

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on April 8, 2024 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, Kalwinski, Salinas, Tyler, Emerson, Woerpel, Rakos

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: None

ABSENT: Venecz

TOTAL: 8

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - Mayor Tom is not able to be here today so I'm happy to give his report on his behalf. We're gonna team it today because I'm also gonna have our City Controller, Megan Moore, come up and talk about the proposed increase on the garbage collection fees. So why don't I have her come up first, she'll do that, then I'll finish the report and we can answer questions afterwards.

City Controller Megan Moore - So last week my office disbursed to you guys a physical copy and then e-mail version of, obviously, a letter that speaks to this a little bit more, as well as an income statement for the operations of the Sanitation Department over the past five years. If you reviewed that income statement, you can see 2022 and 2023 operated in a deficit. It was a pretty significant deficit for both years. This typically results in us relying on other revenues such as Gaming, as these expenses are housed in the General Fund to make up for that shortfall. The current rate of \$21 a month was set by the Sanitary District back in 2014. They house the operations of garbage and recycling collections back then and the rate has since not been touched over the past ten years. The City recently negotiated a renewal contract with Waste Management through the use of a live auction to receive the most competitive offers for our landfill services. In 2024 we are experiencing a 34% increase to our tonnage fee. We are currently wrapping up negotiations with Republic for our recycling and we are anticipating a four year deal in which we would see percentage increases of 5-5-5-7. Given these increases as well as the overall cost increase related to personnel and supplies we are proposing that you enact and amendment to the existing fee of \$21 per month to change that to \$26 a month which is a \$5 per month increase. This increase is estimated to bring in about \$1.4 million in revenue into the General Fund and is estimated to sustain operations for the next four years. So, that's just a quick summery on it. I will kick it back over to Phil to finish the report. Thank you.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - I wanted to update everybody on the Food and Beverage Tax bill. I know that most of you are aware that it passed in Indianapolis and I know I've had some questions. So I just wanted to let you know that we are doing some due diligence right now. A little history, when we were going forward for the

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon cont. - Food and Beverage Tax bill, we were given a road map by the legislatures in Indianapolis that said, "Look, if you want to get this passed, here's what we're gonna tell you to do." Once thing was, they said it had to go to tourism projects. Two, it had to have a sunset. Three, it could not go towards any type of operations. So with that, we are right now reviewing the three projects that were passed in the bill. The Downtown Hammond Train Station, which we all ... I know I've talked to many of you and believe that that will be a significant improvement to the revitalization of Downtown Hammond. Then we also are looking at the Sportsplex expansion, which is really just been extremely successful. I heard just recently we had added 200 more kids into the volleyball program, for example, and I know we've had some traffic issues at that sight because of how successful it's been, and that's part of this project as well. Is addressing some of the traffic, which is doesn't help that the YMCA is under construction at the same exact time. So that's part of what we are experiencing. Then if there's remaining funds after those first two projects, we would look at enhancements to the Pavilion. Those are the three that were approved in the actual bill in Indianapolis. Those are the only three things that the money could be used for. So right now we're doing some due diligence, we're putting some information together and when we're ready, obviously, we'll come back to the Council and seek potential approval based on the projects that we 're doing and we'll go from there. So you'll be hearing about it, specifics, very soon. I didn't write this down, so I'm winging this, but I wanted to let you know that we're on our 3rd Gaming Advisory Commission meeting this Wednesday. Hopefully it will be the final meeting. We had about \$420,000 that we could issue on grants this year, as compared to last year, I believe we were at \$530,000. With that we had a lot more requests than we had last year. I think we had 82 applications submitted this year, and the amount requested was well over \$2 million. So, keep that in mind when you talk to not for profits that let you know that they didn't get what they requested. We're doing the best we can, obviously. The Council has five appointees, the Mayor has five appointees, and then I'm the chairman of the Commission based on the ordinance and it's going really well. We're working together and a lot of us have history on the commission so we know organizations that have applied years before and we use information from he past to help us make decisions today. Myself and Chief Andy Short were happy to represent the City on Sunday at the JE Wade Ministries 8th Annual Grief and Mental Health Conference, which was held at the Tree of Life Church on Hohman Avenue. It was an amazing event. I've never been there before. They had three doctors speak from both East Chicago and Gary. Dr. ??Labarion??, Dr. ??Hanner??, and Dr. Nchekwube, amazing, I mean the information they gave to the people that attended the conference and we all know that mental health is an issue, not just in Hammond, but everywhere and there's a lot of people out there that don't even realize that they have a problem. They really addressed the issue. So I just want o to thank them for hosting it isn Hammond, specifically Dr. Wade and his wife, Mrs. Wade, they were very generous to the mayor and the Council and everybody for our support. I want to congratulate Judge Schneider, Jeff Strack and our very own Mayor Tom, for being inducted into the Purdue Northwest Alumni Hall of Fame last week. It was a great event. I know Mayor Tom was very honored to be inducted. But I think most of us have been involved with the City for the Mayor's twenty years that he's been here and also working together with the Council as well, we have had a great partnership with PNW. There's been three different Chancellors and yet we have never stopped working together with them. That's improvements at Dowling Park, the sports that they brought on, going to Division 2, the properties that they've invested in and redeveloped on Indianapolis Blvd. that have made the City a better place. So it's been a great partnership. But really want to congratulate Mayor Tom on his induction. It was well deserved. Mayor Tom is gonna continue his annual tradition of shaving his head to raise money for someone in need . That's gonna happen this Friday. I believe it's at 3 o'clock or somewhere around there in the Mayor's

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon cont. - Office. This year the person he is raising money for, her name is Allison Gleason. I don't know if you know her, but I've known her for twenty five years. I worked with her at Bank Calumet. She's an amazing person. She's got an unbelievable heart. Anyhow, if you haven't donated please take a look. She needs it. She's got a family. This is her second cancer diagnosis and it's rough. So, please go to Mayor Tom's Facebook page if you haven't and maybe make a donation. That's all I have. I'm happy to answer any questions and Megan is still here too so if you have any questions about the Sanitary fees.

Councilman Kalwinski - I'm not sure how much you're aware about the property across from Hermits Park, 3 141st, but the new owners have been less than up front and less than attentive to regulations and how to do things. We've had a number of issues with them. The first one was putting up a multi mailbox on what looks to be City property. Never asked for permission. Never got a permit. Then they wanted to do demo inside one of the warehouses. Were told what to do. Did not get an asbestos assessment. Did not get a permit. The City shut them down. Then we had a lots of rain and the run off of water for three days after the rain stopped from their property into our streets, into our sewers. I've asked Sanitary to test that water. Then this past weekend they were talking down silos on the property and again didn't get an asbestos assessment. Didn't get a permit. And we don't even really have a design on what they're planning to do. I can't even report anything but negative to the neighborhood right now. So, I wanted you to be aware, I was hoping the Mayor would be here but look at the minutes, something' got to be done about how they're conducting business. They keep being told what to do in advance and then they're not doing it. What kind of neighbor is this coming into my district. Not a good one.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - So, this morning Ron Novak, our Environmental Management Director, gave the Mayor and myself a memo and it was outlining some of the things you just brought up. So, obviously, we need a little bit of time to look through that and review exactly what you're talking about. But based on that information, I know that they are coming to the City for potential incentives to invest in that property. In the last meeting we had, or last conversation we had about it, I want to say it was Thursday or Friday, and the conversation was, "Alright, let's make sure we sit down with the Councilmen and let's all review this together." So, what I would tell you is we're aware of it. Because we did receive the memo today and he outlined some of those things. I think, very soon we'll be addressing some of those concerns that you're expressing.

Councilman Kalwinski - It needs attention. I think they're getting a pattern to develop where they're willing to ask for forgiveness instead of permission.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - On top of the fact that the history of that property, we all know, has very auspicious. I mean we've had an issue with the past owner and you get a new owner and you're excited, you're thinking, alright, we're finally gonna go in the right direction and then we're obviously having some immediate setbacks. So, no, we're gonna address it, you know, and I'll certainly make sure I'm communicating with you two Councilmen.

Councilman Kalwinski - And the one Supervisor who was doing the demo when I went there Saturday actually said that he was going to be using the warehouse and the yard. The store has heavy equipment. That's new information that I wasn't aware of.

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon cont. - Yeah, everything I've heard is light industrial and no semi's and no big trucks, so, yeah, I would agree with that.

Councilman Woerpel - One of the two projects you mentioned are affecting my district and one of them is the Sportsplex. And I've said this before and I'll say it again, I think we have a good problem there with it being so packed. But you can't convince the neighbors of that when they have some parking issues on those side streets. And the same thing with the hockey rink, but at least we've been able to solve that a little bit and are we still on track for a parking lot there?

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - Both sites. So the Sportsplex site, the last preliminary plan I saw for parking, there was gonna be somewhere around a thousand additional spots. It's gonna be The neighbors who are complaining, and I don't blame them, right? Because they're experiencing it right now, they don't want to wait six months. But there is a light at the end of the tunnel here. We want to grow the Sportsplex because it's bringing a lot of revenue into the City, which is fantastic. It's bringing a lot of tourism. It's helping our restaurants, our hotels, our small businesses, all those places. So, but, we certainly take this very seriously that they're affecting our residents, they come first, and please let them know that the plan is in place right now are working towards to going forward that's going to address those issues. And, again, this is partially because the YMCA just happens to be under construction right now. None of their parking spaces are available. There's no good access to the Walmart parking lot where there's a ton of spaces there that are open. That retention area between the Walmart and the Sportsplex, we're gonna put underground detention and there's gonna be parking spaces on top of that which also lets people walk, potentially, from the Walmart to the Sportsplex. So there is light at the end of the tunnel. It is gonna get addressed.

Councilman Woerpel - And I appreciate that, and I know the neighbors do too. I noticed when I get most of the calls it's on Sunday when that church is also in full capacity and I do know when there's not a big event at the Sportsplex, some of that church parking spills over to that Sportsplex lot there, it seems to subside a little bit. But we are taking steps over there. I've seen the police department over there several times. And I know some residents are asking for resident only parking signs and I don't know about how it is now but I always caution against that because you got to have the police settling an argument about who's a resident and who isn't, you know, on a street like that. But, I just wanted you to reiterate too that we're addressing both of them situations because you guys have kept me in the loop too on that.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - Yeah, and thankfully if the Council does eventually pass the Food and Beverage Tax resolution or ordinance, whatever it's gonna be, those dollars are gonna be used to address this situation. So that's the good news, it's not coming from Mayor's Gaming or Capital Improvement Board or anything like that, or Council money.

Councilman Kalwinski - Another issue that doesn't seem to get resolved, and I don't think it's just my district, is that when ornamental light posts go down, the City doesn't put them back up when they get destroyed by a car. When Felix first started, shortly after that, I gave him a list of like twenty poles and lights that were missing. He said we didn't have the poles. That they only get them once or twice a year. Now that was six months ago and I just put another almost twenty on 311 and some of what I looked at in the passed says it's archived. Two

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Kalwinski cont. - things, I don't know what archived means. Did they just push it and throw it in the dumpster and forget about it or is there something else about archived in 311. And the second thing is why can't we get our light poles put up? I mean this is about public safety. Do we have money for maintenance?

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - So, without Felix being here, I need to check in to that process. Maybe, I'm wondering if archived means because we don't have the inventory, it's not being done, but let me check with Felix on that. But I certainly will look into that.

Councilman Kalwinski - It's been six months, six months.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - I will certainly ask him and find out what the reasoning is. I agree with you on that. When an ornamental light goes down, I mean, you'd expect it to get back up.

Councilman Kalwinski - And the electric boxes, there's one exposed with the wires hanging out of it off of Baltimore and Gostlin, for six months. After the car hit it, nobody ... It didn't get repaired and I've got another one on Wabash that hasn't been replaced. I don't get it. Is it, I know some of the people were telling me they were having the same issues but is this related to the 1st District? Is this how we're being treated? And different than everybody else or what is this? Why can't we get light poles?

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - I know we don't treat any district any better or worse than any other district. I could promise you that. So, whatever the process is for the 1st District, it'd be the same for the 6th or 5th or whatever. So, but let me find out what ... let me talk to Felix and find out what the reasoning is and if it is an inventory issue, then I think that's something we could fix. I mean, we could figure out a way to find some dollars to get some new light poles.

Councilman Kalwinski - I hope it won't take another six months.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - I will find out.

Councilman Kalwinski - Thank you.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - You're welcome.

Councilman Salinas - My question is for City Controller Megan Moore. You made mention of your garbage and recycling operations income statement, operating with a deficit the past few years, are you able to elaborate a bit as far as how that deficit was created? What exactly is going on, as far as that deficit?

City Controller Megan Moore - Yeah, no, that's absolutely fine. So we can actually pull up the income statement, and Clerk I have a copy for you too for the record. So, if you look at landfill costs over the past five years you'll see that those have significantly increased. We were in a deal, actually, I pulled up the numbers for you, Councilman, because I know you brought this up in caucus. We had one contract from the years of 2015 through 2018. 2019 we did an amendment to that original agreement. Then in 2021 Covid hit, we did a three

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

City Controller Megan Moore - year deal. Then in the past two years we've done a one year deal. So, as I mentioned earlier in my report, this year, specifically, we've seen 34% increase to our per tonnage rate. So, in previous years we were seeing a pretty significantly rate increase. I want to say it was about 7-8.5% over those three years. So, as, you know, when Covid came so did the rise of, I don't know, the cost of everything. So, mileage was included in that, and then the cost of gas increased and we began getting charged for the disposal of mattresses at the rate of \$25 per mattress. So, that's a significant increase there. Another area where you're gonna see some increases, of course, personnel, you know, that department is ran by mostly teamsters, by the lead of Rhonda, I believe she's the only Civil City employee on that budget. So, as they have increases through their contract, you're going to see those personnel services increase as well. Fuel, of course that's a line item that's there in 2022. In comparison to 2021 you can see, I mean, we went from \$117 thousand spent to \$167 thousand spent. So, it truly comes back down to just the overall costs of operations increasing because of the market.

Councilman Salinas - Thank you. I also think it's worth noting that our current rate of \$21 a month, when you compare that to the other cities and towns around us, we're sitting at one of the lowest rates and with that \$5 increase per month, so a \$26 rate, put us somewhere right in the middle when you're thinking of cities such as Griffith, Gary, Highland, so I think it's right in line. Thank you for your time.

Councilman Woerpel - The question was asked in caucus, but one of the people that attended caucus said that the online version of the ordinance book only has it listed at \$5.

City Controller Megan Moore - So, that ordinance was enacted in, I believe it was 1981, I know it was the early 80's. The operations of the garbage and recycling collections, they were housed at the Sanitary District. When that started, I don't know, but from my research, I know at least from the years of 2008 through 2014. So, any increases that were done from that fee up to where we're at currently at \$21 was done through their governing body, which is the Sanitary District Board. So I was able to find the resolution that the Sanitary District passed for, I believe it was the last three rate increases up to the \$21 in 2014, and then we inherited that and unfortunately it's just, it just didn't get updated on the City side. But there is I mean, it's been tested through audit, so we do have those resolutions that support why we're charging those fees.

Councilman Woerpel - Well, if this passes, it'll go in the ordinance book at this cost, correct?

City Controller Megan Moore - That is correct. So this is actually amending that ordinance.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon - I mentioned this in caucus, you know, you never want to raise fees, right? If we could we'd stay with the same fee forever and everybody would be happy. I think the time we raised water fees, it was the first time we had increased in thirty five years, and I believe we're still the lowest rate in Indiana, and this is the first time were raising the fee on garbage rates since 2024, I believe. So, you don't want to do it but it's cost increases if you don't address those issues through some nominal fee increases, the City will keep on taking on additional expenses and eventually you run out of funding. So, every once in a while you do have to address these situations. This would potentially put us in the black for, you know, at least the near future. But you can't even say how long you'll be in the black because we're gonna be negotiating a new contract with

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Chief of Staff Phil Taillon cont. - Waste Management next year, because we have a one year deal right now. So, I just want to throw that out there because we appreciate you looking at this and think it makes sense based on the numbers and especially when you compare yourself to the other communities around you and you could see that, hey, if we raise it to \$26 we’re gonna be right in the middle of all these other communities. We are the 8th largest city in Indiana. We’re the No. 1 largest city in Lake County and, you know, sometimes these things have to happen.

City Controller Megan Moore - And if I may, as a part of this process, in the review, we also reached out to Republic Services to see what the City of Hammond’s rate of success was when it comes to recycling rate. Because if most of our stuff is ending up in a land fill anyways, Mayor wanted to see if it was even worth offering the program, and to our delight and surprise, Hammond has a success rate in recycling of about 78%. So, that’s very good in comparison to surrounding communities.

Councilman Kalwinski - Regarding garbage, we don’t have customer communities, right?

City Controller Megan Moore - No, we use in house, and then we go through Waste management to dump all of our garbage. But, no, there’s no customer communities that we do services for.

Councilman Kalwinski - Because when we did water, when we raised the water rate, Hammond got the full increase, but the customer communities were graduated over time. When I think back on that, I just wonder why wasn’t Hammond also a part of this graduating instead of like Hammond residents taking the full load while the others negotiate.

City Controller Megan Moore - Yeah, I can’t speak to that, but I will say this is a very different circumstance. It’s not comparable.

Councilman Kalwinski - It sounds like it.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of March 25, 2024 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved to approve the claims from March 26, 2024 through April 3, 2024. Claim #2946 through claim #3306, inclusive. For a total of \$4,547,097.96.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Venecz

Motion carried

8/0/1

CLAIMS APPROVED

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Council President Rakos - HC3 will be having a clean up on May 18th from noon to 3. We'll meet at the Hanson Community Center Building on Martha at 9 o'clock. We're looking for residents and students and teacher and businesses to help out. HC3 is also in the process of planning Live in the Ville, which will be on May 31st and June 1st. They're also looking for sponsors. Council has a packet in their mailbox today. But, they are looking for sponsors and they still need some if anybody wants to participate to sell goods there. It is May 31st and June 1st.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Emerson - We met on April 1st, 2024. We dealt with three things. No. 1 was \$43,600 for construction engineering services with First Group Engineering for Hohman Avenue North approach at Sibley. No. 2 was \$153 thousand for resurfacing the parking lot at 433 Sibley Towle Theater with Dyer Construction. No. 3 was \$589 thousand for Columbia Avenue PEL Study with Lochmueller Group, and this is a total cost of the study and represents 80% match by NIRPC and 20% match by Hammond for \$117,800. And those are the three things we dealt with.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

24-08 Ordinance Amending Ordinance Numbers 4686, 4695, 4770, and 9619, Otherwise Known as §94.041 Garbage Collection Fees of the City of Hammond Municipal Code

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee on April 22, 2024 at 5:15 p.m.

Councilman Woerpel - The City Controller Megan did a great job in explaining it. I know George had a question about it and I hope we answered it on what it said in the Ordinance Book. But, other than that, I got nothing.

Council President Rakos - Any other discussion?

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd reading)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Venecz

Motion carried

8/0/1

MOTION CARRIED

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to reappoint Jorge Bautista to the Electrical Contractor’s Board.

Councilman Woerpel - I talked to Kelly Kearney and Mr. Bautista has been a, I don’t want to say a long term, but he’s served three or four terms already, he’s very qualified to be on the board. I guess his profession is as an electrician. So, other than that it’s a reappointment for two years, correct?

Councilman Salinas - Correct.

Councilman Tyler - Did we figure out what District he resides in? Second?

ROLL CALL VOTE (reappointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Venecz

Motion carried

8/0/1

APPOINTMENT ADOPTED

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

George Stoya - Given the concerns expressed by Phil and others about different costs and escalation in cost and all that stuff and our comparative status with other communities, that’s one of the reasons that I was talking to you earlier about schools. If we’re going to incentivise people to come and/or stay in Hammond, we’ve got to do something about our schools. I know, it’s not your problem, because ultimately this is what we come up against. We come up against these, we don’t have any money for this, we don’t have any money for that. Because why? Property values aren’t appreciating. So, where else are you gonna get your money except by these fees. You’re gonna turn Hammond into an ATM machine. You guys are gonna be the dispensers. Anytime somebody needs money, well, we’ll just go before the Council. Hammond is a working class town. You know, the prices were stable. Property values were stable. If we’re gonna go into debt and we’re gonna start renegotiating contracts another thing, is Republic the only game in town? Isn’t there any competition? Why are we stuck with them? I may be wrong but I just don’t know one way or the other.

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to adjourn.

AYES: ALL

2024 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Katrina Alexander	8 P	22 P	26 P	11 P	25 P	8 P						
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Janet Vencz	E	P	P	P	P	A						
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Alfonso Salinas III	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Barry Tyler	P	P	E	P	E	P						
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Dave Woerpel	A	P	P	P	P	P						
Scott Rakos	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.

Scott M Rakos
Scott Rakos, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST: *RJG*

Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:40 p.m.
cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk