

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on June 23, 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, Emerson, Rakos, Woerpel

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Tyler

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

TOTAL: 7

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott- Hi everybody, nice to see you. I wanted to start off and say thanks, last council meeting with the Coreweave investment and all the ordinances we approved, I thought that was a real big deal, and I wanted to say, thank you, again. Obviously, we're still waiting on NIPSCO. I haven't really heard anything, but I do know that basically on the Coreweave deal, everything's been wrapped up outside of the NIPSCO issue, so, thank you, again. The past couple weeks I've stayed busy working across departments and in the community. Here's a summary of my recent activities; I attended our Hammond Police monthly Captain's meeting, where we discussed crime statistics, emerging trends, and personnel matters. I visited the Hammond Firefighters in Firehouse #7. I had a meeting with the Chiefs, Captains, and Operating Staff on shift 3. It's always great to get face time with our firefighters and I'm looking forward to the day that we replace that aging station with a brand new station. We already know where the location is, we know what it looks like, and we're in the process of designing it. The only thing that we don't have is the money, so if you guys come up with an extra 8 million or so, give me a call and we'll figure out how to build that thing. Let's try to prioritize that. I met with the Parks Department Staff working on this year's Festival of the Lakes Roadie Run 5k. It's a tradition held in honor of former Councilwoman Kathleen Pucalik. We even discussed the usual fun challenge of what time City Employees need to beat me to earn a day off. We want to make this a big run, a bigger run than it even is. So we're making it easier for the employees to beat me. They can beat me by either 3, 2, or 1 minutes and that's a lot less than it used to be. We held a ribbon cutting at the 219 grounds on 169th and Woodmar. It's a great addition to the neighborhood. I want to thank Councilman Woerpel for being there. I think it's a great addition right across the street from the neighborhood where Dave lives. I conducted interviews for a Department Head opening. I'm sure most of you are aware that the Department of Code Enforcement has a vacancy in the Department Head position. I went through a process of interviewing about 7 applicants for that job. We narrowed it down to 3 and I imagine that sometime this week, we will have a person selected to be the new Department Head for Code Enforcement. If you have any questions, I can talk to you after the meeting. I attended the kickoff for Wolf Lake Summer Concert Series over in the 1st District. The first night, night 1, featured a band called Secondhand News. It was a Fleetwood Mac tribute band from Chicago. Around 600 people came out that night. It was a little bit cold, but we still had 600 people and the music was spectacular. Then a week later, which was just Saturday this week, it was about 1000 degrees. It was completely different,

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.- night and day. It was a lot different with music too. We had a band called Swift Nation which is a Taylor Swift tribute band from Southern California. About 500 people came out that night with tons of kids. Like 40 percent of the audience was little kids. It was really cool. This Saturday coming up, Saturday June 28th, we have Hyrider, and Indianapolis based Grateful Dead tribute band, taking the stage at 7 p.m. For the Summer Concert Series, as always, there's free admission, free parking, there's BYOB, BYO drinks, BYO food, and we're actually adding food trucks to the menu this week, so we're gonna have a couple food trucks out there as well. We're trying to grow this Summer Concert Series and I encourage the Council members to pick your band, and meet us out there, Saturday nights. We didn't want to conflict with anything the township is doing or anything that the City of Whiting is doing so we picked Saturday night. It's a nice little niche we have going. I'll see you guys out there. I participated in the 45th annual Purdue Northwest Golf Scrambler at Briar Ridge Country Club. It was another hot one, but it was a great opportunity to catch up with the Chancellor and the Executive staff, and to support my Alma Mater and one of Hammond's largest employers. We held a planning session on the future of the old YMCA on Southeastern. I met with mostly internal about some ideas that the old Y is coming up with what they want to do with that location. If anybody wants to talk to me, I can sort of update you on what's going on there. I had a meeting with Councilman, Al Salinas, 2nd District Councilman, discussing key issues and concerns from residents of the 2nd District. I thought it was a very productive meeting. I joined my executive team in meeting members of the HAST School board, keeping a close eye on that financial situation and how it may impact the City of Hammond. Finally, I had a great meeting with Marty Dybel of the Robertsdale section of Hammond regarding the lighting situation at the Steeple of St. John Baptist Church looking for ways that we could rectify the situation so that I don't get run out of town by the prayer group at St. John the Baptist. I think we can figure this out though. In Fact, Marty and I agreed, that I think had the Board of Public Works been included in that, I'm saying this for Councilman mostly, Councilman Marks district, had the Board of Public Works been included in that in the first place, that was probably the right thing to do and I asked them if they would submit a request to the Board of Public Works and Safety and Marty thought that was reasonable, so they're gonna submit a request. I've already talked to the Board of Public Works and Safety and we think that's a good control mechanism. We were worried that if we didn't have a control mechanism like that, any church or business in the City of Hammond could do the same thing. The control mechanism is The Board of Public Works and Safety. That's my report for the last 2 weeks unless you have any questions. I want to thank you for allowing me this time, Councilman Dave.

Councilman Tyler- This is not a question, but I just wanted to thank you, the Community Development Department, and the Committee for putting on another great Juneteenth event. I know I wasn't there personally, but I saw a lot of posts, a lot of pictures, and heard a lot of great things about the event. I just wanted to say thank you and congratulations for another wonderful event.

Mayor McDermott- Councilman Barry, I appreciate you bringing that up, and thank you. The reason I didn't mention it in my report, is I wasn't there either. I have a legitimate excuse. An emergency came up in my family that I cannot talk about publically, but it was a scary weekend so I couldn't be there. Solid excuse for not being there though, I do want to point that out. I'm sure in time, we'll all learn what I'm talking about, but I appreciate Councilman Barry bringing that up. I know Owana and the staff at Community Development worked real hard. Special events team worked real hard putting the Juneteenth event together and it was well attended as usual, so thank you for bringing that up, Councilman Barry.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to suspend the rules.

SUSPENSION OF RULES cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (suspend rules)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

Motion carried

7/0/2

RULES SUSPENDED

Jamie Zouras- Good Evening, Mayor McDermott, Council Members, and Community Members of Hammond. My name is Jamie Zouras. I am with the Delta Institute, a 501c3 Non Profit based in Chicago, Illinois. We work with communities across the Midwest to enhance climate resilience through 3 program initiatives. One is sustainability support services, resilience ag, and nature based climate solutions, which is what this project I bring to you today is about. Together, partnering with the city, and specifically, Devin Wick, the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation, from now until the end of December 2026, we will be working in Hammond to create an urban forest re-management plan, conduct tree inventories of the 2nd and 3rd District, including Harrison Park, remove 10 hazardous trees to the community and plant 200 new trees all with the goals of improving urban forestry, revitalizing green spaces in Hammond, and specifically in under served neighborhoods, enhance beauty and functionality, and build community resilience against extreme heat, and flooding. We also, are working robustly with community engagement, so we will be conducting a community working group, which I've already met with Councilman Barry about and will be meeting over the course of the summer and the next year or so that we get community input to guide the forestry vision for the future of Hammond. We really want to make sure that the municipality is making informed decisions on tree care, removal, planting, and long term planning. We hope that you'll join us in supporting this effort. We're able to do this through partnerships such as with Davey Resource Group, our consultant that will be conducting tree inventory and writing the urban forestry management plan and through our partnership with Indiana University's Environmental Resilience Institute, which I will let Zack, the fellow, speak about in just a minute. Through this project, we will be like I said planting 200 new trees, removing 10 hazardous trees, mitigating 34,000 gallons of storm water run off, sequestering 5700 pounds of carbon, which is equivalent to not burning 3,000 pounds of coal annually, managing 15,000 acres of urban forest and involving 200 plus residents and stake holders.

Zack Lenaburg- I'm Zack Lenaburg. I grew up here in Hammond, right on Woodmar and 169th where the ribbon cutting just was. So basically, I am in charge of the GIS (Geographic Information Systems), prioritizing planting locations based on socio demographics, impervious surfaces, distance to tree canopy, etc. All summer I'm basically creating a planting plan, and also doing community engagement mostly in the 2nd and 3rd District. I'm with the Environmental Resilience Institute of IU Bloomington.

Jamie Zouras- Thanks so much for your support, and we promise we won't plan community engagements in conflict with your festival this summer.

Councilwoman Venecz- Excuse me, I do have a question.

Jamie Zouras- Yes?

Councilwoman Venecz- What prompted you to focus on the 2nd and 3rd District?

Jamie Zouras- Yes, those are districts that have been identified using census available data that show that those

SUSPENSION OF RULES cont.

Jamie Zouras cont.- district are the predominantly low income and under served areas. They suffer from greater health effects and have lower incomes.

Councilwoman Venecz- So it has nothing to do with the number of trees in each district?

Jamie Zouras- Correct.

Councilwoman Venecz- Ok, thank you.

Jamie Zouras- Although, I will also add that those districts may have fewer trees than other districts, based on previous socioeconomic factors.

Councilwoman Venecz- Thank you

Jamie Zouras- Of course.

Councilman Tyler- I just wanted to say thank you to the group. We did, as they mentioned, meet, and we took a walk around Harrison Park and identified some of those problem trees that Devin has been working hard to remove as well as kind of a pattern to plant new trees as we begin the improvements to Harrison Park later on this year, so excited about that. I know the other thing that they're working on which I just wanted to mention, is as they're doing their analysis on where trees are located across the 3rd District, identifying the areas of the district that are warmer, based off little to no tree coverage, I think in recent years, there's been a lack of emphasis on replanting some of those removed tree, those problem trees that we've seen throughout the 3rd, and so excited to work with this group to decide where we should be planting these trees. Of course as they mentioned, talking to community residents and other program partners that might be interested in being apart of this conversation to, so excited about working with them, excited about working with our Parks Department with Councilman Salinas, and trying to figure out how we can improve the overall quality of life from an Environmental standpoint for residents across the 3rd District, so thank you to the Delta Group and looking forward to working with you all.

Jamie Zouras- Thank you, Councilman.

Council President Woerpel- Anyone else have a question or comment for them?

Councilwoman Venecz- I make a motion to return to the regular order of business.

Council President Woerpel- I just, real quick, since Devin's here, he kind of did it without any fanfare, but last November, around the time City employee, Steve Fowler passed away, Devin contacted me about having an extra tree, and he asked me where to put it, and we put it in a spot where Fowler used to aggravate me all the time in Dowling Park. What was it? A week or 2 ago? He had a plaque made up and dedicated the tree to Steve.

Councilwoman Venecz-How wonderful

Council President Woerpel- So every time I wanna get aggravated and think about Steve, all I gotta do is go

SUSPENSION OF RULES cont.

Council President Woerpel cont.- look at that tree. Thank you, Devin.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to return to regular business

ROLL CALL VOTE (return to business)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

Motion carried

7/0/2

MOTION APPROVED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Rakos, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to approve the minutes of June 09, 2025 and placed on file.

AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims from June 4, 2025 through June 18, 2025. Claim #4891 through claim #5349, inclusive In the amount of \$12,917,970.46.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

Motion carried

7/0/2

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

25-12 An Ordinance Reclassifying Certain Lands in the City of Hammond for Zoning Purposes and Amending Ordinance No. 8514 (An Ordinance Establishing a Zoning Plan for the City of Hammond Including the Regulations and Maps to Administer the Zoning Plan in Order to Provide for Orderly Growth and Development within the City, all in Accordance with the Comprehensive/Land Use Plan, as Amended) for Property Commonly Known As 600 177th Street

25-13 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds from the Operating Balance for the Hammond Park Department

25-14 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for the Hammond Park Department

Anthony Higgs- I just need some clarity as to, specifically on the reference number 25-12, how does it affect the growth within the City of Hammond?

PUBLIC HEARINGS cont.

Council President Woerpel- Does anybody else wish to speak? (x3) Hearing none, public hearings are closed.

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Rakos- I'd like to announce the Picnic in the Park with Hammond PD will happen on Tuesday, July 8th, from 12-2 p.m. at Hessville Park. The Police are excited to invite you to the Hessville Park Splash Pad located at 173rd and Kennedy. Bring the whole family for community fun and great company, free food, free games, and meet and greet with Hammond Police Officers.

Councilman Tyler- I just want to announce that this Saturday, June 28th, I'll be sponsoring a basketball session with free skills training, and free skills competition at the Hammond Sportsplex. Registration is at 8:30 and the skills training begins at 9 a.m. from 9-12. It's for boys and girls ages 7-18. The skills competition will be 3 versus 3 and 1 on 1 from 1-3 p.m. and that's for boys and girls ages 11-18. This is in partnership with the McCoy family in honor of Tayon McCoy. I think this is either the 3rd or 4th year that we're putting on this tournament and this skills training for our youth and excited to continue to use the sportsplex and that great facility. I just wanted to once again announce, this Saturday, June 28th, from 8:30-4:30 p.m. we will be there for a free skills training and the free skills competition. For kids ages 7-18. They'll get a free t-shirt, and of course they will be fed during our time there as well. Thank you.

Council President Woerpel- Does anybody else have anything under communications? (x3) Hearing none, communications are closed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilman Emerson - Brought out 25-12

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Brought out 25-13 and 25-14

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Upcoming meetings:

Community Watch; Wed., June 25; 1 p.m.; Mt Zion Pleasantview Plaza

Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., July 10; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

25-12 An Ordinance Reclassifying Certain Lands in the City of Hammond for Zoning Purposes and Amending Ordinance No. 8514 (An Ordinance Establishing a Zoning Plan for the City of Hammond Including the Regulations and Maps to Administer the Zoning Plan in Order to Provide for Orderly Growth and Development within the City, all in Accordance with the Comprehensive/Land Use Plan, as Amended) for Property Commonly Known As 600 177th Street and 626 177th Street

Councilman Emerson, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved for final passage.

Councilman Emerson- I move to pass 25-12 from C-1 to C-4 in the zoning district, thank you.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

Motion carried

7/0/2

ORDINANCE NO. 9675 PASSED

25-13 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds from the Operating Balance for the Hammond Park Department

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved for final passage.

Councilwoman Venecz- This appropriates \$577,830.53 from the operating balance to a host of different events. There's 219 day, there's the holiday parade, Veteran's Day parade, Hessville Soccer Complex, Cinco De Mayo, and these are the special events that the city offers to the residents of the City of Hammond.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

Motion carried

7/0/2

ORDINANCE NO. 9676 PASSED

25-14 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for the Hammond Park Department

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved for final passage.

Councilwoman Venecz- This is appropriating \$20,897.92 from the operating balance of the innkeeper's tax to the hotel/motel fund in that same amount. That once again, is used for event advertising.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

Motion carried

7/0/2

ORDINANCE NO. 9677 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

25R-17 A Resolution of the Common Council of the City of Hammond, Indiana Granting a Waiver of Noncompliance Pursuant to Indiana Code 6-1.1-12.1-11.3 with Respect to an Assessed Valuation Deduction (Tax Abatement) for the Tangible Real Property of Park 24 Hammond, LLC

RESOLUTIONS cont.

Councilman Rakos, supported by Councilman Emerson, moves for adoption.

Councilman Venecz- Do we have to have a public hearing on this? It's on the agenda for July 14th.

Council President Woerpel- It does state public hearing on July 14th.

Councilman Rakos, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moves to amend motion to include the public hearing for July 14th .

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Salinas

Motion carried

7/0/2

RESOLUTION NO. R17 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Emerson- I would like to mention on 6/11/25 from 12-2 we had a popup picnic where we met police officers at Edison Park. The turnout was great. We visited with police officers and got to know them. Thank you.

Council President Woerpel- I believe, let me look at the date, there's one in Hessville Park coming up, Councilman Rakos?

Councilman Rakos- July 8th, yes.

Council President Woerpel- July 8th. Thank you. Those are always well attended. I would like to bring one thing up. Starting last Thursday, Purdue Northwest, somehow in the title I got Calumet Campus, but Purdue Northwest had a baseball tournament that was called the college showcase, where teams from all over the area including Illinois, competed at different college baseball fields. I know one of the places was, I believe Chicago State. One of the places was Prairie State, and Purdue Northwest fields. Plus yesterday, they had their tournament round where the 2 best teams played in the final game. Now on a personal note, my grandson plays on a team of all 8th graders, and they competed in this tournament against sophomores and they finished 2nd in the tournament.

Councilwoman Venecz- Good for them.

Council President Woerpel- That being said, I also want to congratulate all the high schools in the area that won state championships or competed in championship games over this weekend. I believe Andrean won a championship, Valparaiso did, Hanover Central did, and I believe Kouts was a runner up. I think that's just a testament to how well the baseball programs are doing in not only Hammond but in Lake County. It was quite impressive seeing a group of 8th graders playing sophomores from the Chicago White Sox Institute, and believe me, this team from the Chicago White Sox Institute of 16 year olds, could beat the Chicago White Sox.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilwoman Venecz- Shame on you.

Council President Woerpel- Oh, whatever. That being said, anybody else have anything under New and Unfinished Business?

Councilman Tyler- I just wanted to share that the Hammond High Wildcat family lost a loved coach and mentor recently. Everybody called him Chief, but his name was James Brown, passed away. He was a basketball coach, a football coach, and a track coach and of course a teacher at Hammond High too, so I just want to give my condolences to his family and also share that the funeral will be this Saturday the 28th. Visitation is from 9-11 and the service will begin at 11 at Life Renewed Harvest Ministries which is at 505 West Ridge Road in Gary. The family is asking for anyone who would like to, to wear purple and white to represent Coach Brown and just on a personal note, he was a mentor of mine, of course a coach of mine, I played 2 sports for him, but he just taught me a lot about life, and once he found out some things going on with me at that time, he really poured life into me and supported me through some of those teenage challenges, so just wanna give once again, my condolences to his family and everybody that was impacted by him. His legacy will live on in I think the entire Hammond community is better off for his service to our city, so just wanted to share that information, thank you.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

George Stoya- What's going on with item 11? You guys didn't discuss anything. What gives? We're gonna have a public hearing on it in July and you're gonna get it passed because no one knows what's going on? You guys don't discuss anything. You guys give so many tax breaks in this city.

Dwayne Lewis- I came to get a license, and I'm aware of the fee. I guess because I came in late, they informed me that I have to pay a double fee. I looked up the ordinance and it doesn't say that. Is there a pro rate fee? Is there something that can be done with me being compensated? I just wanted to let you know that I was being charged twice.

Anthony Higgs- I want to say thanks to myself and other community members for putting together an event on Father's Day at MLK Park. We fed over 600 people. I invite you all to join us in the future. I didn't get an answer to 25-12 so I'm still in limbo about how it's going to affect the growth of the City of Hammond. There is an opening this week for Tootie's, but I hope the Council will be there for this black owned business. I applaud the people working on the trees at Harrison Park.

Mary Schoons- I wanted to thank Councilman Kalwinski for asking questions about the data center. He was the only one to do so. They consume a lot of water. We need to be skeptical about this. Once the data center is up and running they will only need 10 percent of the staff that they started with. This is serious. We're talking about our ground water. We need to talk to people that are not attached to Mayor McDermott's interests.

Councilwoman Venecz, 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	27	9	23	14	28	11	25	8	22	H	27	10	24	8	22		
Katrina Alexander	P	E	E	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	A	A														
	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Dan Spitale																										
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P														
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P														
Al Salinas	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	A														
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	E														
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P														
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P														
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P														
Initials	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG															

E=ELECTRONIC

P=PHYSICALLY
PRESENT

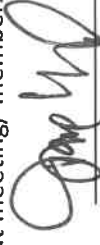
A=ABSENT

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

ATTEST:



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:45 p.m.
mg/cb

Dave Woerpel, President
Hammond Common Council

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk