

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on November 24, 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: Alexander, Spitalo, Venecz, Kalwinski, Salinas, Emerson, Rakos, Woerpel

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Tyler

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott- My report for November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025. I want to echo off of Councilwoman Venecz's moment of silence. I just attended the visitation for a truly trail blazing woman who lived right here in Hammond. Former County Commissioner Fran DuPey. Fran was a giant in Lake County Government. She served 16 years on the Board of Commissioners and a decade before that on the County Council, breaking barriers at every step. She was known for saying exactly what she believed, for advocating fiercely for the people she served, and for never backing down when she saw something was right. She wasn't a shrinking violet, she was tough. An exceptional public servant who earned her seat at the table at a time when women in elected office were far too rare. She didn't just hold that seat, she used it to open the door for others. A lot of women elected officials across the county can count their success on Fran DuPey, my wife included as Judge of Lake County. Fran loved public service. She called politics a labor of love and she lived that everyday. Her legacy is felt across Lake County and especially here in Hammond where her family devoted so much of their lives, and lived. We lost a trailblazer, but the example Fran set, strength, honesty, and service will continue to guide us. May she rest in peace. In memorial to Fran DuPey, the former Lake County Commissioner, in the City of Hammond, we have placed all flags at half mast until the conclusion of her funeral tomorrow, so rest in peace, Fran DuPey. Summary of the schedule of the Mayor's office, we had a meeting in the Mayor's office with Anne Taylor and Owana Miller, that I thought should be of interest to you all, to discuss the funding gap that we have for community events, like the volunteer breakfast, the prayer breakfast, the realtor's breakfast, Juneteenth, things of that nature. Sometimes when we hold these events, they're 10-20 thousand dollars per event, and because of the newly passed SEA-1, Governor Braun's tax relief, that gives us a \$300 credit on our property tax bill, followed up by a local income tax that's most likely going to be implemented by most governments across Lake County. The savings isn't there for us, but the losses for our budget are there. We're projected in our city budget to lose over 10 percent of our funding, over 15 million dollars. If these community events are going to continue as our residents expect, we're going to have to find new and sustainable funding sources, so I'm going to be working closely with you all on the Council and our partners in the public sector to make sure these important traditions don't disappear. We're going to have to decide priority wise, which ones have the biggest impact, bang for your buck so to speak, just like a lot of families have to make decisions, we may have to get rid of a couple of these. As you all

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

## MAYOR'S ADDRESS Cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.- know, we're all getting ready for next year. We don't know what to expect but we're projected to lose 15 million dollars, so we're looking hard at that. I want to thank Owana Miller and Anne Taylor for meeting with us, and Megan and Tinisha in the Controller's office so that we can make these tough decisions. On a good note, promoted, Captain Fire Inspector, Brian Williams to Battalion Chief Fire Inspector last Thursday, November 10, 2025. Brian's in his 10<sup>th</sup> year of service with the Hammond Fire Department. He holds many specialty certifications including a Bachelor's degree, so congratulations to Battalion Chief Brian Williams. I met with Councilwoman Janet Venecz in regards to Hammond's Crime Watch Ring Doorbell giveaway. I appreciate all the hard work she's done on that project, and I'm proud to team with her. I had a meeting with the Economic Development team, and the Inspections Department over issues the city is experiencing with the Development at 6718 Kennedy Ave. This is a great project that we all love, but we're running into a lot of problems that inspections is trying to hammer through, but it's not wonderful. Councilman Rakos, if you have any questions, I'm willing to talk with you. I don't want to do it obviously on air, I met with Joey Lax-Salinas regarding a promotional opportunity for the City of Hammond. I want to thank and congratulate Joey. We were one of his first clients in the City of Hammond. Joey just published a book of landmarks across Northwest Indiana, and it's illustrated like a kids book and it's taking off like wildfire. I'm really proud a couple of our locations in the City of Hammond are in the book, which is neat, but I'm really happy for a guy like that, grew up in Hammond, we were one of his first clients, and he's doing really well. Congratulations to Joey Lax-Salinas, and maybe we'll keep working together. Promoted, this is another promotion, promoted Hammond Police Officer Chris Gootee from Lieutenant to Captain of Detectives. Zeke Hinojosa is one of the longest serving police officers in the State of Indiana. 47 years on the Hammond Police Department. He's been the Captain of Detectives for well over a decade. Zeke's retiring this year because he has too, because he's hitting the magic number where you can't be a police officer anymore. He's retiring with 47 years experience. We're not demoting Zeke though, so we made Chris the co-captain, so him and Zeke could have a transition. Chris Gootee is excellent. He's been with us for a long time. He does a lot of work with federal agencies and I know he has a great reputation with the federal agencies he works with. I think he's going to be a great Captain of Detectives. He's going to be working side by side with Captain of Detectives, Zeke Hinojosa while Zeke begins his transition into retirement after a 47 year career in the police department. Congratulations to Captain Zeke Hinojosa on the announcement of his retirement and congratulations to Chris Gootee on his promotion from Lieutenant to Captain. I was lucky enough to appear on WBEZ in Chicago in the loop with Sasha Ann Simmons in regards to Hammond's approach to establishing I.C.E. free zones on Hammond City property. I want to thank the Hammond City Council for coming up with a great resolution. That was a big topic of discussion on that show. I appeared alongside Cook County Commissioner Toni Preckwinkle, she's been the Cook County Chair for quite a while and she's very powerful. She's the Cook County Democratic Chairman. It's a very powerful woman, and also the Mayor of Evanston, Daniel Bliss. They were very happy to see an Indiana city doing something similar to what they're doing. I thought that was really cool. I had lunch with BP's Vice President Chris Defaulko and their Community Affairs Liason Jill Richie to touch base regarding issues we've had between Hammond Fire Department and BP. I thought it was a really good meeting and for what it's worth, I think Chris is a really good guy and he's trying to do the right thing. I know we've had issues with BP, but I think they got a really good guy in charge, I really do. He seems like he cares a lot though for what it matters and we had a good meeting. I know the Hammond Fire Department is better in line compared to where we were even a year ago. Thank you for that. I cut the ribbon on a 10 million dollar Sportsplex expansion. We're officially opening our 20,000 square feet expansion bringing the Sportsplex to over 155,000 square feet of world class indoor and outdoor athletic space. This includes our brand new soccer

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS Cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.- wing to meet huge demand. In the soccer wing, if you remember before we had 2 soccer courts with walls, now we have a soccer wing. It's just an open space with turf in there. 20 volleyball courts, or 10 basketball courts, we also have 4 outdoor sand volleyball courts, and 2 state of the art golf simulators for year round play, so Congratulations to Jim Taillon, to Kym Roberts, and staff at the Hammond Sportsplex. Thanks to Barry, and congratulations for that occurring in your district, Councilman Barry Tyler, I'm sorry. Las but not least, I attended the Mayor's Commission on Disabilities lunch and learn, honoring Veteran's from across Northwest Indiana who were injured while serving in the line of duty. It's the first time we've ever done something like that, and it turned out spectacular and we want to do it again next year. We want to align it more closely with Veteran's Day, and with our Veteran's Parade, and try to do everything in the same week. That's all I have if I don't have any questions from the Council.

Councilman Tyler is now present in the Council Chambers

Councilman Tyler- Mayor, sorry I was a few minutes late.

Mayor McDermott- That's ok.

Councilman Tyler- I heard most of what you were sharing. I do want to follow up on 2 quick things. In terms of the community events, is there an opportunity for us as a Council to sponsor more heavily?

Mayor McDermott- Good question, yes, I appreciate that. Absolutely. Believe me, that was definitely discussed. I appreciate that and yes. We've considered that a park project which is in the spirit of our agreement. Let's say there was a particular event that you cared about and we were having trouble finding funding for it, we could accept funding from District Councilmen for that. That would be appreciated.

Councilman Tyler- Great, and then my other question was, I saw today, there was an article in the times about data centers and a new agreement between NIPSCO and Amazon.

Mayor McDermott- Yeah.

Councilman Tyler- How could that potentially impact?

Mayor McDermott- Great question. I mean, the power on the grid is not enough to sustain even one new data center, that's why they put together GENCO at NIPSCO so that it makes separate deals with these data center providers, so I imagine for that large of a data center, they had to buy some power from some wind farm in Kansas or literally if you can buy power from that wind farm in Kansas and they put that power on the grid, you can buy that power even here in Northwest Indiana. I think that's pretty much what GENCO's job is Councilman. Everybody knows we have a data center pending in the City of Hammond, and it's pending on GENCO/NIPSCO issues, electrons. If we get more electrons, we can get our data center. It's interesting in Hammond. It's not nearly as interesting in other places when they try to bring a data center. When you think about what our data center was before it was a data center, it was a dirty coal plant. A data center is 100 times better than a dirty coal plant was, so maybe that's why we haven't had as many issues here Hammond, but we still have the NIPSCO problem, Councilman. I heard we're making progress on that, but I got nothing to report.

MAYOR’S ADDRESS Cont.

Councilman Tyler- Well potentially this new deal with GENCO for Amazon could prove beneficial for what we’re trying to do to?

Mayor McDermott- Well, GENCO’s making deals, they have to go to the IURC and get it approved. That’s another thing GENCO has to do. Even if we get our data center deal approved, I believe we have to go down to IURC for the sign off so it could take 6 months still, Councilman. I think it’s encouraging that GENCO is getting deals done because we’re in the queue so to speak.

Councilman Tyler- Got it, alright, thank you.

Mayor McDermott- Yes sir, thank you. I just want to say Happy Thanksgiving to everybody at home and everybody on the Council. I appreciate working with you all, it’s been a good ride, and hopefully we keep on doing it, so Happy Thanksgiving.

Councilwoman Venecz- Thank you, same to you.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to accept the minutes of November 10, 2025 minutes and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Rakos, move to approve the claims from November 5, 2025 through November 19, 2025. Claim #10130 through #10573, inclusive. In the amount of \$7,733,308.86.

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Council President Woerpel- As Council President, I have received and will place on file with the Clerk’s office, the 2026 Hammond Redevelopment Commission’s spending plan pursuant to Indiana Code 36-7-14-12.7

Councilman Tyler- I think everybody knows, but on Saturday we hosted our 6<sup>th</sup> annual turkey giveaway, so I just want to thank all my Council colleagues who contributed to that giveaway. Once again, thanks to Councilwoman Alexander for her continued partnership on that event. We were able to give away 250 turkeys at

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMUNICATIONS Cont.

Councilman Tyler cont.-the event, and then I went to Strack's to pick up a dozen more to distribute to residents because we ran out. So 262 turkeys all together were distributed to Hammond families. We've also been collecting gift cards to distribute to families between now and Christmas, so if anyone in the public would like to donate a gift card, we're just asking for gift cards to local grocery stores. You can give those to me or drop them off here at the Council office, and we'll make sure they get to a family in need. I just want to thank once again, all my Council colleagues, the Hammond Fire Department who contributed as well, the Foodbank of Northwest Indiana, that's who we get our turkeys from, so all donations go directly towards them, they store them for us, and then we just pick them up the morning of the event, A Helper's Heart Home Care who also donated ministerial lines for their partnership, and I think that's it.

Council Woman Alexander- Ophelia Steen Center

Councilman Tyler- Ophelia Steen Center, of course, for housing us, and their ongoing contribution as well. We could not do this event without them and their partnership. Lastly, thanks to all of our volunteers who were there to help distribute and to help direct traffic. We didn't have any issues with traffic this year, so thank you to all the volunteers. Councilwoman Alexander who was conducting ID checks and handing out tickets for the turkeys and yeah, just all of our other volunteers who were there bright and early. We were done in about an hour and 45 minutes, which is a little longer than we expected. Last year we were out of there in about 45 minutes. I think the more turkeys we get, the more people we expect, the longer it might take for an event. So hopefully next year, we'll be able to give out even more, so thank you.

Councilwoman Alexander- We are in works of the holiday treats giveaway for the toy giveaway, so we are still accepting donations for that. We've been partnering with the minister alliance for that as well. That date will come out within the next couple weeks with the sign ups. Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority incorporated has generously donated a lot of toys this year. Of course we're still looking for toys to come in, and the ages will be 0-12 this year.

Council President Woerpel- Just 2 more items here, I want to remind everybody that as far as I'm concerned, the coldest night of the year is this Friday when they light the Christmas tree at 6 p.m. out in front of City Hall. I've learned through the years to not drink too much coffee before I go to that thing. That's at 6 p.m out front of City Hall. Before the next Council meeting, the Christmas parade, that starts by Gavit on 175<sup>th</sup>, and goes down to the Sportsplex on the Boulevard is December 6<sup>th</sup>.

Councilwoman Alexander- At 10 a.m.

Council President Woerpel- I know I'm gonna get this wrong, but I believe there's a run before the parade, correct?

Councilwoman Alexander- That's correct.

Council President Woerpel- I know the parade starts at 10. Do you know what time the run starts?

Councilwoman Alexander- It starts at I think 9.

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*



RESOLUTIONS

25R-23 A Resolution to Reappoint Suzette M. Kubacki to the Hammond Redevelopment Commission

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved for passage.

Councilman Kalwinski- This will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> term for Ms. Kubacki if she is elected to that post and she serves well. She's a realtor, and she brings good information and good questioning to the meetings regarding projects that come before them.

Councilman Salinas- I'd like to say that recently I had a chance to work with Ms. Kubacki on an event and she was probably one of the more organized people that I've come across and I want to say that she was instrumental in being a leader for the event as well. I support this nomination.

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. R23 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Tyler- My apologies to Clerk Golec. Charges to my head and not my heart, but of course you were another sponsor for our turkey giveaway, so my apologies. You've contributed several years in a row, so thank you once again for your continued partnership, and sorry for that oversight in my early remarks.

Council President Woerpel- I will remind my colleagues that we have one appointment left to make by December 31<sup>st</sup> as far as a council appointment and that is on the Redevelopment Commission and the current holder of the position is Greg Myricks and I noticed there hasn't been a line in the Council office to sign up for the 2 committees in there with the Capital Improvement Board and the Gaming fund so

Councilman Rakos- There's a sheet to sign?

Council President Woerpel- Yes, but those will be open until the end of the year too.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Lianne Cortes- Wants to legalize domestic birds in Hammond.

Terry Steagull- Spoke about data centers.

Katey Holly- Requested donations to save the Challenger Learning Center.

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved to adjourn.

AYES: ALL

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

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	13	27	10	24		
Katrina Alexander	P	E	E	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	A	A	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	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	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	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	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	E	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Initials	RJG																							

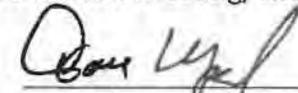
E=ELECTRONIC

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.

  
 Dave Woerpel, President  
 Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:  
  
 Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:36 p.m.  
 mg/cb

Prepared by  
 Robert J. Golec  
 Hammond City Clerk