

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on June 12, 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, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Tyler

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - Hi, Council people. Nice to see you all. I'm giving you the Mayor's address for the week. To give you an idea of what we have been doing for the last few weeks. Something that may come up, I participated in a police memorial. I know there were a couple Council people there. It was an interesting one. I've done like eighteen or nineteen, maybe twenty, since I've been Mayor. At this particular Police Memorial. Which is obviously a very somber occasion. The Hammond FOP decided to let loose for thirty minutes on their dissatisfaction with the contract that they voted for unanimously. Their dissatisfaction with their pay raise that they voted unanimously for. It was really uncomfortable for me and for the Council people that were there, I want to apologize. I want you to know that we responded immediately to the FOP, told them that wasn't the right place to attack us over a contract that they voted on unanimously. I have a feeling our next contract negotiations are going to be a knock down drag out. So, and I know the Council knows that because you guys all just got done running and you had to deal with the same thing I was dealing with the other day. So, we're all on notice. But I do want to remind the Council that we did negotiate in good faith with the Hammond Police Department. I want them to know that the Hammond Police Department, when they negotiated their contract with us, specifically asked for one thing, they wanted the pension changes that you approved, and I approved, they asked for 0-0-0-0 over four years and the pension changes. Instead, we gave them the pension changes they asked for, exactly, and we gave them 2% at the end of their contract. So we gave them 2% for free. They got 0-0-1-1. Those were gifts from us, and the exact pension changes that they asked for. Now, the FOP is up in arms and they want to attack me, and they want to attack the City about how ungrateful we are and we don't appreciate them. I thought it was completely inappropriate. I still think it's completely inappropriate. I thought it was inappropriate enough to put in my report to the Council because this is an issue that is going to come back at us. But I do want to remind you that the FOP voted unanimously for that contract and we gave them exactly what they asked for, exactly, with 2% on top. So, keep that in mind when you're attacked in the future at public meetings. I imagine it will be coming. I also got to participate with the Hammond Mohawk's Memorial Day Parade in the 29th, it was a great turn out. Mohawks always do an excellent job. I want to thank Councilman

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYORS ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - Mark for hosting much of the City to his district that day. 2nd District, I worked with Councilman Torres along with my Economic Development team and Department of Public Works and Engineer's Office on a problem that La Hacienda Azteca is having with their parking lot. They had a cut through situation that we probably should have anticipated when we did the parking lot extensions, we didn't anticipate it and it's turned into be a problem for the owner of that restaurant, which is located at 150th and Columbia. It's an excellent Mexican restaurant in the 2nd District. We have a couple great Mexican Restaurants in the 2nd, but this is a really good one. The owners put a lot of work into it. The food is excellent. But I want to thank Economic Development team, Dean, the Department of Public Works and of course Councilman Torres, for working together to get that problem solved. I know the owner of the building is very happy with the city. So, thank you for bringing it to our attention, Councilman. I participated for most of the day, ½ a day, in a Rule 33, Federally mandated mediation for the Federal lawsuit that is filed against the City of Hammond by Plaintiff Hill. In regards to unlawful, well, a police matter. I talked to the Council about this situation in Executive Session. It was properly posted. We had eight of the nine Council members attended that Executive Session, where we talked in detail about this litigation and the ramifications that this litigation will have. So I want to thank the Council for participating in that. But that was a half a day. I want to thank attorneys from Eichorn & Eichorn for leading us in that case. Attorneys from Levinson & Levinson, Mr. Don and Shana Levinson, and also the Corporate Counsel, Kevin Smith. This is a very complicated case. It's a very important case and hopefully we are getting close to the end of it. I personally participated in another thing in the 1st District, Leon's Triathlon, at the Pavilion. Hosted by Leon Wolek. I think it's the 40th Annual this year. 400 plus people from all over the country, military, disabled vets, it was really, really impressive. A lot of people worked hard to put that together. Obviously Leon and his team. The Southshore Convention and Visitor's Bureau led by Mayor Dave and Megan, his assistant from Southshore Convention and Visitor's Bureau, did a lot of work out there. As well as Jill Gajewski, from the Hammond Port Authority and the Hammond Port Authority Staff, for hosting that event. It looked excellent and it was a great turnout, like I said, 400 plus people. Investigate TV did a forty minute segment with me in City hall regarding the ProPublica article and the Norfolk Southern tracks. They shot that last week. I'm not sure when that's gonna come out but they were, I'm sure Councilman Rakos may be aware if they're still, when I say they, the national media, is still all over this situation with the Norfolk Southern tracks and the kids crossing the train lines. Like I said, Investigate TV was in City Hall for forty minutes with me alone. So, they're poking around. It's a national publication. I, personally, met with all the Public Works employees on a pay issue which is resulting in us having trouble staffing CDL positions. We've noticed that a lot of our laborers take jobs as laboreres or sweepers and they never proceed past those positions. They just get satisfied with where they are and the pay disparity between laborer and driver is not that great of a disparity and, quite frankly, most of our need is CDL drivers. So, we worked with Local 142 to come up with an incentive program to get people out of those labor spots and into the driver spots. I don't like people hanging out in labor spots, I want them constantly challenging themselves and moving up. I said as much to every single employee in the Public Works Department the other day. I talked about how the union and the City work together. I bought them all pizza and then they went out and finished their day. Also that day, I spent the afternoon at Purdue Northwest. I'm a member of the Chancellor's Board of Advisors at PNW and spent that afternoon getting presentations on the enrollment cliff that Purdue Northwest is monitoring. It's coming up and they're obviously paying attention to their budget and the policing at the campus. The Police Chief of Purdue Northwest is a former Police Chief of Hammond, Brian Miller. I attended the Whiting-Robertsdale Crime

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Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - Watch meeting in the 1st District the other day. It was a really good time. A lot of people there. Awarded the Key to the City to Dr. Sean Egan from Hammond Academy of Science and Technology. Dr. Egan is now officially retired. He is the only principal that HAST has ever had. He got the key to the City last week. He was very touched. It was a nice ceremony. I wanted to let Council know that Hammond is officially in the TikTok game. We started our own TikTok channel. I believe it’s gohammond on TikTok at gohammond or ... Alex Stahura, my Office Manager has been named Hammond’s TikTok Czar. She is actually gonna be sort of coordinating social media for the City. I figured I’m fifty-four and I don’t know what I’m doing on Social Media. We have all these young people working for us. So, let’s get some of the young people in charge of Social Media so I can check out. So, Alex, if you have any ideas for TikTok to the Council, I want you to know that we want to work with you and your staff. So, if you have ideas about things going on in your districts or things you want to say to the people, we’ll put you on Hammond’s gohammond TikTok. We’re looking for content. So, if you got something going on in the 5th District, Councilman Woerpel, or in the 6th, and you guys want Alex out there. I know at HC3 Alex was out there filming and doing videos from that. The Festival of the Lakes line up is set. Wed., July 12, Ashanti and Ja Rule; Thur., July 13, Brothers Osbourne; Fri., July 14, Stone Temple Pilots; Sat., July 15, Lil Wayne, Ticketed Concert Event; Sun., July 16; El Flaco. I want to let you know that we’re doing very, very well with July 15th show, Lil Wayne show. We’re doing very well on ticket sales for those people that are complaining that it’s a ticketed event. They better not complain too long or there’s not gonna be any tickets left. So, things are going very well. That’s my report. I’m not sure if the Council has any questions for me but that’s my report. I apologize for the long report today.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of May 23, 2023 and place on file. AYES: ALL

Councilman President Rakos - As the Mayor mentioned, we had Executive Session on Friday, June 9th, from 10 a.m. to 11:35 a.m. in City Hall and the topic was litigation.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims beginning May 24th, 2023 and ending with claims dated June 7th, 2023. Claim #3153 through claim #3770, inclusive. In the amount of \$6,997,811.17.

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

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COMMUNICATIONS

Councilwoman Alexander - On this Monday, June 19th at 10 a.m. we'll be having a Juneteenth celebration. The ceremony will begin at MLK Freedom Plaza on Tapper and Highland Street. We want everyone to come on out and enjoy food, music, fun and giveaways. I also want to congratulate the Class of 2023, as they embark on their new journey into adulthood.

Councilman Tyler - First of all I'd like to wish (unclear) birthday party. She's a resident at Mt. Zion Pleasantview Plaza and had (unclear) birthday celebration for her on Friday. Like I said, she felt very (unclear) birthday, so happy birthday to her. I want to give my condolences to the Love family on the loss of their mother Mariam Love, as well as my condolences to the (unclear) and her family along with her mother Miss Maggie (unclear). The Hammond Central Boy's Basketball team will be hosting a community celebration this Saturday from 12 to 4 p.m. All the athletic team will be at Hammond Central, the entire community is invited to come out and celebrate the success of that team. They're going through a lot of transition as well, so it sounds like their last hurrah (unclear) there'll be food, there'll be games, there'll be music. So, excited to have (unclear) from Power 92 there to (unclear) in celebration. Sponsorships are still available if anybody wants to (unclear) a game. Feel free to reach out to me as well. (Unclear) celebrate the success of their team. Also, I want to echo Councilwoman Alexander's sentiments in terms of the graduating class (unclear). And a special congratulations to the Hammond (unclear) 2023 (unclear) to attend that (unclear). Thank you.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Woerpel - Met on June 5th, 2023. Under New Business, a funding allocation for JF Mahoney Dr., change order #1, to Milestone Contractors North in the amount of \$78,497.99. It's my understanding it had to do with the sewer work that was done out there, I could be incorrect, but I believe that's what it was. The second item was a funding allocation for General Geotechnical Services and it went to Advance Engineering Services in the amount of \$50,000. The third item was a design engineering for the Grand Avenue Pedestrian Bridge to Beam, Longst and Neff in the amount of \$441,700. was approved.

Community and Crime Watch - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:

- Mt. Zion Pleasantview Plaza; Wed., July 12; 1:00 p.m.;
- East Hammond Pullman Crime Watch; June 20th; Ophelia Steen Center; 6:00 p.m.
- Edison Community Watch will not meet until September.
- Harrison Park Crime Watch; August 8th; VFW

There will be a block party at Harrison Park on July 22nd. More details to follow.

- Hessville Crime Watch; Thur., July 18th; 6:00 p.m.; Jean Shepherd Center
- Irving Community Watch will not meet until September.
- South Hohman Avenue Neighborhood Watch will meet in October.
- Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., July 13th; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

I would also like to remind everyone that the City of Hammond Security Light Program is in progress. Applications began being accepted today on the 3rd Floor, Room 314. You must own and reside in your

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NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, moved to re-appoint Suzette Kubacki to the Hammond College Bound Scholarships Oversight and Exceptions Committee.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

APPOINTMENT APPROVED

Council President Rakos - Passes 9/0/0 for Hammond College Bound Scholarships Oversight and Exceptions Committee for Suzette Kubacki for a Four year term.

Councilwoman Venecz - I just wanted to reiterate our fireworks ordinance. We are in that time of the year where people are purchasing and shooting off fireworks. Our fireworks ordinance says that fireworks are permitted between 5 p.m. and two hours after sunset. Between June 29th and July 9th. The only exception is on the 4th of July, they are permissible between 10 a.m. and twelve midnight. The other exception is on New Year's Eve, between 10 a.m. and 1 a.m., but thankfully we don't have that kind of weather right now. I just wanted to point out to everyone that it is that time of the year, please be very careful when shooting off fireworks make sure there aren't any children around and please adhere to the ordinance. There are pets who are disturbed by the fireworks and there are seniors who are not in good health who are disturbed by the fireworks so please adhere to the ordinance and enjoy yourself.

Councilman Kalwinski - A shout out and a big thank you to the Hammond Mohawks for sponsoring another successful Hammond Memorial Day Parade. I want to thank all the participants in the parade as well as St. Cas for offering up their premises for the Memorial Service afterwards.

Councilman Woerpel - I've seen a lot of talk on social media about the railroad crossings and how there were gouges cut in the railroad crossings and rail was put down and I've seen some people categorize it retribution for the meeting and all that. But, I had a conversation with our City Engineer, Dean Button, and it's my understanding and his that they are replacing the track 2,000 feet at a time and that's why them grooves were cut in and it's to complete rail line that they're going through, I believe it's the Norfolk Southern, but I've seen some, you know, talk about, well, you know, the City of Hammond shouldn't of done this, or the railroads doing it for retribution, and it's nothing to do with that. It has to do with them improving their railroad crossings and it's my understanding from what Mr. Button told me that the project will last at least until August when they come in and actually replace the track with the 2,00 foot sections and then redo the crossings. It's also my understanding that that's what's going on down here on Calumet Avenue. Something about when they put the track in and cut the groove, a sewer collapsed. I'm sorry, on Columbia Avenue. There's been some discussion on, you know, when's that gonna get fixed but I just wanted to clarify that.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

George Stoya - Nothing too important, but I was at the Crime Watch where the Mayor brought up the ProPublica stuff and I just want to reenforce the idea, anybody that's read that stuff, I was an old journalist from way back. I spent a couple stints with the Indianapolis Star, some other dailies, I freelanced as a journalist and I can assure you, you do not see that kind of journalism in the United States of America, no. First amendment notwithstanding, there's just far too many considerations given toward sponsors and advertising. You just don't see that. That might be why we got such quick action on that. But everybody should see what a real free press can do when it's free. If you look into ProPublica, you'll find that they're independently financed, which helps a great deal so they're not reliant on advertising. They got guys from the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal that are running that show. That is rare when they do a deep dive like that. They got thorough.

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	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	P	P	P	P												
Dan Spitale	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	PP											
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P											
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P											
Pete Torres	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P											
Barry Tyler	E	P	P	E	P	P	P	E	E	P	P	E	EE											
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P											
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A											
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P											
Initials	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	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 /s/

ATTEST:



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk /s/

Time: 6:30 p.m.
cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk