

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on November 9, 2020 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, Tyler, Emerson, Rakos, Woerpel

ABSENT: Kalwinski, Torres

TOTAL: 7

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - I came up to give a report. If you need it, I'm available to answer any questions you may have. Before I get started I want to wish Councilman Emerson a Happy Birthday. I remember his birthday because he shares it with my wife Marissa. I know that we're not voting on the proposed water rate increase today. I just wanted to come up if anybody had any questions. I've been hearing a lot of talk from outside of Hammond and I wanted to I think that's anticipated, and I wanted to update the Council if they had any questions on this. Just for real quick re-hash, I know we're gonna have a public hearing on this next week. The existing water rates to Hammond residents are .44¢ for a thousand gallons. We have not raised the water rate since 1985. We have studies that have been done by the IURC and the Association of Indiana Municipalities that shows Hammond the dead bottom, as far as what we charge, in the State of Indiana. One of the cheapest rates in the Midwest, in the United States of America, quite frankly. The IURC, two years ago, commissioned a study to determine how much it costs a lot of water utilities to make water, and Hammond, it was determined to be, this is in 2017, it was \$1.11 for a thousand gallons was what it cost us to make it and we're selling it for .44¢. In fact, we're selling it to our customer communities for basically .50¢. So we're losing. Every drip of water that we sell, every drip of water that we make, we lose money. Like I said, this hasn't been raised since 1985. Illinois revenue, I think I've explained it well to the Council. The Illinois revenue is not a part of the Indiana Water Utility. I've heard a lot of, basically, misconceptions coming from the public about this money and how it's going to be used. The money that we're talking about that's gonna be raised under a water rate increase can only be used for the Hammond Water Department to invest in it's infrastructure. It can not be used by the City of Hammond. It can not be used to fund, I've heard, "oh, he's gonna build bike trails with this". That's absolute rubbish, it's ridiculous, it's false, and I'm just putting it clear. This is a water rate increase for the Hammond Water Utility. They will use this money to fund infrastructure projects like the water tower project that's happening right now on Columbia and 165th. That project is being paid for by the City of Hammond. Why? Because the Water Utility didn't have \$3.5 million to do that project. So, projects like that. If we do Tapper Street reconstruction and the water line needs to be paid for, for the last twenty five years the City of Hammond has paid for it ourselves. Even though it should have been the Water Utility paying for it. Those kinds of things go away. The Water Utility will start paying for its own infrastructure work into the future if this

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - happens. Again, I've been in touch with our customer communities. I've met with Munster last week. I plan to meet with Whiting, Griffith, Highland and Dyer very soon. About the ramp up schedule more than anything, I mean, let's take a step back. Hammond residents, Hammond Council, we're talking about something that's gonna affect my household to the tune of \$10 a month max. Probably more like \$6 or \$7 dollars a month. So, for a Hammond resident to budget accordingly, it is a lot easier than it is for the Town of Munster that right now receive \$6 million off the mark up on water and a lot of that is gonna go away because of the water rate increase on their residents. So, I think that it's reasonable for the City of Hammond to discuss with the Munster's, with the Whitings, with the Highlands, and the Dyers, and the Griffiths of the world a ramp up schedule that they're comfortable with. Because we've done our budgets already. In Hammond we passed our budget last meeting. I mean, I imagine Munster has already done their budget, Highland's already done their budget, Dyer's done their budget, and now all of a sudden, you know, Hammond's talking about a rate increase that affects their city. So instead of a \$7 dollar increase for a monthly charge, we're talking about possibly millions of dollars extra for these communities to buy our water. So I think it's reasonable to talk to them and try to work with our customer communities to try to agree to a ramp up where they catch up to us. So, I've been in discussions with that and if it avoids litigation, for instance, let's say, Munster agrees to a certain ramp up schedule that we're comfortable with and if we agree with them on that then they refuse to take us to court and litigate this. I think that's a good resolution. That's sort of where we're heading right now. But, you know, for Hammond residents it's a lot easier to budget for a \$7 dollar change in your household expenses as opposed to Munster that has to deal with millions of dollars, and how it affects them. But, each community that we sell water to in Indiana marks up the water, minimum is 850% mark up. We're talking about millions of dollars that other communities are over charging, you know, and selling water to their residents and you know, you guys are gonna set the record straight. You know, I've heard some arguments about the reasonableness of \$1.90, which is what we're gonna charge, \$1.90 for a thousand gallons. Well, it's completely reasonable when you look at the fact that other communities are charging \$5 dollars for the same amount of water. So, I'm not worried about going to court. If we do end up in court we have a contract and we are going to follow every word in the contract, to the letter of the law. So I'm not worries about going but it could get messy. It could cost a couple bucks and if we could avoid it and try to agree with our customer communities on a ramp up schedule, I'm completely open to it. So, Mr. President, I wanted to update you on that. I also want to apologize to the audience that's in City Hall as well as the Council members and the members of the Clerk's staff that are here, City hall is under construction right now. It's dusty, it's dirty, it's noisy. We're using money that we received from the State Government, ultimately from the Federal Government, to upgrade City hall ADA Access, touchless, things like that for Covid purposes. So, it is sort of a pain in the butt to be in City hall right now. So, I don't blame you for Zooming in. So, I'm available for any questions if you have them.

READING OF THE MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to accept the minutes from October 26, 2020 and place on file.

AYES: ALL

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Hammond City Clerk*

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Rakos, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims from November 2, 2020 through November 4, 2020. Claim #5136 through claim #5352, inclusive.

Councilman Rakos, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to amend in claims:

#5383	United States Treasury-DMS	Self Insurance	\$ 32,890.97
#5384	Gabriela Vasquez & Ruder Law	Self Insurance	\$567,109.03

Councilman Kalwinski is now present.

Councilman Kalwinski - Can we have a brief explanation about those two claims?

City Controller Flores - Those two claims are for a litigation case. They are concluding a litigation case.

ROLL CALL VOTE (amendment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Torres

Motion carried 8/0/1 CLAIMS AMENDED

ROLL CALL VOTE (as amended)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Torres

Motion carried 8/0/1 CLAIMS APPROVED (as amended)

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilwoman Venecz - I am in receipt of a Notice of a Special Council Meeting that will be on Monday, November 16th at 6:00 p.m in the Council Chambers. It is a Public Hearing and Consideration of Proposed Ordinance No. 20-25. Which is with regard to the Increase of the Water Rates.

Councilwoman Alexander - As usual, I want to give an update on this Covid crisis that we are in. From last meeting to this meeting, these numbers are extremely discerning when I call them out. For 46320, an additional 117 cases. For 46327, we have an additional 102 cases. For 46323, we have an additional 238 cases. For 46324, we have an additional 243 cases. For 46394, we have an additional 84 cases. That's a total of 784 cases currently, from last meeting to this meeting. Mayor, I know you're here. We really need to get our Covid Task Force back going. It does not have to be twice a week, it can be once every two weeks as we do updates. But

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COMMUNICATIONS cont.

Councilwoman Alexander cont. - these numbers are serious. We need to put something in place in the city dealing with masks. I don't care if it's a video or something but (unclear) our residents that they need to wear a mask around the city. Wearing a mask doesn't just protect yourself, you're actually protecting someone else. Did you know that two days prior to you actually showing symptoms, you're actually contagious without showing any signs. That's from the data in CDC. That's not from me. So, wearing a mask helps to prevent. When you don't wear a mask you're actually infecting someone else. It is extremely important that we do something as a city to bring our numbers down because just from last week, last meeting, we were at 276 and now we jumped up 784 cases, and I'm sorry, I'm disturbed by this. I don't know about anybody else on the Council but I am extremely disturbed by these numbers rising from day one were we were averaging about 50 cases to know we're at 784 cases since our last meeting. So, can you please help me out with getting this task force started back up immediately so that we can help rectify and do what we can in our city. We can't speak on what happens on the Governor's side but we can do something in our city.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - At the last meeting I announced that there was going to be a Virtual Crime Watch Meeting on Hammond Police Facebook page that we (unclear). Thursday, November 12th, the Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch will meet at Calumet College at 6:30 p.m. As Councilwoman Alexander was saying about the increase in the Covid cases, the Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch does observe social distancing. You are not admitted without a mask. So precautions are taken. My recommendation is if you are interested in going to one of these meetings, please take precautions. You get a lot of great information at these meetings about what's going on in your neighborhood but you definitely need to take precautions.

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilman Spitale - Brought out 20-29.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

20-29 An Ordinance of the Common Council of the City of Hammond, Indiana upon Recommendation of the Hammond Economic Development Commission Designating a Certain Area Within the City as an Economic Development Target Area Pursuant to Indiana Code 6-1.1-12.1

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

Councilman Spitale - Anne Anderson has some further information about 20-29.

Anne Anderson, Director of Economic Development - So, Ord. 20-29, we are in the 3rd and Final passage of this ordinance. And this ordinance is declaring an area in Oxbow Landing in Hammond as an Economic Revitalization area #2. And we are doing this in order to promote a support further redevelopment in this area. We will have a third hotel being erected. It is five stories tall at an investment of about \$7.7 million. It will create hundreds of construction jobs and at least 26 full time jobs and 7-10 part time jobs. We're very excited

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE cont.

Director Anderson cont. - about this development at Oxbow Landing. We have seen the success of hotels there. This is a great area in Hammond right off the highway and it will definitely support the Ice Cube Sports Complex, the Jean Shepherd Center, the Sportsplex on Indianapolis Blvd. The hotels there are always full. They are well taken care of so the city definitely supports this proposed third hotel.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Torres

Motion carried

8/0/1

ORDINANCE NO. 9485 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

20R-19 Resolution to Re-appoint Miriam Soto-Pressley to the Hammond Redevelopment Commission

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved for adoption.

Councilman Kalwinski - Miriam Soto-Pressley has been on the Redevelopment Commission for a number of years. She is a valued Commission member. She also provides a service that, when needed, as translator, she's bilingual and teaches as a bilingual teacher in the Hammond school system. So she provides added value by being able to help with that kind of need when it arises on the Redevelopment Commission, which it does often times during approvals fro the Homebound Program. So, I'm delighted and honored to ... for this resolution to re-appoint Miriam Soto-Pressley for Redevelopment Commission.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Torres

Motion carried

8/0/1

RESOLUTION NO. R19 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Kalwinski - I just want to make mention and (unclear) to the Whiting-Robertsdale Lions Club for hosting the Veteran's Day event at Forsythe Park's War Memorial where thirteen more bricks were laid for Veteran's who have served in various conflicts and a special shout out to Andy Dybel, the coordinator of that event for (unclear) from one year to the next. That occurred Saturday and was well attended and I just want to recognize the Lions Club and all the participants of that event.

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Council President Woerpel - I just want to make a quick statement going back to what Katrina said, a week ago we had, Tuesday, large gatherings of people and we ... I went around all the different polls and noticed and was proud of the fact that I saw a lot of voters wearing the masks and all the poll workers wearing the masks and it woke me up to how reckless I am sometimes when I think just walking to get the mail and not wearing a mask when I go outside and talking to the mail lady. Seeing what's going on I just want to reiterate what you guys have all said. Please wear your mask. This isn't a political statement. This is a safety issue.

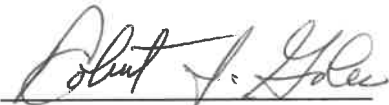
PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Mary Ellen Slazyk - Masks are not that effective. Keeping your distance is the most effective thing and of course washing your hands. Basic stuff we were taught when we were kids. My property rebate check was issued in my deceased husband and my name and I'm having a hard time with the bank. I did remove his name from the house a few months ago so I wouldn't have a problem. They need to double check the names on the homes before the checks are sent out.

George Stoya - I disagree with the Mayor, I'm very worried about litigation. (Unclear) I think that we should take a little more caution with respect to relying on his assurances. He's said that before. There's millions of dollars at stake. (Unclear) I've been opposed to you guys taking the place of the IURC (unclear).

Councilwoman Venecz moved to adjourn.

ATTEST:



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk



Dave Woerpel, President
Hammond Common Council

Time: 6:30 p.m.

cb