

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL

JULY 9, 2018

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on July 9, 2018 in the Hammond City Council Chambers.

Council President Janet Venecz presided.

Council Coordinator Carmen I. Balboa facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

A Moment of Silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

READING OF THE MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of June 25, 2018 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Markovich, supported by Councilman Higgs, moved to approve the claims from June 20, 2018 through July 3, 2018. Claim #3809 through claim #4059, inclusive.

Councilman Higgs - I would just like to reflect that a number of these claims are from the Gaming Advisory Committee to different organizations within our city that's receiving funding for this fiscal year and hopefully those funds are utilized for the purposes that they are being allocated for.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Higgs - I would like to thank the Mayor on behalf of helping us out with “Who Got Game”. “In appreciation to Mayor Thomas McDermott from Councilman Anthony Higgs of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District.” The Three on Three Tournament was held on July 7, 2018 at MLK Park which is gonna be reconstructed. A \$2.5 Million project that I’m glad to see happen. One of the things that I first initially did when I became Councilman was got a pavilion built, as well as playground equipment, as well as new basketball courts. So, the renovation of the park is gonna be a great thing for the 3<sup>rd</sup> District and that’s why I’m on board. I just want to thank the Mayor for your support for my District and for the children of this community because that’s what it’s about. It’s not about me, it’s about them.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community & Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Announced upcoming meetings and events:  
Fri., Jul 20; Community Watch at Silver Birch; 2 p.m.  
Tues., Jul 17; East Hammond Pullman C.W.; Ophelia Steen Center; 6:30 p.m.  
Thur., Jul 19; South Hammond C.W.; Hammond Housing Authority Bld.; 7 p.m.  
Whiting/Robertsdale C.W.; Thur., Jul 17; Calumet College; 6:30 p.m.

Mayor McDermott and the City of Hammond Community and Crime Watch Groups invites everyone to National Night Out against drugs and crime that will be Tues., Aug. 7 from 5-8 p.m. at the Wolf Lake Splash Pad. For a donation of baby products you will receive a free hot dog, chips and pop and those baby products will be donated to Haven House which is a domestic violence shelter. There will be many events, door prizes, a photographer and D.J. Suave.

Today is the last day that you can shoot off fireworks legally in the city of Hammond.

ORDINANCE 3<sup>RD</sup> READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

18-15 Ordinance Authorizing the City of Hammond, Indiana, to Issue its Economic Development Revenue Bonds, Series 2018B (Lear Seating Project) and Approving other Actions in Respect Thereto

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved the proposed ordinance to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading and referred it to the Council as a Whole and Finance Committees. AYES: ALL

Mayor McDermott - I just want to remind the Council, I know the action takes place in two weeks but we have representatives from Lear here if you did have any questions. It doesn’t appear that you do but I want to remind the Council that we fought real hard for this project. They’re buying non-productive land in our city and with a small investment on our part they’ve agreed to build a \$34 million structure. Consolidate hundreds of jobs from all over Northwest Indiana into that one facility. A couple hundred jobs located in Portage are coming back to

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - Hammond and when it's all said and done and they've moved into the new building, as Councilman Higgs was pointing out earlier in caucus, we are going to be able to sell this building. It's a great building that will be sold and put to productive use. So at the end of the day we're gonna get two great companies out of what was previously one. So, I hope that this moves along through the council without a lot of ... I hope it moves smoothly through the Council. It's an important project and we're lucky that they chose our city.

Councilman Higgs - My question was to the company of Lear, what is the total benefit of jobs that's gonna be added to our city?

Lear Representative (Erica) - First of all, just thanks to everyone here in Hammond. We're glad to be able to stay in the city. Like I said earlier, we don't want to relocate our employees and we're glad that we can bring more into the city. So it means a lot to us that you guys are supporting us. As far as jobs, the estimated head count at the new facility will be 798. The average wages for salaried employees is \$80 annually and for hourly employees it's \$21.88 hourly. So, you know, great jobs coming into the city, good pay. So we're excited to be able to do that.

Lear Representative (Mike) - As well as was mentioned earlier, we have our facility in our Portage location that will be all consolidated into Hammond. The Portage location all being one facility here off of Michigan Street so it will be 200 plus, 260 plus jobs that will be going back to Hammond when it's all said and done.

Councilman Higgs - Me being the sponsor of this particular ordinance and it being in my district, initially when Lear came to Hammond I was very enthused and very excited about it and I still am and I feel one of the benefits for Lear staying in Hammond is economic development and when there's economic development and growth in the city it makes the city grow. So I applaud your efforts and I hope your company is prosperous and it moves forward.

Mayor McDermott - In two weeks, I imagine, this comes up again. Just so they know.

RESOLUTIONS

18R-33            A Resolution Authorizing the Amendment of Lear Corporation Development Agreement

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved for adoption.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION NO. R33 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Higgs - As I stated in the previous meeting, I had questions and concerns about the East Side Community Council and you were saying to us that you were gonna schedule a meeting. I'm still wondering when the meeting is going to be held and if there is going to be a meeting. Because I do recall you stating to me and four other people at the meeting that you were the president of that organization. So I'm just trying to get clarity as to if you're still the president, are you plan on running for president or what's the real deal here because when I requested the information from the Secretary of State it said Leroy Howard was the president.

Council President Venecz - Thank you, Councilman. I told you when we have a meeting I would let you know and there is not a meeting scheduled just yet.

Councilman Higgs - Well, it seems as though it hasn't been any meetings. So I'm kind of confused why you would say you are the president and you're not. That's the problem I have with it all.

Councilman Torres - You know you were talking about, tonight, the ordinance for the time limits that fireworks expire. I had at least two complaints about oversized fireworks. I know the M3 are loud enough but some people think that ¼ sticks or better of dynamite are being blown. I don't know if we have any control over that. I don't know how you enforce that but it's just something that a constituent wanted me to bring up.

Council President Venecz - I understand. I got a call about somebody driving down the street throwing M80's out of the car. They are very dangerous. We all saw in the paper today that a man lost his life due to fireworks. So they are very dangerous but they are legal in the state of Indiana.

Councilman Higgs - I want to also thank Councilman Markovich for coming out and helping us in regards to the 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament. Thank you so much for your efforts and your time in spending with the 3 on 3 for a number of years, it's been going on for fourteen years and you have come to my home and personally helped with getting the bikes and all the extra things that are needed for the tournament to the park. So I really appreciate your efforts and your help and I would hope that the other two At Large's would get involved in this wonderful program in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District as well because it's about the children, it's not about the councilmen, it's about the children. And also, County Councilman Dave Hamm, thank you for your participation. And Rita and Kendall Warner as well, since you're in the audience. Thank you all for participating in this wonderful event.

Councilman Torres - You know we're grateful that they're paving the streets in our District. But they put these signs up and sign says, "No Parking, Police Order, 6 a.m. to 7 p.m." But Thursday they were stomping them down in the ground and letting the people know but somebody was out there and went and told people they had to move their cars right away. Of course people go to work, people are coming to work, and there seems to be that they don't give enough notification. The same thing happened Saturday, I got calls at the house because they were doing Sherman Street. They put the signs Friday, with no starting date on them, and then Saturday morning they were there ready to do the milling, stripping the street. People have no problem with moving their cars. But for one thing, they didn't expect contractors to working on Saturday so nobody moved their car. They thought they were gonna start at least Monday. These are put up by the contractors not the engineers or the

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Torres cont. - police department. But they've got to give the people sufficient notice, at least two days. Maybe on these signs, put a starting date so the people will be notified properly and they'll know when to move their cars. There was a lot of fuss Saturday over this.

Councilman Higgs - Councilman Torres, just for clarity, I guess for suggestion in regards to that, you can always come up with an ordinance requiring the engineers or whoever is developing or doing the overlay, a certain time of the day that you request it be done and make it become a law in our city as well. So that's just a suggestion.

Councilman Higgs - I want to thank the Hammond Times for running the ad on Ms. Pearline Jenkins who was a pioneer in our city. Who served this community in every aspect whether you were white, purple or blue. She respected people and she spoke to the issues and she fought for injustice. Something that has been lackadaisical when it comes to the city for some reason. But the reality of it is she was a pioneer in this city. She served as secretary for Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church, as well as president of the NAACP. So Ms. Pearline, your memories and your legacy will live on. And I thank God I had an opportunity to sponsor the resolution and name the street after her. Because she was one of my mentors, as well as Ms. Cherry and a number of other individuals within the community that I worked in, all types of organizations and I am aware of what organization's done what in this city and what they work towards and what they try to accomplish because those were some of the people that were very instrumental in teaching me some of the things that I've learnt and execute here as a councilman. So again, God bless Ms. Pearline and God bless her memories. May you rest in peace, Ms. Pearline.

Councilman Rakos - I wanted to advise my fellow council people here. Last meeting, I've been on this council for 2½ years now and I made a point of if somebody wants to go back to the regular order of business, for the last year I've always said, "no". The reason I do that is, number one, we can take care of business in the regular order of business. Number two, 95% of the time it seems like when somebody wants to criticize a council member here we want to go back to the regular order of business so we can answer the criticism even though they're not allowed to ask us a question and get an answer when they're here. As far as I'm concerned this kind of thing can be taken care of after the meeting. I've gotten some flack, at least one occasion when I said, "no" when going back to the regular order of business. I want you all to know it's not personal, this is the way I feel. I will soon be getting some people here, I'm pretty sure, because they don't like the way Hessville Park, or my parks, are taken care of. I'm pretty sure I'm gonna get some flack. Trust me when I tell you I will not ask to go to the regular order of business when somebody wants to criticize me while I'm up here. They want to criticize me they can. I just want you to know that it is nothing personal and that's how I feel. Thank you.

Councilwoman Venecz - I would like to announce that this coming Thursday at Five Guys there is a fundraiser for our Council Secretary who has some real medical challenges. She's been off work since February and, actually, the other Secretary in the office, Susan Stafford, took it upon herself to organize this. So, at Five Guys in Munster on Thursday, all hours of operation, 20% of the fundraiser sales and an additional dollar for every milkshake will be most helpful for our friend Debbie Jimenez. So, you can even purchase gift cards and she'll get credit for that. So, please go out to Five Guys on Thursday and get yourself a sandwich for Debbie.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Woerpel - Just real quick, as I was walking up this evening, a gentleman I've got to know the last two or three years, I know I don't know him as well as most of you guys do, but Buddie Fennie told me that he retires tomorrow. He's a janitor at this building. When I got out of my car he was like, "I'm joining you tomorrow." I'm like, "What did I do?" He's like, "You retired two years ago and now I get to." So, I just want to wish Buddie a happy retirement.

Council President Venecz - Thank you, Councilman. Buddie is a wonderful man. He and my husband have gotten to be great friends over the years. They worked together over at Planning & Development and he is a very special man, and on behalf of all of us, we wish him the very best in God's blessings.

Councilman Higgs - Well, I just wanted to make something perfectly clear. In my tenure being on the Council I haven't always seen eye to eye with the Mayor but maybe that's because maybe we don't see eye on certain issues. But the reality of it is that my love for my community and my city will always remain the same, whether I'm a councilman or not. What you say, it really makes no difference to me because I'm gonna continue to work for the betterment of this city and my district and the backlash that I've received over the years is unbelievable by some of my own people of my same color. So, the reality of it is they should be fighting for the injustice or fighting to move the community forward instead of coming and criticizing. But that's their choice. I can take it like a man and I have strong shoulders and God bless them and God bless Hammond.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Anne Herbert - Commented on a meeting regarding Hammond Day she attended. Leroy Howard couldn't attend and asked Tommy Dorsey, Councilwoman Venecz, and herself to attend in his place. Councilman Higgs started cursing at her immediately and threatened her. She has about 45 minutes of the meeting recorded. The recording has been taken to the Police Chief and her lawyer.

Edith Nelson Dec - Discussed the Noise Ordinance in District 5. Not regular urban noises but the boom boom base that rattles windows and you can feel within your gut. Something needs to be done about it. The ordinance needs to be enforced. Her tax dollars entitle her to a quiet and peaceful domain and she's not getting it. Would like to share some ideas and recommendations with her Councilman.

Bobby Lewis - Her daughters home was damaged by fire. Her daughter passed last week. I was told to see the Councilman of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District for help. He offered us a mop and a broom. Anne Herbert and Leroy Howard were good friends to her and told her exactly what to do. The situation bothered her. Wanted Councilman Higgs to know that hurt her heart. Mr. Heintz of the Park Department was instrumental in helping repair her child's house. The Council needs a change. The Hammond Police and County Coroner were wonderful.

Leroy Howard - Believed that valuable council time was being wasted. As the President of the East Side Community Council he came to give the councilman who questioned it clarity. Came to dispel lies regarding the organization. Unfortunately more Council time has to be wasted on this regarding statements that were made at

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Leroy Howard cont. - the prior meeting. It is not a ghost organization. It is a legitimate organization in the city of Hammond. Which works with the youth and community. The ESCC was formed in the wake of the McClendon's deaths. The organization is not just a black organization. All races, creeds and nationalities are welcome. If the children are receiving positive results, what does it matter who is leading. Council President Venecz, in her private time as a citizen, is a Chairperson of the ESCC. If the President can not make it to a meeting then he sends someone in his stead. He sends his Chairperson, Administrative Assistant or Public Relations person. The ESCC is not here for recognition, it is here for results.

Denise Campbell - Read a letter from Amira Robinson who couldn't attend regarding the East Side Community Council. The letter described how and why the ESCC was formed. A community vote was taken to appoint the member of the ESCC Board. Leroy Howard was chosen as President, who works tirelessly for the young people of Hammond. His hard work, dedication, and event success speak volumes about his character. Doesn't know why anyone would question the motives of the ESCC. Maybe the motives of those who question the ESCC should be looked into. There is enough division in the community.

Sheila Ivory - Doesn't understand why the problem with the ESCC is always around Hammond Day.

Councilman Higgs was declared out of order.

Sheila Ivory - Councilman Higgs claims that Hammond Day was his idea, then why did it take Leroy to come in and get it done. The day after Hammond Day there was a mess left in the park by Councilman Higgs and his supporters. Hammond Day is for the community and they have divided it. Some of the things said by Councilman Higgs should never have come out of his mouth. Will vote for whoever runs against him. Wants him out.

Tommie Dorsey - Has attended the last couple of council meetings. Councilman Higgs previously stated that the Mayor gave him a \$1 thousand check for Hammond Day and for his 3 on 3. On that same day everybody got a letter from him stating that he was not going to be part of Hammond Day, but yet he still kept the check.

Kendall Warner - This meeting has been hilarious. Good thing Mayor's Night Out is recorded. In 2009, at the Mayor's Night out at Kenwood, asked what the Mayor was going to improve the race relationship between the youth and the Police Department. His answer was that he was going to form an organization. Leroy Howard or any of these individuals sitting here were at that meeting. We met after the meeting and decided to have a meeting that week. This is where Leroy Howard showed up with his family and friends. They voted him in as President.

MINUTES OF THE COMMON COUNCIL cont.

JULY 9, 2018

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Rakos, moved to adjourn.

AYES: ALL

ATTEST:

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Janet Venecz, President  
Hammond Common Council

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Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 7:00 p.m.

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Minutes were approved at the Common Council meeting of July 23, 2018.