

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Salinas

ABSENT: None

TOTAL:9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott- Hi, I didn't know if we were going to do a moment of silence. Nice to see you all. Mayor's address for the 12th of August. We started off with breakfast at The Wheel with a developer. This is a summary over the last 2 weeks as I usually give. Breakfast at The Wheel with a developer interested in investing in Hammond. Particularly in data centers in Hammond. Met with NIPSCO representatives also about data centers, along with leadership of the Digital Crossroads data center, and Hammond's Economic Development team regarding future power deeds for the Hammond Data Center Complex. These data centers are big mega watt users and the type of power generation that needs to be adjacent to these complexes is very large. It's almost similar to what we use in Steel Mills believe it or not. Also met with representatives from Gateway, Hammond's recovery center about their plans to expand their footprint within the City of Hammond. They help women that are struggling with alcoholism and substance abuse problems. Met with Councilwoman Janet Venecz, regarding multiple issues across the city. It's a pretty regular meeting we have. Met with Carmen from Hammond Housing regarding potential litigation against Hammond Housing and possibly against the City of Hammond. An injury to a tenant in one of her buildings. We had it on tape which should mitigate any future litigation should any arise. Met with Chancellor Chris Holford and Matt Wells from One Region. PNW Chancellor Chris Holford and Matt Wells regarding the footprint for PNW's impact lab that will be located in the 2nd district in downtown Hammond. I got more on that in a second. They're very excited. Purdue is very excited about that impact lab. Participated in Hammond's annual WHAM midnight bike ride. I wanna thank the council people that participate every year. I know Councilman Spitale and Councilwoman Venecz always have a stop on there. It's a 30 mile course. Perfect weather. So it was a great night. Thank you to everybody that worked so hard to out on WHAM including all the police officers that were guarding the course. Had a welcome party for Hammond's new Chief of Staff, Scott Miller. Scott's here, good to see you Scott. He's been on the job since August 5th. We had a welcome party in our office for everyone that works in City Hall to come by and introduce themselves. Did our normal standing meeting with the Police Department with our monthly Captain's meeting. Met with all the Captain's and Chiefs from the Hammond Police Department regarding crime, stats, trends, and personnel issues. Met with Leopardo Energy. They're the ones that did all of our energy efficiency programs across the City of Hammond, particularly in City Hall, about a project the wanna do at the Hammond Sanitary District regarding a

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.-solar plant that will make the plant more energy efficient and it will save us all a lot of money. So that's good news. Attended Hammond's annual National Night Out. I wanna thank everyone that worked hard. Also, a lot of Police officers and first responders out there. I know a number of Council members were out there. I wanna thank everyone that got in the dunk tank, because it was a cold day. It was literally in the low 60's so we should have gotten combat pay for being in the dunk tank. National Night out was located at the Pavilion. I thought it was a great location. It was a great event. We had a lot of people there. It's only going to get bigger every year. A lot of people worked hard on that, so thank you to everyone who worked so hard on that. I think it was a total success this year. I appeared on WJOB's morning show with Jed. Took phone calls from the audience. Funny enough, most of them are out of towners asking me questions. Met with the leadership of the Hammond Park's Department Jim Taillon and Councilman Mark Kalwinski regarding the pickle ball courts at Pulaski Park. I know the Councilman has met with Hammond Parks a couple times about expanding the pickle ball presence in Pulaski Park. I think that's a great project. We also have pickle ball expanded to Dowling Park. It's co existing with the tennis courts in Dowling Park, and inside the Jean Shepherd Center, they're converting it to a pickle ball facility. So, a lot of pickle ball going on right now. Met with, Ann Tyler and Juan Moreno regarding the RFP for the design consultant of the downtown Hammond train station. More on downtown Hammond, I know Councilman Salinas is here by zoom, but we picked our developer that's gonna design the train station. We know what it's going to look like. A lot of good stuff going on down there. I know that one of the action items before the council, has been pending, it's a resolution regarding demolition to the former site. We've been asking you to hold off on it, and we're asking you again to hold off on it, and I'm gonna tell you why. Dean Button, our City Engineer is working through the final details with Ton & Blank, who are Franciscan's contractor, regarding the specifications of the aggregate fill that they're gonna use to make sure we are all comfortable with what is going on. Dean, our City Engineer is working with Ton & Blank. We are also working right now with Franciscan and PNW to ensure that the City has control over the frontage on Hohman Avenue where PNW is gonna build their new impact lab. So we're working on the footprint for the impact lab, what's gonna be owned by PNW, what's gonna be owned by the City. We're working with the aggregate, Ton & Blank, and at the end of all of this, the Redevelopment Commission will have control over that entire parcel outside of PNW's impact lab which will be located basically in the NE corner. The impact lab will be in that little quadrant in the NE corner, and the SW quadrant of that hospital site is where the parking garage is. That parking garage is gonna stay. The rest of it will be demolished and the Redevelopment Commission will be in control of it. It's pretty much agreed upon by all actors in this. The Franciscans, because we're working with them on an aggregate issue, PNW and the City of Hammond. Once all that has been finalized, and put into legal language, we're gonna present the resolution to you all and get it all effectuated. Update on police and fire negotiations, fire, we really haven't since the last time we were here, we really haven't progressed. We're waiting right now on some information from the fire union about what they want to start moving forward with as far as pay is concerned. Police, we've been spending a lot of time on police, and I'm happy to say, I think I'm happy to say, we gave the police department our final offer. The City did. I have spoken to a number of you about this offer. It's a big proposal for a big pay raise to Hammond Police department. Recruitment and retention has been our primary goal through this whole process. We are losing officers at an alarming rate. We want to stop losing officers and we're having trouble recruiting new officers with our lower pay scales. We want to fix that, and the way to fix that is to sort of change the way we do the police department. I've been working with the police union. I've been in contact with the city council people individually. We sent the FOP our final offer. We asked them to vote on it. I don't think the FOP is thrilled that we asked them to vote on it, but we think the offer is good. We think it's very generous, and if they vote yes on

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MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont.-it, we have work to do to make sure we can afford this, but if they vote yes on it, we will make sure this happens, and what we'll have is a very competitive salary for Hammond Police officers. We'll stop losing officers to other departments and we'll be a lot more attractive to potential police officers if these new salaries go into effect. So we should be hearing soon from the FOP on when they're gonna schedule that vote, but the ball is in their court. Teamsters, operating engineers have not started yet, but I want to remind the council that about a year ago, we gave a mid contract raise to the teamsters that were qualified CDL drivers. That's a big percentage of the teamsters. They got a mid contract raise. Which was very generous, and that will be carried over into the new contract. Meaning we already gave a pretty dang good raise to a lot of people that work in that department. So I don't think we're gonna be seeing anything like we're seeing with the police department. That's all I got. I know that's a lot. I appreciate you all letting me speak. I think I hit everything that I needed to hit, and I'm available for questions if you have any.

Councilman Kalwinski- Evening, Mayor.

Mayor McDermott- Hi, Councilman

Councilman Kalwinski- I've been getting a few calls from residents pertaining to the senior discount that shows up on their water bill and they're reporting back that, they're being told that the City Council took away the senior discount. Can you tell me how the discount happened to go away?

Mayor McDermott- I have no idea.

Councilman Kalwinski- Would Megan or Kevin have an idea? We haven't had an ordinance where we took it away?

Mayor McDermott - I'll be honest, I don't think senior discounts are legal in Indiana. I'm pretty sure they're not legal in Indiana. I'm not saying that there aren't cities and towns that don't do that. We were informed a long time ago that senior discounts are not legal so what we do in Hammond to help our senior community is we send them \$500 checks called the senior discount which does come from the City Council and the Mayor and we give that to our seniors to help them with bills like this. But Councilman Mark, there's nothing the City Council did to eliminate the senior discount. There's nothing that the Mayor did. If there was a senior discount I don't think it was ever authorized.

Councilman Kalwinski- Ok, so I don't know if it was or wasn't ever authorized, but I'm getting reports that now they're affected and when the garbage rate went up and it seemed like the senior discount went away at the same time so their change is not \$5. It's \$10 from what it used to be. And so it's \$120 a year difference for them on fixed incomes. So, I just don't know what's the explanation? That we weren't supposed to have it? And now we still do the \$500?

Mayor McDermott- Hammond water is the lowest rate in the state of Indiana. You can tell them that with a calm look on your face because it's true. We made sure that when we raised our rates, it was still the lowest in the state of Indiana Councilman Mark, by a longshot, by the way. I don't know what to tell them. I don't think there ever was a senior discount on water.

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Kalwinski- Hmm. Alright.

Mayor McDermott- Well I don’t know what you want me to say. We didn’t do anything. You did nothing as a councilman. I did nothing as a Mayor to remove the senior discount. We set water rates higher. That’s true. We’re still the lowest in the state of Indiana.

Councilman Kalwinski- Ok, so nobody authorized removing a discount?

Mayor McDermott- Not that I know of. Any other questions? I know the last time I was here there was a lot of questions about the Water Department. The Water Department is not here right now. The Water Department has their own separate meetings. It’s a separate board. I appoint 5 members to the board and they run the Water Department. I’m not saying that I’m not aware, but the last time I was here, you were like, you guys changed printers, what’s going on? I have no idea if they changed printers in the Water Department, because I don’t supervise who prints the Water Department bills because that’s the Water Departments job. I’m here on behalf of the city right now. I could tell you the water rates are the lowest in the state of Indiana. For a long time, until we changed them we were losing money. On every gallon of water we sold, we were losing money. So we fixed that and it resulted in higher bills for sure. Okay. But you can check. Hammond’s water, you can compare it to every other water system in the state of Indiana, and you can check right now if I’m lying. I’m not. They are higher than they were before though, I acknowledge that. And the garbage rates by the way, we don’t make a penny in the city off the garbage rates. We take garbage from every house and put it into a big pile and we take it to a landfill and they charge us and we have to pay that bill and that bill has gone up just like everyone else’s bills have gone up. So when that bill goes up, we go to the resident and we raise their bill so it breaks even. So if you’re bill went up, like my bill went up, it’s because it’s more expensive for us. Everything is going up in price. I can’t control that. I have to run the city. That’s all I’m trying to do.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of July 22, 2024 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to approve the claims from July 17, 2024 through August 7, 2024. Claim #6488 through #6991, inclusive. In the amount of \$12,162,135.31.

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

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Rakos- For the public, Wednesday, August 14th at the Hammond Sportsplex & Community Center from 5:30-7, INDOT will be there discussing their flex road project that will start next year. It's a project to improve traffic flow and safety along Indiana's busiest corridor. I happened to go to a meeting at Purdue last week. I had no idea what it was about. I guess they've been having these meetings for some time but the last time was 2022. It's a public meeting. It's about how they're gonna change the Borman Avenue and make it better and safer. They'll have displays and a public meeting.

Councilman Kalwinski-Several weeks ago there was a number of storms in Hammond. The North Hammond Pulaski park are got hit really hard with one and electricity was out for almost 3 days. Approximately 600-700 homes lost a lot of their goods in the refrigerator and freezers and I reached out to Congressman Frank Mrvan to see if there was any assistance federally. Of course there wasn't but he did connect me with some resources that were helpful. The food bank of Northwest Indiana did a run and provided food for I believe 70 plus households. One day they came to the Pulaski Park parking lot. I wanna thank Victor Garcia from the food bank, and also Adrian Santos from the North Township Trustee for the vouchers they provided for people who were eligible from the blackout from the storm which provided them with some aid to go to Stracks and purchase some food. So thank you to those agencies for being helpful during a crisis.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board- Councilman Emerson-The Capital Improvement Board met on August 5, 2024. We dealt with:

Item 1- Columbia Avenue pavement corings and with Advanced Engineering services in the amount of \$7,360.00. Pavement corings needed for our future Columbia Avenue resurfacing project that we applied to INDOT for community crossing matching grant in the 3rd district.

Item 2- Hohman Avenue Phase 1 change order number 22 for Courthouse detour with Rieth Riley construction company in the amount of \$18,332.70. We needed to reroute traffic from Russell Street with a closure of Russell at Hohman and the previously closed Russell to the east to accommodate the West Lake extension in the 2nd district.

Item 3- Hohman Avenue Phase 1 change order number 23 for repair of Russell Street sewer with Rieth Riley construction company in the amount of \$56,553.55. During construction, the contractor found an 18 inch sewer in poor condition that required replacement. The project is in the 2nd district.

Item 4- Hohman Avenue Phase 1 supplemental construction engineering services with the American Structure Point in the amount of \$59,979.48. The project was extended for a number of reasons, including AT&T relocations, vaulted basements, and material delays. This allows for the engineer to continue project observation. The project is in the 2nd district.

Item 5- The last thing we dealt with. Marble street reconstruction change order #1 for removal and disposal of RR ties found during construction of the road with Milestone Contractors North in the amount of \$9,621.70.

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Hammond City Clerk*

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz- I would like to announce the upcoming Community and Crime Watch meetings. Community Watch at Mt Zion and Pleasant View Plaza will be Wednesday, August 14th at 1 pm. East Hammond Pullman Crime Watch will be Tuesday, August 20th at 6 pm at the Ophelia Steen Center. Edison Community Watch will resume now that school is back in session. That will be Wednesday, Sept 4th at 6:30 pm at Edison School. Hessville Crime Watch will meet Thursday, August 15th at 6 pm at the Jean Shepherd Center. Irving Community Watch again resumes now that school is back in session. That will be Friday, September 6th 9:30 am at Irving school. Whiting/Robertsdale Crime Watch will meet September 12th 6:30 pm at Calumet College. I would also like to extend an invitation to all of our council people to attend some of these crime watch meetings. There are often questions that the residents have, that the district for instance, the council person would know specifically. So I invite all of the council people to come and share in the information that is given to our neighborhoods. I also wanted to thank everyone that attended National Night Out. As the Mayor said, it was a chilly evening. It was actually the wind that made it very chilly. We had nearly 600 people in attendance. We had police officers and firefighters from everyone of our departments throughout the city. We also had several people from out of town as far as Valpo, somebody came to our National Night Out. It was a very nice evening. It was an excellent opportunity for everyone who attended to get to know our police officers and firefighters. After all, they are the ones who are out there protecting us at night so we can sleep safely, and we know that they're there to protect us. Thank you to all of our police and fire who came and to all of our council people who came. It was just a very nice community evening. As I always say, community is not just about me, it's about us.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING- FINAL PASSAGE
None.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

24-15 An Ordinance Creating a New Fund (Fund No. 4439) to facilitate the 1% Municipal Food and Beverage Tax (FAB)

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd reading by title.

Councilwoman Venecz- This is simply for us to establish a line item for the Controller for the 1% food and beverage tax

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd reading)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion Carried

9/0/0

MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTIONS

None

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Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Woerpel- I've been asked this question several times, and I guess I'll repeat it again. People wanna know what's going on at Dowling Park. There is a sewer extension project that is a flood control project actually that is extending from Dowling Park over to Kentucky Street pumping station. That's supposed to alleviate the flooding over there and about 4 years ago I had a grid done in Dowling Park to try to alleviate some of the standing water after the floods and when the bid came back it was around \$300,000 in order to get it leveled off and some pipes put under there. Then the pandemic hit and you know what happened with the gaming money, but um, as part of this project, its an 80/20 match with the Army Core of Engineers. They pay 80. I think we pay 20. We were able to save roughly \$250,000 to \$300,000 by keeping the dirt that they're digging out for the sewers on site. So what we've decided to do was to add to the sled hill. I know the football players over there won't like that so much because they run up and down, and it's got a nice slant to it now, but um, the other dirt where it's gonna go ahead and level off we would have been charged \$300,000. So we're not only saving the \$300,000 by keeping the dirt on site, but we're also getting the \$300,000 worth of work down for nothing. There's no buildings being built over there for now. Once the ground gets level, we'll re seed it and the football field/soccer field will be used again. So will from what the Mayor said and what I've been talking with Mr. Taillon from the Park department, there are gonna be some pickle ball going over by the tennis courts and inside the Jean Shepherd Center. Us old people will have something to do now and play pickle ball rather than tennis. Thank you.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Lizette Montanez- Just a simple thank you tonight. Thank you for asking questions. Thank you for representing us. Lastly, thank you for listening to TJ, Ken, and Jana. We need to protect our little green space that we have left. Please take that into consideration when you decide to vote. Thank you for what you do for our children and our community.

Ken Rosek- There needs to be an open discussion. In the process of Governor's Parkway, no meaningful discussion has occurred. Numerous public comments have been completely ignored. Even today, we hear of discussions that happen behind closed doors. This is not good government. We must know something. We deserve open discussion. I am a proud democrat. Numerous studies show that no one that lives in a concrete jungle lives a productive life. Other cities are doing their best to preserve green spaces. Hammond is going in the opposite direction. You voted 9-0 against preservation. The democratic actions in this city, do not reflect what democracy represents. This will taint your legacies.

George Stoya- With respect to the water bill discount that you guys were discussing earlier with the Mayor, according to my notes, 94.041-collection from residential building units, the fees for collection and disposal of garbage and rubbish shall be the sum of \$5, granted it may be amended. Shall be \$5 a month for each residential dwelling unit except for the head of the household of the family dwelling units has submitted proof of age 65 years or older or the head of the household is/has been found disabled by the social security administration or if the head of the household is an unmarried widow.

Joseph Hines- I have planted many trees. The trees on Hohman Avenue are in too shallow of concrete beds and too close to the street and too close to the exhaust fumes. They didn't even remove the burlap bags before planting. It's harmful. These trees will not survive and it is a waste of our taxpayers money. Moreover the planning for the city seems to disregard the value of our last remaining green areas. The proposed bridge and rerouting of the Parrish crossing would destroy vital green space. This isn't just an environmental concern, it's a

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Joseph Hines cont.- community concern. Natural areas are irreplaceable. They provide numerous benefits. I also have reports of trees not being taken care of behind Hammond schools, and trees that are planted under power lines. We deserve better.

Jana A. - Recently I had a very interesting conversation with a local geologist who has studied our history for decades. I learned a lot and wanted to share. I was sent this map and I wanted to share. This map was used by scientists. It shows shorelines that can still be recognized. Before development, our land was sand and sand ridges. As development continued the sand ridges had to be leveled out. It was mined and sold. Before this, nature flourished. Briar East woods was apart of this. These woods remind us of natural evolution. I believe they are worth saving.

Anthony Diaz- The city should build an underpass, not an overpass like Munster. The problem is underneath. Why would you want to destroy Briar woods? What's going on with Harrison Park? No plans. I haven't been able to get in my parking lot for 8 months because of Webb street constructions. All of a sudden it's done within a week because of the Pilgrimage coming from Chicago and the city didn't want to be embarrassed. I've paid \$500 more in taxes this year though. Nothing is happening at the parks anymore because you want us to go to the sportsplex and pay money. Now we have the food and beverage tax for the pavilion and the south shore train. None of us have asked for that. This is all made up by you guys. Paid paradise, put up another parking lot. My taxes going up does nothing for me. Why did the water go up so much? No more senior discount? The trees on Hohman are too close to the road trying to make it walk-able. Hopefully in 10 years it catches on.

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Spitale, 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
	8	22	12	26	11	25	8	22	13	28	10	24	8	22					
Katrina Alexander	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P				
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Janet Venecz	E	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P				
Alfonso Salinas III	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E				
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	E	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	E	P				
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Dave Woerpel	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Scott Rakos	P	P	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	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: 6:46 p.m.
mg/cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk