

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL  
MARCH 28, 2016

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on March 28, 2016 in the Hammond City Council Chambers.

Council President Michael Opinker presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

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

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

READING OF THE MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to accept the minutes of March 14, 2016 and place on file.

AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Markovich, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to approve the claims from March 9, 2016 through March 23, 2016. Claim #1638 through claim #1967, inclusive.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

16-06 Appropriation of Monies into the 2016 Gaming Fund

16-07 Appropriation - \$17,488.40 - From : Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund  
To: Park Department

16-08 Appropriation - \$57,000 - From: Operating Balance  
To: Special Events/Key & Clean Up Refunds

No one spoke.

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL cont.

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COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Rakos read a letter from the School City of Hammond regarding the 47th Annual Scholastic Indiana State Team Chess Championship.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council as a Whole - Councilman Spitale - Brought out 16-06, 16-07, 16-08, 16-09, 16-10 and 16-11.

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

Wed., Mar. 30; Columbia Crime Watch; Columbia School; 5:30 p.m.

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

Wed., Mar. 30; Edison on the Road; Golden Manor; 1:00 p.m.

Fri., Apr. 1; Irving Community Watch; Irving School; 9:15 a.m.

Wed., Mar. 30; Jefferson Crime Watch; Jefferson School; 6:30 p.m.

Tues., Mar. 29; Pulaski Park Neighborhood Assoc.; American Legion; 6:30 p.m.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

16-06 An Ordinance to Appropriate Monies into the 2016 Gaming Fund

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

Councilman Spitale - Transfer of funds from one year to the next and it's done every year.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9335 PASSED

16-07 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for the Hammond Park Department

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

Councilwoman Venecz - This is appropriating funds from the Operating Balance in the amount of \$17,488.40 to the Hotel/Motel Fund to be used for Promotional and Advertising.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9336 PASSED

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE cont.

16-08 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds from the Operating Balance for the Hammond Park Department

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

Councilwoman Venecz - This will appropriate funds from the Operating Balance in the amount of \$57,000 to Special Events which is \$50,000 and Key and Clean Up Refunds in the amount of \$7,000.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9337 PASSED

16-09 An Ordinance Amending Ord. 3351, Amended Ord. 4328 and 4654, also known as Sec. 151.17 of the Hammond Municipal Code as it relates to the Composition of the Electrical Contractor's Board

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

Councilman Spitale - To be on the board you have to be a resident of the city of Hammond, and that's for all members. The members will be changed from eight (8) to another number to be discussed later.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to amend in 16-09A in its entirety.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to amend the number of the members of this board from eight (8) to seven (7); under Section A, Number 2, we will change from two (2) to one (1) lay members that are Hammond residents; also under C, it should read that four (4) members of the Electrical Commission shall constitute a quorum.

ROLL CALL VOTE (amendments to 16-09A)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 AMENDMENT ADOPTED

ROLL CALL VOTE (amend in 16-09A as amended)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 AMENDMENT ADOPTED

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage as amended)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9338 PASSED  
(as amended)

16-10 An Ordinance Amending Ord. 4880 also known as Sec. 154.02 of the Hammond Municipal Code as it relates to the Composition of the HVAC Contractor's Board

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved for passage.

Councilman Spitale - This also is about residency. Those being all members from the city of Hammond.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to amend in 16-10A in its entirety.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to amend the amendment. Under letter A, it says that, "the board shall consist of eight (8) members to serve", and we're going to change that to seven (7); under number 5, we're going to change that from two (2) lay members to one (1) lay member; and under number 6, we are going to change the number five (5) to four (4) members shall constitute a quorum.

ROLL CALL VOTE (amendments to 16-10A)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 AMENDMENT ADOPTED

ROLL CALL VOTE (amend in 16-10A as amended)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 AMENDMENT ADOPTED

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage as amended)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9339 PASSED  
(as amended)

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE cont.

16-11 An Ordinance Amending Ord. 3456 also known as Sec. 150.026 of the Hammond Municipal Code as it relates to the Composition of the Building Contractor's Board

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved for passage.

Councilman Spitale - Also all members have to be Hammond residents.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to amend in 16-11A in its entirety.

ROLL CALL VOTE (amend in 16-11A)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 AMENDMENT ADOPTED  
(as amended)

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage as amended)

AYES: Markovich, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Higgs, Emerson, Rakos, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9340 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Higgs - There was a Ord. 14-21 that was passed and I sponsored, the ordinance number was 9258.

Councilman Higgs reads Ordinance 9258.

Councilman Higgs - The reason I brought this ordinance up is because there are a number of properties within my district that have been demo'd and the trees and all the weeds are still remaining. Whatever company is selected to do the demo's, I would appreciate if they would tear down the trees and take down the trees when they take down the home instead of leaving the trees sitting there. Particularly there is one on 164th and Rev. Burns Drive that has been there since last year. The tore down the property and the trees are still sitting there. Who wants to look out there and see a bunch of dead trees sitting across a vacant lot? It's just ridiculous and I've sent letters and requested this over and over and I don't know why the ball is being dropped but I would

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Higgs cont. - really appreciate if a letter be sent to the Board of Works and all the departments pertaining to this matter so that they will address this in my district as soon as possible. I so move.

Councilman Torres second.

LETTER SENT: MARCH 29, 2016

Councilman Higgs - On 908 Becker, this property has been vacated for about seven to eight years and it still hasn't been demo'd. I make a motion that a letter be sent to Code Enforcement so that the Blue and White house as well as I know I sent a letter to about 838 Carroll also but I think they're looking for the title for that property but 908 Becker needs to be demo'd. It's really bad. In fact the other two properties across the street there's cats running out and everything. But, particularly the one at 908 Becker needs to be demo'd. I so move.

Councilman Torres second.

LETTER SENT: MARCH 29, 2016

Mayor McDermott - I wanted to point out that a couple council meetings ago Councilman Markovich asked for a list of all board appointments appointed by the mayor and the Hammond City Council, how much they make, when their terms started, when their terms expired, and we provided all that information to every council member today, a three page document. I also provided it to the press. It has all appointments made by the city of Hammond, the Mayor's Office and by yourselves as the Council body. So I wanted to point out that Councilman Markovich asked for that and we made sure we got it by today's meeting. So, I don't if anybody has any questions, I'm here to answer them.

Councilman Higgs - You know, I don't have any problem with people sitting on boards, particularly. The only question I had was why some people were sitting on more than one board. Of course I know now, since the stipend went from \$50 to \$200 more people are much more interested in being on boards and I think Councilman Markovich brought up possibly having people submit resumes or applications for these board appointments like they do in some other cities. But my only concern was that some people were sitting on three different boards and to me that's ridiculous. But it's not my choice, I don't have the authority to appoint those.

Mayor McDermott - Councilman Higgs indicated that to me in the caucus and if the council wants to do some type of ordinance to prevent that, that's your option as a council body. But right now, you could, as a civilian, you could be on more than one board. As an elected official you can not sit on boards and that's what we're trying to follow. But I understand Councilman Higgs' concern and if the council wanted to pass an ordinance to prevent that I would conduct myself accordingly as the Mayor. I do acknowledge and I want to point out the particular individual Councilman Higgs is talking about and she was serving on multiple boards before the salaries were bumped up. Now that they're bumped up..... I understand where he's coming from but I do want to point out she was serving on a board that paid \$35 a month, so I don't think she's doing it for the money. She was doing it to help the city in this case. But if the council wanted to bring up and ordinance like that and pass

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - it, that's your prerogative as a council and if it becomes law in Hammond then obviously I'll conduct myself accordingly when I make appointments. As far as Councilman Markovich's recommendation for a database of resumes, I'm not opposed to that. I mean I'm still gonna appoint who I appoint. Maybe it's somebody from that database, maybe it's not, but as long as I'm the Mayor I have the ability to appoint people to boards and I will. And I try to do so based on a number of factors; diversity, professionalism, I like appointing homeowners to boards; people that are knowledgeable in that area, these are the things I look at and quite frankly I think I've done pretty well without a database of resumes. But if you guys want to require a database of resumes that's your prerogative as a council. You just got to pass an

ordinance that requires that. So. And if that's required and I have to look at the database resumes, I will, and then I'll pick the best person and put them on the board. So. Any other questions? And I wanted to point out to Councilman Markovich that we did want to get this out to you and I apologize it wasn't with you earlier. You should have had that last meeting and I acknowledge that and it's my fault, okay?

Councilman Higgs - I received a number of phone calls from my constituents near Kenwood School and Hohman Avenue and Moraine for a number of vehicles being parked on the corner and I guess it's an automotive repair shop or something of that nature.

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Markovich, moved to send a letter to the Chief of Police asking what he has done to address the issue on Hohman Avenue just adjacent to Kenwood School and I think that's Moraine. I would just like to know what his outcome was in regards to addressing the issue.

LETTER SENT: MARCH 29, 2016

Mayor McDermott - I wanted to point something out. There was a reorganization that occurred in the Hammond Police Department on Thursday and I talked to a few of the council members earlier today and I wanted to update the rest of the Hammond City Council about the reorganization that took place in the Hammond City Police Department. The Assistant Chief of Police, Jeff Long, agreed to take over as Captain of the Patrol Division and Jeff is outstanding as Captain of Patrol. Even though I think Jeff was an excellent Assistant Chief, I think that he was a better Captain of Patrol, he recommended this and I wanted him to do it because I think we need to up our game at the Captain of Patrol's position. So, I accepted Assistant Chief Long's recommendation and he is now a Captain of Patrol. So Jeff voluntarily stepped down in rank because he felt that we needed to step up our game in the patrol division. So that left the Assistant Chief's position open and I reached an agreement today with previous Lieutenant Andy Short who is a Lieutenant and is now going to be Hammond's Assistant Chief of Police. I believe this is the first time an African American police officer has ever held the position of Assistant Chief of Police. That's not the reason we chose him. He's an excellent police officer. He grew up in this neighborhood. He's conducted himself exemplary, in an exemplary manner. He took the promotion today and he's excited and I'm excited and the Hammond Police Department is excited. So this was all the Chief's recommendation and I want to make it clear that I think Jeff Long is a trooper for voluntarily stepping down a rank so that he could take over Patrol Division that he thought he could help with. But today the new Assistant Chief Andy Short took over his position. I believe he officially takes over the position tomorrow. But I wanted you all to know in the Hammond City Council. I think that's great news and I know

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - he's very happy and excited about taking over as Assistant Chief of Police. So. But I did want to say thank you to Captain Jeff Long who voluntarily took over Division. He thinks that he's better suited to be Captain of Patrol than he is to be Assistant Chief of Police and I appreciate Captain Long for doing that. I think that's leadership. You don't see too many people voluntarily take a step down in rank so that they could run a division that they think they could be more effective at. But Andy Short is going to be outstanding as Assistant Chief of Police and I think it's a very proud moment for him, for his family and the Hammond Police Department. Obviously, this is the first public announcement I've made and I'm on gohammond.tv right now and I have a Times reporter sitting next to me but more important I have you all in front of me and I wanted you to know what was going on in the Hammond Police Department.

Councilman Torres - I commend you for the appointment of Andy Short. I'm sure he'll do an excellent job. I

also of course know Jeff Long and he's an outstanding person himself and I'm sure he'll do well also as Captain, well he was Captain before, so. I commend you for that.

Councilwoman Venecz - For those who were at the last Council Meeting, sometimes residents think that we don't listen to what you have to say. A gentleman pointed out that 7-eleven building on Hohman Avenue was dark. No lights over there and it was very dangerous. I'm glad to report that as the result of much communication the lights are now on at 7-eleven. We have found out that 7-eleven does not own that building. They are leasing the building from someone who lives out of state and through the efforts of several people we have been able to make contact with 7-eleven, make contact with the gentleman who owns the property and hopefully we will see some results of that communication in the near future. So, we do listen.

#### PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Carolyn Jackson - Hammond High is no longer the only school in Hammond with a tennis team. So when they are practicing at the courts in Harrison Park there is nowhere for H.A.S.T. to practice but the older dilapidated courts behind Eggers. There is oftentimes standing water on these courts which renders them inoperable. Those courts need to be resurfaced. HPD needs to keep an eye on Harrison Park when the children are getting out of school.

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

AYES: ALL

Minutes approved at the Common Council Meeting on April 11, 2016. \_\_\_\_\_

Michael Opinker, President /s/  
Hammond Common Council  
ATTEST:

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Robert J. Golec, City Clerk /s/

Time: 6:40 pm  
cb