

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on August 11, 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.

Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: None

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott- Hi, nice to see you all. This is my report for August 11, 2025. We held WHAM this year, although I was not able to attend this year. I think it was the first time I've ever missed WHAM, but we had a really good turn out this year. We tracked our numbers going back from before the pandemic, we had as high as 1500 during the pandemic of registered. Keep in mind, WHAM, is you register, but there's a lot of people that just show up. We know for a fact that we had at least 900 riders this year, and that doesn't include the amount of people that showed up without registering properly. Going back, we had as low as 300 one year, we had as high as 1500 one year, but we usually average around 750-800 registered, so this year we did an exceptional job, so I just want to say congratulations to the Hammond Port Authority, Jeff Smith, Raquel Welch, everyone that worked so hard over there. As usual, I also attended our usual monthly Police Department's Captain meeting where we discussed crime statistics, emerging trends, and personnel matters. We also held National Night Out at the PAV in the 1st District. That was a great turnout this year. I don't remember a better evening as far as weather. It was absolutely perfect that night. Everybody seemed like they had a real good time. We gave out bikes. We had a lot of good times. There were bubbles, and kids and it was a good time. Thanks to everyone that worked so hard on National Night Out. It seems like it's really starting to take off. I attended a ribbon cutting in the 3rd District. Councilman Barry and I were both there. Tootie's Chicken & Fish in the Hammond's 3rd District, right there on Columbia Avenue, right there by MLK Park. This is the second location for Tootie's. It already had a Crown Point location going very well, same menu and everything. The gentleman Bautiste Haywood, who opened this restaurant, is a Hammond Resident, who grew up across the street. He doesn't live in Hammond anymore, but he wanted to come back home and open a restaurant. He came back home, right across the street from where his grandmother used to live and opened a restaurant. I wish him the best of luck. I appreciate everybody for going out and for getting Tootie's off to a good start. I had a meeting with the Sportsplex and Park Department leadership over, it seems like it's an annual issue we're dealing with, we had a big fight at the Sportsplex basketball league, big fight, cops were called. I called them into City Hall, read them the riot act, I'm doing what Mayor's are supposed to do. I'm being told that it's just a sort of, part of the game. I never played basketball, I'm not very good at it, but I do know that I hate fights, and I hate violence. It seems like we've had too much recently, so I called in the Parks Department leadership, called in the Sportsplex, did

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.-what Mayor's do and read them the riot act. I said, you can't be fighting, you can't be calling the cops out to the Sportsplex, we can't do this anymore. I'll keep you guys appraised if we keep having this problem. I met with Councilman Al Salinas and myself on Columbia Park. We had a good meeting talking about ideas that we could possibly do down the road. I said to Councilman Al, what I say to all Councilmen, all District Councilmen that want to do their districts, is I have 6 Districts, and I have a lot of Councilmen that want to do park projects, so we're trying to be fair with everybody. I attended a meeting with a condo developer in Indianapolis with the Economic Development team, this business Flaherty & Collins, is a well known residential condo developer across the State of Indiana. They have multiple Hoosier clients. They have clients across the country. They have a building in Downtown Indy, we were on the 35th floor, I believe, talking about what they want to do in Hammond. They want two sites in Hammond. Actually both of them are in the 2nd District. They want Gateway, and they want Downtown. We want them too, but their price tag is a little high for us, so we're trying to see if there's anything we can do to try to pull these guys in. They're excellent and they badly want to be in Hammond. They've developed projects in Elkhart, Michigan City, so they know how to do it, urban areas. They really want to come to Hammond. I thought it was a really good meeting. I attended the Summer Concert Series, another 1st District thing. It seems like the 1st District kicks butt during the summer. Another perfect example, Echoes of Pompeii, played the other day at the PAV, for Pink Floyd fans out there, they were unbelievable. There was 1,000 people and that was probably one of the larger crowds we've had in a long time at a Summer Concert Series. They go every Saturday. I know the Council people go out there a lot, and I appreciate you being there, so next week is, Rico. It's the Carlos Santana Tribute band, so that's on Saturday, 7 o'clock, it's free everything for those watching out there, free parking, BYOB. If you get there early and you can get right in front of the stage. We have food trucks out there, that's not free, but you don't have to pay. I met with the Police and Fire Department Chiefs, over recent executive orders signed by the Mayor, I wanted to talk to you all about it. This is something that we've been talking about in regards to Senate Bill 1 passing last year, and being signed by the Governor, which freezes our growth levy's going forward, we know that the State of Indiana passed this in April, and here we are, mid August, they still can't tell us how much we're gonna lose under Senate Bill 1. They have no idea. They're calculating the numbers. They passed this, they have no idea the impact that it's gonna have on our budget. They said don't worry Mayor, there's a municipal income tax option where you can replace the revenue that we're taking from you, so obviously that's involved effort. That has to be something that the Council agrees to, that has to be something that the Mayor agrees to, so I said, well how much, if we enacted the Municipal income tax, how much revenue would that bring into the City of Hammond, they said we don't know, Mayor. Let me get this straight, State, you have no idea how much it's going to cost the City of Hammond, and you have no idea how much the Municipal income tax will put in the City of Hammond? That's true, but it's coming. Next year's budget, not this year's budget, when we're working on next year's budget, we're going to start to see the effects, and when we're working on the budget after that, it's going to be fully in effect. The thumb rule that we're being told is 8 million dollars we're gonna lose out of our already tight budget. I don't have any answers for you as far as revenue projections or losses. All I know is the 2 most expensive departments are police and fire, and we have obligations that we have to make a year in advance with these police officers and firefighters. We have about 8-10 officers going through the pipeline right now. We're not going to turn our backs on those officers who we've committed to. We have about 8 firefighters that we've committed to as well, we're not going to turn our back on those firefighters, but those are the last that are going to come in. The Hiring freeze goes after that. I told the Personnel Office not to process anymore job openings until we know more. It's a case by case basis. If we have a position that resigns, let's say Liz in the Council Office gets another job, and she's the only one that does her

*Prepared by
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MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.- job, obviously we're going to post that job, because it's the only person that could do the job, right? If there's a resignation in Streets, and we have 25 different drivers, maybe we won't fill that one. That's what I'm talking about. Until we know more, this is the responsible thing to do. I sent Council a copy of the Executive order. I'm willing to answer any questions. I don't know how much I can answer for you, because the State can't even answer what the impact is gonna be, but they signed it into law. We will find out down the road what the impact is gonna be. That's my report, I'm available to answer any questions if you have them.

Councilwoman Venecz- I just wanted to say, WHAM, once again was a huge success. Councilman SPitale and I are always on the corner of 173rd and Lyman and it's always fun. You know what amazes me, is that the police officer, whoever is out there, has his lights flashing, and people drive by, I'm like ok.

Mayor McDermott- I almost got hit by a car in WHAM about 10 years ago. Literally, got lucky I didn't get hit. They drove right through the intersection like you said. That's why I always give a safety briefing. I didn't this year, but usually that's one of the things I say, is you may pull up on an intersection with your bike, you may see officers with their lights flashing, and you are gonna assume that those cars are gonna stop. You cannot assume that during WHAM because sometimes they don't.

Councilwoman Venecz- Exactly.

Mayor McDermott- Thank you for what you do, by the way, you and Councilman Spitale. I'm used to stopping there at 73rd and Lyman.

Councilwoman Venecz- I looked at my tshirt and it was 2010, that's how long we've been doing it.

Mayor McDermott- That's pretty solid, thank you.

Councilwoman Venecz- I do want to arrange a meeting with you to talk about WHAM.

Mayor McDermott- Yes ma'am.

Councilwoman Venecz- It was very very good, and National Night Out of course has grown, huge, it's just huge. We have so many people there from many different communities and it's nice to showcase what we have in our community, so thank you.

Mayor McDermott- I appreciate it Councilwoman, the police did a good job. The committee to put the event together did a real good job. I remember one year, we had National Night Out and the Sheriff's helicopter flew in, and I was embarrassed that year because we had such a small turnout. I swore we were never gonna do this again, and this year the Sheriff's helicopter flew in, and we were slammed with people. WE did our job, so thank you Councilwoman for the help in recognizing that.

Councilman Kalwinski- I wondered if you or Scott had any updates about the hotel that Patel was gonna put up at the old car wash.

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott- I haven't heard anything.

Councilman Kalwinski- It seemed to be such a rush last fall to get it done, and nothing has happened there and the weeds are getting high and no demo of the building.

Mayor McDermott- Yeah, I haven't heard anything, I'll follow it up though. Can you send me something, do you mind having Liz fire off a memo to me so I can follow it up, Councilman?

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller-I'll get it, Mayor.

Mayor McDermott- Ok, thanks. I'll follow it up. I haven't heard recently, Councilman. I thought you were going to ask me about NIPSCO. I haven't heard anything about that either.

Councilman Kalwinski- Thank you.

Mayor McDermott- Haven't heard anything at all. They went dark, which I don't think is a good sign personally. I don't want to throw punches either because they'll just turn the light switch off and turn off our project. I'm just sort of sitting here being patient hoping that they're doing the right thing over at NIPSCO.

Councilman Kalwinski- I haven't read anything in the paper either recently.

Mayor McDermott- All I read is how much people hate data centers, and we have a data center sitting here that nobody is opposed to because it doesn't bother anybody and it's not close to any houses, and NIPSCO's stalling and threatening the project, and it's a big project for our city. It makes me nervous.

Councilman Kalwinski- Another question, the west point corner is still vacant.

Mayor McDermott- The what?

Councilman Kalwinski- 141st and Columbia where the Walmart used to have trucks.

Mayor McDermott- Yeah, yeah. I was there the other day.

Councilman Kalwinski- Did you see anything?

Mayor McDermott- Yeah, I thought somebody took it over again. I'll follow that up also, Councilman.

Councilman Kalwinski- You know the berm, the grass is like 2 feet high.

Mayor McDermott- Ok. Alright. Thanks.

Councilman Kalwinski- It just looks like it's been deserted.

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott- Alright, I appreciate it. Any other questions? I'm sorry if I blind sided you all with the hiring freeze, because it didn't go down the way that I wanted it to. We had been talking about it for about a week in the administration, and then they drafted it last week. I get to the office this morning, I read it, and approved it on the spot, and then I thought, I always talk to the Council before I do this, so I scrambled and I gave you a copy after, I apologize. It's an Executive order, I mean, it has nothing to do with the Council, but it does have to do with the Council because we work together. I just want you all to know that I usually do it differently and I apologize if you were blind sided today, but I think it's a good thing. We're going to not add to the problem that we could have. Maybe we won't have a problem. Maybe they'll come out and say, you're gonna lose 8 million, and if you do the income tax, you're gonna make 9 million and we'd have no problem, but we don't have a clue. I just don't think adding to the problem until we know what's going on is wise, but I'm open to suggestions. Nobody gave me a rule book on how to be Mayor, I'm just sort of figuring it out, so if you have any suggestions, please yell them at me. Any other questions?

Councilwoman Alexander- Mayor

Mayor McDermott- Yes ma'am. Can I say something real quick before you? I wanted to apologize to Councilwoman Katrina. The other day at Tootie's grand opening, I mentioned every Council person in attendance, and I didn't see the Councilwoman there, and I wanted to apologize to her because I don't do that stuff in public, and I wanted to say I'm sorry about that. That was in your neighborhood too, it's very embarrassing.

Councilwoman Alexander- Thank you. The question, you were just saying about a municipal tax, where would that come from?

Mayor McDermott- It would be income, Councilwoman. We'd have to pass it locally. If we passed it locally, it would be an income tax on resident's that live in our city. I'm not sure if that applies to people that work in our city also, because that would be interesting, because there's lot of people who work in our city who don't live in our city.

Councilwoman Alexander- So I'm just curious about that.

Mayor McDermott- I'm not sure yet, Councilwoman. They don't have a lot of answers.

Councilwoman Alexander- once you figure it out.

Mayor McDermott- It's wonderful if it covers what we're gonna lose, but this is just a shell game in my opinion, Councilwoman. We have property tax caps that limit us to 1 percent of our homes. I don't really think 1 percent for a home's value is very high, it's one of the lowest in the midwest, and then Governor Braun takes over and says we have this big problem with property taxes, so he cuts it. Every Hoosier is going to get 300 bucks off their property taxes and then we're going to end up laying off teachers and firemen and police officers. I'd rather you keep my 300 bucks and you keep the teachers and firemen and police officers working personally. I'm not the Governor, so, Councilwoman, I don't know, but I promise you as soon as I learn, I'll tell you when I come here. I wish I knew. I wish I did, Councilwoman. It's part of the problem that we don't. Thank you all. Nice to

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.-see you. Have a nice meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to accept the minutes from July 28, 2025 and place on file.

AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims from July 23, 2025 through August 6, 2025. Claim #6791 through claims #7294, inclusive. In the amount of \$13,327,765.47.

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 Salinas- I have 3 announcements I'd like to make, the first being that every Monday night during the Summer, is a cruise night at Paradise Mototiki at 489 Fayette in Downtown Hammond from 5-9 p.m. We have cars that show up from Chicago to Michigan that all participate. If you haven't been to one, it's a good time. My Second announcement is, this Friday, August 15th from 6-9 p.m., The Art Table will be presenting a self portraiture exhibit by the name of Exposed. They'll be set up between to Paul Henry and the Towle Theater right in the alleyway. Their main attraction is a gentleman by the name of Bryce Clark. My third announcement, I just wanted to say thank you to Devin Wick of the Parks Department and his crew, Juan Serrano from the Public Works Department and his crew, Councilman Dave Woerpel, and the Art Table Group for their efforts in helping clean up the Dan Rabin Transit Plaza in Downtown Hammond. Great job, it looks excellent, thank you all.

Anybody else got anything under communications (x2) Communications are closed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board- Councilman Salinas-The Capital Improvement Board met on August 4, 2025. We dealt with:

Item A- Funding Allocation #264- Geotechnical Services for Fire Station 7 Design; Advanced Engineering Services; in the amount of \$8,460.00

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

COMMITTEE REPORTS cont.

Item B- Funding Allocation #265- Relocate Street Lighting on Kennedy at US20; Hawk Enterprises; in the amount of \$32,147.75

Item C- Funding Allocation #266- 2052-2 CCMG Design 165th St from Kennedy to Kentucky- Michigan Street from Hohman to Calumet; First Group Engineering; in the amount of \$92,300.00

Item D- Funding Allocation #267- Clark Field Sewer Redesign- Supplemental-; NIES Engineering; in the amount of \$16,343.00

Item E- Funding Allocation #268- Kennedy Ave Road Diet Stump Removal; Howard & Sons; in the amount of \$2,250.00

Item F- Funding Allocation #269- Pavement Markings and Sign on Northcote at River Drive; High Star Traffic; in the amount of \$13,375.00

Item G- Funding Allocation #270- 2025 Sidewalk Program; JJ Newell Concrete; in the amount of \$300,000.00

Item H- Funding Allocation #271- 2025 Crack Sealing Program; Site Services; in the amount of \$300,00.00

Item I- Funding Allocation #272- Resurface Erie Lackawanna Trail; Milestone Contractors North; in the amount of \$927,793.00

Item J- Funding Allocation #273- Resurface Erie Lackawanna Trail CE; First Group Engineering; in the amount of \$45,000

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

Wed., Aug. 13; Community Watch at Mt. Zion Pleasantview Plaza; 1 p.m.

Wed., Sept. 3; Edison Community Watch; Edison School 6:30 p.m.

Thurs., Aug 21; Hessville Crime Watch; HC3 Community Center; 6:00 p.m.

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

Thurs., Sept. 18; South Hohman Avenue Neighborhood Watch; Trinity Lutheran Church; 7:00 p.m.

Thur., Aug. 14; Whiting/Robertsdale; Calumet College; 6:30 p.m.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

25-16 An Ordinance Creating New Funds (Fund #3394, 3395, 3396 and #4682) for Series 2025 YMCA Bond Monies for the City of Hammond

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES cont.

Councilwoman Venecz- At the request of our Controller, these are line items that will be used for the ordinance that was passed back in December for the YMCA bond. The new funds were established for the allocation of the bond monies for the YMCA Project and this way the Controller can access the funding as it comes in.

AYES: ALL

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

James Douglas- I want to thank the Council for talking to me after the last meeting. The Semi problem on Gostlin is not fixed, but it has been better. The police have been present.

Gary Dreischorf- Since Councilman Salinas announced that there is money for sidewalks, maybe you can get Martha and Alexander sidewalk finished. NIPSCO is still terrible and hasn't fixed the lights yet even though they have the big increase.

George Stoya- I was shocked listening to the Mayor about the freeze and the levy's and how the tax burden is going to be shifted increasingly to us. I don't think we should be surprised. The state's been handing out exemptions, deferrals. You guys have been handing out deferrals, abatements, and outright eliminations of taxes, at the state level, county level. Where else would it come from, but us? This is insane. I don't know how much more we can be taxed, while the corporations, do they pay any taxes at all? They also have the cost of doing business that's deducted.

Councilwoman Alexander, 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	12	27	9	23	14	28	11			
Katrina Alexander	P	E	E	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	A	A	P	A	P			
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	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	P	P	P			
Alfonso Salinas III	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	A	P	P	P			
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	E	P	P	P			
Bill Emerson	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	E	P	P	P	P	P	P			
Dave Woerpel	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				

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: 6:32
mg/cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk


 Scott Rakos, President
 Hammond Common Council