

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

A moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: None

ABSENT: None

TOTAL:9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott- Hi, nice to see you all. This is my address for the week of July 8th. Welcome back. First meeting in July. Activity log over the last couple of weeks, and then I'll get in to a couple issues about Police and Fire negotiations and update on Clark fields. So first off, activity log for the last 2 weeks. We are doing weekly meetings now with regards to the FOTL, as everybody knows it starts next week. Next Wednesday. We've been meeting weekly for the last few weeks. Just making sure that we're taking care of last second planning. Just making sure everything is going to plan. I know we have a number of college bounders lined up for the neighborhoods. I know Councilman Mark always makes sure we're in the neighborhoods every year. I know we're working hard on getting college bounders lined up to block the streets to make sure that nobody parks illegally in the neighborhoods. So anyway, we're going to have 2 more meetings before the FOTL. I met with all 5 Hammond School Board Members and spoke to the members about the referendum, about the Superintendents position, about the abandoned schools and plans for the abandoned schools. Long term planning. I thought it was a good meeting. It was a couple weeks ago. Yeah there's a lot going on in the School City. If you have any questions, Im willing to answer. Participated in the annual Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce golf outing, was a real good event. Held at the Lost Marsh. Place looked great. Food was great. A lot of people came to Hammond that day. Always a good time. Summer concert series is going on at the Pavilion. I attended on Saturday evening to watch the Grateful Dead cover band from Indianapolis. That was amazing. It's a great time, for the people that are watching. It's every Saturday night during the summer. Usually have cover bands from around the region, around the state. Like I said, there was a Grateful Dead one last week. I'm not sure who's coming up this week, but, actually I know it's not going during the festival, so when the summer concert series is going, I urge everyone to get out there. I wanna thank Jill Gajewski, and the Port Authority for holding those. Held seven interviews for the Chief of Staff position, everybody that interviewed with the Mayor got a return phone call from the Mayor and I explained what I thought was great, and what I thought they should work on. So I think it was a real learning experience for everybody that put in. I attended the visitation for a retired Hammond Police Officer who unexpectedly passed away. Lt. Michael Ramirez. Great Hammond Police officer that retired a number of years ago. Went to Purdue Northwest. Great Police Officer. A Hammond guy unexpectedly and tragically passed away, so I attended on behalf of the City of Hammond. Met with shift 2

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott Cont.- station 1 for our monthly fire department meeting. Thought we had a real good meeting. Talked about what was going on. I'll tell you, we have a lot of these meetings with different shifts and different stations. That one was really good. So I wanna thank shift 2 at station 1. It was a really good meeting. We talked about issues that Mayor needs to hear about. And I thought it was a really good exchange. So I want to thank those guys. It was a real good meeting. Lunch with the Controller and the new Chief of Staff, Scott Miller regarding details on when Scott's gonna take over. Obviously he's transitioning out of his role as Superintendent of the Public schools in the City of Hammond. He's taking over as the Chief of Staff for Myself. Obviously we want to work with the school board, we want to work with Scott, so it's a smooth transition. We had a nice meeting with the controller and him. Attended the annual 4th of July fireworks display. Bill Porter's Orchestra played again for, I don't know, the 30th time. He's played a lot, he's still out there doing it. I think he's pretty dang close to 90 too. It's pretty impressive to see a guy out there every year doing the same thing. So, thanks to Bill Porter's Orchestra and everyone that came out to watch a great fireworks display. Hammond Port Authority also. Attended Whiting's annual 4th of July Parade. Mayor Steve always throws a good party there. A lot of people came out. It was a great day. Hammond had a great float. A lot of college bounders. Good times. Attended the council lunch with Councilman Salinas, Councilman Berry, Councilman Emerson, Councilman Woerpel. Thank you very much for coming out with me. And for those of you that attend council lunches, I can only meet with you 4 at a time. I appreciate those of you that attend with me because I think it's good to communicate like that between the executive and legislative branches. So I appreciate you cooperating like that. Update on police and fire negotiations, we'll start with police negotiations. I met with the FOP negotiating team the week before last and we have made significant progress. The goals we have been centered around making our police dept competitive in the now very competitive employment market for police officers. So the words recruit and retain have been used a lot. We need to make sure our current officers get a significant raise to retain them, and that our dept is able to recruit new officers to make the dept attractive to people looking to make police work a career. I'm willing to give our officers the raises that they proposed, but it comes at a cost. Some of the perks of the contract have to go away, and the pensions we fixed last time, can't keep going up or we can't give the raises they want. And we're down to just a few issues. They're big issues, but we are down to just a few issues. And then I gotta come to you guys and tell you the plan for paying for it. But we are losing police officers as we speak. It's a regular occurrence and it's a pay issue. Make no mistake about it. Fire. Mike Hull and his team have presented a very thorough summary of where Hammond Fire department sits related to other departments around the state and in the region. Im committed to working with the union to correct wage differentials to make sure our fire fighters are paid a very competitive wage versus other Northwest Indiana departments. I also want to make sure we look at our paramedic pay, and address them specifically. That goes back to the conversation we had the other day at shift 2, station 1. We are looking to add another ambulance to better serve our residents. And taking another piece of equipment out of service so that it doesn't add to the tax burden of the Hammond Fire Dept. My team is awaiting some further information from the union so that we can officially give the Fire Union our response to their proposal. So we're off and running with the Fire Dept, and with the FOP. The Teamsters, we're in the process of scheduling our first negotiations as we speak. So it's interesting and I want you guys to know that when I'm negotiating with Police officers and Firemen, I'm negotiating with unions that about 25 percent of their members live in the City of Hammond. Okay? They're asking for the biggest raises and that's a fact. That's something that's factual. Alright? And then what happens is the teamsters come along at the end, and I can tell you one thing about the Teamsters, 100 percent of them live in the City of Hammond. So I hear

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott Cont.- sometimes, hey let's cut back on the teamsters. We're paying so much to Police and Fire, I don't really belong to that club because the last negotiation I did was the Teamsters and they're the ones that actually are our bosses. They actually live here with us. So we gotta keep in mind that police and fire can't get everything. But we do need to keep our police department like we are. And we got challenges for sure. So Clark Field update. Clark Field's infrastructure is almost done. Preliminary site plans are being reviewed. Now for the 37 new homes. We could see ground breaking this fall. Stay tuned on when 3 remaining parcels where the old fire station is will become available for 3 more homes. Alright, good update for that. The Bank in downtown Hammond, floors 2 and 3 are gonna be open. Excuse me, let me read this how it's written. Floors 4-6 are almost done. Floors 7-9 are gonna be done after that. Floors 2 and 3 are gonna be opening in the next couple months. Leasing tours are happening now. People will be moving in, in August. And the event space called, The Reserve, in the lobby will be completed by the end of the year. So that's good news. Action items before the council, I know there's not a lot going on with council tonight. I know there's items, but, but from the executive branch, not a lot going on. We do have a resolution that's still pending. I acknowledge Councilman Salinas. Lawyers are working between Franciscan and the City of Hammond right now. We're still not ready to bring it out. I apologize. Other than that, that's my report unless you all have any questions for me.

Councilwoman Alexander- Mayor, couple questions, dealing with the Water Dept. We know that some residents have not received their bills. I did go up there myself and found out that we have not received our bills because there is a transition that is happening, dealing with someone else that is doing our billing.

Mayor McDermott- Yeah, It's shortly gonna be. We tried to notify everybody that it was gonna be delayed this month only because of the changeover, Councilwoman. I appreciate you bringing that up. I still don't have, I have 2 different water bills and I got none of them at this point yet. And that's just unusual.

Councilwoman Alexander- So just a question financially, dealing with that, since there's outsourcing happening, if you can give me a run down on what that outsourcing has cost? And also.

Mayor McDermott- I can't, but you can probably ask the CEO of the Water Company.

Councilwoman Alexander- Ok, can we find that out then? The other question is, did anyone lose their jobs pending this out source as well?

Mayor McDermott- No. I can tell you that. There's no layoffs at the Water Dept. If anything, they're completely overworked in the business office. Because we went to monthly billing, and it doubled their workload, and they've been slammed with work. So we've been retaining our employees, reorganizing. For efficiency sake, the water dept decided to out source the billing and that's why we're experiencing this delay. But I don't run the day to day operations of the water dept. I wanna remind you councilwoman, I appoint the board members and they run the water dept. I imagine that we can find out the answers to these questions. But if they worked directly for the mayor I'd probably know this off the top of my head, but there is separation there. It's a board and an independent CEO. But I'm not sure of the financial details involved, I guess, that's what I'm trying to say.

Councilwoman Alexander- OK.

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott- Any other questions about that?

Councilwoman Alexander- No.

Council President Rakos- Anybody else have questions for the Mayor? Alright, Thank you Mayor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the minutes of June 24, 2024 and place on file. AYES: ALL

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved to approve the Public Hearing minutes of June 24, 2024. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to approve the claims from June 25, 2024 through July 2, 2024. Claim #5507 through #6069, inclusive. In the amount of \$16,880,204.80.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Salinas-I have a few thank yous that I think are in order. First off, I’d like to say thank you to the Public Works dept. Our supervisor, Juan Serrano, and his crew in the 2nd district has done an excellent job taking care of a lot of the 311 app tickets. Specifically down Sherman St. We have a large parcel of land that is just riddled with trash and overgrown weeds and what not, and Mr Serrano and his crew has come out and made that area look neat all the way around, So I wanna say a big thank you to Juan Serrano of the public works department. Also, I wanna say a thank you to Pastor Orlando Solair from the Living Hope Church. Pastor Orlando put together a crew that came out yesterday and helped during one of our district clean ups along the Grand Calumet River. So a big thank you to Pastor Orlando and his congregation members.

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved to approve all communications from the last meeting and the current packet, and entered into the record.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMUNICATIONS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (communications)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried

9/0/0

COMMUNICATIONS INCLUSION APPROVED

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Councilwoman Venecz-Council as a whole will be bringing out 24-14 for final passage. And Mr. President, I would like to move onto community and crime watch. Let me, as I do, at every meeting, tell everyone about the upcoming community and crime watch meetings. Community watch at Mt Zion Pleasant view Plaza will be Wednesday August 14th, at 1pm. East Hammond Pullman crime watch will meet July 18th, 6pm at the Ophelia Steen Center. Edison community watch is off for the summer because the school is closed. Harrison Park crime watch will meet Tuesday August 6th 6pm at the VFW on Hohman ave across from Harrison Park. Hessville crime watch does not meet in the month of July. Irving community watch is off for the summer because school is closed. South Hohman ave neighborhood watch will meet at Trinity Lutheran Church on 173rd and Hohman probably somewhere in October, so keep your eyes open for that. Whiting/Robertsdale crime watch will meet Thursday July 11th at 6:30 pm at Calumet College. I'd like to announce National Night Out is coming up on Tuesday August 6th from 5-8pm will be at the Pavilion at Wolf Lake. This is a family event. Lots of things for the youngsters to do. And for the adults, and for the children for that matter, gives them an opportunity to take an up close and personal look at our fire vehicles and our police vehicles and our city department vehicles. There will be pontoon rides, and food. The Lake County Sheriff is going to bring his Helicopter. In addition to that, donations will be accepted for Hammond Animal Control. They are always in need of bleach, towels, cat food, dog food, things of that nature. So please come out, that is Tuesday August 6th. I do want to point out that tomorrow is the final day for legal fireworks. After tomorrow, if your neighbors are setting off fireworks, please feel free to call the Hammond Police Department. Be sure to call in with a specific address. The police cannot chase smoke. But it's just very annoying during the middle of the week when some of us have to get up and go to work the next day and somebody's shooting off fireworks on our block, so tomorrow is the last legal day. I just wanted to point that out. Please come out to a community and crime watch meeting. As you all know, our community is the eyes and ears of our police dept, because community is not just about me, it's about us.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING- FINAL PASSAGE

24-14 An Ordinance Creating New Funds, Fund #3393 and Fund #3395 to Facilitate the 2024 Firehouse Project Bond

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

Councilwoman Venecz-Yes, this is an ordinance to create line items for the firehouse bond. The dedicated funds must be dedicated to a specific line item.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried

9/0/0

ORDINANCE NO. 9637 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Woerpel- A couple weeks back, I received a few complaints, myself included, about a business behind the street where I live, on Indianapolis Blvd. And it was, Im not gonna name it by name, but it was a repair shop and not only did that lot, but the lot next to it, had about 60 cars on it. A lot of them didn't have plates on them. And one of the Council lunches the Mayor was talking about, I brought it up to the Mayor, about is there anything we can do about that. And he set up a meeting or a text with everybody involved including code enforcement and within 2 days, those 50 cars were down to about 6. And I do know that there's one over there by you that they're also starting to get some cars out of there too. But, these repair shops are not allowed to go buy cars from the junkyard, and then go over there and take the parts off of them and then just leave the cars on the property. And I just wanted to, I'm not gonna name people by name because they know who they are, But I wanna thank the Mayor and the Code Enforcement department for taking care of this problem. Kinda like as we spoke. So I just wanna make the residents that complained and the staff that it's appreciated, so thank you.

Councilman Salinas- I have a few announcements I'd like to make. First off, Monday night, tonight, every Monday night here this summer, the downtown Hammond Development District is hosting their blues cruise car show. The car show runs from 5pm-9pm. There's lots of custom and vintage cars on display as well as food vendors. It's actually a pretty good time if you haven't gone, it's worth checking out. It's nice seeing people back in the downtown Hammond area. My second item that I have is, I'd like to let everyone know that this Saturday, July 13th, at 9am I'll be hosting another neighborhood cleanup. We'll be starting at the Calumet Avenue Bridge near Logan St. working our way eastbound down Logan to the Columbia Avenue Bridge so if you or your neighbors are interested or free, come on out and join us. Again that's this Saturday, July 13th, at 9am. And one last announcement, the Hammond Police Department is hosting their picnic in the park at Columbia Park. That's tomorrow. 11am to 1pm. I encourage all the kids in the neighborhood and their parents to come on out and enjoy free food, free games, and prizes. There's a bicycle raffle. It's a great opportunity to meet the officers that patrol our neighborhoods. Again that's the Picnic in the Park at Columbia Park from 11am to 1 pm tomorrow. Thank you.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

John Chapski- Lifetime city resident. Parents passed away. Worked at a supermarket. Had to get a permit in order to work. Went to College. Bought a house at age 50. Had to give it up. Had to downsize. A realtor has to go to school and pass a test to get a license. He's too honest. He trusted an Indiana State realtor.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

George Stoya- Passed

TJ Gaertig- The cost for Governor's Parkway is up to 14 million and doesn't help kids walking to school. A pedestrian bridge is going to cost 5 million. It's going to take residential relocation. Looking forward to seeing the actual plans. This is going to cost too much money and take out too many homes. It's also going to take out the Briar East woods. One of the last city urban green spaces. Grand Ave. is the most effective and the cheapest, and preserves the wildlife and character of our town. Do not support Governor's Parkway Bridge. Support saving Briar East Woods. Support and overpass or an underpass for the kids to get to school.

Ken Rosek-Prepared a visual map of the Briar East Woods. Too often people in charge make plans that divide and disseminate areas with roads and bridges while leaving residents completely out of the decision making process. That must end. Meetings and discussions are going on behind closed doors. Nobody is invited except a privileged few. If it wasn't for misinformation, we would get no information at all. They tried to give us the impression of input with the city bridge survey. They are taking more than a sliver of the woods. Our councilmen and mayor stated that there are no plans for housing. The road destroys the woods anyway. The city isn't being forthcoming.

Jana A.- Prepared a visual board. Ecuador is the first country in the world to make a law that says nature cannot be seen as a set of natural resources to be exploited or developed. This is groundbreaking for the world and the 1.1 million indigenous people that reside there. The indigenous care for nature and their home. Nature provided everything. Now shifting towards Hammond, we have lost our special connection with nature. Can you blame us for wanting to protect our green spaces? Because I am a human just like the indigenous, I understand the importance of nature, and I know for a fact the damage we do to our green spaces, we are doing to ourselves. Nature is our home and because we don't live like the indigenous, we need this space to remind us what home really feels like. Nature does not have a voice, so it cannot defend itself. So we the people will speak for it and will continue to protect it.

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	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Janet Veneez	E	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Alfonso Salinas III	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P					
Dave Woerpel	A	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 M Rakos

Scott Rakos, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:

RJG

Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:40 P.M.
MG/CB

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk