

## **BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS AND SAFETY MINUTES OF JULY 9, 2026**

The regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Public Works and Safety convened at 9:00 a.m. on Thursday, July 9, 2026, in the Council Chambers of Hammond City Hall. A roll call was taken: Mr. Long – absent; Ms. Greenwell – present; Mr. Kalina – present.

Due to the absence of Mr. Long, normal rules of procedure are suspended.

Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve the Minutes of the meeting of June 9, 2026; concurred by Ms. Greenwell.

Under Matters from Other Department Heads, Mr. Button presents Change Order No. 1 for the downtown removal of tunnels to be approved. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-397)

Under Correspondence, correspondence received from Jeffery Long, Chief of Police recommending the approval of the following applicants be appointed as probationer members effective July 9, 2026: Colin Devries, Treyvon Carr, Brayden Carter, Rudolfo Guzman, Aleksandar Jovanoski and Marisol Huerta. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-398)

Correspondence received from Bernard Grisolia, Fire Chief recommending the approval of the resignation of Fireman Steven Tepper effective July 10, 2026. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-399)

Correspondence received from Dean Button requesting the approval of Change Order No. 10 for the Kennedy Road Diet. This is a time extension to complete the work at no additional cost. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-400)

Correspondence received from Milestone advising of the scheduled milling and paving of 167th Street from Southeastern to Indianapolis Blvd. and requesting to close all side streets beginning on July 23, 2026 from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-401)

Under New Matters, Agreement with Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District regarding the Construction of Downtown Station submitted for approval. Mr. Smith requests this be approved in substantial conformity; Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-402)

Demolition hearing for property located at 1644, 1648-52, 1654-58 and 1670 175th Street.

Mr. Smith sets the record. Demolition Order issued pursuant to the Indiana Unsafe Building Act, I.C. 36-7-9, et seq. by Mr. Kearney, the Enforcement Authority under the Act and Head of Inspections Department. Order issued on May 22, 2026 for Gavit High School building which was sent to the School City, received and the green card receipt is dated May 28, 2026. Mr. Smith spoke with Mr. Harris as it was set for June 18<sup>th</sup> for a hearing and Mr. Harris requested a continuance which was granted by the Board by agreement by the parties and set today, July 9, 2026. Good service under the Act, and by Mr. Harris' appearance, the owner is present for the hearing pursuant to the Order issued by Mr. Kearney that it's the City's position and the Enforcement Authority's opinion that the building does meet the statutory requirements of an unsafe building under the Act due to its condition. Mr. Smith will present to the Board through testimony and photographs and would request that the Demolition Order issued by Mr. Kearney be affirmed by the Board.

Mr. Jewell Harris, attorney representing School City of Hammond. The School City did receive the May 22, 2026 Notice of Violation from the City regarding the alleged Unsafe Building but takes issue with the sufficiency of the Notice, no prior notice issued pursuant to §150.055 of the Hammond City Code regarding any inspection that had previously occurred and any discovery of substandard building conditions. The City continues to use this building on a regular basis so any allegations that the building is unsafe is curious at best. In addition to not having any record of any prior inspections, they do not have any communication from the City that identify what specifically is unsafe or what is substandard in terms of the building. The Notice refers to several sections of the code and also state law but those raise questions as well and support his argument that the Notice is not sufficient. There is improper application of the city code in making reference to §96 which applies to residential dwelling, there is insufficient reliance on the §150.001 of the Hammond City Code and that it simply states that it adopts State Regulations but it fails to state what State Regulations are allegedly violated and because of those reasons, the School City of Hammond is not in a position to respond substantively to these allegations because they are not made with any reasonable particularity. In some instances, the Notice itself is not applicable because Gavit High School is not a residence. Mr. Harris requests that the Notice be deemed deficient, that the City be required to comply with the Code and with the State Law properly and provide proper notice before moving forward with the hearing. If we were to proceed forward with the hearing, Mr. Harris would allege that it is in violation of the due process rights of the School City of Hammond as a property owner, and that they have no pictures, no inspection reports, nor any record of any communication. To generally say that indicated in the notice that there are issues with exterior walls, bricks and stones, windows, foundation, all of which cite to §96 of the Code that relates to dwelling units. Mr. Harris indicates that the Notice is not sufficient and should not proceed with the hearing.

Mr. Smith states he has not received a request from Mr. Harris for any documentation. The Unsafe Building Act does not require that, it requires a hearing which is what is happening today. Mr. Smith will provide Mr. Harris with all that will be presenting and allow the Board to hear the testimony.

Ms. Greenwell states the Board is ready to proceed.

Mr. Smith calls Christopher Pajdzik, Inspector. Mr. Pajdzik states his job duty is the 5<sup>th</sup> District Code Enforcement for the City. Gavit High School is within boundary of inspection and duties. Mr. Pajdzik is a graduating class of 2011 and is familiar with the building. The building today does not look like the building in 2011, and does not look like the same when it closed in 2021. Mr. Pajdzik states there is a lot of peeling paint on the Northcote side of the building, side entrance, towards the back area is a lot of peeling paint, a few broken bricks in the back area as well as windows open exposed to the elements. Gavit was complaint driven as surrounding residence have called and made complaints directly stating that the building has been vacant for sometime since its closing, reported there is not water service at the property. The complaints were from the curb appeal. Mr. Smith presents Exhibit 1 – Inspection Report with photos. These were taken April 15, 2026. Mr. Pajdzik did hear Mr. Harris say that §96 of the Code pertains to residential units and believes this also applies to commercial buildings within the city. The form is generally set up by section of the code and when he checked them off, he physically observed these issues and made this part of the report. Based upon his inspection back in April, the condition of the building deemed it unsafe and eligible for an Unsafe Building Act hearing. Mr. Pajdzik believes today that the building continues to be in an unsafe condition. There has not been any permits pulled.

Mr. Harris questions Mr. Pajdzik and states he indicated peeling paint and broken bricks. He has driven by a few times but has not inspected the property. No inspection. Mr. Pajdzik is aware it has been closed for 5-6 years and at no time during that he has inspected property other than on April the 15<sup>th</sup>, did not contact any representatives of the School City regarding concerns related to the peeling paint or broken bricks. Mr. Harris asks at what point would the School City have had an opportunity to abate any of the issues.

Mr. Smith objects as to irrelevance as it relates to the Unsafe Building Act action but can answer.

Mr. Harris states the Notice indicates that there is an obligation of the property owner, once issued the notice to abate within thirty days prior to the hearing. They did not receive notice as to what the issues were or a copy of the inspection report, there was no communication either. How can abatement occur with no knowledge of what the issues are. Demolition is a last resort. The idea is you get notice of this, you abate, provide evidence that you have abated and the Board decides as to whether or not you want to proceed forward. How can any of this happen if no communication, no prior inspections, no record of anything. All the School City has is a notice that they received regarding demolition and doesn't believe this hearing should be going forward.

Mr. Smith states Mr. Harris incorrect and that the Notice which is pursuant to the Unsafe Building Act allows for more than 10 and less than 30 days to abate and that includes repair or demolish. Nothing has occurred outside of his communication with Mr. Harris as attorneys and professionals. There has been no communication between the School City Maintenance or their

Building Department, School Board and have made no effort to do anything to the building since the Notice occurred.

Mr. Harris wants to ask a question regarding the communication with any personnel from School City concerning Mr. Pajdzik concerns with the building. Mr. Pajdzik states no communication prior nor after the inspection.

Mr. Smith calls Mr. Bill Lewter, Code Enforcement Commissioner of the City of Hammond. (Mr. Harris is fine without being sworn.) Mr. Lewter is a direct supervisor of Mr. Pajdzik and is familiar with Gavit High School personally and professionally. Mr. Lewter constantly drives by the building and as Code Enforcement Officer, there has been no change or repair to the building since 2021, the building has continued to deteriorate, no entity has occupied it, and has taken photos on July 8, 2026 which represents the condition of the property. Exhibit 2 – Photos taken by Mr. Lewter on July 8, 2026. Mr. Lewter believes the building is unsafe, vacant and has many complaints from residents asking how long before something happens. Mr. Lewter believes that in picture #2 there are several sections of peeling paint, some action was taken to fill in grates with foam that is unappealing to the eye, weeds overgrown around the building, open windows on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Open windows would allow access to the elements such as all the rain and storms recently, water in the building, animals getting into building causing damage or worse. Mr. Lewter believes the building is in an unsafe, blighted and vacant condition and can be subjected to the Unsafe Building Act and the Order that Mr. Kearney has produced.

Mr. Harris questions how long Mr. Lewter has been Commissioner. Mr. Lewter states he has been commissioner for one year, he is familiar with §150.055 of the Hammond City Code. He is familiar with after an inspection, a duly authorized inspector will determine whether a building violates at least three provisions of the building, fire or housing codes. Mr. Lewter believes he has verification there has been no water since November of last year, if there is a fire there is no way to fight it. Mr. Harris asks him if he has any evidence. Mr. Lewter states November 19, 2025 was the last time there was any usage and the water was turned off at the main. Mr. Harris asks what section of the code does that violate. Mr. Lewter states the same as requested in regards to fire. Mr. Harris states there must at least 3 provisions violated and didn't cite as to what provision that would constitute. Mr. Lewter states the fire regulation is that it would require water, should there be an emergency situation and does not have the citation number on hand. No violation was issued to the School City for the violation of that section but as the owner of the building, it is their responsibility to keep the building both looking as it was still used as a school as well as kept up. Mr. Harris wants to make sure that process is being followed. §150.055 says you have to cite this property owner for violation of three provisions of the code, were there citations on this property?

Mr. Smith objects citing citations of property can occur separately from a Notice of the Unsafe Building Act. Objects to relevance but Mr. Lewter can answer.

Mr. Lewter states he has been with the Inspections Department for 12 years, 7 years as building inspection before being name the Code Enforcement Commissioner. They would cite the

property, make contact with the owner, then complete a full inspection, report would be forwarded to the owner, owner would then enter into a rehab agreement because they do not have access to inside the building and cannot complete a full inspection, thus the building is set on a demo list, an inspection is paid for and completed and the property is rehabbed or ultimately demolished.

Mr. Harris states it's a great process and did it happen here? Mr. Lewter states we are here now because of that. Mr. Harris questions the process he just described regarding citation. Mr. Lewter states he did not say citation..... demo order, inspection based on the demo order to determine the full extent of damages that need to be repaired, a rehab agreement and then onto repair or ultimate demolish. Mr. Harris questions how you issue a demo order without an inspection due to confusion. Mr. Harris states he described a drive by but did not enter the interior of the building, correct?

Mr. Smith objects due to Mr. Lewter saying he did not inspect the building, that was Mr. Pajdzik. Mr. Harris withdraws the use of inspection but Mr. Lewter testified that he went by and presented that to the Board for some reason so it had some probative value to some degree and wants to ask about that.

Mr. Lewter drove by so he could testify today and he lives in the area and has the same concerns as all the residents do. The building has been allowed to sit vacant for 5 years and we can drive 10 miles to the East and see what happens when schools are left to be abandoned and blighted. Mr. Harris understands. Mr. Lewter's drive by is cosmetic concerns and there is no way to determine a full extent of the damage of the building without a full, lengthy inspection which would come from the request for the demolition order. Mr. Harris states he presenting to the Board that the building is unsafe. Mr. Lewter believes the building is unsafe by the drive by and cosmetic concerns.

Mr. Smith confirms with Mr. Lewter that he did not do the inspection of the building that formed the bases of the demolition order. Mr. Lewter states he did not, he received the complaints, concerns of the citizens and personally requested Mr. Pajdzik to do the exterior inspection and complete the request for demo that was received. Based on the condition of the property, Mr. Lewter supported his conclusion that the property was unsafe, vacant and blighted to the point that it supported the demolition order that Mr. Kearney issued.

Mr. Smith calls Mr. Bob Vale, who has been the Building Commissioner for 8 years. His duties are to enforce all building codes, residential and commercial and is familiar with Gavit High School. Mr. Vale's concerns for the property is that it is being used for storage, which it can't be used as storage, the utilities, water is off and violates commercial code. The building has to be maintained as it was when it was abandoned, utilities would need to be on.

Mr. Harris asks if he is aware that the City of Hammond is using the building on a regular basis. Mr. Vale does not. Mr. Harris asks if it would strike him odd that the city is using this building if it also says it is unsafe?

Mr. Smith objects as to argumentative. Mr. Vale already indicated that he wasn't aware of it so whether it is odd or not, this is Mr. Harris' opinion which is argumentative and doesn't relate as Mr. Vale already answered the question.

Mr. Harris states he's been Building Commissioner for 8 years and he thinks his opinion is of value to this Board.

Mr. Smith states it also assumes some sort of hearsay that there is some kind of conversation or document that the city could use the building.

Mr. Harris doesn't think it requires any hearsay and doesn't know because he has not been allowed to testify, is aware that emails are distributed within municipalities where people are aware of what is happening within other departments of the city and as Building Commissioner, we are here regarding an alleged unsafe building that the city is using.

Mr. Smith stated Mr. Vale indicated that he had no knowledge of that, therefore he cannot answer whether or not its odd or not. Mr. Harris states he has knowledge now and is asking his opinion about it now.

Ms. Greenwell states she doesn't think he can speak to whether or not it is being used if he has no knowledge of that so let's get passed this area regarding the usage.

Mr. Harris asks if he is aware of any citations that have been issued by the City of Hammond regarding Gavit High School.

Mr. Smith calls Mr. Kelly Kearney who has been head of Inspections about 10 years and is familiar with Gavit High School and is familiar with the building since it closed and has deteriorated. Mr. Kearney did instruct him to do that and reviewed the report which formed the bases for the Demolition Order. He believes that Gavit High School as it sits today is in an unsafe building condition, vacant, blighted and in a condition that request a repair or demolish order be issued. Mr. Kearney spoke with the Water Department to see if there was any water usage. Mr. Smith asks what he determined the status of the water usage?

Mr. Harris objects to the testimony as being hearsay. Mr. Smith states he is not asking him what the Water Department told him, asking that based upon his investigation as to the water usage, what his determination was. Mr. Harris states if his testimony is going to rely upon what someone told him, that is hearsay. Mr. Smith presents Exhibit 3 - and Mr. Kearney states it does reflect the information he obtained from the Water Department. Mr. Smith asks what is the information obtained from the Water Department in that document indicates or relates to the water at the High School.

Mr. Harris objects and asks Mr. Smith where is Mr. Kearney indicated on this email? Mr. Smith states Melanie Banisch is an employee of the Water Department, he and Mr. Kearney were discussing the matter and in preparation for today, he requested that the document be sent to Mr. Smith at the Law Department. Mr. Kearney reviewed it and is the same document Mr. Kearney had a discussion with her over at the Water Department and it arrived this morning.

Mr. Harris objects on the basis on hearsay. It is not an email to or from Mr. Kearney. Ms. Greenwell states she will take it under advisement.

Mr. Smith presents Exhibit 4 in supplementation of the email. Mr. Harris reviews document. Mr. Kearney states it was a result of a conversation he had with Jessica at the Water Department regarding the condition of the water service and it indicates that the last reading was November 19, 2025 at that point the water was shut off. The document was provided by the Water Department. Mr. Kearney states that the lack of water is unsafe and also supports the Demolition Order. He has great concern as the building has a hookup for water service for the Fire Department and is there is no water service.

Mr. Smith completes his testimony.

Mr. Harris moves forward for a dismissal of this action as the basic elements of the Unsafe Building Law under Indiana Code 36-7-9 have not been met. The Board has heard complaints of cosmetic concerns, argument that Notice that was issued is deficient, testimony indicating that §96 of the Code is generally applicable to this building as well, while it may be in theory, legally it is not and for that reason, everything that is cited in this Notice isn't proper. The City is aware that there are plans for this site, not only for the building but the site overall. The plans are significant and this process does nothing but frustrate the objectives of those goals and doesn't want to get into them now as it is somewhat premature. The City is aware, it is not something they are trying to keep from them and doing best to work cooperatively with City in that regard. The only hiccup they are having is this proceeding. Mr. Harris requests this matter be set over to 1) cure the Notice defects that exist; 2) to digest the inspection reports that they just received today to the extent any cosmetic issues can be address. The School City of Hammond will represent that they will address those cosmetic issues as quickly as possible. With respect to the issue of the water, he does have a witness that will testify lack of service going back to 2025 is not accurate. He can have testimony but assures that is not the case. For this reason, he asked that this matter be either dismissed or set over to allow sufficient time to hear the legal issues that exist currently.

Mr. Smith response that Mr. Harris hasn't indicated the notice issues. Notice has to do with did you have a notice to appear, you did and Mr. Harris asked for a continuance and we are here by agreement. Mr. Smith states he thinks the notice issue has been set out, they have been notified and they have an opportunity to appear and present evidence, a full and fair hearing is what is required, which is occurring currently. As it relates to the discussion as ongoing discussions with the city or third parties. Mr. Smith wants to make clear that this demolition proceeding and order only has to do with the building and to make sure the residents who have been complaining about the property for some time are heard and that the city administration and the city through its inspections department clearly and plainly indicates that we are not going to put up with a vacant building continually for 5 years, are not going to continue to allow continued deterioration. We see what happens in Gary with buildings that become vacant and abandoned, they end up with dead bodies, furniture in them, graffiti, significantly dangerous situations. We are not there but

he believes the School City shares this that they don't want to be there. By taking a proactive approach, which the city has taken for 20+ years under Mayor McDermott, making sure that blight, vacant structures, abandoned structures, dangerous structures are addressed. This is no different, this is exactly what the city is doing by taking a proactive approach and for the School City to take the position that somehow it's unfair that they have had an unsafe building sitting vacant for 5 years and the apparently the School Board currently supports the position, that it unfair that we are sitting here trying to help our residence and keep them safe is ludicrous. The City's position is and continues to be is to make sure that when there are vacant structures, when there are unsafe structures, when there is blight that the City addresses it. And that is what we are trying to do. If the Board enters the Order, he would suggest that we will treat them as to every other property owner which is to allow them an opportunity to repair the property through the proper inspection that Mr. Lewter alluded to allow the School City to bring the property up to code if they wish to do that. This is not enter the Demolition Order today and knock the building down tomorrow. There is a process, it has to bid out and during that time, generally property owners discuss the matter with the Building Department, which has not heard from them since the Order was issued in May. Mr. Smith suggest this not to be dismissed, Mr. Harris can present evidence and Mr. Smith can respond and present it to the Board.

Mr. Harris states he's not making any complaint regarding the sufficiency of service, the Notice that he is referring to is the Notice of Violations and the issues related to the Notice of Violation are what he indicated at the onset of the hearing and that is the Notice itself makes reference to inapplicable sections of the city code, it lacks any type of specificity to allow him to respond or prepare to respond so he can have a full and fair hearing. Outside of cosmetic issues and the issue as whether there is water service, we did not hear any testimony regarding foundation or any inspection to support the allegation that the foundation is in disrepair. The process is flawed and he would like to correct this process so he can have a full and fair hearing before the Board. He understands there is a process after a decision is made regarding the Demolition Order, the problem is because of the pending matters they have with the site which the city is aware, 1) it could frustrate the deal and 2) it could result in a unnecessarily cost to the taxpayers to the city of Hammond. If this path of demolition at a public cost, its forgoing the opportunity to have it paid for privately and his concerns is a decision by the Board and an entry of an order will result in a multi-million dollar cost to the taxpayers. He is asking 1) to dismiss or 2) set it over so deal they are working on can be finalized and present it to the city and the Board.

Mr. Smith makes clear the cost, the city has gone through the whole bid process and then someone will come in at the end take care of the demolition. It is not heard of for the process to continue to have a private entity come in and pay for the demolition. It is important to keep the process moving due to it being the only hammer we have on property owners. If we sit back and say it is going to be continued, there is no ability for this process to keep moving. One of the reasons and issues when we have properties that are vacant, abandoned, blighted and in an unsafe condition to enter the order is so we can keep that process moving. The city is all for the School City resolving this issue, we are supporters of that and any third party deal that they have going,

but the city has an obligation to do their part in the process which is to make sure that the city continues to be safe and we address unsafe buildings under the Act.

Mr. Harris states that obligation Mr. Smith is referring to has existed for the last 5 or 6 years that Gavit has been closed and during that period of time, none of these proceedings have gone forward not have there been any citations issued against the school. We are here with a new school board, a new superintendent who is newly in his position, there is a deal in place and ready to finalize. They share the concern and don't want any blighted buildings and trying to clean up the mess made from prior administrations within the School City of Hammond and what is needed is time to make that happen. They don't want for a demolition order process to be part of the negotiations to finalize the deal. It will do nothing but frustrate it. The city can still move forward and retain all the jurisdiction needed if you move it down the road 60 days.

Mr. Smith states that the Board has rescind, stayed orders of demolitions from the past. We have worked with and have attempted to work with the School City and the School Board on this issue. If at some point, Mr. Harris' concerns comes up, Mr. Harris and the Superintendent have a direct line to the administration and it will be responded to and will be happy to discuss that. If there is an agreement that takes place, Mr. Smith can come before the Board to rescind the order. This process has been done before with properties that are being rehabbed, sold, new contractor involved. This is a building but trying to treat it the same as they do the garage or a house. It is the same process and asking to allow the process to move forward.

Mr. Harris understands the argument but why clean up spilled milk, just don't spill it. Requesting to give them 60 days and will let the Board know what is going on with the deal.

Mr. Smith states unfortunately the milk was spilled by the School City a while ago and we are trying to clean it up.

Mr. Harris says years ago, that is exactly what they we are trying to do.

Mr. Smith states there are properties in Hammond that do go awhile before we bring them before the Board. We have a big city and each inspector has a district, they get to them as they get to them, some sooner as others but others have been in poor condition for years but there is not requirement under the Code that the city address a vacant building in X days.

Ms. Greenwell asks Mr. Harris if he has any witnesses he would like to call.

Mr. Harris would like to call one with the understanding that the only evidence that we have heard today is that there is peeling paint, broken windows and the issue of water. He'll call one witness.

Mr. Smith objects to that characterization.

Mr. Harris calls Ted Bryak, School City of Hammond. Mr. Bryak is Acting Director of Buildings and Grounds and he familiar with the Gavit property, visits the property on a fairly regular basis. Mr. Bryak did look through Exhibit 1, the Inspection Report today only. He did

not receive any reports, any communication from the City of Hammond for Gavit High School. Through reading the report today, he understands that there are certain allegations made regarding the condition of the building. Mr. Bryak finds the items that are checked on the inspections report to be generally cosmetic but there is nothing within the report that indicates that the building is unsafe. To his knowledge the Hammond Police Department, SWAT Team, Lake County, all police districts around the borderline use the building for training purposes. His opinion is that the building is not unsafe.

Mr. Smith asks Mr. Bryak how long he has been in his position. He has been with the School City for over 35 years. He has been in all custodial and maintenance. He was at Gavit in 93/94 and he has become head of grounds in 2025. In his experience a vacant building is a bigger concern from a maintenance standpoint than a building that is occupied. He agrees that a building that has water is a much more safer building than a building that doesn't have water, it's not a good idea to have open windows in a vacant building. They do have checks throughout the week and do have process in place to take care of them and it is not a good idea to have a vacant building with open windows. Mr. Smith asks if Gavit High School is in a worse condition today than it is in 2021?

Mr. Smith requests Ms. King or anyone else in the audience not answer for the witness.

Mr. Smith asks if Gavit High School is in a worse condition today than it is in 2021? Mr. Bryak states they have their checks there every week but don't have someone there 24 hours so in that point, yes. Mr. Bryak agrees the police department has used Gavit. Mr. Smith addresses a text from Assistant Chief Gootee to him dated November 19<sup>th</sup> ---- the text says "good morning sir. Was wondering if the K9 Unit could get some assistance unlocking Gavit around 10:30 today. Reaching out because I am sick and won't be there otherwise I'd do it myself." And Mr. Bryak responds "good morning, unfortunately we are turning off the water of the facility due to issues with the boilers, with that being said would you be able to use Kenwood or the Wallace facilities instead. Please let me know your thoughts. Thank you." Mr. Bryak remembers getting the text. It is correct that when the police asked regarding Gavit, he indicated that because the water was off they weren't going to be able to use it. The police have used it since then but due to using the restrooms, water, that is why it is easier for them. It was the same at the Christmas parade the city was not able to use it because the bathroom facilities were not up and running because the water was off.

Mr. Harris questions the period of time regarding the text messages. Mr. Bryak does not know. Mr. Harris objects to this testimony due to this reason and there is no foundation that was laid for that, it is hearsay and doesn't know what time they are talking about. He will ask other follow-up questions regarding the water because he thinks it does have some value to the Board.

Ms. Greenwell states they will take that under advisement.

Mr. Harris asks Mr. Bryak that he previously heard some testimony that there has been no water service at the building going back to November of 2025 and he doesn't know if it is accurate as he would have to look at his notes and emails and doesn't have it with him. Mr. Harris asks to the best of his knowledge there has been water service November of 2025?

Mr. Smith objects as it is a leading question.

Mr. Bryak would have to check as he does not have that information. There has not been any HVAC service within the last 12 months. He indicated the text messages he recommended that the city not use the building because of water as his sole concern was restrooms, washing their hands, the animals are there training so he wants to make it easier on them during their training session. The city has continuously used the facility since that time.

Mr. Smith asks if the boilers are off. Mr. Bryak states yes they are off due to routine maintenance and due to no one being in the building, they shut them off. There is HVAC in the boiler room but the boilers are down. There is partial gas to the building but not to the boilers.

Mr. Harris calls witness Anthony Salinas, Superintendent of School City of Hammond and has served one year in this capacity and has been with the School City for 27 years. He is familiar with Gavit and is not aware of any citations, general concerns expressed regarding unsafe issues with Gavit High School. He is not aware of any prior Board action that officially closed Gavit High School and it is a particular statutory process in order to close the school and that has not occurred. The building at this point is not abandoned.

Mr. Smith asks if he agrees that the building is vacant. Mr. Salinas agrees and the building has not been used since its closure for students and has not been used on an ongoing basis where there is people there every week since 2021. The building is completely vacant now and not being used. Does not agree the building is in a worse condition that it was in 2021 due to the building being vacant, and not being used because it was closed but not in a worse condition. The property has had some renovations. Mr. Smith asks what they were. Mr. Salinas advises the ceilings, floors, lights, have been upgraded.

Mr. Harris questions if he heard Mr. Harris explain to the Board that there are current pending negotiations regarding the future use of the Gavit site and the building. Mr. Salinas shares the concerns that a demolition order might frustrate the negotiations and requesting the Board forego issuing a demolition order.

Mr. Smith states he believes the Board has heard both their positions and believes the evidence, Exhibits 1-4 as well as the testimony indicates that the property is vacant since 2021, that the property is in a deteriorating condition, it is not substantially from the testimony except for Mr. Salinas that there has been any work on the property since 2021. There are open windows, no water, no gas for the most part, concern for vacant structures in the city that they be repaired or demolished. The order before the Board is to repair or demolish the structure and would request the order be affirmed under the Unsafe Building Act based upon the evidence presented and testimony today.

Mr. Harris states they are trying to get rid of a vacant building and hoping that the Board doesn't make a bad decision, move forward with this process and jeopardize a deal that is pending. That is not what they want to see happen. Testimony today indicated the building has been improved since 2021, time happens and structures age but there was testimony today that the building did get some improvements and that has been factored in their discussions what they are doing with the facility going forward. What was not heard today was anything to suggest that the building is unsafe. They understand the building is vacant but it is in use and used by the city itself. They are asking for a little patience, as this issue has been out there for 6 years with no action by the city and the School City of Hammond is requesting some grace, professional courtesy and allow 60 days to finalize that the city is fully aware of and continue to brief them and hope they continue to work with them but request the time to get the work done.

Mr. Smith mentions and reminds the Board that during the time that an order is affirmed, the city is constantly working with property owners to get their properties up to code, to work with them, potentially transfer their property and it would be no different with the School City. There have been public discussions and probably private discussions between the School City and others that the City is happy to help and assist where needed but the purpose of this hearing is to allow this process to go forward with the vacant, abandoned and blighted building. As for Mr. Harris' request for grace and time, it will take 8 weeks to even this bid out if not more. During this time we can continue to discuss this matter and thinks it important for the Board to issue the Order to Repair or Demolish so the process can continue.

Mr. Kalina asks Mr. Harris how often is the city there using the building? Mr. Byrak states every week the city, the SWAT team, Hammond PD uses. He would have to look at his records to see the last time they used the Gavit facility. The Police are not there every week, they use the other facilities since the water was cut off. That is why he suggested they use Wallace and Kenwood but they have used it since then and it's been a while since they used it.

Mr. Greenwell states the Board's position is to take this under advisement and come back next week with the decision in order to review the documents.

Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to take under advisement and set status for July 16, 2026; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-403)

Right of Way Permits (4) received from Engineering submitted for approval.  
Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-404)

Special Events – Calumet College of St. Joseph – Pierogi Stumble – July 23, 2026 from 5:00 – 9:30 P.M. with parade route and police approval. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-405)

Special Events – First Baptist Church – July 20 – 23, 2026 from 8:00 A.M. – 11:00 P.M. Requesting to close off Oakley Avenue from Sibley north to Willow Court and State Street from the parking lot before the library west to the bridge before the tracks. Recommendation by Mr.

Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-406)

Neighborhood Special Events – Dayspring Ministries, 860 State St. – August 22, 2026 from 8:00 A.M to 6:00 P.M. Requesting to close Maywood and Sibley and Maywood and State. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26- 407)

Neighborhood Special Events – Jessica Hernandez, 6349 Van Buren – August 1, 2026 from 10:00 A.M. to 10:00 P.M. Requesting to close Cleveland from the corner to the alley. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-408)

Garage Sale Permits submitted for approval. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to approve; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-409)

Under Old Business, Status – 4934 Ash. Mr. Jackson appears. Mr. Polak states the electrical inspection failed, as the outlet plate and covers are missing, basement exterior light missing with hanging wiring and in the garage was exposed wiring throughout. Mr. Jackson will get this done and have the contractor call in for an inspection. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to set for status on July 23, 2026; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-410)

Status – 5125-27 Hohman (OTA) Ms. Willis appears. Mr. Smith states this is a property that Mr. Willis would like to put a fraternal organization in, concerns with limited parking and looking for a status. Ms. Willis states they have partnered with another entity for funding, obtain a surety bond, obtained a scope of work for the construction and will pull permits and move forward requesting an extension. Mr. Smith wants to make sure the Willis' can move forward and want to make sure all are in order. Mr. Lewter states he met with Mr. Willis in 2024 and completed a rehab agreement but has probably expired and recommend a re-inspection and update the rehab agreement. Ms. Willis agrees and wants to make sure everything is in alignment to move forward. Mr. Smith would like to set over for 6 weeks. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to set for status for August 8, 2026; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-411)

Under Late Rental Registration Hearings, 512 Gostlin, 1519 Truman. 4415 Torrence, 4637 Cameron, 1468 Michigan. Owner appears. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to waive the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

3312 175th Pl. – Owner appears. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to waive the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

1102 May St., 830 Morris – Owner appears. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to waive the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

7619 Monroe – Owner appears. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to waive the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

7516 Jarnecke – Owner does not appear. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to impose the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

7146 Lindberg, 7834 Belmont - Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to waive the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

6331 Blaine Ave. Owner does not appear. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to impose the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

948 Chicago St. – Owner appears. Recommendation by Mr. Kalina to waive the late fee; concurred by Ms. Greenwell. (Ins. No. 26-412)

There being no further business to come before the Board, recommendation by Ms. Greenwell to adjourn; concurred by Mr. Long. The regularly scheduled meeting adjourned at 10:31 a.m.

APPROVED:

BY:   
Tinisha Greenwell, Vice-President

ATTEST:

  
Linda Norville, Board Secretary