

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on January 14, 2019 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

NOMINATION of new Common Council President and Vice President.

Council President Venecz thanked the Council and residents of Hammond for the opportunity and encouragement in serving as President for the past two years.

Councilman Higgs nominated Councilman Markovich as President. AYES: ALL

Councilman Rakos nominated Councilman Woerpel as Vice President. AYES: ALL

Council President Markovich now presided over the meeting.

READING OF THE MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to accept the minutes of December 24, 2018 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved to approve the claims from December 19, 2018 through January 9, 2019. Claim #1 through #346, inclusive.

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

18-31 An Ordinance to Create Fund 241 and to Appropriate Funds within the Hammond Police Department Grant Fund for 2019

No one spoke

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Higgs read correspondence from the 311 App in regards to there not being any speed limit signs on Blaine where cars are speeding which concerns the students of Eggers Middle School and the residents and other traffic and parking concerns.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance Committee - Councilman Woerpel - Brought out 18-31.

Community & Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Announced upcoming meetings:

Fri., Jan. 18; Community Watch at Silver Birch; 2 p.m.

Thur., Jan. 17; Hessville C.W.; Jean Shepherd Center; 7 p.m.

Lafayette N.W.; Wed., Jan. 16; Lafayette School; 6:30 p.m.

Thur., Jan. 17; S. Hammond C.W.; Hammond Housing Authority Bldg; 7 p.m.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

18-31 An Ordinance to Create Fund 241 and to Appropriate Funds within the Hammond Police Department Grant Fund for 2019

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved for passage.

Councilman Spitale - This is for the Traffic Safety Grant for \$12,500. This includes the seeing of a safety movie for the children, bicycle safety, crossing railroad tracks and crossing the streets. This is located on the east side of Civic Center.

Councilman Higgs - Which happens to be in the 3rd District of the city of Hammond. Thanks for a wonderful grant on behalf of the Police Department.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

ORDINANCE NO. 9430 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

19-01 An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 8514, also Known as the Hammond Zoning Ordinance and Amending Ordinance 9310, also known as the Marina District Development Planned Unit Development District Ordinance for Purposes of Amending certain Provisions for the Marina District Development Planned Unit Development District Ordinance

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee with a Notice of Intent for 1/28/19. AYES: ALL

19-02 An Ordinance to Create a New Section of Title III, Chapter 30 of the Hammond Municipal Code as it Pertains to Council President

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee.

Councilwoman Venecz - Because there is no definition in Title III, Chapter 30, specific to the responsibilities or authority of the Hammond Common Council President, after having served a little over 2 years, I thought it necessary that we put some pencil to paper and outline what some of the responsibilities and authority of the Hammond Common Council President are.

Councilman Higgs - I find that kind of amazing that all of a sudden this particular ordinance would come up seeing that she is relinquishing the seat as president and is no longer the President of the Hammond Common Council with all the disrespect that was given in the previous tenure of her being the president. It's unbelievable, but anyway, thanks.

Councilwoman Venecz - Councilman Higgs, I always appreciate your perspective. Thank you very much.

Council President Markovich - All those in favor signify by saying aye. Opposed? AYES: ALL

RESOLUTIONS

19R-01 A Resolution Confirming the Appointment of Ronald Mullins as a Commissioner of the Hammond Human Relations Commission of the City of Hammond, Indiana

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved for adoption.

Councilman Higgs - Seeing that Mr. Mullins is in our presence, I just want to emphasize that it's very important to me, in respect to dealing with Human Relations and dealing with the community as a whole. So, I feel it's very important that you communicate and give me any information pertaining any issues pertaining African Americans, Hispanics, or anyone in the city of Hammond, as it relates to Human Relations.

RESOLUTIONS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION NO. R01 ADOPTED

19R-02 A Resolution Confirming the Appointment of Gary Wilson as a Commissioner of the Hammond Human Relations Commission of the City of Hammond, Indiana

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved for adoption.

Councilman Higgs - Seeing that Mr. Wilson is in my presence and I hope that you understand the responsibilities and duties in this capacity as being on the Human Relations Commission and I hope you the best and I would hope that you're future endeavors in serving on this Commission is one of pleasure.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION NO. R02 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Higgs - Recently, I read the paper today, in regards to Lost Marsh and according to the testing there is no contamination and I'm sure the Mayor's aware of that as well. So, I am very happy to find out that there is no contamination, apparently, there.

Mayor McDermott - I wanted to talk about this a little bit. Councilman Kalwinski, I haven't even had the chance to talk to him, in particular, about it. But, we did extensive... I don't know if you guys remember, about three or four months ago we bought a new x-ray, super expensive, machine in the Hammond Department of Environmental. It was like a \$30 thousand piece of machinery and it's coming in really handy right now. We just did round two of our testing. We did an initial testing all around the Lost Marsh area, North Basin of George Lake, we did it all through the whole area, 125th Street, South basin of George Lake. We found that we had elevated levels of lead on the north basin of George Lake, the closer you got to Federated Metals. Big shock, right? We all know that we used to have a lead plant there operating for decades, however, the interesting thing is, I know you guys have been around a while, about seven or eight years ago, if I remember correctly, actually I think it was even longer, ten years, 2008? The Federal Government capped the north basin of George Lake and presumably removed all lead. The cap is literally a cap. It can not be permeated by anything. The water stays out and everything. It's literally a cap that locks in all the contaminants that were there for years and if we find contaminates on top of the cap, that means that that's new lead. It's interesting. So, we had a fire in August, September, time frame at Whiting Metals. Whiting Metals was upset that the Hammond Fire Department

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - responded. They felt that they could take care of it on their own and since that time about ten swans, the white swans with the long necks, have died. The autopsies performed on the swans found poisonous levels of lead in their system I made the presumption that the fire and the poisoning of the swans was related and just about everybody up there called me a dumb-ass. They said this is not related, but I still maintain I think they are related. I've been Mayor fifteen years and I don't remember swans dying left and right like we have this year. I don't believe in coincidences. So, I asked the Hammond Department of Environmental Mgt. to go and order round two of testing and focus on the north basin. Because we didn't really find any type of lead in the south basin at the Lost Marsh Golf Course, all that was clean. Along the north basin we focused between the bike path and the water and we found about a hundred parts per million, mid hundred parts per million, one hundred fifty, getting up to two hundred in a couple spots, and four hundred. The closer you got to Federated Metals, the higher they were. But they were like four hundred. Now, we see what's going on in East Chicago where they forced all the residents out because they were built on a former lead plant. The readings they were getting there were like 50,000, 80,000. Four hundred parts per million, right now, if the EPA found your yard to have four hundred parts per million, they probably wouldn't do anything. Okay, it's not great, but it's not dangerous. It's not an action phase for the EPA, but it's something for us to pay attention to. So I've asked Ron and his crew to go back out and do a really thorough analysis between the path and the water, between the water and the houses, just all, and then we're gonna get onto private property over there with Federated Metals and all the property around there and do it around there. If we find new lead, the new lead came from some place. There's only one lead plant in that whole area. They insist that they had nothing to do with what is going on but I don't really believe them, I'll be honest with you. We're probably gonna have to get into the water. If we get into the water and we find lead on top of the cap, that's new lead. Now what we think is happening is the lead came from the fire and came onto the land, and with the rain and everything it washed into the water and it's sitting below the water line but on top of the cap. So when the long necked swans go into the water and feed off of the bottom, they're ingesting lead. The other animals can't get down that deep. We think that's why they're dying. We think it's new lead. If it is, there's only one lead plant in that neighborhood. So, I wanted you to know that we're on this. I released round two of testing today. We're doing round three as we speak. That's up to date. That's up to the minute. I think they were out there today doing more testing. But that piece of machinery that we purchased for HDEM is paying off in spades. I don't know how much it would have cost us, I guarantee it would have cost us \$10 to \$15 grand for what we've done already. The thing only cost a little over \$30 so it's gonna pay itself off in this process alone. So, if any body has any questions about that. It doesn't seem like the newspaper's too interested. We dropped a press release on this Friday and they didn't run it. There was a small little mention in the Post Tribune. So I told them to drop it on gohammond today. We put it out there and we put it on social media and not a lot of people shared it. There is a community meeting coming up in room 200, Calumet College of St. Joseph, I don't remember the date off the top of my head.

Council President Markovich - January 22nd at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor McDermott - Thank you. We're basically gonna talk about the 2nd phase that I just told you about, and we'll have the 3rd phase results as well. But the good news, if there is good news is it's not extremely high. It's higher than normal levels but it's not at action phase for the EPA. That made me feel better. But we're all over it. I just wanted the Councilmen, especially, all you all to know.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Council President Markovich - To reiterate what the Mayor said, there is going to be a meeting on Tuesday, January 22 at Cal College in Room 200 at 6:30 in regards to the Hammond Department of Environmental Mgt. releasing testing results.

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Torres, moved to send a letter. At 1003 Becker Street there is a tree that has been sitting there for three weeks. I reported it, to have it removed. I don't know if it's the city's property or if someone privately owns it. It's right across the street from Sgt. Alcox home. So, I'd like it determined whether that property is privately owned or it's the property of the city, but the tree needs to be removed. Also, 1046 Becker Street, there is a property that has a green sticker on there that I'm hoping they could have that demo'd as quickly as possible.

