

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on March 22, 2021 in the Hammond City Council Chambers.

Council President Dave Woerpel presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.
Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander.

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: Torres

TOTAL: 8

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - We received word, about a week ago, that stimulus package recently approved in Washington D.C. under President Biden and the Democratic (unclear) Congress gave \$53 million award to the City of Hammond. Which is unbelievably great news. You know there were other communities that received more money under the stimulus package. It was based on population, demographic data, poverty data. Hammond had a great award. I know our School City received, I think, \$48 million. I think that's amazing news. Obviously, you know, this money hasn't hit the coffers yet and statutorily there's only certain things that you can use that money for, like infrastructure projects, streets, sidewalks, water, sanitary, things of that nature. Replacement money for money that we lost during the pandemic is a big part of it and we could prove we lost millions of dollars during the pandemic. So, right now, as far as replacing that money goes, we were throwing around numbers earlier today saying, let's say that we could prove that we had \$13 million of revenue loss last year because of Covid. I think we could do that with a straight face. If we did that, what we would plan to do is take the \$13 million out of the stimulus money and put it into the equation that we all approved through the Council. Which is 62% of the replacement money will go to the Capital Improvement Board, 15% of the replacement money would go to Mayor's gaming, 15% of the replacement money would go to the six Council Districts, 4% of the money would go to the Rainy Day Find, and 4% would go to the Gaming Advisory Committee. With regard to replacement money, once we're done with replacement money the rest of it will be subject to capital projects. You know, we have a number of things that we're talking about and obviously the Capital Improvement Board is gonna have a lot to do with that. I know the Council has three representatives on the Capital Improvement Board, so in total transparency, I just want to let everybody know the money hasn't hit yet and when it does come we have to know the rules and I think it's in our best interest to prove replacement money as much as we can, and then we could get some projects going right away. You know, I've been talking a lot when I come to talk to you all about how we spend backwards now. We had a meeting earlier with Megan and there was four Council people at the meeting and I asked Megan about our cash balances right now in the City of Hammond. She said we had about \$18 million, if I remember correctly. \$18 million that's there, it's in the bank account, it's being spent but, you know, right now it's not out of the coffers yet. So, that just goes to prove right there, we never had cash balances like this when we did it the old way. Now that we're spending

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - money that we have in the bank, it allows us to build up these cash balances and it's good for our credit rating. It's good for a number of reasons. We're about two weeks away from supplying you all with the next quarterly gaming report, which will budget even more money to the Capital Improvement Board, Mayor's Gaming and all the things of that nature, so the end of the quarter is coming up. I imagine by our next Council Meeting we should have our report ready for you, with regard to first quarter 2021. I anticipated having the wholesale settlement agreement from the water litigation ready for you at this Council Meeting, however, it's a very complicated lawsuit that was settled and submitting it to writing has proven to be more challenging than we thought. There is a little quibbling over minor issues that are going through right now. So, the long and the short of it is we do not have the wholesale rates ready for 1st and 2nd reading today as I thought we would. I imagine by the next meeting we will have it ready for you. We talked last meeting about the credit card charges at the Water Department. It was a little more complicated than we thought but it is in the process. I don't want the Council to think we're not paying attention to you. There is going to be a charge on credit card transactions, and if we're not going to charge our residents, which is the will of the Council, we have to pay it. So, there will be a charge though. So, like, you know, if somebody is not paying it, it doesn't mean there's no charge. If the resident's not paying it then it's gonna fall on the City to pick up the accumulated charges, which can be hundreds of thousands of dollars easily. So, we're in the process right now of working out the deal possible for the Hammond Water Department and with the will of the Council where credit card charges will not result in charges to the residents. This has proven to be a little more challenging than we thought. I think, as of this moment, the credit card charges are gonna be picked up by the water department as we speak. We're working through these issues and trying to get the best deal that we can for the Hammond Water Company. We've gone through reorganization of the Water Department business office because of the increase in workload. They have twice as much workload as they are used to having because we bill every month now, as opposed to every two months which doubles the amount of paperwork that they do. Munster-Hammond Pedestrian Bridge, I talked a little about that last time I spoke to you all. I had a meeting with Dustin Anderson, the Town Manager of Munster, and their City Engineer and talked about how we can partner together on that project. We would like Munster to participate financially since it is a border project we're hoping that they will donate towards that project like the Little Calumet River Basin Authority donated a million dollars towards this project, which is wonderful. Your former colleague Dan Repay had a lot to do with that. I want to thank Dan, a former 5th District City Councilman, for helping us with that. Within the last two week we cut a ribbon on the new ADA accessible entrance to the Hammond Civic Center Fitness Center. We did that during the Disability Awareness Ceremony. It's really nice. You can get into the Fitness Center without having to go down stairs, which makes a lot of sense, obviously. But we had to put a ramp in, obviously the Civic Center was built in the forties and not a lot of thought was put into ADA Accessibility in the 1940's. Hammond Fire House #5 is still shuttered. It suffered permanent damage because of a fire that took place next door. The amount of water and ice that built up in the structure bled into the basement of Fire House #5. I'm no expert but I think it was permanently damaged. We are working with the Union, we are working with the Fire Administration, trying to figure out if we can do it better in that part of the City and to be continued on that. That could be a direction for stimulus money down the road. Trying to figure out a better way to do fire response in South Hammond. Just a couple days ago Councilman Mark Kalwinski and I were in the 1st District cutting a ribbon on a new \$4 million Luke's Gas Station that includes a brand new car wash. Everything on the inside is brand new. It's really big, on a former 35 acres, but the Collins just put \$4 million into it. I'm no fan of gas stations but that's a

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - beautiful gas station and it was a big investment. So really nice. St. Joseph's Church in Downtown Hammond just welcomed Bishop Robert McClurry to mass on Saturday which was nice having the Bishop in Downtown Hammond. And last but not least, I had a meeting today with the RDA CEO Sherry Ziller to talk about Transit Development Districts. Right now, I know Councilman Emerson is in front of me, we are not talking about South Hammond at all. Right now we are just focusing on Gateway. We figure Gateway is less controversial. When we start talking TDD's in the 4th we have a lot of issues to work through and I want the Councilman there with us when we do that. We figured let's focus on the Gateway first, it's least controversial. We are eligible to have a TDD in the 4th District as well and it could help us develop Calumet Avenue and 165th and things of that nature. So we're working on the boundaries right now and obviously the Council should probably be briefed on what these districts are. But, it basically gives us opportunities to seize increment on income tax, property tax, sales tax, things that we don't receive a portion of at all right now, we'll be allowed to receive it in these districts under this new tool. It seems to me there's very little down side and a lot of upside for the City of Hammond. It's like a TIF District on steroids. Munster is going through the process of doing a TDD right now. I know East Chicago in the process of doing a TDD, and Gary is in the process of doing a TDD in Miller, and our first TDD will be around the Gateway Station, which is Gostlin, Chicago, Downtown Hammond, down to Harrison Park and that area of the City. So, that's my report. If you have any questions I'm more than happy to answer them.

Councilman Emerson - I have a question about something I read in the paper this morning regarding the wetlands, a supermajority in Indianapolis, it looks like it may pass. Does that affect the City of Hammond at all, around Wolf Lake, aren't those wetlands?

Mayor McDermott - Councilman Emerson, I would be lying if I told you I saw the article, I didn't read it. I'm not aware of anything happening that affects us right now.

Councilman Emerson - Well, Lake County Surveyor is not happy.

Mayor McDermott - Well, you would probably know a lot more about that than I would, Councilman. Because your son happens to be an excellent surveyor. He probably knows a lot more about that than I do. I'm not pleading ignorance, I just ...

Councilman Emerson - I think it would enable them to build on wetlands which there's not many left in the State and that's what I think they are fixin to do. But we'll see if it passes. It hasn't, it's going to the Senate, I think, and then back to the House.

Mayor McDermott - I would be remiss, and I thank you for bringing up Wolf Lake, I would be remiss if I didn't talk about Wolf Lake and the swans and the geese. A photo published a couple of weeks ago had about ten or twelve dead geese and swans laying on the ground. They were located throughout the channel at Wolf Lake and the Times and the local media and the Chicago media did a story alleging that geese, Wolf Lake, obviously the geese got sick from the lake and it's dirty and like these geese are dying because they're drinking it. In my gut, there's no way that I thought that for even a second. Wolf Lake is a very clean lake. We just recently remediated

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - the lake, you know, within the last ten years. We used Federal money and cleaned it all out, cleaned the trench out. It's actually a really clean lake. We do tests on it regularly. So anyway, when we heard about that, and then the birding societies were getting very concerned that there's something in Wolf Lake that was killing these water fowl and we did, through the Hammond Sanitary District, multiple water tests on Wolf Lake. All of them came back within specifications of the EPA. We did an independent lab, given the same tests that we performed on the water at Wolf Lake and the lab confirmed our results. Nothing of concern. We tested the water at George Lake, which is a little bit more iffy because there's a superfund right over there, that water came back clean. We took our XRF (X-ray fluorescence spectroscopy), it's a brand new device that you helped Hammond Environmental Department purchase a few years back. I asked one of the employees of the Hammond Department of Environmental Management to shoot 21 different locations up and down the channel and see if there's anything that we're missing. Every one of them came back clean. So the bottom line is, these geese, these water fowl, are dying but whatever is killing them is not from the land at Wolf Lake, it is not from the water at Wolf Lake, and that's been confirmed. Then there was this weekend, we had people, very good natured people that care a lot about the birds, they go out there with signs about, "clean up this lake" and "McDermott step down" and stuff like that. It's beyond ridiculous. Whatever is killing these birds, it's not from Wolf Lake. That happens to be a place to hang out. I appreciate the Councilman for bringing that up because I forgot to mention the birds at Wolf Lake and that lake is clean. I'm gonna be in Leon's Triathlon and I have to swim a mile in that lake and I'm not fazed about it in the slightest bit. I'm gonna jump in there, I'm scared about the cold, and if there's something you can do about the cold water that would be wonderful, but I'm not worried about the quality of the water at all.

Council President Woerpel - Just on that issue alone, it's been my experience from members of my family that worked in conservation that those dead birds are gonna wind up at the southernmost point of water. They could have come from anywhere.

Mayor McDermott - Gibson County in Southern Indiana had a hundred and seventy six dead birds from the Avian Flu. Chicago's not talking about this a lot but the inlets, the rivers and the lake inlets, tons of fish are dying. A lot of people think it could be from the harsh winter. I don't know what it is. I'm not an expert in water fowl, but I can tell you that the water is clean at Wolf Lake. The land is clean at Wolf Lake. If it wasn't, we would not allow people in there. But it's clean and I wanted to point that out because we may have to repeat that over and over again because some people are trying to talk louder. Like, "Oh no, it doesn't matter that you tested. The birds died"... you know, we just need to be louder than they are and tell them with fact.

Councilman Kalwinski - I believe that the DNR has the dead birds and will get us report at some point about cause of death so that will be public when they're done and give that to us.

Mayor McDermott - Yes sir, agreed, Councilman Mark.

READING OF THE MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to accept the minutes of March 8, 2021 and place on file. AYES: ALL

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Rakos, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to approve the claims from March 3, 2021 through March 17, 2021. Claim #1073 through #1378, inclusive.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Torres

Motion carried

8/0/1

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Kalwinski - Wanted to update the residents of the 1st District, especially in Robertsdale, about conversations with an industry. I spoke with Chris Foster at Cargill today regarding the humming noise that comes out of the plant and will be talking with the Plant Manager, Mr. Lawson, tomorrow. As well about that issue that's been frustrating a lot of the residents because of the intermittent noise and hum that happens a along in Robertsdale in the day and especially at night. Then also the City, later in the week, will be meeting with Cargill to further discuss the issue to see if we can find a resolution to this frustrating and aggravating humming that occurs out of the Cargill Plant.

Councilwoman Alexander - I have the updated Covid numbers. For 46320, there is an additional 3 cases; for 46327, an additional 19 cases; for 46323, additional 28 cases; 46324, and additional 50 cases; and 46394, an additional 27 cases. That takes us to 154 new cases from our March 8 meeting. As we see, the numbers are trending down and I really hope it's because people are getting vaccinated, people have learned to continue to wear their mask and social distance. The weather is getting better, as we can see we have lots of people out at the parks. But until we get all the way out of the pandemic, let's continue to wear our masks, wash our hands and social distance as much as possible. Vaccinations are available for educators now, anywhere. There was a mass vaccination clinic done at Merrillville High School this past weekend that I attended myself to be vaccinated. There were tons of people there. They're constantly dropping the number by fives. We're at the age of forty and over now, as well as educators to go to any locations. I believe they will be dropping again to thirty five on the next Monday. So, as you're waiting and getting your turn, make sure you go to ourshot.in.gov to get registered for your vaccination.

Councilman Tyler - I just want to go on record in saying my condolences to all the families of the victims of the killings in Atlanta last week. You know we've seen an uptick in hate crimes across our country over the past few years, especially those targeting our API Community so I just wanted to share my support. As always, Hammond is a very diverse city, but I know that we can also be doing more to protect just people within our city and so I know as a City Council we're exploring just different possibility and trying to figure out ways to bring us all closer together. Just want to call for everyone to just kind of forget about the silly differences that set us apart and try to do what's right for our community as a whole.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Brought out 21-09.

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - I would like to announce that tomorrow evening, which is March 23rd at 6 pm, there will be a virtual crime watch meeting on the Hammond, Indiana Police Department Facebook Page. Anyone is welcome to attend and make any comments or questions that they may have. Each of the community policing officers will be giving the crime statistics for their area, and that begins at 6 o'clock tomorrow evening. I would like to thank the Hammond Police Department for the self defense workshop that they held this past Friday. Twenty-four women came out and learned safety measures to protect themselves and how to be aware of their surroundings. So thank you for that and thank you to the women who came out to learn about safety. Now that the vaccinations are kind of in full swing, I did get notification that there will be a meeting at Mt. Zion Pleasant View Plaza that will be on June 9th. I know that's a while away, but I look for other crime watch groups to begin to meet with more regularity than we have certainly over the past year. And as always if you see something that just does not seem right, please call 911.

Capital Improvement Board - Councilwoman Venecz - We did meet last Monday. We discussed a format for funding tracking and we were presented with a project request form for residents. There was some discussion about having a request form for each of the council people or other department heads who would come before us. Our Controller, Megan, talked a projection report for projects and the casino funding distribution. There is... there was a request made of the Sanitary District for \$260,000 for a project on Schneider due to a main break near the Kennedy Avenue pumping station. The Sanitary District is kind of holding off on committing to that cost sharing effort until they find out exactly what the main break is going to entail. And we also approved \$121,526.52 for phase one of the Chicago Street construction engineering. Our next meeting is scheduled for April 5th, at this point in time we have no business that will come before the Capital Improvement Board, but we will still have a work study session at 4pm, and that is on April 5th. Thank you.

Councilman Tyler- We haven't met yet, but we are in the process of planning another Police and Fire Committee meeting coming up soon just on the agenda. I wanna share that we will be discussing the return of the Explorer program through Hammond Police Department, as well as the openings that they have and are looking to feel for other life's current licensed officers from other departments who want to become Hammond Police Officers. And the last thing I'll share is, I wanna give my condolences to Corporal Woods and the entire Hammond Police Department on the loss of his K-9 partner, Jet. Jet came down with cancer relatively quickly and had to be put down over the... the timing was about 2 months. Jet was a member of the H.P.D. for 7 or 8 years and was actually coming up on retirement over the next couple of months. So he was the oldest dog in the K-9 Unit, just, I mean, just a top-notch K-9 and partner for Corporal Woods. So I want to give me condolences to Corporal Woods and the entire Hammond Police Department on their loss.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING-FINAL PASSAGE

21-09 An Ordinance To Appropriate Monies into the 2021 Gaming Fund

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

Councilwoman Venecz- This Ordinance is appropriating funds from various different balances that were left over from 2020 and will be appropriated to the 2021 accounts.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Torres

Motion carried 8/0/1 ORDINANCE NO. 9502 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

21-10 An Ordinance Vacating a 66-foot Portion of 600 and 700 Block of Eaton Street and 5800 Block of Madison (AKA Windrich) Avenue

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee with a Committee Meeting on April 12, 2021 at 5:15p.m.,with a Public Hearing on April 12, 2021. AYES: ALL

Councilman Tyler- Just so the public knows, this ordinance is coming out of a relationship agreement with the School City of Hammond. To vacate a portion of Eaton Street and Windrich Avenue, in between the back of the Civic Center and the alleyway up against Erie Street. So that the School City of Hammond can use this for a sports facility for the new highschool. Not sure when the demolition or construction is going to begin, but I know we are in the final stages of this agreement, so hopefully we'll start seeing some movement on that soon so that they can utilize in their first year of existence in the fall. Thank you.

21-11 An Ordinance Reclassifying Certain Lands in the City of Hammond for Zoning Purpose and Amending Ordinance No. 8514 (An Ordinance Establishing a Zoning Plan for the City of Hammond Including the Regulations and Maps to Administer the Zoning Plan in Order to Provide for Orderly Growth and Development within the City, All in Accordance with the Comprehensive/Land Use Plan, As Amended) for property commonly known as 2642 New York Avenue

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee with a Committee Meeting on April 12th, 2021 at 5:25p.m. and an Intent to Consider for the same day. AYES: ALL

RESOLUTIONS

None

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilwoman Venecz- I would like to remind our residents that dog tags are coming due on March 31st. You can get the application online or you can go to the Controller's Office and get your dog tag by March 31st. I do owe the residents of North Hammond an apology for not bringing this up at the last meeting, but our meeting on February 22nd. Suzzette Kubacki brought to our attention a liquor license transfer that was going to go in her neighborhood at 3915 Hohman Avenue. And thanks to the neighborhood coming together they received over 300 signatures on a petition to remonstrate against the transfer of that license. Councilman Kalwinski was very involved in this effort as well. As what ended up happening was the petitioner withdrew his request. So I just wanted to point out that a neighborhood can have an effect on how things transpire in their neighborhood and their voice was certainly heard in the area of 3915 Hohman Avenue. So congratulations to the neighborhood. And thank you for your efforts in keeping your neighborhood, a neighborhood. Thank you.

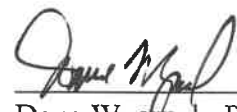
PUBLIC EXPRESSION

George Stoya- With respect to the credit cards used to make payments on the water bills, will this Council contemplate adding that fee on to our bills monthly? Also with respect to Cargill, I would like to get a little more detail with the invasive noise.

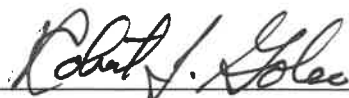
Chief of Staff Phil Taillon- I just wanted to say about the credit card fees, that the Water Department have came up with a solution. Not only will the residents not have to cover any of the cost for the fees for using a credit card, but also the City might be charged a cheaper rate because we a public utility. In regards to Cargill, Councilman Kalwinski has a meeting with Mr. Lawson from Cargill, myself and Ron Novak have a meeting with him on Thursday. So we will be following up about whatever they speak about. This issue is not going away and we're going to address it one way or the other.

Councilman Emerson, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to adjourn. AYES: ALL

ATTEST:



Dave Woepel, President
Hammond Common Council



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

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

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*