestamer Agency	Fire	\$4,824.00

ROLL CALL VOTE (amendment)

A YES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Opinker

NAYS: None

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Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

ABSENT: Kalwinski, Hinojosa

Motion carried

7/0/2

CLAIMS
AMENDED

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (as amended)

A YES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Kalwinski, Hinojosa

Motion carried

7/0/2

CLAIMS
AMENDED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Higgs read correspondence from Police Chief Doughty requesting a meeting.

Councilman Higgs read correspondence from the Ophelia Steen Center requesting donations for the annual Black & White Ball Auction.

Councilman Kalwinski is now in attendance.

Councilman Higgs read correspondence requesting a motion for a Moratorium on Indiana Criminal Justice Institute Grants in reference to jaywalking citations.

Councilman Higgs announced that he went and cleaned out where the dumpster used to be at the old KFC building.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

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Hammond City Clerk*

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

15R-01 A Resolution Authorizing the City of Hammond, by the Hammond Fire Department, to Apply for a 2015 Homeland Security Foundation Grant

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved for adoption.

RESOLUTIONS cont.

Councilwoman Venecz - This is a \$4 thousand grant for reimbursement of EMS Jump Bags to be used for public safety.

Councilman Higgs asked to be added as a sponsor.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

A YES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Hinojosa

Motion carried

8/0/1

RESOLUTION R01 ADOPTED

15R-02 A Resolution Appointing Greg Myricks to Serve as a Member of the Hammond Redevelopment Commission

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved for adoption.

Councilman Spitale - Mr. Myricks has been on there for three years, he's working on his 4th year right now. He's also from the 3rd District and also too he's a realtor which really does help understand a lot of issues that happen on that particular board. He's doing a great job.

Councilman Higgs asked to be added as a sponsor.

Mayor McDermott - I know Mr. Myricks is an appointee of the Council but I want to applaud the Council for putting him on there. He's done a really good job. He asks a lot of questions. He works really well and represents the Council great. And I want to remind you that at this point you only have one appointee to

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

the Redevelopment Commission so this would be your second appointee and if it didn't get filled tonight it would be vacant for at least a couple more weeks. But I just wanted to make sure I got to put on the record what a great guy he is and what a great job he does so I appreciate Councilman's support.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

A YES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Hinojosa

Motion carried

8/0/1

RESOLUTION R02 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

14-48 INTENT TO CONSIDER - BZA - Z-14-07: For Variance of Use from Zoning Ordinance to allow Distribution and Food Processing located at 2825 Carlson Drive within the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana
Petitioned by Byway Brewing Company

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Kalwinski, moved for final passage.

Councilwoman Venecz - This comes before us after favorable recommendations from the BZA and Redevelopment. If Mr. Novak would like to speak to this you're more than welcome.

Don Novak, Zoning Administrator - The Zoning Board had a public hearing and they had determined they had met the required standards for a positive recommendation to the Council. This would basically allow for a food processing, and actually it's a micro brewery, so that's how it would be classified. We feel it's a good project. We recommend that it be approved.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

A YES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Hinojosa

Motion carried

8/0/1

PETITION Z-14-07 APPROVED

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

Councilwoman Venecz - With the beginning of the new year the community and crime watch meetings are beginning again. On Tuesday, January 20, the E. Ham'd Pullman C.W. will meet 6:30 pm at the Ophelia Steen Center. On Thursday, January 15th Hessville C.W. will meet at 7 pm at the Jean Shepherd Center. Also on Thursday, January 15th the S. Ham'd C.W. will meet at the Ham'd Housing Authority Building on 173rd, that begins at 6:30. That is how change happens, one gesture, one person, one moment at a time.

Councilman Higgs read a correspondence from the Ophelia Steen Health and Service Center will be celebrating Senior Citizens day on Monday, January 19th. There will be games and refreshments.

Councilman Higgs requested to send a letter again to Gary Gleason in terms of getting some salt down on Carroll Street from Sohl to Calumet; on Morris from Calumet to Columbia; on Sohl by the U.S. Post Office; on Drackert Street from Calumet to Columbia; on Becker from Calumet to Columbia. I've received several phone calls so I'm requesting that salt be placed there.

LETTER SENT: JANUARY 15, 2015

Councilman Higgs requested a letter be sent to Judge Harkin requesting that gang graffiti be removed from the fence at 6142 Van Buren.

LETTER SENT: JANUARY 15, 2015

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Higgs requested a letter be sent to Gary Gleason in regards to removing the debris, the couches and the mattresses behind the KFC building on Calumet Avenue between Drackert and Eaton.

LETTER SENT: JANUARY 15, 2015

Councilman Higgs requested to send a thank you letter to the Chief of Police in regards to having the vehicles removed from the two lots where they sat there for a number of years and I sent approximately about ten or eleven letters requesting that they be removed and finally the cars are gone off the lot. Thank God. It just was a complete eye sore. Not only on Calumet Avenue but to the entire community so I really appreciate the fact of them getting the tow trucks out there and having those vehicles removed.

LETTER SENT: JANUARY 15, 2015

Councilman Emerson - Under the eyesore removed category, I noticed today driving down Hohman Avenue the formerly a Clark Station, I want to say it was another gas station, on roughly I want to say Webb, it may not be Webb but it's the northwest corner of Harrison Park. The gas station is gone. It has been razed. I know they allegedly had drug problems there, selling drugs, what have you. So it looks

really great. It's totally gone.

Councilman Higgs - For point of clarity that is in the 3rd District and you could look on the map and I am also pleased and happy to see that gas station gone.

Councilwoman Venecz - I just wanted to take a moment to thank all of our city workers and the people who have been doing work around the city. Such as the demolition of the gas station. There was also a building that was demolished on the corner of 173rd and Columbia that was an eyesore for quite a long time and our Police Department, Fire Department, Street Department, the people who pick up our trash have done a wonderful job in this weather that we've had with the cold temperatures and the snow. I just wanted to say thank you publically for your efforts, thank you.

Mayor McDermott - A lot of the stuff that we talk about at the Council Meetings, Councilman Higgs just pointed out graffiti for instance, and that's wonderful and I appreciate him bringing it through this forum, but one of the things we've been trying to do as an administration is impress upon the residents of Hammond to download the 311 app so that they could report it directly. So if you wake up and your fence got tagged and you have the 311 app on your smart phone you could literally take a picture of it with your phone and put it through the 311 system. The picture would go directly to Graffiti Removal, literally on their phone, and they'd be able to open it up. When you posted it you would get acknowledgment back that the complaint was received. When Graffiti Removal was on their way out there they would e-mail you and say we're on our way out there to clean it up and after they got done they would take a picture and send it back to you. You know we started this See Click Fix system about a year ago and we're really pushing it upon the residents to try to download this app so that we could make filing complaints with the city a lot easier so I'd appreciate your help in that endeavor as well. I think a lot of times even on the radio show when I'm called in and people leave a complaint like that I try to remind them that no problem I'll take your complaint but I'd also like you to know that you could download

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - this app for free. And a lot of people we know do have smart phones so I would ask for your help in that as well. I appreciate Councilman Higgs bringing that Graffiti Removal up but at the same time while we fix it I'd also like to remind the neighbor if you download this app you don't have to wait for two weeks until Councilman Higgs reads these off at a Council meeting.

Councilman Higgs - First and foremost, Mayor, I appreciate your efforts in regards to addressing this particular issue but unfortunately I have a number of senior citizens not only do they not have cell phones but they don't have phones at all. A lot of them I personally go to they homes and find out what exactly they need and as a councilman I feel it's my obligation and my responsibility as well as my duty to let that information be disclosed at every council meeting in regards to any particular issue as it relates to

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Hammond City Clerk*

my district.

Mayor McDermott - I appreciate that and I realize that there is a large percentage of our residents who don't have smart phones, however I know the councilman probably does and he could do it, report it directly that day. Instead of us waiting two weeks until the next Council meeting, you know. If Councilman Higgs received this complaint two weeks ago and he waited until the Council meeting the resident would have to live with graffiti on their house until the next Council meeting. You could report it directly through your phone, Councilman Higgs, for your constituent. I do it all the time.

Councilwoman Venecz - I did want to say that change is always difficult and for those who do have the smart phone and maybe don't know how to use it, this is just an easy way for them to communicate with the city. I received an email from a resident who sent me a picture of graffiti that happened to be in the 1st District. I then sent an email to the Hammond 311 and I got communication the very next day. This was on a Sunday, the very next day they sent me an email saying the graffiti was removed. So, you don't have to have the smart phone. You can utilize the computer and for those who don't have any of that technology, the old phone call will still work as well. This is just a more efficient way of getting the graffiti cleaned up in our neighborhoods.

Mayor McDermott - As Council people I think you could be a depository for complaints and you could file them yourself, you know. Councilman Jack in the 2nd District maybe has three or four different constituents giving three or four different complaints and he sits there and types them all into See Click Fix and sends them off to us and we follow them and we track them, and we'll follow them up. You know, instead of Councilman Jack waiting for two weeks to come into a Council meeting and send a letter to us. That could take two, three weeks before we get the complaint resolved. We can fix it like that with this new system. So I'm just asking, I'm not trying to cause problems. I'm just asking you all to help us. We're literally tracking how effective we are getting Hammond residents to download this app. So I'm asking for your help and I appreciate it.

Councilman Higgs - You know what, to be openly and point blank to this whole situation currently, the reality of it is I can pull up, actually out of the computer, at least, since I've been on this council, probably about five to six thousand letters. Whether I say it on the council floor or send a letter, it still takes forever for it to happen. So maybe, Mayor, the suggestion would be to maybe meet with your department heads and see if we can expedite some of these things, getting them completed. The reality of it is I send letters as well as make phone calls and you can pull out a smart phone and you could text and you can do whatever and you can stop by

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Higgs cont. - Conkey Street or whatever, the reality of it is my main priority is getting it taken

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Hammond City Clerk*

care of. So, whatever tools, any tools we could utilize to better assist the constituents I'm all for it. But I can attest to sending thousands of letters in regards to particular issues within the district and can pull them up and give you copies.

Councilwoman Venecz - As I said before, change is sometimes difficult. When you access the See Click Fix program you can see what's going on in your neighborhood. You can follow the work that our departments are doing, in terms of picking up trash, clearing debris and the transmission on the cell phone or an email does not cost the fifty cents that a letter costs to mail.

Mayor McDermott - Like I said, we could have direct communication with our constituents by allowing them to download this app. I think that all of us as elected officials in the city should encourage that.

Councilman Higgs - We do have a promotional account so anyway you want to utilize that in terms of doing a training for the smart phones or pay for a phone or whatever you want to do for your colleagues, I'm all for it. Instead of taking why don't you give a little more.

Councilwoman Venecz - Who is that addressed to?

Councilman Higgs - Wherever the shoe fits wear it that's what I would say.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Carolyn Jackson - Regarding Byway Brewery, the city has given them somewhere in the neighborhood of \$300 thousand with rebate of \$300 and something which basically means if they survive five years they will only be paying \$5 thousand which is roughly \$1 thousand a year for that land. Can we really afford it? Regarding the 311 app, the Ophelia Steen center will be including in their Senior program the use of computers. We do have computers that were donated and we have no problem with incorporating instruction and a program so that they will be able to come and access the city website to make those reports.

Johnny Williams - Read a letter from concerned voices of the Hubert Humphrey Senior Building regarding mistreatment by Helen "Cookie" Spudic.

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Markovich, moved to return to New and Unfinished Business.

A YES: ALL

Councilman Higgs moved to have a moratorium on the jaywalking issue to find out to see if we could come to some solution.

Motion dies for lack of a second.

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Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Markovich, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to return to the regular order of business.

A YES: ALL

Councilman Markovich, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to adjourn.

A YES:
ALL

Michael Opinker, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:

Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Minutes approved at the Common Council Meeting of January 26, 2015.

Time: 6:45 pm
cb