

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on January 12, 2026 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- Thanks, Councilman Woerpel. Happy New Year everybody. Welcome back after a long break. It's good to see you all. I just have basically a summary of my schedule over the past couple weeks. It's been dominated by one story that's been going throughout the media. Obviously I've been bouncing as a result of that, so you'll notice a certain theme. I attended North Shore Health Centers Winter Wonderland employee dinner in Portage. That was right after Christmas. As you all know, we have a North Shore Health Center located in Hammond's 3rd District adjacent to the Hammond Sportsplex. It's a great option for people that have health issues and they don't want to go to a hospital. They do doctors and it's a great location for dental work and things of that nature. It was nice to see them and be invited there. I had to drive out to Portage. I had lunch with Mayor Spebar from the City of Whiting, talking about ongoing issues between our cities. I had a meeting with Personnel and Code Enforcement leadership regarding an employee situation. I've talked to some of the Council Members about this situation. It's a pretty bad situation, but we're handling it the right way as you all imagine. I wasn't able to attend this, but I do want to recognize publicly that Andrea Edwards had a retirement party. I wasn't able to be there but I just want to say thank you to Andrea for spending her career with the City of Hammond, most of her career, if not all of her career right in this building. She was the Office Manager of the Inspections Department and is retiring after spending her career working for us, so Congratulations, Andrea on your announcement. We're going to miss you. I met with Milan and Jeff from the Hammond Sanitary District to talk about open Operator positions within the Hammond Sanitary District. I'm noticing these jobs are harder to fill and that's amazing to me because they're great jobs. They're shift work, so that makes them harder to fill internally, so I'm asking the Council if you have anybody that wants to work some shift work. When you get qualified in these positions, you can make six figures with just a little bit of overtime. You will work shifts though, but it's a great career. Usually people that go there, stay there, their whole career. We do have Operator positions that are open in the Hammond Water Department and the Hammond Sanitary District. We're filling them, but it seems like those jobs don't fill as easily as other jobs that we have, so if you have anybody in mind that is willing to work at one of our utilities working, please get their names to us, we have to get them certified. I was interviewed by journalist Brian Howey in regards to the possibility of the Bears moving to Hammond, Indiana. I met with Mr. Ameet Patel. He's a developer that wants to put a RV and boat storage park on the 3500

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS Cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.- block of Sheffield. You guys probably, I think this issue came before you, or you've been briefed about it. It fell off track a little bit. I think Councilman Mark's been talking a lot with Mr. Patel. I think the City and Mr. Patel are back on the same page and I anticipate this project to start moving again. It's a really cool project located just South of Wolf Lake before it was cool to locate there. If all this other stuff goes down that's being talked about in the newspaper, he's going to be in a really good position. He was out there before any of this talk started, so congratulations to Mr. Patel, hopefully we have new neighbors for you. You guys will see that development coming before you soon. I met with Cody Detamore, he is a developer from Crown Point with CD Development about the possibility of opening 2 new restaurants in Hammond's 3rd District adjacent to the Hammond Sportsplex. I think if this goes forward the way we anticipate, everyone will be very happy, but it's probably too early to talk about it. If a Council Person wants to talk to me off the record, I'm willing to talk about this, but I don't want to say it publicly because when you do that, these deals fall apart, so I'm just going to keep it quiet and keep our fingers crossed and hope that this heads in the right direction. I met with the Managing Editor of The Northwest Indiana Times, actually he's the Managing Editor of dozens and dozens of newspapers, but he's stationed out of Northwest Indiana, Mark Chase. I caught up with him. It's always nice to talk. I met with the Chancellor of Purdue Northwest to get an update on the newest dorm project and the future growth plans of PNW's Hammond Campus. They're building a new dorm that's coming up right there really close to where I live. Their dorms are full. This new one they're building is going to be full, and they anticipate building 2 more dorms which is excellent news. They're growing like crazy at Purdue Northwest and obviously that's great for our city. It's great to hear from Chancellor Holford. It seems like their sports programs are going really well. They've got big plans and it's exciting to hear about what's going on in that part of our city. I was interviewed by ABC Reporter, John Garcia, from ABC Channel 7 News in Swinger's Bar at the Hammond Sportsplex in regards to the possibility of the Bears moving to Hammond. I attended our Hammond Police Department monthly Captain's meeting where we discuss crime stats, merging trends, and personnel matters. As you all know, we recently had, not really a change of command ceremony. Chief Andy Short is the Co-Chief along with Jeff Long who is the Co-Chief. We also had another retirement in the CID Division which is the Detective's Bureau, that's Captain Chris Gootie is Captain of CID and we also have at the same time is Captain Zeke Hinojosa who's transitioning out. Zeke and Andy have only a few months left, so they're going to be turning over in the mean time, and I didn't want to demote either of them because I thought that was disrespectful. Jeff Long is Co-Chief along with Captain Gootie in the Detective's Bureau until about April, so Congratulations to everybody, a lot going on in the Police Department. I attended Northwest Indiana Forums Legislative Reception in Indianapolis with Chief of Staff, Scott Miller. I know Anne and Juan were there from Economic Development. I have to say that the only thing that people are talking to us about is the Chicago Bears. It's unbelievable. Anne didn't make matters any easier because she was wearing Bears pants to the event, but everybody was talking to us about it. It's a buzz across the region right now and it's exciting down in Indianapolis to hear Legislators come up and ask if this is true. It seems like a lot of people are on board with this down state. I held a meeting in the Mayor's Office with a developer that's planning to open a Dairy Belle in the Robertsdale section of Hammond and also adjacent to a laundry mat. That's a pretty awesome proposal. I love Dairy Belle. I love it expanding it's presence in our city. Councilman Mark, I'm not sure if you know but Dairy Belle is pretty popular in the 4th District so I imagine it's going to take over in the 1st as well. I don't think that's 100 percent solid yet, but it's really interesting to hear about the proposal. I think it's a really nice one. I was interviewed by Gerry Dick of the Inside Indiana Business in Indianapolis studio in regards to the possibility of the Bears moving to Hammond, Indiana. I received an update from the Hammond City Engineer regarding quiet zones in the city. This is something that interests quite a few of you. We were quoted numbers predicting

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS Cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.- the cost for each quiet zone we seek across the City of Hammond. It's going to be expensive. That's not going to stop us, but to give you an idea, what we were quoting, The IHB Line in Downtown Hammond affects mostly the residents of the Renaissance Towers. We're looking at IHB right there, right by Renaissance, so I guess that's Sohl and Willow Court, the Norfolk Southern Line in Downtown also, the Norfolk Southern Line at Sibley is a problem because of the way that the line crosses the street. It goes diagonally so it's going to cost us more money. We've got that issue and then we've got the Norfolk Southern Line in Hessville as well as where it crosses at Kennedy, 169th, Arizona, and Parrish, and 173rd, and Grand. Parrish is going to be closed under Governor's Parkway Bridge once that's completed. That is going to be expensive, but that's what we're looking at right now for quality of life issues. Norfolk Southern Line, Downtown, is annoying, it wakes up people, especially through Hessville. The IHB Line Downtown wreaks havoc on the residents, The Renaissance, it's been happening way too long. We have so many crossings, it's going to be expensive, but this is something that Capital Improvement is looking at to try and get going across the City of Hammond. I think it's a good project, it's just an expensive project. Last but not least, I met with Councilman Salinas, and a gentleman named Raul Correa, who's a developer in our city, in regards to a proposal to open an event space on 1400 Michigan Avenue. I think it was a very productive meeting. I imagine you guys will be seeing this project come before you soon. That's all I have unless you all have any questions.

Councilman Kalwinski- Any news on the data center?

Mayor McDermott- No, but thank you for the question. As you all remember, the last time we all got together, we extended the data center development agreement between us and Decennial another 2 months. Decennial was extremely pleased and they feel like they're real close. That's the last I heard, Councilman Mark. In the meantime, Amazon just closed a mega deal in Hobart. They secured their NIPSCO, and I think the City of Hobart over the next couple of years is going to get over 100 million dollars from Amazon because they made that deal, but all the elected officials may lose their job. It's interesting because it's a very controversial topic in Hobart. In Hammond, it's much easier because we're locating our data center on a plot that was once occupied by a coal plant. It's a lot easier when you're replacing a coal plant with a data center than it is replacing farmland with a data center. I think Mayor Josh and his team did a great job, but I'm still waiting to hear good news, Councilman Mark and when I do, I promise I'll include you all in that. Any other questions? In regards to the topic, I keep bringing it up. I think it makes tons of sense for the Bears to locate to Indiana. They'll save 30-40 million dollars every year building a 3 billion dollar stadium in Indiana. Obviously I'm partial to Hammond. We're close, we have the room, I think it's a great opportunity for Hammond to completely redefine who we are as a city. Any talk like this has got to be taken seriously. I hear a lot of people telling me how stupid I am. What am I supposed to do as Mayor? If you've got an opportunity to bring 3 billion dollars of development to your city, it could be a long shot, but what if it's not? What if I was just as jaded as half the people that live in our region are and I just didn't go after opportunities like this, so any Mayor worth their salt would be doing anything they can to close this deal and I promise you, I am also, and I have a great team and I think we're doing a great job for our city.

Council President Woerpel- The next item on our Agenda, we're going to elect a new President and a new Vice President and I just wanna say that the first time I did this was in 2020.

Mayor McDermott- It was.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

Council President Woerpel- I'll never forget that day in January or was it February when you called me and said we're shutting down the city and he asked that night if you could speak in front of the Council and we've done it ever since then and I get all kinds of people saying that it's one of their favorite things we do nowadays. I wanna thank you for your reports every meeting and I hope they continue because the residents love them. Thank you for doing them.

Mayor McDermott- I appreciate that Councilman. I'm one of the only Mayor's of a class 2 city that does this and I'm doing it because I was asked to by you originally and it still went on and it forces me to gather my thoughts once every 2 weeks and actually it sort of keeps a good record because all of it's saved in here so if I wanna look up what I was doing 5 years ago on this date I can pull it up real easy because it's all located here. I appreciate you guys and I do say this a lot. There's a lot going on in the City of Hammond right now and I can't do it without a good Council working with me. That's a fact. I know that sometimes we all get fired up and we're hating on each other but the bottom line is I think we're very functional and we get stuff done and I appreciate you guys.

Council President Woerpel- Not only is it informative to the residents, but it gets, even you see that the Council people get to ask questions and there's a good back and forth and I just, I think that's one of the proudest things that I'm proud of as far as the Hammond Council goes, it's almost like a State of the City every 2 weeks.

Mayor McDermott- I know, it takes a lot of work, but I appreciate it, Councilman. Thanks, nice to see you all, have a nice day.

NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

Council President Woerpel- With that, I'll entertain a nomination for President of the Hammond City Council.

Councilman Rakos- I make a motion for Janet Venecz to become President of the Hammond City Council.

Council President Woerpel- Is there anybody else that would like to make a nomination? Is there any other nominations? Hearing no nominations, I'll take a voice vote on Janet Venecz for Council President. All in favor?
AYES: ALL

Council President Woerpel- But, since that's a final decision, does that need to be a roll call, Dave?

Dave Hamm- It's by acclamation.

Councilman Woerpel- By acclamation? Ok, thanks. Congrats, Janet.

Council President Venecz- Thank you. Thank you everyone, now I'd like to open up nominations for Vice President.

Councilman Woerpel- I'd like to nominate Scott Rakos for Vice President.

Council President Venecz- Any other nominations? (X3) All those in favor? AYES: ALL

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved to approve the minutes of December 22, 2025 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to approve the claims from December 17, 2025 through January 7, 2026. Claim #1 through claim#198, inclusive. In the amount of \$8,104,604.10.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BOARD - Councilman Salinas- The Capital Improvement Board did not meet last Monday, so there is no report.

COMMUNITY AND CRIME WATCH COMMITTEE - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:

- Jefferson Crime Watch; Tues. Jan. 13; 6 p.m.; Jefferson School
- Mt. Zion Pleasantview Plaza; Wed. Jan. 14; 1 p.m.
- Edison Community Watch; Wed. Feb. 4; 6:30 p.m.; Edison School
- Harrison Park Crime Watch; Tues. Feb. 3; 6 p.m.; VFW on Hohman Ave.
- Hessville Crime Watch; Thur. Jan 15; 6 p.m.; HC3 Community Center
- Irving Community Watch; Tues. Feb 10; 9:30 a.m.; Irving School
- Whiting/Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur. Feb 12; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

Council President Venecz- When we passed out the doorbells for everyone who qualified and came to pick up their doorbell, we gave them a list of crime watch meetings, and encouraged everyone to come to a crime watch meeting. I extend that invitation to everyone. Find out what's going on in your neighborhood. Find out some safety tips for you, your family, and your property and get to meet some of your neighbors because community is not just about me, it's about us.

ORDINANCE THIRD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

26-01 An Ordinance Amending Ord. No's 9378 and 9572, which are Amendments to Ord. 8514, to Amending the Hammond Sports Facilities Planned Unit Development District PUD Supplement 4 and T/S 30.09 for Property at 6532-6630 Indianapolis Blvd. And 1918-1940 165th Street

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved for passage.

Councilman Tyler- This ordinance is an update to the Planned Unit Development District which includes the Hammond Sportsplex and the YMCA. The amendments we are making tonight will allow for expansion of the YMCA to include the water park, which I believe should be built and opened within the next couple of years, a year and a half or so.

Councilman Woerpel- I know we've been asked in the past why, I know some people that watch us on social media have asked, why do they put everything off to the next meeting, and we've been asked in the past on why we do that and that's because we pass stuff on first and second reading. This ordinance is a yes or no vote on a recommendation from the Planning Commission and it's basically a yes or no vote if we agree with the recommendation in ordinance form and that's why we're doing it in one meeting for these type of ordinances. Thank you.

Council Attorney Berger- I wanted to say, you know, I was a little bit confused at first because I had never read the statute, but the statute explicitly provides that at the first meeting after you get the ordinance, you have the right to either adopt it, eject it, or amend it, so I agree that the Council can do that tonight, but there was this other discussion about how you cannot receive any evidence, and I don't know that I have any opinion on that at all and this should not be a precedent to say that you cannot do that because the statute I've got has nothing to do with whether you can do that or not, but I would think that you clearly have the authority to adopt at this meeting.

Council President Venecz- Thank you. Thank you, Attorney Berger. Given the discussion in caucus, I think it would be prudent for us to move forward.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

ORDINANCE NO. 9697 PASSED

RESOLUTIONS

26R-01 Resolution to Reappoint Melissa Farrell to the Gaming Advisory Committee of the City of Hammond

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Spitale, moves for adoption.

Councilman Kalwinski- Mrs. Farrell has faithfully served as a volunteer on this board for approximately the past

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

RESOLUTIONS Cont.

Councilman Kalwinski cont.-15 years and has attended and been a very vital member of that group, thank you.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION R01 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, motioned to accept the Council appointments from the volunteer sheets that were placed in the office to the Capital Improvements Board, and the Gaming Advisory Committee

Councilman Woerpel- Can you read the names on the sheets?

Council President Venecz- Yes, I certainly will. For the Gaming Advisory Committee; Councilman Salinas, Councilwoman Venecz, Councilwoman Alexander, Councilman Rakos, and Melissa Farrell who we just approved. On the Capital Improvement Board; Councilman Salinas, Councilman Rakos, and Councilman Woerpel.

Councilman Woerpel- I throw a challenge flag on me, but that's beside the point.

Council President Venecz- Pardon me?

Councilman Woerpel- Never mind.

Council President Venecz- Ok.

Councilman Woerpel- I do it under protest.

Councilman Tyler- Just for clarification, we still have one more appointment to the Gaming Advisory Committee right?

Councilman Woerpel- We get 5, right?

Council President Venecz- We have 5.

Councilman Tyler- Correct me if I'm wrong, but right now there is no representative from the 3rd District?

Council President Venecz- Ok?

Councilman Tyler- Which tonight I was planning on under New and Unfinished Business reappointing the

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS Cont.

Councilman Tyler cont.- person from last year.

Council President Venecz- Ok.

Councilman Rakos- Is anybody else from the 6th District on there?

Council President Venecz- No. We have 2nd, 4th, 3rd, 1st, and 6th.

Councilman Rakos- I'll rescind my name.

Council President Venecz- Ok.

Councilman Kalwinski- Add the name. What's the name?

Council President Venecz- Pardon me?

Councilman Tyler- Brandon Dorsey.

Council President Venecz- Ok.

Councilman Rakos- Nobody made you do that dude.

Council President Venecz- All the names have been read, do I have a motion for approval?

Councilman Woerpel- I make a motion that we approve the names as amended.

Council President Venecz- We have to say first of all that we're going to move for the names that were on there originally and then amend it.

Councilman Woerpel- I make a motion that we rescind the whatever and

Council President Venecz- I'm looking for a motion to approve the names that were originally read for the Gaming Advisory Committee and the Capital Improvement Committee.

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Tyler, motioned to amend that list and take off Councilman Rakos' name and put on Brandon Dorsey's

ROLL CALL VOTE (amendment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

AMENDMENT ADOPTED

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS Cont.

Councilman Woerpel, supported by, Councilwoman Alexander, motioned to accept the names as amended.

Councilman Rakos- I don't think you need to.

ROLL CALL VOTE (as amended)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

APPOINTMENTS ADOPTED

(as amended)

Council President Venecz- I would like to take just a moment to wish our Controller a happy birthday. Happy Birthday, Megan.

Councilwoman Alexander- Just in my absence of last week, I wanted to thank you all for your donations to the toy drive. We were able to bless over 200 kids this Christmas and all the families were extremely excited as always and I'm really truly hoping that we can double that number next year, so thank you.

Council President Venecz- Thank you for your efforts.

Councilman Tyler- I just want to remind everyone that our annual MLK Candlelight March and program is Monday, January 19th. Lineup begins at 6:30 a.m. at MLK Freedom Plaza and the march begins at 6:45 over to the Civic Center. I believe the program should start around 7:15/7:30. There will be vendors, refreshments, and a short program. Thank you.

Councilwoman Alexander- Even though the other 2 have not said anything, I'm going to say it. Myself, Councilman Tyler, and Councilman Salinas will be playing on the Region Rebounders against the Harlem Wizards on January 22nd at the Civic Center thanks to the Hammond PTA. Looking forward to a great time. Prayerfully we do not get hurt, but looking for a great time. Tickets are on sale if you're looking forward to that, you can find all of the information on social media at the Hammond PTA to come out and support the event. We're looking forward to it.

Council President Venecz- Any other New and Unfinished Business? (X3)

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Mary Schoons- Expressed opinion against stating address and against Governor's Parkway Bridge/housing developments. Brought Councilman Rakos a sponge.

Darryl Rodgers- Voiced concerns with 5G towers.

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved to adjourn

AYES: ALL

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

2026 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
12												
Katrina Alexander	P											
Dan Spitale	P											
Mark Kalwinski	P											
Alfonso Salinas III	P											
Barry Tyler	P											
Bill Emerson	P											
Scott Rakos	P											
Dave Woerpel	P											
Janet Venecz	P											
Initials												

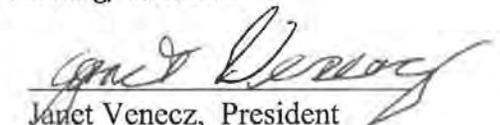
E=ELECTRONIC

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.


Janet Venecz, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:


Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:40 p.m.2
mg

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk