

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on March 27, 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.

Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: None

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - I want to start off with something that if it hasn't happened today, it's gonna happen shortly. I'm not sure if it's happened officially from the Environmental Protection Agency. It's about to classify certain parts of our city as a Superfund Site. So I wanted to talk to you about this. This isn't anything that's surprising. The only thing surprising about it is it's happening today. I want to remind everybody that it concerns the Federated Metals site. Federated Metal was on the North basin of George Lake and for the better part of 100 years it's been a polluter in the city of Hammond. It was lead primarily. Lead is a heavy smoke. When it left the smoke stack in like the 20's, 30's, 40's and 50's, that what we're talking about, all the way through the 80's, which is when they started cleaning up. But when the smoke would leave the smoke stack, and we have prevailing northerly winds here where we live, the smoke would go up in the air and start blowing north and it's a heavy smoke because it's lead, and lead would be in that smoke, and lead would literally, for decades, rain down on the neighborhoods. It would get to Lake Michigan where it would wash into our water. But, basically, anybody that lived from a prevailing wind direction away from Federated Metals, you could test their yards and find lead. Not from the 80's, 90's, 2000's, 2010's, it's from like the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's, and they've lived this way for decades. We've known about this for decades. The city's known about this, the Federal Government's known about this. When I took over as Mayor, the north basin of George Lake was drained and the USEPA scraped it and filled it. They didn't complete the job. They didn't do the houses. They didn't do the yards. They didn't do anything but a small section of the north basin of George Lake, which was better than nothing. So here we are. In 2016, Governor Holcomb visited this site and went to a few homes and I've scratched my head because we all knew it was a hot area, and Governor Holcomb knew it was a hot area, then in 2020, the USEPA visited Whiting and invited us and explained to us that they planned to do a Superfund site in that area, which encompasses Federated Metals. When I tell you that I know how many properties in Hammond are affected, 112, and this problem in Hammond, this 112 properties, cost us about \$5 million to clean, and we did it ourselves. I'll get to that in a second. To give you an idea, the magnitude of the problem this is for Whiting, it's ten times that. Simple math, we're talking about a big number. In Whiting, it happened from

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

## MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - a Hammond plant when I wasn't even thought about. My dad was a little boy. So this goes way back and it's a polluter, the USEPA is going to declare that area as a Superfund Site. Which includes the homes in the area. They're gonna draw the boundaries including about 112 homes in the city of Hammond and areas around there, the bike trail. It's been like this for decades. It's nothing new. It's been like this everybody in here was a little kid. There's people I know that grew up in that area. There's a lot of people that Councilman Mark knows that grew up in that area, and they're just fine. USEPA is going to do something about it. The EPA won't begin cleanup for at least seven years. Once they designate, it's gonna be a long process. Which is why the city of Hammond decided, with the help of the Hammond Council, to help out the people that live in this area. We made a decision using ARP money to cleanup the people who live in this area's front and back yards, if they are greater than 400 parts per million. There were 112 properties that were greater than 400 parts per million. In 1920, the USEPA did some of the houses, a couple of them in Hammond, a couple of the in Whiting. We got an idea of what they were looking at. The Hammond Department of Environmental took the lead along with Enviroforensics, a firm out of Indianapolis, and we started doing the properties ourselves. Once we clean the properties, we would certify them through the Hammond Department of Environmental Management that it's clean. We'd certify it with a stamp and file it with the Recorder's Office. I don't know if this is gonna make the Federal Government happy but I imagine it's gonna make the homeowner's that live in this area happy. Because if you own a home in this area, and you're now being declared being in a Superfund Site, and it's gonna take at least a decade to clean that area up. Good luck selling that house. I don't think you're gonna get the same price you were thinking about yesterday, tomorrow, for that house. So we made a decision, as a city, to clean up these properties. I'm proud that we did this. I appreciate the Council's support in that. I think we need to remind our residents that. So this is not a shock to us that it's coming now. If it was declared, I guess I'm unofficially declaring it now at the Council meeting. This is happening, it was supposed to happen today, if it hasn't happened already. So, I want to thank the Council for helping us with this project. We've done a number of them right now. We've done 21 properties remediated by the EPA, 12 properties remediated by Hammond in 2021, 28 properties remediated by Hammond in 2022, 30 proposed remediations in 2023. Properties with lead less than 400 parts per million, which was the break point for us, if it was above 400 that's action zone for EPA. We made it our action zone. There's 11 properties with ppm less than 400 parts per million, so we didn't do that. Eight properties denied us sampling access, they wouldn't even let us test their property, they're on their own. Good luck with the EPA. We tried to help you. They literally wouldn't let us on their property. Now it's Superfund, they get to deal with the USEPA. Two denied remediation access. So out of the 112 properties, 10 of them didn't give us the ability to get their property done. Now they have to deal with the Federal Government. The other 102, we did 70 of them already. We're gonna do 30 this year. So, that was with \$5 million we designated from ARP. It makes us look real smart right now. I'm not gloating though, because our neighbors in Whiting are really, really, hurting on this. I really feel bad, especially considering it was a Hammond plant that did it. It was. But I was zero years old in 1950.

Councilman Kalwinski - Mayor, do you know if the USEPA is also (unclear) anything in Whiting a Superfund (unclear).

Mayor McDermott - Councilman Mark, absolutely, yes. We're part of it, the small part.

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Kalwinski - (unclear)

Mayor McDermott - Yes, sir.

Councilman Kalwinski - And the 100 or so homes that you talked about that got cleaned up, will they still ... how will they fare at this? Will they still be part of the cleanup with Superfund?

Mayor McDermott - Good question, I doubt it. Because it's clean. Okay, but, keep in mind, so, let's say my back yard is the bike trail. My back yard's clean because we cleaned it, Hammond Environmental, and then the bike trails the path and then on the other side of the bike trail it's probably greater than 400 parts per million. So your yard is clean but you're surrounded by land that's not. Because it's not privately owned, it's owned by us. That's got to be cleaned up by EPA. Which means they're gonna have to go two feet deep to clean it up, like we did. Which is not cheap. The government's gonna pay for it, it's not gonna be .... if this is done a decade from now I'll be proud of them. If this is done a decade from now. That's why we did what we did. I'm proud that we did that. I appreciate your support on this. Now the UPA is making it official and we were ahead of the game, thankfully. So thank you for working with the administration on that. I don't know if anybody has questions on this. I would also defer to Councilman Spitale who is a realtor. I imagine he knows how devastating this is going to be on that whole area.

Councilman Kalwinski - So, the EPA will begin the process in what year? (Unclear) in the process is (unclear).

Mayor McDermott - Ultimately, so we spent \$5 million. I think if we waited a decade, we wouldn't have to spend \$5 million. So we made the decision to spend the \$5 million, even knowing that if we would have waited the Federal Government would have done it. We did it for those residents though. That are trying to sell their house now. They don't have a decade to wait. That's why we did what we did.

Councilman Kalwinski - and we should finish this year, once we ...

Mayor McDermott - Yes, sir. We still have money left, we're gonna finish the last 30 this year and all properties, except for the 10 that didn't allow us to sample or allow us on their property, we did all 112 besides those 10.

Councilman Emerson - I hesitate to asked this question, are there any other that the EPA is looking at in Hammond?

Mayor McDermott - I don't believe so. We've known ... Councilman, when I took over as Mayor twenty years ago we knew about this site. Then EPA drained it. We knew that they didn't finish the job. Hopefully, they'll finish the job this time. Because quite frankly, that's an area that we can develop down the road. That's a beautiful area. The north basin of George Lake is gorgeous. If they would clean it up we could actually develop it maybe. So, let's hope for the best. We did the residents. There's still work to do in Hammond, okay, and the EPA's gonna pay for it. The way they do it is they pay for it with lawsuits. They'll try to go after the owners of Federated Metals and all the subsequent owners. They'll try to get it through lawsuits like that. If they get money they'll use it to ... and if it's short then the government comes up with the rest.

*Prepared by  
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Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Kalwinski - So will the buildings likely come down (unclear).

Mayor McDermott - I hope so, Councilman Mark. I hope so. It's a eyesore.

Councilman Tyler - Mayor, I know you said we were being proactive about cleaning up those properties for the residents, but wasn't, maybe I got this wrong, but I thought we were also trying to prevent the area being labeled as a Superfund Site?

Mayor McDermott - No, we always knew and I appreciate the question, Councilman. We always knew that, like I was saying, your back yard may be clean and then it goes to the bike path and then on the other side of the bike path you got the land that goes down to George Lake. We always knew, we were cleaning up privately owned property, we always knew there was work to do after that. That's what we're talking about. The privately owned parts, except for those 10 parcels, are done. Thankfully, at the tune of \$5 million, a little more. But there's still plenty of work to do in the city, Councilman.

Councilman Tyler - Thank you.

Mayor McDermott - And I imagine for the next decade we'll be talking about this project. We'll be watching it slowly progress for the next decade or so. It could be longer. This is a slow process. That's why we did what we did. Thank you on that. Let me just go through a couple other things real quick. I appreciate your patience, Councilman Rakos. And I want to thank HC3 for the parade in Hessville, even though I didn't get to go this year. I heard it turned out great. As a reminder to everybody, we have a St. Patrick's Day Parade in Hammond. It's HC3 throws it in Hessville. Even though it was a construction zone, I heard it was really well attended. So, congratulations to HC3. Lansing water rates, I talked about last Council meeting. About what I thought would be litigation. I'm happy to report we have great lawyers that are very charming and they talked the litigation out. We're working on a final agreement with Lansing. I think it's gonna be successful. So, that's good news. Councilman Barry, we're gonna be talking to you a new TIF District we want to create right around City Hall, call it the City Hall TIF. I'm not sure if you've heard about this already but we have opportunities with a couple developments that are talking place close to City Hall where we could capture the increment from those developments and use them to do things like the outlots we want to do on both sides of City Hall. We could use the increment on other projects. Those projects are Swanel, they're doing a big expansion. If we could capture the increment before it's invested that's good for us. The other one is a potential relocation of U-Haul into the 3<sup>rd</sup> District. Well it's still in the 3<sup>rd</sup> District but into a new location where they'll invest a lot more and would be a multi-million dollar investment. If that happens, we could capture the increment from those two investments to help spur other development in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. So, we're creating this TIF District, it will obviously go through the Council. When we're doing that process, it may be making its way through the Redevelopment Commission shortly. It doesn't raise taxes on anybody. What it does is it captures a snapshot of the area as it is right now. Nobody loses on this deal. Everybody that pays property taxes to the tax base stays, but if we get a brand new development right next to City Hall the increment there would go to the TIF District to help pay for the debt. So, let's hope it works. Speaking at the School Board tomorrow. I'm appearing before them talking to them about Gavit High School and Clark High School. I know we all talked about that a couple meetings ago. I want you

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - know that I followed it up and I’m meeting with the School Board tomorrow. We’ve got Mayor’s Night Out on Wednesday at the Lost Marsh. Just to prove to you that these are randomly timed and I show up for every one. This is going to be an interesting one with the recent announcement. I got Mayor’s Night at the Lost Marsh on Wednesday. I imagine Councilman Mark and I should pack a lunch that day. Disabilities Breakfast is on Thursday, I invite all Council people to attend. It’s always a great time. It’s at the Dynasty at 8 a.m. And I am donating all proceeds from a gofundme, that’s why my hair is so long, to the family of Karina Almarez who is battling Hodgkin’s Lymphoma right now. Her family is going through a lot right now. I have a gofundme on my Facebook Page on the city’s website if anybody would be willing to donate a couple bucks we’re trying to get to \$10 thousand. 100% of the money we raise on the gofundme goes to Karina. 100%. There’s no middle man. It goes straight from gofundme to Karina’s family. Last year we did over \$15 thousand for the family and right now we are sitting at about \$6 thousand. So please help out and donate and 100% of your proceeds will go to Karina’s family. Unless there’s any questions, I’ll say I’m sorry about the long report.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of March 13, 2023 and place on file.

AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims from March 8, 2023 through March 22, 2023. Claim #1663 through #1966, inclusive. In the amount of \$7,820,713.38

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

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilwoman Alexander- The last day for students to apply for the Hammond Common Council Scholarship is on March 31<sup>st</sup>. All applications should be turned into their guidance counselor. Um, please guidance counselors, make sure those applications get to Dr. Rausch by March 31<sup>st</sup>. On April 24<sup>th</sup>, we will draw for fifteen \$1,000.00 scholarships and then these scholarships will be awarded on May 22<sup>nd</sup> during our Council Meeting. So, I'm encouraging students that if they have not gotten that application, it's one of the easiest ones you will fill out. So, fill out that application and get it over to your guidance counselor so that they can get it back and we have our drawing. Thank you.

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMUNICATIONS cont.

Councilman Tyler- I just want to congratulate the Hammond Cental Wolves on their historic season. Uh, they brought our city's first boys' regional basketball championship since 1954. Um, they only lost one game during the regular season. Didn't lose to any Indiana schools and was ranked No.3 in the state. They fell short in a semi-state game. But I know that a lot of those kids will go off to college and the ones that are remaining will come back and do great things next season too. So looking forward to seeing if they can build off their success from this year. So, congratulations to Coach Larry Moore and the entire team.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Community Watch at Mt. Zion Pleasant view Plaza; Wed., April. 12<sup>th</sup> ; 1 p.m.  
East Ham'd Pullman Crime Watch; Tues., April. 18<sup>th</sup> ; 6 p.m.; Ophelia Steen Center  
Wed., April. 5<sup>th</sup> ; Edison Community Watch; Edison School; 6:30pm  
Tues, April 4<sup>th</sup> ;Harrison Park Crime Watch; VFW; 6;30pm  
Thur., April. 20<sup>th</sup>; Hessville Crime Watch; Jean Shepard; 6:00 p.m.  
Fri., April 14<sup>th</sup> ; Irving Community Watch; Irving School; 9:15 a.m.  
South Hohman Neighborhood Watch; Thur., April 13<sup>th</sup> ; Trinity Lutheran Church; 6:30 p.m.  
Whiting/Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., April. 13<sup>th</sup> ; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Woerpel- I did have my notes from the Capitol Improvements Board but I think I grabbed the wrong folder when I left the house. So, I'll give the report the next meeting. Although, Councilman Kalwinski and Councilman Torres did request some streets to be paved. If you guys want to say what those streets were?

Councilman Kalwinski- (unclear)

Councilman Torres- Yes, for the 2<sup>nd</sup> District, I requested Gostlin between Columbia and Calumet Avenue. Uh, Hoffman between Calumet and Hohman Avenue and 150<sup>th</sup> Street from Calumet to Columbia and Michigan from Calumet to Hohman Avenue.

Councilman Woerpel- And I apologize I brought the wife's car and she told me I left some stuff in it. So she probably threw it away, but I'll find it, as far as the notes from the meeting.

Councilman Kalwinski- (unclear)

Councilman Torres- We are happy to report that Summer Street got approved for \$14 million project between Columbia and Indianapolis. That is to be started in early May. Thank you.

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

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

23-10 An Ordinance Respecting and Ratifying the Action of the City of Hammond Board of Public Works and Safety related to Traffic Regulation for 2022

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved the proposed ordinance to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Councilwoman Venecz- I did not request a committee meeting on this because we have been notified throughout the year of these requests that have come into the Board of Works. Uh, this ordinance does nothing other than ratify the requests that have come into the Board of Works that they approved for stop signs, restricted parking, and resident-only parking, and that is it. AYES:ALL

RESOLUTIONS

23R-02 A Resolution of the Hammond Common Council Approving the First Amendment to Development Agreement among the City of Hammond, Indiana, the City of Hammond Redevelopment Commission, and Linz Enterprises, LLC regarding the Project at 628 Hoffman Street

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

Councilman Torres- The developer is Linz Enterprises LLC at 6820 Hoffman. It is a meat packaging and processing plant. It's being built there and because of delays in construction and other supply chain issues, the developer has sought an extension of various deadlines set forth in development agreements dated May 5th, 2022. Thank you.

Council President Rakos- There is also an Exhibit A to this resolution?

Councilman Torres- Yes, that is correct. It is attached to the resolution.

Councilman Woerpel- Do we need to amend this in?

Council Atty. Berger- I think when the motion was made, it included exhibit A.

Councilman Kalwinski- (unclear)

Councilman Torres- I am sure that if it need another resolution for whatever purpose that is. The Redevelopment Department will present at that time.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION NO. R02 ADOPTED

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Kalwinski- (unclear).

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Ken Rosek- Of course, you know the reason I'm here. I'm here to talk about the Train Project in Hessville. I noticed in the NWI Times mentioned a lot of different projects are going along in Hammond, and of course, that one was left out. Um, I think we need to make a note of it. Guess what didn't happen in Hessville last week? We had no parked trains for over 10 minutes. Why? I think it's because of community action. We started doing something. We went out there and started monitoring the trains. Okay, this right here is a trail cam. It cost a little under 100 bucks. We have several of them now in residence backyards, monitoring the trains. We've got time stamps and everything. We also video the engineers and see what they're doing. We have been contacting several organizations and departments in the United States. We have been tweeting and writing letters and taking videos. We take pictures of the kids hopping over and crawling under the trains. The bridge will not solve this problem. The railroad doesn't want the grief any longer.

Carl Wolf- My brother sent an article from the Guardian which is a newspaper out of England and they had an article about pollution in the United States. The places burned by the worst pollution are overwhelmingly the same places Black and Hispanic populations live. NWI is considered a hot spot. The entirety of Hammond is in a hot spot. Demanding EPA action. We need more green space in the city. But come on get started.

Linda Angiano- I just want to talk a little about East Palestine, Ohio. I don't know if many of you knew, but there were expected to be 30,000 trucks of toxic soil and water to be moved from that area. They went to Texas and Michigan and they told them we don't want the trucks to come here. And I called to ask how they did that. Our Gov. Didn't even know that they were sending the trucks to Indiana. So we need to protect Indiana in every spot. And this team's responsibility is Hammond. So, let's save those woods.

Paula Taylor- I have a question whether Hammond has an anti-pet mill ordinance. I stopped at a puppy store on Calumet Avenue and their puppies were in crates without a solid floor but the wires. So that itself is unhealthy for the puppies. So my question is does Hammond have an anti-pet mill?

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Woerpel, 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	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	P																
Dan Spitale	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																
Pete Torres	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																
Barry Tyler	E	P	P	E	P	P	P	P																
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P																
Initials	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.

ATTEST:  
*Robert J. Golec*  
Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

*Scott M. Rakos*  
Scott Rakos, President  
Hammond Common Council

Time: 6:45 p.m.  
cb/dw

Prepared by  
**Robert J. Golec**  
Hammond City Clerk