

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on September 23, 2024 in the Hammond City Council Chambers and was available to be viewed at gohammond on Facebook, gohammond.tv live and per Zoom.

Council President Scott Rakos presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Moment of silence was observed

ROLL CALL

PHYSICALLY PRESENT: Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Salinas, Tyler, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Alexander

ABSENT: None

TOTAL:9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott- Good evening, Council. This is my address for September 23<sup>rd</sup>. I'm available for questions if you have any afterward. I'll start off with my activity log. It's a summary over the last couple weeks. Right after the Council Meeting, I had a meeting with the President of the Whiting Refinery, Chris Delafranco, in City Hall. We had a really good meeting. We talked about the incident that happened in the Spring. We talked about the hydrogen plant that they're talking about building and a lot of other issues. He seems like a really great guy, and I thought it was a really good meeting. I met with Hammond Fire Department Local 556, continuing our negotiations. We are at the point where we received the second response from the Fire Department and we're responding back to them. I think it's going very well though. I just wanna say the negotiations between, Fire, Teamsters, and Police has been very professional, like the best I've been involved in. Everybody's making their case and I think it's going very well so far. I know I've done a pretty good job, hopefully of keeping you all in the loop. If you have any questions, I can fill you in after, if you don't mind, so it's not on the record, but I'm willing to talk to anybody about where we are at anytime. Worked with the Hammond Police Department about potential migrant unhoused areas within Hammond. This has been interesting the last couple weeks. We have a lot of internet news that hasn't been vetted, and sometimes this internet news is not right, believe it or not. We get sent on wild goose chases going all over the city finding potential migrants here and there. I was on the scene with one of the areas we investigated close to 80/94 and there was definitely unhoused people living there. I don't think anybody could prove that it was migrants, but there's definitely unhoused people that were living there. Ok, and obviously we're paying attention to it now, because it's pretty well hidden where that was. I know there was another one off of 169<sup>th</sup> in Hessville that was also reportedly a group of migrants from Chicago that were living there, and that was being reported widely in the internet news. Upon further investigation, there was unhoused people living there. They were quite comfortable in fact. They were American unhoused people. I just wanted to point that out, but the Hammond Police have been sent on wild goose chases because of internet news, and that's not right. I just want to remind people, internet news is not always right and unfortunately for the Hammond Police Department, we have been sent on wild goose chases. I've been along with them for most of these, and I can tell you with certainty, I have not seen any unhoused person that's not an American Citizen. Period. I don't think 1 Hammond Police Officer could tell you any differently than that. When you get this, and

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

## MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont- know the Council are getting it just as often as I am, please remind them that there are unhoused people that have always lived in The City. Obviously the weather takes care of that, but we have been on a lot of wild goose chases lately. Hammond Police monthly Captain's Meeting, we do that monthly, obviously. Lunch with Representative Mike Andrade, discussed the 2024 General Assembly Session. I had a meeting with our Lobbying Team, and our Executive Staff in regards to Indiana's 2024 General Assembly Session. I had a couple meetings with our Data Center. We're gonna be coming to you shortly, hopefully. We have big, big things percolating. The Data Center's talking. We're working with the State on IEDC Economic Development projects right now. Good stuff. It's gonna take Council approval, if you have any questions after the meeting, I'm willing to talk one on one, because I don't wanna talk publically and screw it up, but we're doing good stuff. Economic Development has big fish that they're trying to lure. It's real big. Economic team and I have been meeting a lot lately. Gateway Station, I know Councilman Al, we have a lot of talking to do with you about what the future of that whole area is gonna look like. We're starting to map out, we know the Station's coming, and what's it gonna look like? Obviously we want the local District Councilman involved. Councilman Mark, I know that, that's the southern edge of you district as well. Economic Development team and I met on 18<sup>th</sup> Street. There's some things percolating with 18<sup>th</sup> Street, we're working on that I'll need Council approval for. Freddy's Steakhouse update, Project Wicker update, Memorial Park update, Councilman Barry and I have been talking about a public meeting that we set up at the Ophelia Steen Center on October 24<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. to go public with Memorial Park. I think it's real good what's going on there. Every time we do neighborhood changes, we go to the public. We've been doing it consistently, and obviously we're gonna be consistent with Memorial Park's project as well. If you wanna see the latest plans on what that entire area will look like, October 24<sup>th</sup> 6 p.m. Ophelia Steen Center. Mayor's Night Out in the 5<sup>th</sup> District was held as well. It was at Jefferson School. It was a solid 2 hour meeting. It was real good. I met with Hessville Little League President, Dan Faulkner, and happily appointed him to represent us before the BZA, so I want to congratulate Mr. Faulkner. It was pretty sweet to put him on that. His father was Assistant City Attorney, Alan Faulkner, for the City of Hammond for a long time, and he represented the BZA. So that's sort of interesting to see his kid go on that board as well. He's a great guy. For those of you that see what he does with Hessville Little League, he's really done a great job as the President of Hessville Little League. So, Congratulations to Dan for taking that position. It's a 4 year term. I know you have a resolution before you today. Resolution 24R-17. This is the first step in order to create a new City Hall redevelopment area. This is obviously City Hall. This redevelopment area will basically be both sides of Calumet, from 165<sup>th</sup> to 150<sup>th</sup>. We have a lot of new increment coming to this area, which is gonna help us with our TIF District and it will help us redevelop the areas outside of the 2 big projects that are coming into this area. The Swanel expansion is gonna give us a good amount of increment that's already been approved by all of us. It's taking place right now. It's multi million dollar project. It's gonna help with our increment. We also have the new U-haul going over there off of Kenwood, that's gonna help us with our increment, and that increment we get over there, we can use to beautify this area right next to City Hall. This area to the South of us right next to City Hall, so this is vital. 24R-17, passing this is a required step if we wanna keep on marching down. We don't have to have a redevelopment area here and we would still have the Swanel Project and we would still have the U-haul project, but we wouldn't have that increment that we could use in this district, so I really hope you guys reconsider passing that. Last but not least, I know you guys have been talking about this in Caucus before, I've been alluding to it for a long time, the Wheel Tax. There's a number of communities, dozens of communities, across Indiana that have already passed this. In 2017, we were approached by the General Assembly and asked to pass the Wheel Tax. In fact, at that time, they made

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## MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont- it conditional, if you wanted a grant, you had to pass the Wheel Tax, and we didn't do it, and we still got money from that grant because we matched that money with Gaming Money at the time. Since that time, we've never passed a wheel tax in Hammond. In my brain, it worked as simply as this. We have a Gaming Boat, the Gaming Boat is doing well, it's giving us millions of dollars, and we use those millions of dollars to do the roads. We have the CIB and we have the equation, and the money goes in, what comes out goes to CIB. When you put 15 million dollars less into that equation, there's 15 million less that comes out, and we've gotten to the point in Hammond now, where the amount of maintenance that we're doing on our roads is abysmal. This year, it will be about a half million dollars and that's not enough. This proposal, if passed by the City Council, will give us 1.5 million dollars per year, directed right into CIB, with stipulations. It can only be used for roads. Now, state law only gives us 3 ways that we can use that money. State law says you can use wheel tax money for roads, obviously. You can use wheel tax money for bridges, and you can use wheel tax money for local matches, like federal matches, state matches. We limited it in Hammond to 1 thing. We're putting it in CIB and using it on roads. Regardless of how well or how poorly Hammond Horseshoe Casino is doing, we will still have 1.5 million we're doing annually in roads, which is not enough still, but it's better than what we're doing now. Obviously, we'll still be getting some form of gaming revenue. I think this is overdue. We should have probably done it when the State wanted us to. We'd have that much more revenue over the years. We didn't, we've saved all of our tax payers money over that time. At this point, and by the way, this proposal before you doesn't begin until January 1, 2026, so nobody would pay this for a year. If you have yet to renew your plates this year, you can renew them one more time before this tax will hit you, under this proposal. Along with the ordinance, we attached a packet, that basically said, we're not alone here. Crown Point already has the same exact fees we've proposed. They've had it that way since 2018. They make about a million dollars extra a year using that fee. Gary has the exact same fees we proposed. Gary makes 1.5 million annually under this fee, which is more than us. We realized how can they make more than us on a wheel tax, when we probably have more cars. Well, Gary has more trucks and semis, and it's at the higher rate. That's at the \$40 rate, so they make more, even though they're a smaller community than we will. We're projected to make 1.4-1.5 million. Portage basically the exact same fees, little bit lower on the motorcycles. They make \$150,000. Valpo has the same fees. Dyer has the same fees. Laporte has the same fees. Merrillville, not the same fees but slight modifications. Munster same exact fees. This is just close to us. There was a packet I was gonna give to you that had all the communities across Indiana and I didn't think it was important for us here in Northwest Indiana to talk about what Greencastle charges on their wheel tax, which is less, rest assured. We're one of the few communities that hasn't taken this step at this point, and we need it. I know you guys are talking about doing a public hearing. God Bless you if you do. I guarantee that not 1 person is gonna come in and say that you guys are doing a great job passing this. I'll predict that, but if people wanna come in and vent, God Bless America. That's what the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment's all about, but this is not lovely. I have to pay this, I have 4 cars that I'm gonna have to pay this on, and I will obviously. It's needed, and the reason we didn't pass it before was because the Horseshoe Casino was doing so well and it's not doing well anymore and because of that, we're not doing the road work like we need to, and this is vital. Nobody loves paying for extra taxes, I know that, and I'm sorry, but I'm in charge of running this city, and making sure it runs properly. Sometimes, when you're running a city, you have to do unpopular stuff. I know some of us do it every time, and I know others who take a break, and their like, they got 5 votes, I don't need to vote on this, but I don't think that's right, I'll just be honest with you. When they voted for you, they voted for you to run this city, and this is running the city. Sometimes when you run the city, you gotta make unpopular decisions, like this. I just need 5 of you, but I have a feeling I already know what the votes gonna be, but I'm just asking you. You were you were entrusted with running

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MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont- the City of Hammond, and if we have bad roads, you have to do something about that. We've managed all this time without doing it, but here we are. That's all I got, I don't know if you have any questions.

Councilman Tyler- just with regards to the Wheel Tax, you said it wouldn't take effect until 2026, I don't see that in the actual ordinance though.

Mayor McDermott- It's not in the ordinance, it's in the state law Councilman.

Councilman Tyler- Got it, ok.

Mayor McDermott- The state law said if you don't get it done by September 1<sup>st</sup>, it doesn't take effect until the following year.

Councilman Tyler- So then, residents would actually have 2 years? So I myself haven't renewed this year.

Mayor McDermott- It depends on when you renew.

Councilman Tyler- So I haven't renewed this year, I have to do so before November whatever, and so I'll have this November and next November.

Mayor McDermott- Yes, exactly. So if you're in November, you'll have this November and you'll have next November before you have to pay it, true story. Thank you for pointing that out.

Councilwoman Alexander- I understand we wanna pass this wheel tax, but what are we gonna do dealing with our Illinois residents that are here in our city. Are we gonna do anything dealing with that where they'll be paying that wheel tax? I know a lot of the complaints that I have been getting was about the Illinois residents. We always hear that all the time, and how we're gonna step our game up to get them to change over their residency. The second question is, I know that you're going to the max of the \$25 that the state says versus going towards the minimum and gradually increasing. Can you give me some insight on that?

Mayor McDermott- Well yeah, if we went to the max, it only brought in 1.4 million dollars a year, and quite frankly, that's not enough in itself, and that's the max we could do. That's what we need, that's why we chose those numbers. The Council does have the option to cut that back. You can cut it back. I know that some communities cut it back for motorcycles and stuff like that. That's an option for sure. But, keep in mind that if you cut it back, that cuts down the final number, and the whole purpose I imagine of doing this is so that we pave the streets and have nice smooth streets. If we do cut it back, God bless you all. You have the right to do that, I get it. If that's the way we go, then there's less at the end. The first question was about reciprocity, Illinois plates, which is a problem. It was a problem when I took over. It's a problem currently. It will probably be a problem 50 years from now, because we live on the state line. I'm not making excuses but I can tell you with certainty that Code Enforcement, and the Hammond Police Department is constantly working on this. If they knock out 10, 15 more move in. Then they knock out 10, and 15 more move in. Then I get criticized by the Council and rightfully so, we get criticized, all of us get criticized because they're still here. What I'm saying is,

