

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on September 25, 2017 in the Hammond City Council Chambers.

Council President Janet Venecz presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Invocation by Councilwoman Venecz.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Markovich, Spitale, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos, Venecz

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

READING OF THE MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to accept the minutes of September 11, 2017 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Markovich, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved to approve the claims from September 6, 2017 through September 20, 2017. Claim #5378 through claim #5777, inclusive.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos, Venecz

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

17-21 2018 Hammond Civil City Budget Proposal
 Sponsored by Dan Spitale

17-24 2018 Hammond Redevelopment Budget Proposal
 Sponsored by Dan Spitale

17-25 2018 Hammond Sanitary District Budget Proposal
 Sponsored by Janet Venecz, Robert Markovich and Daniel Spitale

No one spoke.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES cont.

17-22 2018 Hammond Civil City Salary Ordinance

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading and referred it to the Finance Committee. AYES: ALL

17-23 2018 Hammond Police & Fire Salary Ordinance

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading and referred it to the Finance Committee. AYES: ALL

17-24 2018 Hammond Redevelopment Budget Proposal

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading and referred it to the Finance Committee. AYES: ALL

17-25 2018 Hammond Sanitary District Budget Proposal

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading and referred it to the Finance Committee. AYES: ALL

Councilman Higgs asked to be added as a sponsor.

17-26 Authorizing the Business Manager to Transfer Funds from one line item to another within the Hammond Sanitary District Sewer Maintenance Budget (\$285,000)

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading and referred it to the Finance Committee. AYES: ALL

17-27 Creating a Voluntary Retirement Program in 2017 for Certain Eligible Employees of the City of Hammond

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading and referred it to the Finance Committee. AYES: ALL

City Controller Garay - This buyout ordinance basically just mirrors the language, I believe, of the one that was offered previously. We have several departments that have eligible employees. You have to meet the PERF rules of retirement in order to be eligible. Which means that either you are 65 and have 10 years of service; you are 60 and have 15 years of service; or you are 55 or older and have a combined age and years of service that equals 85. So those are the PERF standards. That's what we put in place here. If the Council is to approve this we are asking that the departments will be notified of the employees who will be eligible. The employees will have to make a decision and notify our office by October 24th and the retirement filing date will be December

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to send a letter to INDOT as it relates to the high weeds near the bridge and Spohn School, and see if they can have that cleaned up as quickly as possible, as well as the Railroad Company that is responsible for dumping on Fayette, from Fayette all the way to Sohl.

AYES: ALL

LETTERS SENT: September 26, 2017 &
September 27, 2017

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to send a letter to Public Works in regards to the graffiti that is sitting on the fence on Bauer Street, it's the corner of Calumet, there's a car dealership there, and there is a bunch of graffiti just sitting on the fence.

AYES: ALL

LETTER SENT: September 26, 2017

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Chuck Erhart - Representing the residents and supporters of the areas affected by the proposed eminent domain properties for the West Lake Corridor. We would like to request that referendum be proposed and passed stating that the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District may not take our homes or any partial acquisitions unless the federal funding is in place for the Westlake Corridor Project. We have been called a slum. We do not feel that way. Our homes on Brunswick and Hanover are well kept, constantly improving, lawns and gardens tended, the streets clean and the neighborhood quiet and safe. The slum lord is NICTD. The current properties are only mowed 2 to 3 times per year. There is litter and dumping there and nothing is done about it. We clean up the trash.

Donna Dunn - Offered clarification on where we are with this South Shore Project right now. Right now they submitted their bid for FTA evaluation and rating. If they get a thumbs up rating that means they start the engineering phase. Once they complete the engineering phase, then they have to go back next year, about this time next year, back to the FTA and do it all over again, before they ever get dime one from the federal government. So a thumbs up right now does not guarantee federal funding. Millions of dollars of assessed value of this property could be taken off the tax rolls for a train that we may never get. These properties that are acquired will sit empty. We can't afford that in Hammond.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos, Venecz

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Kalwinski

Motion carried

8/0/1

MOTION CARRIED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Higgs - I just wanted to let those individuals that are in the audience, if you could stand up again, please. Those in regards to your property being taken. I commend you in your efforts of speaking up for an issue that is very important. I am so elated and so excited to know that you are in the audience and you're concerned about your property. You can sit down. Secondly, I would like to say, as a councilman, it's not in my particular district but I sympathize with you and I understand. If I can do anything in your efforts of keeping your property, feel free to reach out to me. It's important and your points were well taken. God bless you all and thank you for coming.

Councilman Torres - That happens to be the 2nd District, which you all know, and it is my understanding that they are not going to make the decision until February. They're going through, it seems like, all the action now of getting or preparing to acquire property. But, at least I've been told, that because of the White House they don't know which way they are going to go. Even though a lot of people feel positive that it is gonna happen with our help, the city's help, or with the federal government's help, or NICTD, for some reason has the power and control to do it even without us. So, I've been waiting from them to hear so that I could relate that information to you. I've talked to a few people there, in that area, not many, and because I don't know of what direction it's gonna go yet, that's why I haven't shared anything. Well, I have nothing to share other than it's gonna be in February before they make the final decision of any property they are going to acquire for that area. We all know what the area is but I'm sure that with the public hearings and we had one at Irving back in April, I believe that was relayed there also. So, as the councilman, that's all I have to say. I've been trying to keep up with it and I'm just as informed as you are going back and forth and what appears in the Northwest Times every now and then and that's all I can tell you. But, if it does go through, the only thing I can tell you is that hopefully you get fair value for your property. That's the issue that I'm gonna deal with. But I'll be happy to go with you through whatever road it is. I know what the feeling is with the residents in that area and if I lived in that area I'd be feeling the same way.

Councilwoman Venecz - I would like to point out that we, as a council, have no control over what NICTD does. NICTD is completely separate from us. They are the one who is driving the train, so to speak, on this. So we have no say so about what action they take.

Councilman Higgs - Dean, if you could please step up maybe you can give us an idea. He's our city engineer and maybe he can address some of the concerns. I know there was an issue with contamination and the soil being tested in that area at one point.

City Engineer Dean Button - I'm not aware of any testing of contaminated soil. I would point out that this Council has already approved a resolution that set forth the requirements for funding for the project. So, those requirements included a gateway station, a maintenance facility, and the stipulation that no money be transferred or included as part of a previous taxation, so there's no increase in taxes until the federal funding is made available. The expectation is that federal funding, it could be in the President's budget as early as February, so no homes would be acquired until that point. Contrary to what the woman said earlier. Engineering has been ongoing for many months, actually two years now. So engineering is ongoing and in fact homes will not start to be acquired until federal funding is in place and there is no second action that has to be done by the federal

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

City Engineer Button cont. - government once federal funding is approved then you move forward. As for environmental testing, I'm not aware of any. I know that the engineer has been out taking soil borings but those are mostly for structural design of the overhead structures that are going through the city.

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to return to the regular order of business.

AYES: ALL

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

AYES: ALL

Janet Venecz, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:

Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 7:00 pm
cb

Minutes approved at the Common Council meeting of October 10, 2017.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*