AYES: ALL

LETTER SENT: JANUARY 15, 2019

Mayor McDermott - It's the beginning of the year and I just wanted to remind everybody that next year is going to be a challenging year for all of us, when we do our budget. And we're all filing for office right now and everybody is all happy, going down there taking pictures. I just want to reiterate to everybody, it's January, we're gonna be doing our budget in July, and it's gonna be tough. So if you have ideas about the budget, I suggest we do it when it's snowing, and not when it's sunny out. I think we should start talking about this. If we do nothing, and when July hits, and you guys look at the bottom line, you may not be as happy as you've been before. So, I'm always looking at ways to cut government. We've done a really good job over the last fifteen years. Obviously, if we don't do any more cutting, which is an option, but if we don't do any more cutting, we're gonna lose \$5 or \$6 million left year to the property tax caps. Which is great for the taxpayers. The taxpayers. The taxpayers are happy. But that falls on us, and it's not just us. It's School City, Library, it's other cities and towns. But in Hammond in particular, we're looking at a \$5 to \$6 million loss in our budget, fact. In the Sanitary District, I know they're real worried about the Hammond Sanitary Sewage Department, which is gonna lose about \$3 million to property tax revenues and there's no way to fund that department right now. That's a nightmare scenario that we're facing next year and if we do nothing and we just enjoy ourselves through the winter and when July comes rolling around, don't be pissed at me, don't be pissed at me. I didn't create the tax caps. We got issues with gaming right now, to our west. Illinois is getting their act together. We're gonna have a casino coming real soon. We got issues to our east. I don't know if you guys have been paying attention, but Gary is making a real hard pitch right now to take our money, and there's a lot of people lining up behind them. So, we got a lot of issues facing us right now. I just wanted to make sure you guys, A) If you're signing up for another four years, you're ready for this next four years. It's gonna be rough; B) Let's keep in mind that Mayor McDermott didn't create the situation that's facing us; C) If you've got ideas about cutting government, I'm all ears, at all times. I've proven that. But if we don't cut, don't complain to me in July when you see the numbers. That's all I want to say, okay. I don't know if you have any questions.

Councilman Higgs - The number one priority in the city of Hammond is, certainly, the police and fire. But we are facing some serious matters in 2020 and we need experienced people that are really willing to do what is necessary to do initial cuts so that people are not screaming and hollering. There may be some people actually losing their jobs within the city.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Mayor McDermott - Yes, Sir. Like I said, I'm all ears. And the thing is, it is an option to run like we are right now, that's an option, but if we do nothing, that is the option we are choosing. If you guys are interested in other cuts, please talk to me. You know, 75% of our money goes to public safety and I'm a supporter of our police and fire department, a big supporter. I know you all are too. Okay, and it is an option to run at status quo. You know, next year the City Court is closing down and we're gonna have a lot of employees looking for relocation out of that. We're losing a lot of staffing in the City Clerk's Office next year. I'm doing my best to try and accommodate those employees when they are looking for other spots. It's tough, but I always, if I see Clerk's Office or Judge's Office, I'm always trying to move them to the front of the line because that's what I told you I would do. But, you know, we got issues in Sanitary District next year. We got issues on our budget next year. If we do nothing, because I think we've done a good job to get to where we are. You know, and I'm not gonna complain because the taxpayers are getting 1/3 of a tax break next year. But at the end of the day, the buck stops with us. We got to make tough decisions. As tough as this years budget was, it was tough, next years is gonna be brutal and it's not gonna get better after that. So, we got to change the way we operate and if we don't, don't complain to me. Please, it's too stressful.

Councilman Higgs - I'm ready, Mayor. Let's get it done.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

George Stoya - I thought that no property taxes were used on the Sanitary District so does that mean we have the prospect of looking up at higher fees now? I don't understand what the problems would be with the Sanitary District. I don't understand where the property tax aspect comes into play.

Mayor McDermott - Just to answer. The Sewer Department and the Sanitary District runs off property taxes, always has. The rates pay for the plant and the workers in the plant and the capital improvements and things of that nature. As far as the Sanitary District being in good financial condition, currently they are in good financial condition. However, we also have \$250 million worth of improvements that we are mandated by the Federal Government that we do over the next seventeen years. So, currently, Sanitary District is in good financial condition, outside of the Sewer Department which is not funded at all for next year, alright? In the future we have to do \$250 million worth of improvements to the Hammond Sanitary District mandated by the U.S.E.P.A. and ultimately it's gonna come to the Hammond Sanitary District, to the Hammond City Council and to the Mayor's Office and we're gonna have to sign off on that and our residents are gonna be pissed. Because they're not gonna understand what's going on. They're gonna blame you. They're gonna blame me. In fact, it's the U.S.E.P.A. that's mandating all this work to be done. That's what I'm saying, so when you sign up for your next term, I know what I'm getting myself into, I know what I'm getting myself into, I know this is probably gonna be our roughest term. I'm just saying, understand what you are putting yourself into and be ready for it because we are going to have to make tough decisions next term. But, currently, George, Hammond Sanitary District in 2019 is fully funded, operating perfectly, Sanitary Sewer Department's funded, everything's happy. Next year, everything changes.

Councilman Higgs moved to return to New and Unfinished Business.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Motion died for lack of a second.

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

AYES: ALL

ATTEST:

Robert A. Markovich, President
Hammond Common Council

Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:40 p.m.

cb

Minutes approved at the Common Council meeting of January 28, 2019.