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont- I have a feeling we should. I get it Councilwoman, if they're free riders and they're not registering their license in Indiana, then they're not gonna pay this tax, and that's not fair. I agree, and that's gonna mean that we're always gonna be fighting this fight, and we do. I'm not making excuses, we do. You call up, and say my neighbors got Illinois plates, I'll go out there. Code Enforcement will go out there. We'll follow the state law and we'll enforce the reciprocity, and then your next door neighbor will have 4 cars with Illinois plates parked right next door. It's a problem. We live on the state line though, I do wanna point that out. There is a difference in Illinois between what they charge and what we charge, and that difference is gonna get greater under this scenario, which will encourage even more. I acknowledge that. I appreciate the questions though Councilwoman. I don't know if I answered your question.

Councilwoman Alexander- Yes, just a follow up with the reciprocity, are we also just asking our residents to help with community type policing in terms of saying, hey, I have a resident that has been living next to me for X amount of time, That's something we're encouraging our residents to do? If you see something, say something, type of thing so that we can help with the issue.

Mayor McDermott- Yes ma'am. We have Hammond 311, and that's one of the things you can report. We follow them up constantly. I get this complaint constantly, as I imagine the Council people get this complaint constantly. I don't wanna tell you, oh I'm so jaded, we don't follow up reciprocity. If I'm jaded on anything, it's because we'll knock off ten of them and there will be 15 more that move in, so that jades me a little and I imagine that the police get the same way, but it's our job and we do it. I don't wanna sit here and say, if you pass the wheel tax, wallah, they'll all go away. I would be full of crap if I told you that. This is a problem, and it's gonna constantly be a problem. Whoever the Mayor is, is gonna be constantly fighting this battle, because we live on the state line, in my opinion. I'm not trying to be disrespectful, I hope it's not coming off that way. I promise you, Councilwoman, or anyone else who calls us, you give me an address, we're all over it. We will do everything we can to get rid of it. I acknowledge that's an issue in this debate, I acknowledge it.

Councilwoman Venecz- As you know, I'm really active in Crime Watch, and I attend most of the meetings around town. This is precisely why we have our meetings. Residents come, they tell the community policing officer that my neighbor lives next door, they've been there for 3 years, and they never changed over their plates. That's what we need. Precisely what the Councilwoman was saying to encourage the residents to make the call or use 311. There are avenues out there for us as residents to pursue to help the Police Department, to help Code Enforcement, to help, I know we will never eradicate the problem, it will always be there, umm but, certainly to make a difference.

Mayor McDermott- Thank you

Councilman Woerpel- To go along with what you're saying on this, as far as reciprocity goes, since we're neighbors kind of, there's an apartment complex down the street on 169<sup>th</sup> and Olcott, I got a complaint over there about 2 or 3 years ago and the officer invited me to go with him. We went down there and I watched him ticket 13 cars and by the time people were proving who they were and all this, one car. It was one car that wasn't accounted for. The rest were student cars, lease cars, some grandparents watching kids. These people tell me all the time, when it comes to both issues, whether it's reciprocity, or whether you gotta do something. My question is, What? What more can we do, number 1, and then number 2, I get constantly, like I got 3 calls today about the

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.-

Councilman Woerpel cont- condition of Columbia Avenue by St John Bosco, by 173<sup>rd</sup> St., that we share by Hessville Park, and by 169<sup>th</sup> from Northcote to Indianapolis Blvd., now I do know at one time, the CIB had planned on doing all 3 of those streets, but when there's no money, there's no money. What am I supposed to tell the residents?

Mayor McDermott- Agreed. But like, honestly, Councilman, I didn't mean to interrupt you, I'm sorry. I think that the way we decided to go about this back in 2018 or 2017 when the wheel tax was created was the right thing to do. It's like, why should we tax our residents when our boats doing 30 million dollars a year, and we're doing 15 million dollars a year on the roadway. Why should we tax our residents on top of that? It didn't make sense. Now it's not happening like that anymore. Our boats less than 20 million a year right now, we were up to 35. It's less than 20 million a year right now, and dropping. I don't think it's done dropping. It could go to zero for all I know. So we gotta get ready to make some tough decisions. Is there anyone that feels strongly that it's gonna keep doing 20 million a year, cause I don't. If it drops, where does it drop, 10? We still gotta do our ADA payments. Where does it stop dropping? If it drops down to 10, we're doing absolutely no road work. You know what I'm saying? This is how communities do road work is through the wheel tax, and we don't have one. We were doing very well when the boat was doing well. The boats not doing well.

Councilman Woerpel- I was sitting there, when I got a phone call from your office in March of 2020, and the call was, hey, we're shutting the city down, and we have no money, as far as paying our bills cause the boat shut down. We all knew that this was coming, and during the middle of that pandemic, there was a storm that wiped out pretty much Hessville, and parts of I think it was the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> district, and I'll never forget driving in the car down the street and watching them people's furniture float down the street. I think it was, what's the name of the street? Anyway, I had just had a project for lights put on hold, when that storm came, and I got people saying, when am I gonna get lights? When am I gonna get lights? I'm in this car and I'm watching everything that people own float down the street. I think I said at the time, we gotta do something different, because depending on what district you're in and how you spend your money, when one district is getting lights, and another has stuff floating down out of people's houses, and basements, I'm sorry, blame me. That's not right.

Mayor McDermott- We weren't doing that. I don't think we were doing it right, and that's why we changed.

Councilman Woerpel- That's all I got on that.

Mayor McDermott- Thanks.

Councilman Salinas- I just wanna say that I agree with Councilman Woerpel, and I think a lot of us probably do. We all have blocks and areas in our districts, that are in need of repair, and we need to have funds. I agree, this is needed, but Mr. Mayor, with that being said, I know we've explored other options and I know that other municipalities, as well as the County employees grant writers, that secure funds from the state, and from the government, and different entities, is that of interest?

Mayor McDermott- We do grants all the time Councilman. I don't think hiring a grant writer, I just have a feeling that won't work out, but I'm open to it. What we've been trying to do lately is get people to bring the grants to us. Like, Structurepointe, and other firms, they're like, hey, we would love to do this project for you.

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.-

Mayor McDermott cont- So, we said, hey, if you can find some money, we will let you do this project for us. They have a lot of grant writers that work for these companies. I'm not dismissing what you're saying, Councilman. We've talked about like contractual basis, employing somebody. I just don't know if a full time position is the answer in that regard, but there's a lot of money out there.

Councilman Salinas- I think County does it that way as well, with the contractual. What they bring in, they receive a percentage of that and that might be worth exploring in conjunction with this wheel tax.

Mayor McDermott- Ok.

Councilman Tyler- Just 2 real quick points Mayor, to your point about the grants, I know that CIB, when I was on CIB, we were applying for grants left and right, and a lot of the plans that we were contributing funds to, were matching grants too. I know that the Engineering Department is on top of that. I'm not saying that maybe there's more out there, but that department has always been good about exploring those opportunities. The other thing I wanted to say is that, I don't want the public to think that we're just raising taxes to just raise taxes, and we're not exploring other cost cutting measures, or other balance budgeting measures. I know that Megan in her office and of course you, are doing all that you can to figure out other ways to direct more money to street repairs and infrastructure and other things that we need, and other things that our residents want, lighting, whatever CIB money for those larger City wide projects. I just wanted to mention that, so people just don't think we're not doing that other stuff, and we're only raising taxes. This is a balance, and even with all of those other measures, we still need to do this on top of that to continue with these infrastructure repairs.

Mayor McDermott- Councilman, I appreciate that. The budget that Megan and I are working on right now, that we're gonna turn into you shortly, is let's be honest, the police are asking for a 25 percent pay raise. We had on the books last year, 230 something police officers. They're asking for a 25 percent pay raise, the most expensive department. So, now the Firemen naturally want a 25 percent pay raise. Then, the Teamsters are like, hey, we actually live in Hammond, all those other people, they don't live here, we'd like at least half of the 25 percent pay raise. This is all happening at the same time that the State of Indiana did a corrupt deal and opened up the Hard Rock on the highway. It was a corrupt deal, let's be honest, people are going to jail over it. They do this corrupt deal in Indiana, they fly him all over the country, all these people are going to jail. They opened this casino, and it's kicking our butt. I knew it was going to, that's why I fought so hard against it. While we're going through the post pandemic salary requests that are going through the roof, our casino is getting annihilated at the same time, and we gotta turn in a good budget. It's tough, that's why I get grey hair trying to balance all of this. It's hard, I agree. Listen man, we have people in our city that live tight Councilman, and I know you have a great concern for that, just like I do, and I know this is the last thing in the world that they wanna hear. This is a city of 80,000 people, with 25,000 residences, 300 square miles of roads, not even counting the alleys. Let's just say we have 150 miles of alleys. That's a big responsibility we have and I'm just trying to balance it all. Listen, I don't like paying this anymore than anybody else.

Councilman Woerpel- Councilman when you were talking about grants, 169<sup>th</sup> got repaved this year, 169<sup>th</sup> got repaved last year, and I think it was, I call it Oxbow Road, is that 179<sup>th</sup>, and that was all by Community Crossing grants that the Engineering Department got for us. Other than that, them streets wouldn't have been repaved.

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott- I know that, and I understand what Councilman Al was saying also. There's more money out there. Those are great, and Councilman Barry was right also. When we have to do a grant on Community Crossings, it'd be 2.5 million dollars, our local match. 2.5 million dollars almost eats all the money we have available, so it's just 1 project. It's a massive project. I don't want you all to think we're not doing any road work, we're doing a lot of road work. Just drive around. Those are all local matches on huge federal projects. We're not doing a lot of local projects. Councilman Mark and I got elected at the same time, we used to do all local projects. Hardly any of that is taking place now. It's the massive Kennedy Avenue, Hohman, Michigan, all the big projects like that are happening, and all of our money gets eaten up by local match, which is why we made sure on the wheel tax money, it cannot be used for local match. That's specifically why, because the local match would be more than 1.5 and all the wheel tax money would go to a local match. So it would just go like that. If we focus it all on streets, I think that's the best way to do it. It'll guarantee that we're doing road work every year. I appreciate the questions guys, I really do. This is not a fun thing. I was sick last night as a dog, and I woke up, went to work this morning, and I'm on a lot of dayquil, and the reason is I didn't wanna put my Chief of Staff up here. I didn't think that'd be fair. So, I'm up here taking the heat and this is not fun, but I just wanted you all to know that I held off as long as I could on this tax, and I think we can't hold off anymore and still do our jobs. I just honestly feel that way. I appreciate the good questions and I agree with you. Councilwoman Katrina, I agree with you, I hate reciprocity issues, it's annoying. I pay my taxes, we pay our taxes, everybody should, right? So if you give it to us, I promise you, we'll fight it. Next, I also wanted to point out, I'm gonna ask the Community Police Captain, Tom Strabavy to come to the next meeting to talk to you about what they do on reciprocity, if that will help. He's a great guy, he's a 1<sup>st</sup> District resident, and he's the Captain of Community Policing. He can talk about those issues as well.

Councilman Tyler- Last point, I promise. To Councilwoman Alexanders point, That was gonna be my question. I'm not an expert on how reciprocity works, but in terms of fines, if we are adding this wheel tax, maybe we could increase fines in terms of reciprocity laws too.

Mayor McDermott- I think it's state law, but I will follow that up. I'm pretty sure it's state law, but the annoying thing about the reciprocity is, you can't just go up and tow them. You have to verify their address and they have a certain period that they have to rectify it. It's a period of like 60 days, That's why I think Captain Strabavy, just to tell you how annoying it is for one car, the process that they have to go through on one car, and there could be an apartment complex with 100 of them and each car is a complicated process and that car could just move right over to Chicago. That's why I think it's good to have Captain Strabavy here who everyone knows. He's a Hammond resident through and through. He's in charge of this and he takes it personally, so I think, him coming to the next meeting, will be a good thing for all of us.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of September 9, 2024 and place on file.

AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved to approve the claims from September 4, 2024 through September 18, 2024. Claim #7789 through #8241, inclusive. In the amount of \$10,845,896.55.

ROLL CALL VOTE (Claims)

AYES: Alexander, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Salinas, Tyler, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED  
(As amended)

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Tyler- I would like to give condolences to the family of Mrs. Annie Burns-Hicks who was the first African American teacher in the City of Hammond. She passed away about a week ago, and her Funeral will be this upcoming Friday and Saturday. I just wanted to give a heartfelt condolences to her family and thank her once again for all of the great contributions that she made to our great city and our school city. A couple years ago, as a Council, we recognized her when they changed the name of Maywood Elementary to Annie Burns-Hicks, and I know it was a great honor to her and her family. Thank you to the Council for being a part of that. Once again, I just wanna give my condolences to her family and everybody that she touched, cause she was a teacher within the school city for decades.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board- Councilman Emerson-The Capital Improvement Board met on September 16,2024. We dealt with:

Item A- Funding Allocation #207- The 2024 Street Resurfacing Milestone Contractors North in the amount of \$447,000.

Item B- Funding Allocation #208- Ditch Clearing on Cline Service Rd. Dyer Construction Company INC in the amount of \$13,487.32

Item C- Funding Allocation #209- Investigate the Sinkhole in the Parkway at 730 173<sup>rd</sup> St. in the amount of \$2,555.13

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMITTEE REPORTS cont.

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz- Upcoming meetings:

- Mt. Zion Pleasantview Plaza Community Watch: Wed., Oct 9; 1pm;
- East Hammond Pullman Crime Watch: Tue., Oct 15; 6pm: Ophelia Steen Center
- Edison Community Watch; Wed., Oct 2; 6:30 pm; Edison School
- Harrison Park Crime Watch; Tue., Oct. 1; 6 pm; VFW on Hohman Ave.
- Hessville Crime Watch; Thurs., Oct 17; 6pm; Hansen Library
- Irving Community Watch; Tues., Oct 8; 9:30am; Irving School
- Whiting/Robertsdale; Thurs., Oct 10; 6:30pm; Calumet College
- South Hohman Avenue neighborhood Watch; Thurs., Oct 17; 6:30pm; Trinity Church

ORDINANCE 3<sup>RD</sup> READING- FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

24-19 An Ordinance of the City of Hammond, Adopting a Municipal Vehicle Excise Tax and a Concurrent Wheel Tax Pursuant to Indiana Code

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved the proposed ordinance to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading by title, with a Council as a Whole committee meeting at 5:00 p.m. and a public hearing at 6:00 p.m on October 15, 2024

ROLL CALL VOTE (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> reading)

AYES: Alexander, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Salinas, Tyler, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried 9/0/0 MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTIONS

24R-17 A Resolution of the Common Council of the City of Hammond, Indiana Approving Plan Commission Resolution 2024-01 as a Written Order and Finding of Fact Approving Redevelopment Commission Resolution No. 2024-11 as an Amending Declaratory Resolution That Established, Designated and Approved the East Hammond Urban Renewal Area and the Urban Renewal Plan for the East Hammond Urban Renewal Area, IND. R-91, (NPD Area 2) to Modify the Boundary Description

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved for adoption.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Alexander, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Salinas, Tyler, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried 9/0/0 RESOLUTION NO. R17 ADOPTED

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved that the meeting scheduled for October 14<sup>th</sup> be rescheduled to October 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. AYES: ALL

Councilman Tyler- I should have mentioned this under communications but, I want to thank Lone Pine for Cleaning up Harrison Park. I know we've been talking about this for awhile, but Harrison Park of course is the next park in my vision to be redeveloped in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District, and right now we're working on a 3-4 phase plan that'll probably take place over the next 5-6 years, maybe a little bit longer depending on how we are able to generate revenue to support that project. A few years ago we turned off the water source for the pond, because the pond was flooding every single time we had a major rain, which was felt like every other month. In doing so, the pond is now in pretty bad condition. We had the pond cleaned out and the trees were pulled up, and it is looking much better now and I'm being told by the contractor for the 1<sup>st</sup> phase of the pond improvements that it'll take place early to late spring, so somewhere early in the first or second quarter of 2025. So like I said, that'll be the first phase, is cleaning up the pond, expanding the pond's footprint, so that it's more connected to what it looked like historically. It'll be a little larger, a little deeper. We're gonna line the pond and then like Dowling Park, we're hopeful that we're gonna be able to stock it so that people will be able to fish in Harrison Park Pond within the next year or so. We're excited about that. We will be having a public meeting once all the plans are finalized to release every single phase so that people understand what those plans are, and can weigh in on all those phases coming up too. Hopefully, we'll be able to have that meeting before the end of this year. If you are interested in the development of Harrison Park, please be on the lookout for that information.

Councilman Woerpel- Lone Pine has had the management now for 8 years at Dowling Park, when they approached me on it. This guy is great. He does the bacteria readings, water clearness, sustainability of fish, and his first time out there, he said we were lucky there were any fish out there in that pond. I said go for it, do what you gotta do. The last 2 years in a row a state record fish has come out of that pond. I'm drawing a blank on what the fish was. So Stacey does a great job, and I know when you drive over there, that water is crystal clear.

Councilman Rakos- Stacey from Lone Pine also works on the Ridgewood Townhome pond also. He does a good job.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Joan Schmidt- I represent the NWI Rugby team. They play at Riverside Park. They purchased lights and would like to use them on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the spring and in the fall from 6-8:30 for practice, and we are asking for permission. Match days are on Saturdays if you'd like to come spectate.

Ken Rosek- I know how you can save 3 million bucks, get rid of the boondoggle bridge. At Mayor's Night Out, TJ was talking about emergency response times, and halfway through his speech, the City cut him off. They said, you're done, sit down bud. Very disrespectful, because he knew TJ was right and he does not want the citizens to know the truth. If someone dies because the police show up 2 minutes late, then the City will be liable. Councilman Rakos doesn't want the bridge on Grand Ave., because he lives there. Their bridge does nothing for the students. There are 3 schools on Grand Ave.

Jose Galvan- I am asking for help from the Used Car Lot Task Force into looking into the car lots for the use of dealer plates, and parking, and cleanliness. They are printing paper plates to work around the police and taxes.

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

George Stoya- I don't buy the Mayor's position on the futility on going after the people from Illinois and the registration problem. He set up cameras and it deterred a lot of people from committing crime knowing that they couldn't get away that easy. He was willing to go get chummy with Ed Soliday to get the food and beverage tax. Why couldn't he go have him create some legislature to create something for this? He's willing to spend 10's of thousands of dollars on the voter's rights legislation. Quit wasting money in the Courts. I wrote a memo, and haven't heard anything. You wanna find some more money? Get a little more disciplined around here and do your jobs.

Jana A.- At Mayor's Night Out, it became clear to me that the Mayor has convinced people and himself that he is doing the right thing for the City. I can understand how a resident that has trust in their government would take his word for it. Perhaps we do not recognize the inconsistencies. In February 2023 Dean Button said 50 homes would be taken out. A few months later in April at the INDOT hearing, it was discovered it would only be 9. Regarding construction costs, Mayor said the bridge was better than the overpass. Dean Button said, an underpass would be twice as much as a bridge. Nick Botta said the Grand Ave solution would be 8 million and the bridge would be 11 million. Ken discovered a plan to put 68 lots, and 2 residential buildings into those woods, of course the residents were not informed. It still doesn't solve the safety issues for the kids walking to school. The truth will always come out in the end.

Andrea Senters- While working with the people trying to save the Dunes, it has been a great concern. You would be dishoming animals. Some of them are rare and could become extinct. I like walking my dogs through the woods, and I always see people utilizing them. It should be considered historical land, it's been there for thousands and thousands of years. I couldn't get any assistance when we got 7 inches in 7 minutes, and if you clear the woods, where does all the rain go? Would we have to get flood insurance? That's not in my budget.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved to Adjourn

AYES: ALL

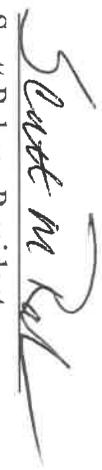


2024 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec											
Katrina Alexander	8 P	22 P	12 P	26 P	11 P	25 P	8 P	22 P	13 P	28 P	10 P	24 E	8 P	22 P	12 P	26 P	9 P	23 E	15 P				
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Janet Verecz	E	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A			
Alfonso Salinas III	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Dave Woerpel	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Initials	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG			

E=ELECTRONIC  
P=PHYSICALLY  
PRESENT  
A=ABSENT

If the member qualifies for an exemption from the "Consecutive - 50" requirements, draw a circle around the E for that meeting/ member.

  
Scott Rakos, President  
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:  
  
Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 7: p.m.  
mg/cb

Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk