

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on March 13, 2023 in the Hammond City Council Chambers and was available to be viewed at gohammond on Facebook, gohammond.tv live and per Zoom.

Council President Scott Rakos presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

A Moment of Silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

PHYSICALLY PRESENT: Alexander, Venecz, Torres, Tyler, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: None

ABSENT: Spitale, Kalwinski

TOTAL: 7

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - The Controller just handed all of us our Gaming Report for the first quarter of 2023. As you'll notice, we took in \$3.3 million; Capital Improvement Board got a little over \$2 million; Mayor's Discretionary almost a half million; each Council District, about \$82,600; Gaming Advisory Committee, \$132 thousand; Rainy Day Fund, \$132 thousand. I know gaming revenues are down. I would expect that to be the new normal. So, I think we should get used to that. The good news is, under the system we implemented during the pandemic. A year like this is type of year we would have had trouble with because we ramping down a little bit and usually, in situations like that, our spending didn't correct itself for over a year. So the good news is we only spent what we have. This is what we have. I know Megan's got individual reports for all six Council Districts on there. If you have any questions, I urge you to direct them her way. As part of my address, I also wanted to cover that United Hospital Services opened up their West Point Industrial Complex, basically it was an open house. The built a state of the art hospital and clinical laundry facility. Hammond's chosen as their second location due to our great business climate here and the location. The only other location they have is in Indianapolis. So, two locations in the state. The grand opening was March 1st, 2023. \$18 million investment. By the end of the year they expect to have a hundred new jobs there and they are already planning a future expansion. So, that was good news. I want to congratulate our Economic Development Team for helping pull that off. I know Councilman Mark had a lot to do with that over the years also. So thank you for all the help. We've had some movement take place over the last few weeks on the Board of Public Works and Safety. I haven't officially updated you all on what we're doing with that, so I wanted to go ahead and bring you up to speed. At the beginning of the year we were rolling into ... well, towards the end of last year, my three appointees to the Board of Public Works and Safety was the Assistant Chief of Police, Jeff Long; Johnny Perez, who was the leader of our Sanitation and the number two in the Department of Public Works; and Kevin Margraf, the Deputy Fire Chief. Since that time, Johnny Perez took the buyout. Kevin Margraf retired as well. I replace both of those with Tinisha Greenwell, who is in the Controller's Office. Formerly worked for the Hammond Police Department. She has great background. She's great with numbers. Has a law enforcement

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - background. Adds a great presence to the Board of Public Works. I also promoted Donny Kalina to the Board of Public Works as my appointee as well. Donny Kalina currently works in Code Enforcement but you probably all remember him from Hammond EMS and throughout the community. So, Don Kalina, Tinisha Greenwell and Jeff Long are my three appointees to the Board of Public Works and Safety. I'm very proud of that board. I think it's a great board and I appreciate their service. You all have heard this as well, but I just want to reiterate it. I haven't talked about it since I took over or since this occurred. Africa Tarver surprised me in February with bad news, god news for her, bad news for me. Her good news was she got a job in Texas. She's gonna be closer to her daughter. She's gonna be closer to her extended family. It's a promotion opportunity for her. Bad news for Hammond and for me is it's gonna be hard to replace Africa. She's been excellent for us since the day I walked in City Hall. She's been promoted time and time again through my administration, to where she is now. She was my appointee to the Regional Development Authority. Did an excellent job on a regional basis there. She is also the Head of Planning and Development. I'm very proud of her. I wish her well. She is officially now retired and moved off the payroll. Since that time, I've promoted Anne Anderson. Anne had a variety of jobs. Moved all the way up through the system. She formally was the Head of Economic Development. She is now the Director of Planning and Development, filling Africa's old position. Phil Taillon, my Chief of Staff, has been appointed to the Regional Development Authority to fill in for Africa's appointment. Juan Moreno, who's here today, was formally the Economic Development TIF Coordinator. He's been promoted to the Head of Economic Development. Congratulations to all of you. I'm looking forward to working with you and bringing in more and more economic development opportunities for our city. I wanted to update you on two more things. I met recently with the School City of Hammond. I met with the Superintendent. I met with the School Board members. Talking about what is going on with the lawsuit with the State of Indiana, as it relates to Clark Highschool and Gavit High School. I think the School City is doing great things but I did want them to know that my patience is starting to run thin on the high school situation. We're not gonna stand by, as a City and watch our old high schools fall into disrepair and slowly delapidate before our eyes. So, I let the Superintendent know that we were hoping to see more action and a quicker time frame. I want to update the Council that Clark High School, we own the parking lots. We own the athletic fields, the city does, and we're planning to move forward real soon with a subdivision there. We can't do anything with the schools themselves until the schools decide to move forward. They're afraid because of the lawsuit requiring them to offer to a Charter School. We're sort of at a stand still. Gavit High School, the complete footprint is still owned by the School City of Hammond, 100% of it. And last but not least, good news, for once, for Hammond. Bad news for other communities. One of our customer communities, the City of Lansing, has been on a long term contract with the City of Hammond that was extremely beneficial to Lansing. That contract expired. So, we're renegotiating a new contract with the City of Lansing. We expect it to have very favorable terms for the City of Hammond, which affects everybody in this room to help better capitalize the Hammond Water Department which is good news for everybody. Right now Lansing is buying water for us for about a \$1 dollar for a thousand gallons. Selling it to their residents at about \$6 for a thousand gallons. We're proposing their buying it for a more market rate, which is in the mid threes. So, I'll keep you up to date on that. Lansing is in receipt of a letter from the CEO of the Hammond Water Department informing them that the contract is expired and we're seeking to move forward with new rates. So, I don't know if you all have any questions, but it's nice to be back. Good to see you. If you don't have any questions, I'll move on.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Tyler - Mayor, I think at the last meeting, Phil touched base with us around there being an analysis done of, like, city salaries.

Mayor McDermott - Yeah.

Councilman Tyler - I wanted to know if there is, like, an update of that or a time line of when you think that report will be done.

Mayor McDermott - I'm not moving on salaries until the contracts are up. Contracts aren't going to up until the end of next year. So, when I'm negotiating, probably about a year from now, I want to have this material ready because I'm not sure if we're low. I don't think we're that low. Quite frankly, you have to remember that these are unions we're negotiating with and, you know, they bargained for what they have, just like, you know, just like we do. It's hard to break a union contract in the middle and give away taxpayer money when we're not obligated to under the contract. But, we are doing that research. If there are glaring deficiencies, we'll take care of it. I could assure you, and we'll have to take care of it during the next negotiations.

Councilman Tyler - Because I know there were some ... I know we've been looking for CDL Drivers and there were some complaints about the salary for the CDL Drivers that we had posted compared to other cities and that might be part of the reason why we weren't able to hire anybody for those positions.

Mayor McDermott - We're not having that much trouble. I'll be honest with you. I see new drivers coming in all the time. You know, salary wise, maybe somebody wants to be a truck driver, you know, and they have a CDL, maybe they make more, but we have fourteen paid days off that everybody gets, we got personal days, we have vacation days. There's a lot of benefits that you get working for the City of Hammond that a lot of other companies couldn't provide. So, I would want to look at the whole thing though, Councilman. I mean, I love the people that work in the Public Works. I love our driver's, we need them. They are integral to our City. But I can't be giving away taxpayer money that we're not obligated to give away. I got to be careful as Mayor because if we do it for them, we have a lot of employees and everybody's important. So, I have to be cautious. That's all I'm saying. But we are gonna get somebody to follow that up, Councilman.

Councilman Emerson - Regarding the water to Lansing or other communities, in Illinois we have no cap, right? I mean we did have a cap in Indiana, or has that changed?

Mayor McDermott - Good question. In Indiana we are regulated by the IURC. In Illinois, the Indiana Utility Regulatory Commission doesn't control the sale of water, ok. But market forces do, Councilman. So we can't just set any price. We have to be cognitive of what Chicago is charging. We have to be cheaper than them. We also have ... it's complicated, because we have to be able to get the water to that community. Which is expensive because every community you go through they pay a toll, so to speak. So by the time I can get the water to Homewood or Flossmoor, it's got to be competitive with Chicago. But you still got to go through Chicago Heights, you still got to go through communities to get there and everybody charges a toll. So there's a lot of things that go into it what you could charge. We have a sales contract in Chicago Heights with the Mayor of Chicago Heights. Where the Mayor of Chicago Heights, who happens to be David Gonzalez right now, sells

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott - Hammond water at \$2 per thousand gallons. That's marketable. We give it to him cheaper than we even get it as residents here. Because he needs to be able to sell that water to other communities and pay the tolls that go along with it. So, I've learned a lot about water over the last 20 years. But we're doing a really good job. We recently brought in Homewood. I think Flossmoor is either on or about to come on, and we're hoping to get Olympia Fields soon. We're really starting to make a bigger footprint on the South Side of Chicago, Councilman.

Councilman Kalwinski - Does each contract with an outside consultant (unclear) to look at salaries or we just doing that on our own?

Mayor McDermott - No, we're not doing it on our own. I think it's a firm that's gonna do that for us, Councilman. I haven't seen exactly. I know that there was some talk with a firm that knows somebody that does this. I don't know if we're going through the firm or if we're going to that professional. But we want this on a grand scale. We want to be ... when I'm giving information to ... because if the teamsters are contacted, Councilman Barry, you know, the Firemen and the Policemen are contacting me or contacting other people. They're all gonna come at the Mayor next year trying to get money. Unless you guys want me writing big checks, we're gonna have to be armed with facts. That's what we're trying to do, Councilman, is we're getting ready for next year. Next year is gonna be tough negotiation. I imagine ...

Councilman Kalwinski - We haven't signed with anybody yet? We don't know what it's gonna cost?

Mayor McDermott - I saw some correspondence, I haven't seen ... I imagine it's gonna cost a couple bucks, I mean, it's not gonna be super cheap but the thought is if we spend, let's say, \$20 thousand on people doing this type of research, we'd save, hopefully, more than that, armed with facts. So that when the teamsters approach councilman, we have facts that we can answer with and it's been researched by somebody that's knowledgeable.

Councilman Kalwinski - So will they do that (unclear) look at all of Lake County then?

Mayor McDermott - They'll look all over the State where we're going, Councilman. Which is handy info. Believe it or not, we're losing police officers to Indy, we're competing with Indy right now. We're competing with Carmel and Fishers, it's a new day. And the employer, us, we're in a different position. We have to compete to keep our employees. But we do a good job, by the way. Hammond does, generally. That's why I'm sort of skeptical when I hear that, Councilman Barry. I appreciate you bringing it up. I get sort of skeptical because we offer a pretty good package. It's not easy to leave us. It's not easy to leave us. We offer really good package for our employees. I know people in Public Works, they're doing \$65, the typical person with overtime. So, it's a decent job.

Councilwoman Venecz - Mayor, with regard to the CDL drivers, they start at a certain level and then after a probationary period they increase, correct?

Mayor McDermott - True.

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Councilwoman Venecz - So, it’s not like an extended period of time.

Mayor McDermott - It’s ninety days.

Councilwoman Venecz - Okay.

Mayor McDermott - And if you’re a part timer, we usually wave that. Usually, when we’re bringing somebody from Public Works, usually they’re part timers that we’re promoting to full time and we’ve already checked them out and know they are good employees. They got their CDL. And, usually, in a case like that we would just waive their probation. We would just bring them in at the higher rate because they’ve already worked for us. We do that the Sportsplex a lot also. Float part timers that move to full time, we waive their probationary period because they’ve been part timers for so long. We do that for almost every position, Councilwoman.

Council President Rakos - Councilmen Spitale and Councilman Kalwinski are now present in Chambers.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of February 27, 2023 and place on file.

AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved to approve the claims from February 22, 2023 through March 08, 2023. Claim #1296 through #1662, inclusive. In the amount of \$24,972,605.33.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

23-07 To Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for Economic Development purposes in 2023.

23-08 Amending Fund number for FY 2021 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program funds Awarded to the City of Hammond Police Department

23-09 Appropriating the Proceeds of the Annual Action Plan and Dealing with other matters Pertaining to the Expenditure of Plan Proceeds for Program year 2023

No one spoke.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Torres- We all got letters from students from Hammond Central regarding certain topics. They're interested in a response from us. One of their forms they have a topic on gun violence, poverty, drug abuse and wage equality, teenage child neglect because of LGBTQ +, police brutality and health care in Indiana, poverty concerns in our community, and teenage gun violence. I encourage my colleagues to look at these and see if they can respond to anyone of them. I'm sure they would appreciate it. Thank you

Councilman Emerson- I have a scheduled meeting with Mr. Kyleman who teaches social studies at Hammond Central. And also Councilman Tyler, (unclear).

Council President Rakos- So, what I am hearing is there is a time limit where they're looking for council members to address the students?

Councilman Emerson Yes, that letter was addressed to all of us. There was another letter that was sent to the Mayor's Office.

Councilman Tyler- To clarify (unclear) it seems like there is an open invitation for us to come to the classrooms and speak to students either virtually or in person at any point that we are available.

Council President Rakos- So, if any council people would like to attend, that's Thursday at 5 pm. We can try to talk to classrooms if we so chose.

Councilman Tyler- I would like to extend my condolences to the family of Pastor Wayne Hudson and Deacon Edward Roper. Both of their services were this past weekend. I think it was a testament to how much these two gentlemen meant to our community by the amount of people that came out and showed support. I just want to extend my condolences to those families. I also want to congratulate the Hammond Central boys' basketball team on their regional victory. They were able to defeat Mishawaka this Saturday and will play this upcoming Saturday for semi-state.

Councilwoman Venecz - HC3 will be having a St. Patrick Day Parade on St. Patrick Day. It goes from Harding all the way down to 165th to Kennedy Avenue North. It will be the 1st ever Twilight St. Patty's Day Parade.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Woerpel- We approved \$1,870,125.73 for Columbia Street to Indianapolis Blvd. We also approved \$249,466.33 for Florida Avenue Milestone Contractors North. We also approved \$84,100 for Florida Avenue Construction Nies Eng. Councilman Kalwinski attended the meeting about repaving 119th Calumet to Atchison and he also requested Johnson Street from 138th to the CSX tracks be repaved. He also inquired about the stop sign on 142nd and Hohman that was approved in September. He inquired on when it will be installed. Councilman Emerson was also there and inquired about State Line to 165th. Is that correct?

Councilman Emerson-Yes, it's a dangerous and unsightly intersection. But it's also dangerous for people coming over from Illinois, hitting the guardrail and whatnot.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMITTEE REPORTS cont.

Councilman Woerpel- And that's being straightened out, I believe, something like that they said?

Councilman Emerson- They're dealing with the guardrail. That's Illinois that has to straighten that out. I don't think that's ever going to happen. I want to say never, but we will put some lighting to let everyone know it's a curb there so they don't hit the guard rail because it's dangerous.

Park Board Committee - Councilman Worpel- I attended the Park Board meeting last Wednesday. Basically, the park board transferred certain properties, which were Clark Football Field, to the Redevelopment Commission to prepare for the auction of single-family lots.

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

- Community Watch at Mt. Zion Pleasant view Plaza; Wed., April. 12th ; 1 p.m.
- East Ham'd Pullman Crime Watch; Tues., April. 18th ; 6 p.m.; Ophelia Steen Center
- Wed., April. 5th ; Edison Community Watch; Edison School; 6:30pm
- Tues, April 04th ;Harrison Park Crime Watch; VFW; 6;30pm
- Thur., March. 16th; Hessville Crime Watch; Jean Shepard; 6:00 p.m.
- Fri., April 14th ; Irving Community Watch; Irving School; 9:15 a.m.
- South Hohman Neighborhood Watch; Thur., April 13th ; Trinity Lutheran Church; 6:30 p.m.
- Whiting/Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., April. 13th ; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

Councilwoman Alexander- Our scholarship is available now to our Hammond students. Um, they can pick up an application with their guidance counselors. It's going to be until March 31st. Also, it is going to be awarded on April 24th. Also, on May 22nd is when we will have those winners come in and receive their certificates. And if they have questions, they should see their guidance counselors. We encourage each student to apply.

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Brought out 23-07, 23-08, and 23-09.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING-FINAL PASSAGE

23-07 To Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for Economic Development purposes in 2023

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

Councilman Spitale- This ordinance will appropriate funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for Economic Development.

ROLL CALL VOTE (23-07)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

ORDINANCE NO. 9596 PASSED

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE cont.

23-08 Amending Fund Number for FY 2021 Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) program funds
Awarded to the City of Hammond Police Department

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

Councilman Spitale- This grant is for equipment for the Police Department Fund #2472 to fund #2475.

ROLL CALL VOTE (23-08)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9597 PASSED

23-09 Appropriating the Proceeds of the Annual Action Plan and Dealing with other matters
pertaining to the Expenditure of Plan Proceeds for Program year 2023

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

Councilman Spitale- (unclear)

ROLL CALL VOTE (23-09)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9598 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTION

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to appoint Lesley M. Miller to the Gaming Advisory Board.

Councilman Tyler- Garrick could not fulfill his commitment because of family responsibility. So, I was looking for someone from my district who could step up and take this appointment. Lesley is a business owner, and a

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Tyler cont. - long-time resident, and someone who is very active within our community. So, I'm excited to have her as a part of this committee.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

TJ Gaertig- I just had a question regarding the auctioning off the new lots. Where was that at?

Councilman Woerpel- The old Clark High School Football Field. I will talk to you after the meeting.

Ken Rosek- It's come to my attention that a few people within the council and within the chambers don't understand the significance of the Briar East Woods. Behind the scenes, some people are making false claims that these dunes are not what we say they are. The last unprotected remnant of the Tolleston Dunes. However, they will never say these things in public. It's always in backrooms and behind closed doors. Make no bones about it. Those of you who support the project are supporting the destruction of an ancient geological treasure in the heart of Hessville.

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to adjourn.

AYES: ALL

2023 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	9	23	13	27	13	27	13	27	10	24	8	22	12	26	10	24	14	28	11	25	23	13	27	4
Katrina Alexander	E	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Dan Spitale	E	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Janet Vencz	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Pete Torres	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Barry Tyler	E	P	P	E	P	P	P																	
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																	
Initials	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG																	

E=ELECTRONIC

P=PHYSICALLY

PRESENT

A=ABSENT

If the member qualifies for an exemption from the "Consecutive - 50" requirements, draw a circle around the E for that meeting/ member.



Scott Rakos, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:45

cb/dw

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk