

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on March 10, 2014, in the Hammond City Council Chambers.

Council President Michael Opinker presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Hinojosa, Opinker

ABSENT: Markovich

TOTAL: 8

READING OF THE MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Kalwinski, moved to accept the minutes of February 24, 2014 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to accept the claims from February 19, 2014 through March 5, 2014. Claim #1329 through claim #1619, inclusive.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Hinojosa, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Markovich

Motion carried

8/0/1

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Higgs read correspondence from Dale Parrish regarding the Bethany Childcare Development building.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

RESOLUTIONS cont.

Councilman Hinojosa cont. - people without health care can get a mammogram. Preventable diseases such as flu and pneumonia, how many people will get the flu shot and die because they can't pay the \$30 to \$40. How many women, particularly the poor, have been exposed and can't get a pap smear. People left with untreated diseases, Councilman Higgs blood pressure, diabetes, can end up with more serious health issues. The legislation closes this Friday and our hope is that the governor and the legislators reconsider their position.

ROLL CALL VOTE

AYES: Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Uylaki, Higgs, Emerson, Hinojosa, Opinker

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Markovich

Motion carried

8/0/1

RESOLUTION NO. R08 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Emerson - In regards to the proposed South Shore Expansion project that's in a lot of places lately. One place it hasn't been is in my mail box, either e-mail or snail mail or council mail. I've received nothing about the details and I have primary questions about the funding. A million other questions. A new rumor from the radio or who knows where comes up every day, so. I'm not opposed to transportation but my question, beyond funding, I have a million questions and I was thinking that collectively up here this body represents over 80 thousand people. More importantly, the proposed project runs through the heart of the 4th District which has over 14 thousand people, Councilman Higgs' District and to a certain degree, Councilman Uylaki's District. Beyond that, like I said, we all represent the whole city and we, as far as I know, I've talked to a few colleagues, we have no information that we can actually put our teeth into. There's a million opinions out there, but to that end, and again, I think we may be for it, we just know nothing. I mean, the average person on the street has more opinions about this than I do.

Councilman Emerson, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to send a letter to Congressman Pete Visclosky, inviting him to our next meeting, if possible. If he could not make it to the meeting, or another meeting, that he send us a letter with an explanation of the details of the proposed project.

AYES: ALL

LETTER SENT: MARCH 11, 2014

Councilman Higgs - Certainly I haven't received any correspondence as it relates to that expansion of the South Shore as well.

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to send a letter to the RDA Board in regards to the expansion and how is it gonna affect the city of Hammond as well as my district. Certainly if there's gonna be some demolition or relocation or whatever, I need to get some general idea so that my constituents are aware

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Higgs cont. - of what's gonna be effecting them in the future. Maybe we can get some of the representatives from the board to come out and give us some input as to which direction they are planning on going with this expansion.

AYES: ALL

LETTER SENT: MARCH 11, 2014

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Hinojosa, moved to send a letter to Phil Taillon in regards to the Woodmar project so I can get a status on that. I know I sent a letter previously to the Board of works but I need to direct it to him and maybe Owana Miller and they can give me a general idea as to what's going on with that project.

AYES: ALL

LETTER SENT: MARCH 11, 2014

Councilman Higgs - I certainly want to say thank you to those who sent their condolences in regards to my Aunt who was funeralized on Friday in Freeport, IL. So, Sheriff Buncich, my colleagues, as well as Jerome Prince, for their condolences. So I just wanted to say thank you.

Councilman Higgs - Also, I received correspondence from the city of Hammond, Office of the Common Council to the principals, and it's pertaining the scholarship funds and it's generally just saying that the Hammond City Council is once again providing fifteen \$1,000 scholarships to high school seniors graduating on June of 2014. Scholarship applications are included in this memorandum and I have a copy of it if anyone wants to take a look at it I have it and what the criteria is or whatever and I just wanted to make sure that you guys know I have a copy.

Councilwoman Venecz - For those who wish to do good in your community and know what's going on in your neighborhood:

Mon., Mar. 17	Columbia C.W.	Columbia School	6:00 pm
Tues., Mar. 18	E. Ham'd Pullman C.W.	Ophelia Steen Center	6:00 pm
Thur., Mar. 20	Hessville C.W.	Jean Shepherd Center	7:00 pm
Wed., Mar. 19	Lafayette C.W.	Lafayette School	6:30 pm
Thur., Mar. 20	S. Ham'd C.W.	Ham'd Housing Bldg.	7:00 pm
Thur., Mar. 13	Whiting-Rob. C.W.	Calumet College	6:30 pm
Wed., Mar. 12	Woodmar C.W.	Nat'l Guard Armory	6:00 pm

Councilman Higgs - I just wanted you to give a general idea as to what's the status on Bethany so all minds and hearts are clear.

City Atty. Kantar - The action against Bethany Childcare Center which is right there on Highland Street originated back in April. The City of Hammond received a letter from the councilman in April of 2013 saying that due to the deplorable condition of the property which has been vacant, without power and utilities since

*Prepared by
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NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

City Atty. Kantar cont. - 2009, several windows are boarded up, several windows are wide open to the elements and have been open to the elements for some time. There's trash in the yard. It's quite a mess. Due to the deplorable condition I would like this property referred for the demolition list. So we placed it on the demolition list. In October we had the hearing, October 17th it was affirmed for demolition. The required procedure for notice is to notify all parties as they are listed on the title report. The title report listed indicated a dissolved corporation with an address. That address, unfortunately, when you send mail to it there's no mailbox so it is returned. It is the only address on the title work for that property. In addition there is a \$25,000 redevelopment loan on the property and there's some federal tax liens on the property. We also publish notice in the paper and we also physically attach a notice to the front door of the property on two occasions and we photographed this notice so that there is proof that it was actually posted. So any person who is visiting a property or going past the property would see that there was some sort of a notice on the door. Nobody showed any interest in the property. No repairs were made. No action was taken. October 17th it was ordered demolished. That was recorded on the property. In January we again repeated the same exact steps, notice was mailed, published and posted for the opening of the bid which was the beginning of January, January 16th I think. At that time persons who were affiliated with the property the administratively dissolved corporation approached and said, "We've got a buyer, don't tear the property down." we said, "Okay, fine, if you've got a buyer you can do what every other person does who's got a property on the demolition list. We have a resolution, which was passed in 2009, outlining the procedure for removing a property off the demolition list. We have processed 400 properties through demolition since the program commenced in 2008 and many have been rehabilitated. An individual who is interested in rehabilitating a property first tours the property with the Building Commissioner so he can indicate what needs to be done because what the city does not want is some flipper picking up a property, putting a new coat of paint on it and selling it to a family and all the wiring is bad and there is a fire. So we want it done right and we want it done to code, and if it's been vacant since 2009 believe me it's gonna be expensive to fix. So we said, "Fine, we will take no further action on this demolition. Your buyer can come to the city, meet with us, we can go through an inspection, and tell them what needs to be done and draft an agreement to rehabilitate. This has been reiterate over, and over, and over. Since January to right now at this moment no buyer has come forward to the city fo Hammond and said I am going to be the buyer of this property. I am going to make repairs. Here is who I am. Let's do something. That hasn't happened. The property remains in its condition. Anybody who wants to can drive over there. If you go around the back, the time I took some pictures in January, there were footprints in the snow going into the back of the building. I don't know who's been in there. Last summer we chased some guy out who was living in there. It's a problem that we have with abandoned properties that people go in and tear out all the copper, they tear out all the copper pipes, they tear out all the copper wiring, they start fires, they do drugs, they leave garbage, the place burns down. We've had many fires, especially over on Sibley Street. We have many, many, fires. It's a serious problem. Nobody has come forward and it's the city's intention to move forward. And that's all there is about that.

Councilman Higgs - And even reinforced (unclear) I know you said you sent a letter, there's no mailbox. You put notice in the paper

City Atty. Kantar - Correct, and we taped it to the front door.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Higgs - Even if a buyer should purchase that property, the property still has to be inspected.

City Atty. Kantar - The property still has to be inspected. Anybody you purchase it still has to pay off redevelopment's lien and any federal tax liens that are on the property. So anybody who is interested in buying the property has to take care of those clouds on the title first before they even get to the point of rehabilitating it.

Councilman Higgs - And how many liens are there?

City Atty. Kantar - Well there's a \$25 thousand redevelopment loan that was never paid back and there was some federal tax liens and I don't have the exact amount but they are substantial. We just updated the title policy for the January bid notices and it's still appeared on the title policy for the January bid notices. We haven't run the title policy update since then because there's no point.

Councilman Higgs - So what is the status in terms of the Board of Works at this point.

City Atty. Kantar - We're just gonna proceed forward as soon as the weather breaks. You can't do anything now, the ground's too wet, the construction equipment sinks. It's no good. It's either got to freeze again or dry out because the foundation has to come out. So you digging big equipment with big holes and muddy, it's just not a good combination.

Councilman Higgs - Well, thank you for your input.

City Atty. Kantar - No problem, glad to help. If the buyer or the potential buyer, whoever they are, sees this video, is in ear shot, I'm telling you what to do because you obviously have not been told what to do. Come to the city. Meet with the city. We'll go through the building, we'll tell you what needs to be done to bring it up to code. It's been vacant since 2009, so any grand fathered, preexisting, non-conforming uses have expired. It's going to go back to the original zoning. It's gonna have to be brought up to ADA compliance. It's gonna have to be done right.

Councilman Higgs - And that's the criteria for anyone that purchases an abandoned property.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Mrs. Gray - Read letters regarding the fact that H.A.S.T. school did nothing to commemorate African American Month.

Councilman Higgs, supported by Councilman Hinojosa, moved to return to the regular order of business.

AYES: ALL

Councilman Higgs - First and foremost, the municipality and the school board are two separate entities. I sympathize and understand your feelings, as it relates to that...seeing that I'm the only African American city

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Higgs cont. - councilman in the city of Hammond. But the reality of it is, some of those complaints that you have really need to be directed to the school board. You have three representatives that run for the school board. The reality of it is they need to be addressed with this particular issue. Some of these issues maybe you need to get the community behind you and address it. You know, and if some of my colleagues are interested in joining forces with you and addressing the issue, that's totally up to them. But school city and municipality are two separate entities and I don't know if they're willing to get involved but all I could say is that I understand your thoughts.

Councilwoman Venecz - I am a member of the H.A.S.T. School Board. This situation is being misrepresented to us and it will be addressed at the H.A.S.T. School Board meeting. So, thank you.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Hinojosa, moved to return to the regular order of business.
AYES: ALL

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Dale Parrish - There are things that were not mentioned when City Atty. Kantar spoke about Bethany. On Jan. 27th, the Mayor and Councilman Higgs both said they would take the building off of the demolition list for six months to sell or make the necessary repairs. Secondly, the buyer did meet with Mr. Kearney of the Building Dept.

Ola Smith - In regards to Bethany, I was in that meeting with the Mayor, Councilman Higgs, Dale Parrish and Atty. Kantar. They did agree to take it off of the demolition list and to extend a six month extension for them to be able to get confirmation from the buyer.

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

ATTEST:

Michael Opinker, President
Hammond Common Council

Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:45 pm
cb

Minutes approved at the Hammond Common Council meeting of March 24, 2014.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*