

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on April 28, 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 observed

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Alexander

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott- Hi, nice to see everybody. This is my report for April 28, 2025. I'm available for questions if anybody has any. Not as much as usual for this period. We did have a holiday right in the middle of it. I did meet with the developer that currently owns the old Walmart in Hammond's 3rd District. He currently owns it. It's a Porter County Councilman, owns it, and it about to flip it to a gentleman from Hammond. They have plans. They're talking to a business from Porter County, relocating there. They're also talking to a couple of the current tenants on the footprint where we need to clear out the footprint so that we can expand the water park. That's all being planned for the old Walmart right now. That is in the process of being flipped to a new developer and we're in communication with them. It seems like everything is heading in the right direction over there. I appeared on WJOB Morning Show with Tom Dabertin to speak about the effects of Hammond's budget from the proposed new convention center located in the Hard Rock Casino. So far we are down \$13 million in our budget, most of that lost to Hard Rock. Anyway, I've done a lot. After the last Council Meeting, I've appeared on quite a number of different places talking about the effects that this convention center will have on our city. I attended the ground breaking for PNW's third dormitory. This one is going to be located on campus north of 173rd street, right off of Woodmar and 173rd. This is the first dorm on campus. It's across the street from where the other dorms are, but it's technically considered on campus. It's a big move for Purdue. It's a big project. I think it was a \$30 million project. They're breaking ground on it, it's underway right now, so that's good news. I met with the CEO of the South Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau, Phil Taillon, to speak about the effects of locating Hammond's, upon Hammond's budget from proposed new convention center locating next to Hard Rock Casino. I know that the CEO of the South Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau badly wants a convention center built. I think he doesn't really care as much about where it's built as long as it's built. He's got an interesting perspective. I still personally don't feel that we need one, but I know where they sit. They think we need one. They're not necessarily sold on Hard Rock. They think if it happens in Hobart, they're happy. That's what I've heard so far. I attended the grand opening of The Branding Room Floor, a new marketing agency. They opened up in Downtown Hessville. It was a great event. Jaime Prieto's wife Cynthia is one of the Co-owners of The Branding Room Floor. That was a nice event we held in Hessville. I met with US Senator Jim Bank's, District Director, LeAnn Angerman. I've known LeAnn for a long time. She was on the Lake County Election Board served in the Elections and Registrations Office for a number of years, so I knew

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.- her through that process. It was nice to speak to her. She came in and talked about what was going on with Senator Banks. He had some questions about some projects in the city that I cleared up. This is interesting, I want to thank Dean Button for meeting with me to discuss the status of quiet zone applications. I know this is important with Councilman Salinas. We're actively working to make the IHB crossing, at Sohl Avenue near Willow Court a quiet zone crossing. We are actively exploring 5 quiet zone applications for the Norfolk Southern line from Willow Court to Sohl Avenue. They have some complaint that have come from complaints we received from tenants at the bank and at Renaissance. We recognize the current conditions may have detrimental impact on attracting residential housing in Downtown Hammond. Obviously I've been talking to the seniors that live at the Renaissance for a number of years. This is a process that we're going through right now. I want to thank Dean for starting that process. I met with the new School City of Hammond Superintendent Talisa Reed. We had a nice meeting over at Byway Brewery, you know, talking about cooperative issues that could take place between the school city and the civil city, so it was nice speaking to her. I think she's a great Superintendent. Quite frankly, I think they made an excellent decision. It seems like we're going to have a great relationship. If you haven't had a chance to talk to the new Superintendent, I recommend doing so. She's a breath of fresh air. I had lunch with the CEO of the Horseshoe Casino Hammond last week. Obviously there's a lot going on in the casino industry. I've been talking real close to the leadership of Horseshoe Casino constantly. They know what's going on with us. They know what's going on with the convention center and they're monitoring obviously. It impacts them greatly. We hosted bring your child to work day in Hammond City Hall. It turned out to be a great event. I want to thank everyone that participated. Last but not least, I attended the coldest opening day I've had in a long time. It was in Robertsdale. It was literally in the 20's. Councilman Spitale, and Councilwoman Venecz were there. It was a cold one. Robertsdale Little League is playing though. It was 20 degrees, but they still played. I know that you all have Ordinance 25-10 coming before you. It's an ordinance to appropriate funds in the hotel/motel innkeeper's tax fund for Economic Development purposes in 2025. I know that's going to have a public hearing next meeting. If you have any questions, I'm here to answer them, other than that, that's my report.

Councilman Kalwinski- Evening, Mayor.

Mayor McDermott- Yes, sir. Hi Councilman.

Councilman Kalwinski- Last time we had a council meeting, you were going to meet with NIPSCO and I mentioned;

Mayor McDermott- Yes, 2 things with NIPSCO.

Councilman Kalwinski- the gas and electricity.

Mayor McDermott- Yes, sir.

Councilman Kalwinski- What do you know?

Mayor McDermott- We followed that up. I haven't had a chance to meet with NIPSCO yet, not for lack of trying. I'm trying to meet with the CEO on a couple of things. That's one of them. I did get some follow up on this issue. I'm aware that within the next 4 weeks, NIPSCO plans to have full power to that area. I don't know

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.-much about building houses, so I talked to people that know a lot about building houses. In fact, I'm surrounded by them right now, in case you have any further questions from what I understand, having temporary power in a situation like this is not completely unusual. NIPSCO is aware that we need power out there. We did drop the ball, I acknowledge. My administration did. I didn't personally, but I'm the boss, so I take responsibility, but they will have power out there within the next 3-4 weeks.

Councilman Kalwinski- Thanks.

Mayor McDermott- We did follow that up, Councilman. I didn't have a chance to talk to the CEO yet. I wanted to talk to him about not only yours, but about data centers. That's the big thing right now.

Councilman Kalwinski- Was there any discussion about or talk about moving NIPSCO from the easement to the front?

Mayor McDermott- That is a NIPSCO decision. That was part of the reason we don't have power right now. That's part of the reason. When you think about all the new developments NIPSCO has, they don't come from the back with power anymore, they go through the front. We were prepared, because almost every development we have, the power comes through the front, and we had to make that, excuse me, the power comes from the back, we had to make that change. That's part of the reason.

Councilman Kalwinski- I guess the question people will ask then, is will there be a public sidewalk in front?

Mayor McDermott- There is going to be a public sidewalk in front. We had to rearrange that too, right?

City Engineer, Dean Button- There is a public sidewalk in front. We're working on exact location.

Mayor McDermott- But we had to change that around with the;

City Engineer, Dean Button-Little bit of change, but, there will be a sidewalk in front.

Mayor McDermott- There will be a sidewalk in front, Councilman.

Councilman Kalwinski- Will it be along the curb or will it be a little parkway?

City Engineer, Dean Button- We're hoping to have parkway. It sort of depends on where NIPSCO puts their facilities in, but we're working towards having a parkway.

Councilman Kalwinski- I think a parkway not going to be for a little bit. Thanks for trying.

Mayor McDermott- I appreciate you bringing it up last meeting. I got heavy on that subject, so I was ready for your answer, but I did not get a chance to talk to the CEO yet. I wanted to talk to him more about data centers and that also concerns your district. We have a big proposal on the table right now, and NIPSCO holds the keys, literally. If NIPSCO says yes, you guys are going to be happy with us.

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Kalwinski- Data center?

Mayor McDermott- Yes, a big one. Big one. It's a good proposal for our city. It's adjacent to a current data center. We don't have neighbor problems at that data center. We have power problems. That's what we're trying to work out with NIPSCO. It's literally, everything is done. We've done everything you could do. We're literally waiting on NIPSCO.

Councilman Kalwinski- As you probably know, people are concerned that they're going to be paying for the power that goes to the data center.

Mayor McDermott- Well, that's a really good point you bring up. That's part of the problem right now, is NIPSCO has a proposal where they're pulling data centers out of NIPSCO utility and what that does for us utility payers, it's not a good deal for us. This data center is going to pull more power than US Steel. The data center we're talking about is going to pull more power than US Steel, which is a great customer for NIPSCO. NIPSCO should leave, in my opinion, not that it matters, but I think that it belongs in the rate with all of us, so it can help pay for our lower rates here in Northwest Indiana. If they're siphoned off, data centers are being talking about siphoned off out of NIPSCO and put into a separate company basically that only deals with data centers, that reports basically to a hedge fund. That's no good.

Councilman Kalwinski- How do they prioritize?

Mayor McDermott- That's a great question, Councilman. We have a proposal ready to go right now. Hammond does. We're ready to go right now. We don't have cooling problems. We don't have neighbor problems. We have a data center there already. We need mega watts. That's what's holding us up, and NIPSCO has all the keys. If NIPSCO says yes, I'm coming back here and buying pizza, and we're gonna have a party. If NIPSCO says no, I don't know what the answer is, being honest. There's not enough power in NIPSCO's service territory for all these data centers that are knocking on our door. Indiana made us very attractive to data centers with our legislation and the laws that we have in Indiana and then the data centers come here, and they say do you have the power, and we say no. We have all these great laws on the books, but we don't have the power, sorry. They're like, why are you even talking to us if you can't even get us the power. That's the most important part.

Councilman Kalwinski- Thanks

Mayor McDermott- Thank you, but when I do talk to him, I will report, I promise you. Any other questions? Thanks everybody.

Councilwoman Venecz- Thank you, Mayor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of April 14, 2025 and placed on file.

AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims from April 10, 2025 through April 24, 2025. Claim #3379 through claim #3747, inclusive. In the amount of \$9,977,572.96.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Tyler- I just want to remind everybody that, Mayor's Night Out for the 3rd District is coming up on Wednesday, May 14, at Hammond Central from 6:30 to 8:30. Thank you.

Councilman Salinas- I'd like to remind everyone that the Hammond's 20th Annual Cinco De Mayo Fiesta is taking place this Friday, May 2nd from 5-8 p.m. at the Hammond Civic Center

Councilman Rakos- I want to congratulate the Hammond Fire Department for their victory on Slugfest 2025. It was a very good night. It was very entertaining, and we had a good time. I want to thank Jack Callahan and Karen Callahan. They did a great job.

Councilwoman Venecz- I'd like to acknowledge the Hammond Police Officers who participated. It was, now Scott, I know you're partial because you're a retired firefighter, but it was a good night. Hammond showed what we're made of, and it was just a very enjoyable evening. Thank you Mr. President.

Councilman Salinas- To Councilwoman Venecz's point, I believe the Hammond Police Department, the active fighters were 4-0, I believe the Hammond Boxer's were. It was a fun night all the way around.

Council President Woerpel- Anybody got the ring girls? I mean, while we're talking.

Councilwoman Venecz- As a matter of fact, I will be announcing the upcoming Community and Crime Watch meetings. One of the meetings that I host is Edison Community Watch, which will be on Wednesday, May 7th and I'm inviting the police officers and fire fighters who participated in Slugfest because I think they deserve to be acknowledged. Thank you.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Upcoming meetings:

Edison Community Watch; Wed., May 7; 6:30 p.m.; Edison School

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

COMMITTEE REPORTS cont.

Hessville Crime Watch; Thur., May 15; 6 p.m.; HC3 Community Center
Irving Community Watch; Tues., May 13; 9:30 a.m.; Irving School
Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., May 8; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

25-10 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for Economic Development Purposes in 2025

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title, referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee for May 12, 2025 at 5:15 p.m., and a Public Hearing on May 12, 2025. AYES: ALL

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Salinas- We have a couple of Council Board reappointments here, or one reappointment to the Electrical Board, a Jorge Bautista. I'd like to make a motion that we reappoint Mr. Bautista to the Electrical Board. His term effectively finished up April 25, 2025.

Councilwoman Venecz- Second.

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

Councilman Salinas- We have a second appointment. I'd like to appoint Tracey Miller to the Library Board. The current Council Board appointee Karen Janiga, her term will expire in September 11, 2025. I'd make a motion that we appoint Tracey Miller.

Councilman Rakos- Second.

Council President Woerpel- Just to clarify, Karen's had 2 terms on the, or Ms. Janiga's had 2 terms on the Library Board, and that's what they're limited to, correct?

Councilwoman Venecz- That's what I believe.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Council President Woerpel-That's what we're understanding it, so.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

MOTION CARRIED

Council President Woerpel- I'll entertain a motion to move the May 26th meeting which is Memorial Day to May 27th at 6 o'clock.

Councilman Salinas- So moved.

Councilwoman Venecz- So Moved.

Council President Woerpel- The motions been made by Councilman Salinas

Councilwoman Venecz- Second.

Council President Woerpel- Seconded by Councilwoman Venecz, is there any discussion?

Councilman Kalwinski- Mr. Chairman, I will have a conflict on that day. I've got IDEM coming to a meeting a Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association. You can have the meeting on Tuesday if you want, but I'm just letting you know.

Council President- What's Council's pleasure? You want to keep it that day?

Councilwoman Venecz- It was my understanding that, that was the preference of the Mayor's Office because there were conflicts down the road, so that's why they wanted the 27th, 28th, whatever.

Councilman Kalwinski- That's fine.

Council President Woerpel- Any further discussion?

Councilman Tyler- Councilman Kalwinski, would the 28th work for you? That Wednesday.

Councilman Kalwinski- Is that Wednesday?

Council President Woerpel- I'm looking at the calendar here though, Councilman, and there's a Board of Zoning Appeals meeting at 6 o'clock in the Council Chambers, so I'm assuming;

Councilman Tyler- The 28th?

Council President Woerpel- Yeah, on the 28th, so I'm assuming we'd have to take steps to move that. I don't

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Council President Woerpel cont.- know, does public notice go out on that stuff?

Councilwoman Venecz- Yes.

Council President- Because that would be kind of hard to change that around, correct?

Chief of Staff Scott Miller- Yeah.

Councilman Tyler- Just wanted to, Councilman Rakos, made mention that, are we sure that there is no meetings on the 27th?

Councilman Rakos- Is redevelopment on Tuesday the 27th?

Council President Woerpel- Mr. Miller, do you happen to know?

Anne Anderson- No, it's not.

Chief of Staff Scott Miller- It's not. Redevelopment is not on the 27th.

Council President Woerpel- What time is your meeting?

Councilman Kalwinski- 6:30

Council President- Is there a way we can do a Council meeting at 4:30? Would that be a problem?

Councilwoman Venecz- My suggestion would be that we wait until the May, what is it? The 12th?

Council President Woerpel- The next meeting in May to decide when the next meeting would be?

Councilwoman Venecz-and decide then, so we can get our ducks in a row as far as usage of the chambers, Mayor's Office, and the other meetings.

Council President Woerpel- That's fine.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

George Stoya- There was an article about Crossroads and DX Hammond, and how the company was concerned that they would be saddled with construction costs for their project. If they're not going to be saddled with their own cost, guess who will be? They want to saddle us. They want to externalize all those costs. DX Hammond is not making their case why NIPSCO or anyone else should help them out. They have tax breaks and incentives. Now they're worried about being saddled? They're not talking to the City of Hammond. They just think everyone should just part the sea for them. They Mayor is right, that's a good location for them. I thought this thing was a done deal. The consumers don't know what's going on. I don't know if I can fit the saddle, or if the saddle can fit me. It'll be forced on us otherwise. Thank you.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Salinas, 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	11	25	8	22
Katrina Alexander	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	E				
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Al Salinas	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Initials	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.

ATTEST:



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:28 p.m.
mg/cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk