

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on September 28, 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 Janet Venecz presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Woerpel

ABSENT: Tyler

TOTAL: 8

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Good evening Council, President Venecz, Clerk Golec. Mayor sends his greetings, but I am your Chief of Staff, Scott Miller giving the update today. Just because not everybody is at caucus, and we have some students here, I'm going to quickly run through what's in front of you tonight. We have the ordinance 26-23 to allocate 5 % of the Innkeepers Tax revenue to our Parks Department, which usually goes to promotion for our Park's events. Ordinance 26-24 appropriates funds from the Parks Department including a major allocation to re-turf the infields at Dowling Park. As you know, Purdue Northwest leases those fields from us, and we used a portion basically of the money they pay us to redo the infields on the fields at their request. It was needed. Ordinance 26-25 is creation of funds just so we can keep track of some newer expenses such as our storm recovery fund from August 11th, a bond service fund, and a bond project fund. Ordinance 26-26 authorizes a bond payment to support the Chipotle/Dutch Brothers project. It represents about 15 percent of the cost with the incentive. Also in front of you tonight is a resolution with the Little Cal River Basin. They are trying to be a good neighbor to surrounding municipalities that had a lot of damage from the storm and they are basically loaning us, interest free, \$285k to assist with cash flow until we receive that money back. Alright, a couple updates for you, the administration has started our regular meetings with FEMA. We do feel like we have the right documentation in place to qualify our expenses. We have our consultants still so who are helping us along with that process. As mentioned in caucus, I'll give you a little more detail, FEMA, we can get up to .75 on the dollar back, and then Governor Braun added that he'll cover 75% of the remaining 25%, which gives us an effective rate of 6.25%, so roughly if the city spends a million dollars on the storm, we'll be on the hook for \$62,500. That's what it means. The rest will be covered by the state and the federal government. They require a lot of documentation for that, so that's part of what our meetings are. In other good news, a little tidbit is that we have found that they will even cover some preventative costs for future storms, so we're working with our people at the utilities of water and sewer to make sure that things like our lift stations and such can remain operational in a future storm, so people don't have to deal with power outage, and their basement flooding potentially. We had our audit call last week and the results of that of course will be made public. They're not finalized yet. It doesn't have all the signatures. I will just say it was a very positive call. Some of the council were on the call. I know I saw Councilman Rakos on the call and it was very positive. We run a tight ship here

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS Cont.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller cont.- at the city and they auditors did not find anything substantive to complain about or to feel that we were doing inappropriately. That's very positive. I met with Rieth Riley, they are looking at moving their demo program which is basically free demolitions for buildings that have been approved to be demolished from Gary over to Hammond and looking at this winter possibly demo-ing 12-15 sites for us completely free of costs. It's their off season in January and February where they're not doing road projects and they want to give back to the community. They do work in Hammond, so that's an exciting possibility. Our job fair we had this week, last week was our biggest yet. We had the highest number of companies with 70 companies present and the highest number of attendees with over 1200 attendees came through our job fair. This does absolutely serve a need. Thank you to Juan who's in the audience and Melissa who helped in our Economic Development department who put that on definitely serving a need. There were many people who left with a new job in Hammond. Many of the people were hiring right on site, so that's great. We will have our budget complete this week to put in your hands, likely as soon as Monday. That will give you a full month, that'll be 2 weeks before your first and second to look at the budget, and another 2 weeks to again, have your questions answered, so that will get us with all our appropriate advertising and everything else, Tinisha in the business office will be in contact to set up a meeting if you need to have any questions answered about the budget. Our farmer's market concluded their first season in Downtown Hammond. We had over 15,000 through SNAP, \$15,000 of funds through SNAP that were collected through our farmer's market. That is very unique meaning that if you are eligible for SNAP benefits, came to our farmer's market, you could get 3 for 1. If your card had \$50 on it, you could actually spend up to \$150 on eligible things, such as fresh produce. It was definitely a success. We had over 1000 people at one of them. Our average was around 500 people at every event. I know Councilman Salinas, I saw you at many of them. Councilman Spitale, I saw you at one of them. Councilwoman Vencz, I think I saw you at one of them as well. It definitely was a positive for our Downtown area and we'll be using, partnering with Farmed & Foraged next year, again, we have some ideas on how to make it even better, get more people involved. Our summer concert series also concluded since we last met. A great quality of life thing we do for free. We don't charge admission. I know Adrian in the Township, they charge admission to their summer concert series. We do not. Our attendance continues to grow. We added food trucks this year. Our average attendance was around 600. Echoes of Pompeii, we had 1500 people come out for the free concert for that. Lastly, I'll mention as far as summary of events, we had our armored mma show at the civic center, over 2,000 people in attendance for that, so again, kudos to our Parks Department to continue and for the Port Authority, for continuing to put on events that people want to come to and they want to be here. A couple of upcoming events, I'll give you some dates here, we have our, if you're not ready yet, we have our city trunk or treat on October 8th, 5 o'clock at the civic center this year. It's going to be at the civic center, 5 o'clock on October 8th. We have on October 9th, our Paladin/HPD showcase, so Paladin is an outreach to the disabled community and it's an outreach from our Hammond Police Department where they get together and they play basketball, but this is a big showcase. That's from 5-8 p.m. at the Sportsplex. Normally they're not really open to the public, but this one is. They're trying to encourage people to come and be in the audience. That is again, October 9th, 5-8 p.m. at the Sportsplex. The next day on the Saturday, we have our Fire Department's annual open house on the 10th from 10-2. This year it's going to be back at the Central Station. We haven't had it at the Central Station in awhile, but that is on the 10th. This next one is not open to the public, but if you guys want to come, we do have our Realtor's breakfast on October 7th, if you're interested, just shoot me a text and I can add you to the invite list. That's at 9 o'clock at The Lost Marsh. That is invite only, but again, if you're interested, let me know. You get to hear some updates about residential and what we get to tell our realtor's who sell our houses and properties in Hammond. Alright, that concludes all my updates. I'm open for any questions.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS Cont.

Councilman Kalwinski- You mentioned that FEMA could shell out for preventive kind of activity, would that include either knocking some trees down or even some limbs off the parkway?

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- So, we are doing that already. FEMA has pretty strict requirements though, so literally every tree we chop down that we would seek reimbursement from, we have to photograph or they won't even, they won't reimburse you for it, so like, there is a lot of documentation and you might be aware we have a documentation company. Their costs are 100 percent reimbursed by FEMA, but they follow that tree cutting company from Mississippi around and they are the ones photographing every tree and you even have to take it all the way to when it gets chopped up. The documentation is pretty serious, but we're doing all of that. Yes, Devin, our City Arborist, he had a list of trees that he felt were FEMA compliant that were not fully knocked down but were dangerous and we have been having those removed as well.

Councilman Kalwinski- So they can be dying trees that didn't, wasn't a result of the storm?

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Yes. If it's in the parkway, ok, so now if, I know Mayor mentioned it at the last meeting or the meeting before, the concept of, does the City Council and the Mayor want to entertain the idea of even going on to private property if we recognize a tree could impact the power lines. That's a discussion for a future date with the Mayor, but it is something that other municipalities have done to be a little more proactive on the tree issue.

Councilman Kalwinski- Ok, thanks.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- You're welcome. Anybody else?

Council President Venecz- Has there been any update from NIPSCO? You didn't mention NIPSCO at all. I suppose they don't want to be mentioned neither.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- I have not heard any updates that you probably haven't seen online or in the paper. I can tell you that, like, they're responsive to us. You know we have the church coming down on Michigan where the wall collapsed. Well the demo was delayed a little bit because we needed NIPSCO to terminate the utility service. We reached out to our friends over there and they had it terminated within 24 hours so that demo could continue. It remains to be seen. I think we all are waiting to see what the real fallout is and if there's anything, any long term changes that come from NIPSCO. My hope as Chief of Staff is communication is improved. I think all of us can understand it was a disaster that was bigger than we had seen in any recent history but when those things happen, you just want to hear, like what's going on and I think that was, that could definitely be improved. I know when you guys reached out to me, and you're like, hey what are you hearing and that part was frustrating for myself, is when you'd reach out, they really didn't have much, but generic information to give you.

Councilman Kalwinski- You know I mentioned I think the last meeting, that for those of us who were blacked out who didn't have power or internet, cable, that a second source to go to or listen to like WJOB. It might be important for residents if they don't have their phone or internet or any means to hear from family. They couldn't really go onto gohammond. Another source that's different could be useful to just give out the same

MAYOR'S ADDRESS Cont.

Councilman Kalwinski cont.- information during a crisis or disaster.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- I do like the WJOB. We are also close to implementing, and again, it would require you to have phone service, but a opt in notification service that would be text based where the city can send out emergency notifications to residents. We'll start promoting that pretty soon and residents will be able to opt in through either online or through their water bill or things like that. It'll have 2 facets, one will be if you want event notices, and then the other one will be like emergency type things that people need to know about. I hear you. My observation is the one thing that people found a way to get power was on their cell phone. I mean like, whether it was sitting in their car for an hour while their cell phone charged, that was the one thing that people seemed to prioritize in the storm.

Councilman Kalwinski- Thanks.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Sure, you're welcome.

Councilman Salinas- Scott, you mentioned about the church there on Michigan and Calumet, when did NIPSCO shut that power off, do you know?

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- The power is shut off.

Councilman Salinas- Yeah, when did they do that?

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- I know it was last week, I don't have the exact date.

Councilman Salinas- There hasn't been any activity there since the initial activity.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- So the next thing they have to do is, there is asbestos in the basement, so they have to abate it first and then they can finish the demo. There was an update this morning on that, but the environmental contractor's supposed to be out there if not today, tomorrow at the latest. Once that happens, the demo can move pretty quickly. It's likely going to be one of the same crews that the haunted house is down now, if you've been over there, it's completely down and they'll just move over and take over the church next.

Councilman Salinas- Sounds good, thank you.

Council President Venecz- Any other questions? (X2) Thank you, Scott.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- You're welcome. Thanks.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, moved to approve the minutes of September 14, 2026 and place on file.

AYES: ALL

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Rakos, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the claims from August 9, 2026 through August 23, 2026. Claim #7290 through claim #7701, inclusive. In the amount of \$7,341,716.80

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tyler

Motion carried

8/0/1

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

26-23 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for the Hammond Park Department

26-24 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds from the Operating Balance for the Hammond Park Department

26-26 An Ordinance of the Common Council of the City of Hammond, Indiana, Authorizing the City to Issue its Taxable Economic Development Revenue Bonds (Central Allocation Area Project), and Approving Other Actions in Respect Thereto

Council President Venecz- Anyone wishing to address any of those 3 items, please approach the podium? (X3)

Public hearings is now closed.

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Kalwinski- I was asked to give a reminder that in person voting in Lake County begins on October 6th through November 2nd and absentee mail in voting, the deadline for that is October 27th. It has to be in, not the application for absenteeism, or absentee voting, but actually the form for voting has to be in by 10/27. Thank you.

Council President Venecz- Any other communications? (X3) Communications is now closed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE- Councilman Tyler is not here so we will not have an Economic development report.

PLANNING COMMITTEE- Councilman Spitale- No planing report.

FINANCE COMMITTEE- Councilman Woerpel- No finance report, but 26-25 will be brought out for final passage.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMITTEE REPORTS Cont.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT BOARD - Councilman Salinas- Capital Improvement board met on September 21st and there were 4 funding allocations, all of which I'll cover at this moment:

FUNDING ALLOCATION #346- Marquette Greenway- Kennedy Ave to Cline Ave Construction- INDOT/Grimmer Construction Local Match- in the amount of \$508,786.10

FUNDING ALLOCATION #347- Downtown Hammond Station- NICTD Flagging/Force Account Work for 2026- in the amount of \$50,000.00

FUNDING ALLOCATION #348- Emergency Vehicle Preemption Town of Munster as Lead LPA- in the amount of \$33,790.22

FUNDING ALLOCATION #349- Marina District Screen Wall- Norfolk Southern Force Account- in the amount of \$4,669.50

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

East Hammond Pullman Crime Watch; Tues. October 20; 6 p.m.; Ophelia Steen Center
Edison Community Watch; Wed. October 7; 6:30 p.m.; Edison School
Harrison Park Crime Watch; Tues. October 6; 6 p.m.; VFW on Hohman Ave.
Hessville Crime Watch; Thur. October 14; 6 p.m.; HC3 Community Center
Irving Community Watch; Wed. October 21; 6 p.m.; Irving School
South Hohman Ave Neighborhood Watch; Thur. October 22; 6:30 p.m.; Trinity Lutheran Church
Whiting/Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur. October 8; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College
Jefferson Crime Watch; Wed. October 14; 6 p.m.; Jefferson School

Council President Venecz- Once again, we have a good network of crime watch meetings throughout the city. I urge everyone to come out and find out what's going on in your neighborhood and the city in general because community is not just about me, it's about us.

Council President Venecz brought out 26-23, 26-24, 26-25, and 26-26

ORDINANCE THIRD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

26-23 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for the Hammond Park Department

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

Council President Venecz- Any discussion? (X3)

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

ORDINANCE THIRD READING-FINAL PASSAGE Cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tyler

Motion carried

8/0/1

ORDINANCE NO. 9717 APPROVED

26-24 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds from the Operating Balance for the Hammond Park Department

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved for final passage.

Council President Venecz- Any discussion? (X3)

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tyler

Motion carried

8/0/1

ORDINANCE NO. 9718 APPROVED

26-25 An Ordinance Creating New Funds (Fund #2504, #3383, and #4685) For the City of Hammond

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

Councilman Woerpel- As we discussed in caucus, these create 3 funds for the City of Hammond to appropriate monies to. Last week when I introduced it, I misspoke and said there is no money allocated to any fund yet, and I was incorrect because 5.15 million has been allocated by the P.D. for the radios, and the Fire Department for a fire engine.

Council President Venecz- Any other discussion? (X3)

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tyler

Motion carried

8/0/1

ORDINANCE NO. 9719 APPROVED

26-26 An Ordinance of the Common Council of the City of Hammond, Indiana, Authorizing the City to Issue its Taxable Economic Development Revenue Bonds (Central Allocation Area Project), and Approving Other Actions in Respect Thereto

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, moved for final passage.

Councilman Rakos- I'd like Juan to come up and discuss a little bit because we had questions our last meeting about how this is done with our bonds and stuff, and I also talked to somebody after the meeting, so if he could

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

ORDINANCE THIRD READING-FINAL PASSAGE Cont.

Councilman Rakos cont.- explain it a little bit more because we had the committee meeting on it, but some people weren't there for it.

Juan J. Moreno, Director of Economic Development- Thank you for taking it under consideration, and hoping for passage of ordinance 26-26 of an exciting project for the entire City of Hammond and Northwest Indiana. This is regarding the development of 6525 Indianapolis Boulevard for 2 commercial buildings. Chipotle's Mexican Grill, and Dutch Bros on the same site. This was recently approved by the Hammond Redevelopment Commission and the Economic Development Commission on or about September 15, 2026. This project has a timeline for beginning of construction of October '26. Completion of project is projected to be completed by mid-end of Spring of 2027. This is a \$5.3 million investment. It had a gap of \$700,000 which they requested to fill that by the TIF bond and that would be paid out in 3 different tranches which, \$200,000 would come at the beginning of construction. The second payment of \$200,000 would come at what would be considered 50% of complete of construction, and the final payment of \$300,000 would be paid at occupancy. This would create 50 permanent jobs for both sites. It would have an annual salary of \$1.6 million for these 50 workers. It would create up to 50 temporary construction jobs for the duration of this development.

Council President Venecz- What is the scheduled completed date?

Juan J. Moreno, Director of Economic Development- The completion is projected to be mid Spring of 2027.

Councilman Rakos- And these bonds are Redevelopment bonds or just regular?

Juan J. Moreno, Director of Economic Development- Yes, for the central allocation area.

Councilman Rakos- From our TIF District?

Juan J. Moreno, Director of Economic Development- Correct.

Council President Venecz- Any other questions?

Councilman Woerpel- For the record this property is formally Petro's Restaurant who was in business for over 40 years before they decided to retire and sell the property. I spent a lot of time in there over the years. Great restaurant, it's just time that they retired and I know my grandkids can't wait for the new businesses coming.

Council President Venecz- Any other discussion? (X3)

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tyler

Motion carried

8/0/1

ORDINANCE NO. 9720 APPROVED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

RESOLUTIONS

26R-18 A Resolution Authorizing the City of Hammond to Enter into an Intergovernmental Cooperation Agreement with the Little Calumet River Basin Development Commission for Interim Disaster Recovery Funds for Emergency Vegetation Debris Removal and Disposal Subject to Federal and State Cost-Share Reimbursement

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, moved for adoption.

Councilman Woerpel- This, as everyone knows, the storm of August 11th was declared a, not only a state emergency by the Governor, but a federal emergency by the President of the United States. What that basically means is that we are eligible for funds made available by both entities, but the catch is, we have to pay for the services as they're provided, and then we will be reimbursed by FEMA for 75 percent. Of the remaining 25 percent, the Governor has agreed to reimburse 75 percent of that. So what this actually is, is an intergovernmental cooperation agreement with the Little Cal River Basin Development Commission to loan us those funds which is approximately \$285,000 interest free until we get the reimbursement and then we will pay it back. There is no interest rate on this.

Council President Venecz- Any other discussion? (X3)

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Tyler

Motion carried

8/0/1

RESOLUTION NO. R18 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilwoman Alexander- I probably should have said this under communications, but it's ok, I just want to thank you all for keeping me and my family in your prayers as we buried my uncle this past weekend, and just continue to keep me in your prayers as I'm going through a couple health challenges, but I'm on the mend now, so I appreciate you guys for checking in with me. Thank you.

Council President Venecz- I would like to remind everyone that our next scheduled meeting would be October 12th, which is Columbus Day, City Hall is closed on that day, so we moved our meeting to the 13th, so don't come here on Monday, nobody's going to be here.

Any other new and unfinished business? (X3)

SPECIAL ZONING ACTION ADOPTED UNDER I.C. 36-7

None

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Council President Venecz acknowledged and thanked the students from Munster High School.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC EXPRESSION Cont.

Rushil Parekh- Just wanted to thank the Council for showing him an accurate representation of how things get passed in government.

Esteban Lopez- Just wanted to thank the Council for helping them with their project.

Laura Boyd- Asked questions about storm related damage, and how long homeowners have to actually have the damaged repaired, and where she can find that information, asked for FEMA info, impressed by how Mayor McDermott handles disaster situations and infrastructure issues.

Chief of Staff, Scott Miller- Gave a brief description of how to contact FEMA.

Councilman Woerpel- Says you have up to 2 years to file a claim with insurance, says to read the fine print before you sign with anyone.

Mary Schoons- Opposes giving her address when speaking under public expression.

City Clerk Golec read 30.28 aloud, and gave Council President Venecz a copy.

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

AYES: ALL

2026 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	12	26	9	23	9	23	13	27	11	26	8	22	13	27	10	24	14	28						
Katrina Alexander	P	P	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	P						
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Alfonso Salinas III	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	E	P	A	P						
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	A						
Bill Emerson	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	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	E						
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	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	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG						

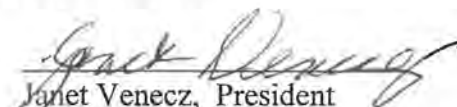
E=ELECTRONIC

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.


Janet Venecz, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:


Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:56 p.m.

mg

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk