

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on January 27, 2025 in the Hammond City Council Chambers and was available to be viewed at gohammond on Facebook, gohammond.tv live and per Zoom.

Council President Dave Woerpel 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, Rakos, Woerpel

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: None

ABSENT: Alexander

TOTAL: 8

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Good evening, Council. Mayor sends his greetings. I'll be delivering the address today. Some updates, Public Works did vote and approve their contract, 63-4. That was the last contract of this negotiating season. We won't have to do those again for another 4 years, so good news there. There was a Times article in the paper today about the Downtown Quantum Corridor. That is in the old dialysis building where Purdue is going into. We are having conversations with them, but it's also going to be a business incubator for all types of businesses. They're even looking at having some studios in there for artists and for small businesses to be able to perform commercials and the like. The big part is the Quantum Corridor. Again, if you're not familiar with quantum computing, in a nutshell, it allows you to take a whole bunch of data at a single time, and process it much faster than a traditional computer which does just one thing at a time, really fast. Councilman Woerpel and I went down to Chattanooga, and we got to see a presentation of this back in November of how they're doing it down there. This corridor will have a highspeed link between Chicago, through Hammond, down to Purdue Lafayette. Really, it's gonna be used as a location for researchers. So, you're saying, well how does that benefit, Hammond? We're gonna have research scientists having long term stays in downtown where they're gonna be going to work each day at this Purdue location to utilize quantum computing and there's really few places in the country where they can do that and they're gonna have that here in Hammond. There was also a Times article on Sunday about the homicide rate in Lake County going down. I just want to inform the Council and publicly state that they overstated the Hammond homicide rate by 30 percent. They will be issuing a correction on that. We do a lot of things to keep that number as low as possible. We investigated the discrepancy between the Coroner's office and our data today. I'll give you a real example: There was a person that was shot in a neighboring community all the way back in 2010, but they passed away this year, and when the Coroner came to determine the cause of death, they attributed in part to a gunshot that happened 14 years ago, but since they were now living in Hammond, they attributed that to a homicide in Hammond. There was also a couple other instances where someone was shot in Chicago, multiple years past, and they came and they moved to Hammond, and again they passed away, and that was attributed to a death in Hammond. So, those are the kinds of things we discovered today. The Times is gonna post a correction. An update that they Mayor mentioned on Mayor's Night Out about the data center deal up in the 1st District, I just want to mention that we

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller cont.- continue to move forward. I know there has been some questions to this board of, hey, you did a 1st reading of this, when is it gonna come in front of the Council again? We're just making sure this thing is legitimate. The biggest thing, is the power, as Mayor mentioned at Mayor's Night Out. We're gonna make sure the deal with NIPSCO is solid and then it will be brought forth again to the Council for consideration. That's why it's not there again tonight. There's no conspiracy. We just want to make sure that before we ask you to approve something, that it's not vaporware and it's gonna go away. WE had our MLK celebration last week. We had a really good attendance there. I want to thank Owana Miller, who is in the audience, for her team, for planning all that. Owana let me know today, and I think we should give a round of applause, that she just celebrated her 30 years with the City of Hammond. Here's to 30 more, right Owana? No, haha, just kidding. We did post, as promised, we did post the letter to BP that Mayor had sent. They have been in touch with the administration, and we will be having a meeting upcoming to make sure that if there are any types of leaks in the future that we have the technical data we need in a much quicker form, and that even potentially we will have the kits out in the field where we can determine very quickly what is in the atmosphere if there is another BP leak. So we are moving forward with that and we will keep you posted on that. I had a meeting with Councilman Salinas over at the Hammond Sanitary District to explore some of the odors coming from HSD. I am pleased to say we are working on a plan and we have hired a chemist, as an expert to help us with a solution to limit the odors in especially the 2nd District. We did get to tour the new Water Department. If you're not familiar, or for the audience, the Water Department is moving Downtown into the old People's Bank building. It's taking a little longer than we expected, so the new update is May. The work is coming along, and it's looking good. We had a meeting too about the Sportsplex expansion. That should begin principle construction in March. So we're trying to finish up a couple leagues and get them, I know my kid plays in it and they're squashing all the games together so we can get the construction started in March. A couple upcoming events and then I will take my seat, next Thursday, we have our Black History celebration. That is February 6th at 10 a.m. at the Civic Center, not the Sportsplex, but the Civic Center. I'd like to invite everyone in the community out for that, again, Black History Celebration, February 6th, 10 a.m. We do have our upcoming 219 day, which is not on February 19th, but it is on Saturday February 22nd from 6-11 at the Civic Center. The theme is Viva Las Region, so it's a Vegas theme applied to the region. Again, 219 day is on Saturday the 22nd at the Civic Center. My last announcement is in February as well, we will have a Pro Pickleball Tournament at the Jean Shepherd from February 21st to the 23rd. \$20,000 in prize money, that's in partnership with 219 Pickleball. That's our first big hosting a professional event where there's actual prize money at the Jean. So that's February 21st through the 23rd. I know some people are gonna be mentioning it, but I have no updates on the video, there will probably be some groans about that, but I have nothing to update about last council's meeting and the video. That's my update, thank you. Any Questions?

Council President Woerpel- It's not a question, it's a comment about something you said when we went to learn about quantum computing.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Yes.

Council President Woerpel- I asked a question on what exactly is quantum computing compared to computing, and about half way through the answer, I thought I would have learned more standing out in the 40 degree cold rain because I had no clue as far as being computer illiterate, but it's the new trend and the next 20 years, is that correct?

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Yeah. What it seeks to do, is like take the weather as a perfect example, like rather than just taking, weather data from maybe 10 different locations, you could take radio data from a million locations at the same time and process all of that and give a much more reliable, same thing with DNA type things, that used to take days, where it's calculating all of this stuff to do DNA research, it can be done in a matter of minutes. So somebody's massively parallel computing just took a really long time with traditional computers. You know a traditional computer is like a light switch, it goes on and off, it just does that super fast. This is taking all that information in at one time.

Council President Woerpel- and it's just kinda like the City of Chattanooga partnered with the University of Tennessee and it's a very successful lab that they have there, and that's kinda what we're hoping for here, correct?

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Yeah, it is exactly what we're hoping for here. Purdue's been a great partner to this city for a long time. I think it help substantiates part of the downtown vision, right? Why are people gonna go down there, well this is gonna be one of the reasons why. They're gonna eat in our restaurants, they're gonna stay in our locations, and do their research work for months at a time. They're not just gonna be there for a weekend. It's gonna be months at a time.

Council President Woerpel- Thank you. Anybody else got anything for him?

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Thank you, everybody.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of January 13, 2025 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims from January 9, 2025 through January 22, 2025. Claim #362 through claim #875, inclusive. In the amount of \$9,218,354.72.

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to amend in claim #876, to the Whiting/Robertsedale Historical Society, in the amount of \$300.00.

Councilwoman Alexander is now present via Zoom.

ROLL CALL VOTE (amendment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS AMENDED

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims as amended)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED
(As Amended)

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community and Crime Watch - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:

Mt Zion Pleasantview Plaza; Wed., Feb 12; 1 p.m.

Edison Community Watch; Edison School; Wed, Feb 5; 6:30 p.m.

Harrison Park Crime Watch; VFW on Hohman; Tues, Feb 4; 6 p.m.

Hessville Crime Watch; HC3 Community Center; Thurs, Feb 20; 6 p.m.

Irving Community Watch; Irving School; Tues, Feb 11; 9:30 a.m.

Whiting/Robertsdale Crime Watch; Calumet College; Thurs, Feb 13; 6:30 p.m.

South Hohman Ave Neighborhood Watch; will be sometime in April

Capital Improvement Board- Councilman Salinas- I have a report from our Capital Improvement Board. We met last week on January 21st and we approved 4 allocations of funding. The 1st allocation was for the relocation of the siren in Robertsedale for the new fire station that's nearing completion in the amount of \$9,700.00. The 2nd allocation was a 165th and Stateline improvements that was awarded to the Gariup Construction in the amount of \$252,500.00. This deals with the intersection split between the 3rd and the 4th Districts. It includes improvements and warnings and addition of rumble strips. The 3rd allocation was a Clark Field storm sewer redesign awarded to NEIS Engineering in the amount of \$17,700.00. This was a storm sewer and sewer pipe relocation from a private parkway back to the easement as it initially should've been. The 4th and final allocation is to the downtown Hammond kiss and ride design that deals with our train station to the Lochmueller Group in the amount of \$480,250.00. That concludes the update of the Capital Improvement Board.

Councilman Kalwinski- Mr. President, thank you. Just a question. You mentioned rumble strips, where will they go? Is that a common practice in the city? Do we have other rumble strip areas? Scott, do you know? I'm excited to hear about it.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- I'm unaware of any other rumble strips. Was there discussion at the meeting?

Councilman Salinas- There was. That was included in some of the improvements of the notes I took down.

Council President Woerpel- What was the location of that again?

COMMITTEE REPORTS CONT.

Councilman Salinas- The location was 165th and Stateline.

Council President Woerpel- Ok, Councilman, I believe, and correct me if I'm wrong, those are rumble strips on the shoulder, when you start to approach the cement blocks that are there. It's my understanding that some people have been running in to them not knowing that the turn is there. As an action to further warn them that they're about to hit a wall, I think that's, I could be wrong, but I believe that's where, the rumble strips were explained that, that's where the rumble strips are going. It's in the shoulder, correct?

Councilman Emerson- Yes

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- That would make a lot of sense. Literally this past weekend, we had somebody drive up that corner by Stateline and 165th into a person's house. Drive right into their house. So hopefully, this would help prohibit that. Thanks.

Councilman Kalwinski- I wanted to make mention that tomorrow, Tuesday, the Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association will hold a meeting at the Hammond Mohawks at 141st and Calumet Avenue. There will be some updates regarding the BP event as well as 341st and the doings, and goings on over there. I would encourage all the At Larges to attend if they can because these issues are pretty big in the district and I think they're looking for all of us to do something about some of these issues. Thank you. 6:30.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

25-01 An Ordinance Appropriating the Proceeds of the Annual Action Plan and Dealing
 with other Matters Pertaining to the Expenditure of Plan Proceeds for Program Year 2025.

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title, with a Council as a Whole committee meeting at 5:15 p.m. and a Public Hearing on February 10, 2025

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Just because the title of the ordinance doesn't indicate what it is. This is our annual approval for our federal funding including housing, our emergency solutions grant, and our CDGBR Community Development block grant funds. This is required every year so we can be on pace with the services we offer through federal funding.

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd reading)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried

9/0/0

MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTIONS

25R-01 A Resolution of the City Council of the City of Hammond Authorizing the Filing of an Annual Action Plan Application and Designating Signatories for Payment Voucher on Letters of Credit for the 2025 Annual Action Plan Programs

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Rakos, moves for adoption

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION NO. R01 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve Angel Ojeda for a second 2 year appointment to the HVAC Contractor's Board

ROLL CALL VOTE (reappointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Perry Stabler- I have a cabin on the River. It's as beautiful as the Hessville Dunes. In 1975 I helped save the Gibson Woods. I want to talk about death. I want to say, if any of you are on hospice, I'm gonna come visit you and say look what you did to all the little animals. I have my own radio show on WJOB. Just remember when you are dying, what you did to the animals. McDermott is not your God.

Ken Rosek- Greetings Council. McDermott refuses to release the video footage from the last Council Meeting. It was one of the biggest displays of community participation in the City's history. It's a horrible moment for the Council and a sad state of affairs for the residents of Hammond. We deserve to have that footage posted. The Mayor has violated our freedom of speech and establishing an authoritarian government. At Mayor's Night Out, we were all blocked from speaking. On the Mayor's Podcast, he said he wanted to beat the crap out of us, and it made people scared to come tonight. He claims that we are terrorizing him. He's being a bully and playing the victim.

Andrea Jo Senters- I was disturbed listening to the Mayor's podcast. That is not the Mayor that I voted for. This is supposed to be a peaceful demonstration. We need the trees for oxygen and flood control and the animals. We clean the woods on our own. We should be able to come to a meeting of the minds. He is having a temper tantrum. He shouldn't tell us he is going to shoot us. I like to walk through the woods with my dogs.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Anne Sedlacek- I express my support for the preservation of the entire 32 acres of the Briar East Woods. I ask you to say no to the Governor's Parkway Bridge. The bridge should be built on Grand Avenue at the crossing. The FRA is in agreement with the Hessville Dune Dusters that an overpass or an underpass is needed. This is costing too much money. Hammond taxpayers are still responsible for 20 percent of the cost. The only reason this could possibly moving forward is too pad someone's pockets. The Mayor, his cronies, or whoever will profit from the eventual 68 residential lots, and 2 commercial sites along the new road through Briar East Woods known as Governor's Parkway. This will be your legacy and we will keep sharing the truth.

Sam Carpenter- I went to Arizona and they have woods with a plaque about how the state park came to be. No matter what decision you make, do you guys want to be remembered on the right side of history or the wrong side of history? People will remember. I think you guys should fight for this. The Mayor shouldn't be throwing temper tantrums on his podcast.

Anthony Diaz- Harrison Park needs updated and cleaned. I commend the green space people. We're gonna continue to expand the Sportsplex, but it's not working. I didn't ask for any of these new buildings, but my taxes are going up and my park looks like crap. Scott Miller destroyed the School City of Hammond, but got promoted to be the Chief of Staff. You guys are ok with that? What's happening in the City is atrocious. Where is the Mayor today? These people work for us. We pay their salaries. I'm gonna keep on fighting.

Elvia Fuentes- It's hard to believe that you are supporting this project. The Bridge is not going to benefit anyone but the Mayor and a few from his team. It's going to destroy the trees and the community. You are turning your back on us. This is unacceptable. We expected better representation. Voters will remember this at the next election.

Negin Goodrich- I came to the US from the middle east. It used to be filled with trees, plants, and animals. It didn't take long for them to cut it all down to develop. One day I woke up to realize that I was breathing dust with no woods. Hopeless, I migrated here to the US to breathe freely. I am surprised to see that Americans are taking this nature for granted. I have this experience in my life. Nature is a kind healer. I want to invite you in loving the Briar East Woods, and help us save it.

Lisette Montanez- I attended Mayor's Night Out this week, and I also attended the last council meeting. There were important topics discussed. I also listened to the LOC Podcast where remarks were made and rather than to make a rebuttal, I'd like to redirect the focus back on the safety issues that have been disregarded. I don't believe that people are disputing that we need a bridge. It's the design that is being disputed. The design isn't safe or helping our children. Scott Miller is right here. He's aware of the kids jumping the trains, and the transportation cuts. The remedy is not pedestrian bridge. Please put the children first. I'll be back.

TJ Gaertig- I want to talk about what you guys know about this project. Were you guys filled in about this project? Did you know there was 7 alternate routes for this bridge to not go through the woods that were proposed to Hammond? One of those was an overpass on Grand Ave. Did you guys know the price differences before you signed off on Governor's Parkway? Did you know that the Mayor has said many times, that he wasn't doing this for housing, but on the grant application, it says for residential development of 30 acres, and commercial development of 4 acres, with a projected increase and assessed valuation of new development at

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

TJ Gaertig cont.- 10.4 million dollars and an increase on the tax levy by \$251,000 per year. Did you guys know about this? It's from 2018.

Nathan Reeder- I've titled this rule by mob, elections be damned. The first time I noticed we were being ruled by mob, and not the representatives we elected, was back in 2021 when my friend and fellow realtor from East Chicago, Nick Smith, worked for a year to bring a housing development of 8 \$250,000 townhomes to Robertsdale, only to have the rug pulled out from under his clients feet as a mob showed up in protest and killed the deal. At the time, I hadn't thought much of it, because on the surface, it seemed the neighbors might have been just as surprised as I that a project like that might even be proposed in our rustbelt city after finally crawling out of the depths of the great recession. That eliminated \$2 million from our total assessed value chopping about \$50,000 in our annual tax revenue. The second time was a year later in 2022 at the Clark High School redevelopment meeting. As I drove to that meeting, I was excited to see what plans the Mayor put together, to develop that 15 acre city owned lot across the street from our multi million dollar wolf lake park. We could have 1,000 housing units at that site and really bring us into the 21st century, I thought as I passed the Lost Marsh Golf Course, and headed to the meeting. Instead when I arrived, I saw a room of 70 year old white homeowners who demanded the Mayor eliminate any plan that involves those people who might buy a \$250,000 town home. All we want is those people who buy 4&5 hundred thousand dollar single family homes Mayor, and they won. So today, we might add 15-20 million into assessed value into that site, that could have generated about 200 million into assessed value, taxed at 2 percent, providing enough funding at that one site to fully fund College Bound for the next 10 years. Instead we will be lucky to generate more than \$150,000 in tax revenue, in a very hard to come buy 15 acre city owned lot, across from a beautiful park. Thousands of people have bought homes below \$150,000 every year from 1998 to 2018 in cities and towns, outside of our urban core of Hammond, Whiting, East Chicago, and Gary. Today just 200 homes are sold in places like Highland, Munster, Griffith, Cedar Lake, Lowell, all the way out to Portage and Valparaiso, Where do you think those thousands of buyers went? Everyone who used to buy \$150,000 homes Munster, Highland, and Griffith, hundreds a year, now are forced to our city. And they're displacing the hundreds of people every year from 1998-2018 who used to buy homes for \$90,000 in our city. Now those people who used to move to our city are moving to Gary, and displacing those people. So the best way to save this forest is to build abundant housing everywhere, not just our city. So our city doesn't have to chop up sites like Briar East Woods. Just to build homes, when communities around us, simply wont build. I been following this housing crisis and prevalence of nimbi neighbors, to show up and protest with rule of mob.

Langston Jasper- Councilman Tyler invited me here to speak. Last time I was here, I was too nervous to speak. Ever since then, I thought about it and wanted to use this opportunity to help others to act and speak out to inspire others. Don't be afraid to make your presence known.

Anthony Higgs- Thank you to Councilman Woerpel for sending your regards. I've always been dedicated and committed to the City of Hammond in doing what's best. Seeing Coyotes ruin through my neighborhood, I'm not happy with. I want to applaud you all for coming out and speaking in regards to the issues. The woods being taken away is not good. The housing industry throughout the City of Hammond, people can barely afford to live in Hammond, and that breaks my heart. You were all elected to do a job. Fight for them and speak up.

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

AYES: ALL

2025 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	13	27	10	24	10	24	14	28	12	H	9	23	14	28	11	25	8	22	H	27	10	24	8	22
Katrina Alexander	P	E																						
Dan Spitale	P	P																						
Janet Venecz	P	P																						
Mark Kalwinski	P	P																						
Pete Torres	P	P																						
Barry Tyler	P	P																						
Bill Emerson	P	P																						
Scott Rakos	P	P																						
Dave Woerpel	P	P																						
Initials	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.

ATTEST:



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 7:05 p.m.
mg/cb



Dave Woerpel, President
Hammond Common Council

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk