

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

Council Coordinator Carmen I. Balboa facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander and a Moment of Silence was observed for Councilwoman Venecz's husband and Councilman Woerpel's son.

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Venecz

ABSENT: Woerpel

TOTAL: 8

NOMINATION OF OFFICERS

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Spitale, nominated Councilman Rakos for President and Councilman Tyler for Vice President.

Councilman Tyler accepted.

Council President Rakos accepted.

Council President Rakos - All in favor? All opposed?

AYES: ALL

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - First off, congratulations Councilman Rakos and Councilman Tyler on you elected positions. Congratulations. Congratulations to Al Salinas, our new Councilman in the 2nd District. Looking forward to working with you, Councilman Salinas. I also want to start off with condolences. It's a real rough start to 2024 for the Hammond Council. Obviously we started off 2024 with the loss of Phil Venecz, the husband of Councilwoman Janet Venecz. We'll really miss Phil. I've know Phil for twenty five years. Gonna miss him a lot. And also, just yesterday, Councilman Woerpel's son Jimmy passed away over night. It's really devastating as well. So I want to send out. So I want to send condolences to Councilman Dave Woerpel in the 5th District and his wife Tina over the loss of their son Jimmy. A really tough start to the year for the Hammond Council. So, I'm really sorry. I know you guys are all grieving. Mayor's activity log, started off the last weeks getting sworn in to my 6th term by Judge Marissa McDermott. We turned in the paperwork legally. Also attended Councilman Woerpel's swearing in, also by Judge Marissa McDermott. I imagine Councilman Woerpel turned in his paperwork as well. I attended internal meeting regarding the Haunted House TIF. Which is, I know, on the

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - agenda for tonight. I met with the attorneys and my Economic Development team. I'm willing to talk about that if you have any questions. I attended the Hammond Water Department holiday party. I spoke to the employees of the Water Departments Business Office. I gave them good news in regards to the reorganization we're doing at the Hammond Water Department in the Business Office. Swore in officers from the Hessville Democratic Club. Thank you very much for inviting me to that. Did WJOB Radio for one hour with Mr. Dabertin shortly before Christmas. Discussed city business. Swore in new Police Officers. I'm gonna talk about the Police Department in a few minutes. Met with architects regarding possible future designs at the Pavillion. Nothing we've committed to at this point. Just taking a look at some options in regards to the Pav that we would have down the road. I personally swore in Councilman Barry Tyler of the Hammond 3rd District; Councilman Bill Emerson of Hammond's 4th District; Councilman Scott Rakos of the 6th District, our Council President, on New Year's Day. Congratulations to them. We had a very nice ceremony at the Sportsplex. It was well put together. I want to thank the Park staff and everybody for showing up. Councilwoman Katrina Alexander was sworn in that day as well by Representative Carolyn Jackson. I attended meetings with the Police Captains and the Chiefs. I attended a meeting with my Economic Development team. We're (unclear) from Downtown Hammond in regards to the prolonged railroad project. I met with the U.S. Department of Transportation Deputy Assistant Secretary Evan Wessell, in regards to a Federal Grant that we've applied for in regards to EV Charging Stations across Hammond for multiple locations. We're hoping that that meeting will help our grant application. I spoke on behalf of our friend Phil Venecz at his funeral service. It was very somber. I met with members of the Hammond Sanitary District Board. I presented to them, Milan Kruzynski, who is the CEO of the Hammond Port Authority and asked the board to confirm Milan as the next CEO of the Hammond Sanitary District. So we should be dealing with that in the next couple of days. I want to talk a little bit about the Police Department. Some things that have been happening recently, some problems that we've had and some changes that we've had to do because of these problems. As you'll all remember four years ago we negotiated a contract with the Hammond F.O.P., where the F.O.P. asked for 0% pay raises for four years in regards to changes on our pension. We agreed four years ago to the 0% pay raises. We nicely added two 1% pay raises to the end of the contract and we made the pension changes as requested by the F.O.P. Nobody could have anticipated four years ago that we'd be heading into a global pandemic and that the prices would skyrocket, including salaries. So what that's done, because we had a 0,0,1,1 built into our contract, our starting pay for Hammond Police Officers became uncompetitive. And what we began to see is when we would have ten open police department spots, ten, fifteen years ago we'd have 250 people apply for those ten spots. Now, because of our starting pay problems that we had, past tense, we would put out 10 open spots for the Hammond Police Department and we'd have 20 people instead of 250 people. It would literally fighting tooth and nail to get everybody to apply, and just because you apply for a spot in the Hammond Police Department doesn't mean you get a spot in the Hammond Police Department because you have to pass background, physical, psych, and a high percentage of people that apply to be officers are washed out in the process. So if we even had 20 people apply that doesn't even mean that you will get two or three officers out of that group. So we had a real problem. We started in 2023, realizing that if I stuck to the contract that we would be uncompetitive and we would not be able to get new Hammond Police Officers. I didn't want to tinker with the contract, out of the four year contract, but I did. Only because we needed to be competitive for our new officers, and we have been. So we raised the starting pay without negotiating with the F.O.P. of our Hammond Police Officers from the high \$40's to the mid \$50's. That's where it stands right now, and it did help us when

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - we post jobs in the Hammond Police Department. We do have a fairly significant number of people still applying. However, current police staffing is in our budget, 235 officers. Actual on the street, about 170 something. Sixty or so officers are in flux right now. Transitioning out of the Hammond Police Department, getting ready to transition into retirement. Which means we are in the process of finding new police officers to take their place. So in our budget this year, that we all approved, we built in 230 something police officers. Which is the highest staffing level we've ever had in the Hammond Police Department. But that doesn't mean those 230 are out on the street. They're transitioning out, new people are transitioning in. We have to send them to the academy. We have to get them trained on the streets. It's gonna take a while. So this year our staffing levels as high as we'll ever see it again. We're also negotiating a new contract with the Hammond F.O.P. this year and in 2024 we ran into another problem, which is we're starting to lose officers with seniority. Four, five, six, seven year officers are quitting and going to other departments. Why? They can make \$10 thousand more by leaving the Hammond Police Department and go to work in a place like Dyer or Crown Point. A quiet little town that's offering more for their police officers than we are. So, again, we have one more year left in our contract. We have a choice, we can sit back for a year and do nothing and watch our officers leave us or we could try to make changes. We're gonna have to make these changes eventually anyway. I decided to pull the trigger. I am reporting to the Hammond Council, we eliminated two pay levels and combined them with corporals. Basically, there's no more third class police officer, no more second class police officer, there's only a probationary officer and then you jump to corporal. And you could be a corporal for about ten years. There used to be probationary, third class, second class, first class, corporal. Now it's probationary, corporal. What we did was gave 51 police officers a pay raise immediately, fairly significant pay raise, and these are all officers with less than ten years on the street. Officers that didn't get taken care of in the last contract, quite frankly. They got fairly significant pay raises, 5-10%. It was a bigger raise for officers that were third class. Because they jumped from \$55-\$63, whereas the second class jumped from \$60-\$63. \$63,867 is the new level for corporal. Sixty officers are going to be impacted by this. It puts our pay for corporal at a very competitive place. Which means we should stop hemorrhaging officers with less than ten years experience. These are not fun decisions we are having to make but if we don't make these decisions we literally gonna bleed all the officers that we worked so hard to bring into the Hammond Police Department. I'm reporting to you all. I'm not thrilled about it. Normally we would go through a process with the F.O.P. and we'd negotiate and we'd get concessions. If we did that, it would never get done and we'd lose officers over the next year. I did this. I do have to negotiate with the F.O.P. for a new four year deal this year. And I will be talking about the stuff that we've already done, voluntarily. The F.O.P. didn't give up anything, I know that's not lovely. I apologize to you all, but the alternative was do nothing for the next year and lose officers. I'm transparent, I try to be as transparent as possible as Mayor. I just wanted you all to know that happened. I take responsibility for it. If you don't like it I'm willing to answer any questions if you have it.

Councilman Kalwinski - How much does this make in the way of an increase to the budget for the Police Department?

Mayor McDermott - It doesn't, Councilman Mark. If we do mid raises ... first off, a couple things, okay, the budget is 235 officers this year. Which is as large as we'll ever see in the Hammond Police Department budget. That's way more officers than we've ever had. The whole purpose was to absorb. The budget won't be changed

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott - at all. The Police Department Budget that you approved won't be changed a bit. Okay? Did that answer your question? Any other questions about this?

Councilman Tyler - Mayor, I think at one point last year, either your administration or the Police Department administration was looking into doing some type of report generating like a salary comparison to cities in similar size to Hammond or even just like in Northwest Indiana. I don't believe I've seen that. Is that something that did occur?

Mayor McDermott - Yes, we did.

Councilman Tyler - Can you share that with us?

Mayor McDermott - It's a huge data base. It's not like a (unclear) report. It's literally hundreds of pages. A data base of ... it's a data base. That's the best way to describe it. It's not even something that's easily printed out. It's something that's available to us in negotiation. If the F.O.P. says, "Hey, a Valpo officer has this, this and this", and then I could instantly pull up what a Valpo police officer has available to them, including if they have a Union contract, what type of benefits. It's comprehensive but it's not a printed paper. It's a data base, basically. It was assembled. I mean I could work with you if you want to work and try to get you some information out of that data base, Councilman. But I don't have a printed copy of it, it's so big.

Councilman Tyler - Got it, yeah I just wondered if there is some type of summery that we might be able to see to take a look at.

Mayor McDermott - It happened. It cost us a couple bucks. It's gonna be available for us on our negotiations, which is vital. Because sometimes in negotiations we get things thrown at us. "Well, in Highland they do this, Mayor", it's you wanted what a Highland officers gets. This is all what they get. That's the type of info we have. So, I don't know if I can give that ... I mean, I'm willing to give you whatever you need, Councilman. So if you can give me like some type of idea, I'm willing to work with you.

Councilman Tyler - Thanks.

Mayor McDermott - Anyway, so that's P.D. I apologize if you feel blind sided by this, but I have the Police Chiefs in my office worried to death constantly about the number of officers that are leaving our force. And it's ... we gotta start. If I wait one more year we'll probably lose ten to fifteen officers, realistically. They're leaving, we had three leave a couple weeks ago. Three young officers leaving us. So you know, twenty years ago when I first became your mayor, officers stayed on the force, when they were hired by Hammond, they retired in Hammond. It's just not like that anymore. The officers are shopping. They're looking for the best deal. I know you have ARP 3rd and Final coming to you today. I want to point out, going through all the different projects that are adjusted with ARP. I know you guys have talked about them. Over \$1.1 million going back to Capital Improvement once this is improved. I think that's a good thing for Capital Improvement. I know that you have also on the agenda an adjustment to a TIF District of the Gateways Allocation Area south of 80/94. We're

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - calling it the Haunted House Project. There's a few bullet points on that project I want to talk about. I know it was in the paper shortly before Christmas that the City is looking to acquire all the land south of 80/94, west of Calumet Avenue. It's better know I mean, the haunted house, the Reaper's Realm haunted house, the fireworks stand. We want to do something like we did with Oxbow. Interesting fact, talking a lot with the 4th District Councilman about his frustration with the 4th District and a lack of a sit down restaurant. When Councilman Emerson first told be his district does not have a sit down restaurant, I said "Bill, you've got to be wrong." He's not wrong. There's no sit down restaurant in the 4th District with table service. You know, you can count the hot dog place, but quite frankly, table service. I think that we should be striving to do better with a marketable piece of property like the former Reaper's Realm is very marketable. If you see what we did at Oxbow, we spent \$14 million at Oxbow and it's worth \$60 or \$70 million now. There's no doubt in my mind that if we were given control of this property, we could turn it into a very marketable piece of property paying taxes, supplying jobs, to the residents of Hammond. I think it's easy to say that we could put a couple restaurants there and probably an office building or a hotel. It's a big piece of property. It's 15 total acres. Great potential for development. Economic Development team is already receiving inquiries about the area after the article appeared in the paper and it's important to plan ahead and expand the allocation area to capture this new increment. That will give us tools down the road. This investment, if we get \$30-\$40 million in new investment into this property, we could use that increment down the road to help do other projects around that allocation area. I know that there's people affected by this. Any time we use eminent domain, it's a serious thing. I know the Haluska family well. They are very nice people. I've been Mayor for 20 years, it's a great family. Sometimes as Mayor, you got to put on your mayor hat and do what's right for the city. Frankly, this is a marketable piece of property. I wish I was dealing directly with the Haluska family. I do. Because it's a great family. And if the City of Hammond is gonna pay money. I would rather pay it to that family, because this is the family that has been running the property. However, if that family doesn't have control of the property. I can't help that. Our job is to work with the landowner and give them fair market value for that property and that's what we're doing. The whole purpose I'm doing this is to make our city stronger. We're gonna end up with something in the 4th District. Think about it, you're driving into Indiana, one of the first things you see is an old broken down haunted house. All due respect. It's not the nicest building you see coming into our city. I think that we can make it a lot nicer. Make it a lot more like what we did in Hessville with the Oxbow landing, and I think that's a much better entrance to the State of Indiana. So, all due respect to the family, I know that they're impacted by this. I know they all sent you letters. They sent me letters as well. But I do want you to know this is an important project for my administration and my economic development team and I'm positive, positive, that we could make this worth three, four times what it's worth now. Just like we did in Hessville. And last, I know you have an ordinance before you in regards to event spaces. I want to remind the Council that we've been having problems with event spaces around the city. For instance, an old ... there's a couple locations in the city where it would be like an event space and then they would rent it out to somebody and they'd have a party with drugs and alcohol and sometimes weapons, so this allows us to get better control with zoning and conditional use permits to get better control of these event spaces. So, I appreciate you all working with us. Sorry about the long report. Again, condolences to the Council. I can't remember a time where we've been grieving ... I know we've grieved a lot in the Hammond Council over the years, but to have two grieving Council people at the same time is unprecedented. So, anyway, if you have any questions, I'm available.

Councilwoman Alexander - I know you mentioned about Police. Have you thought about Fire?

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott - Yeah, I think about Fire all the time.

Councilwoman Alexander - I'm just saying, because I know that with this change that's gonna be a question that's gonna come up.

Mayor McDermott - I have to negotiate all contracts this year, Councilwoman. Police, Fire, Teamsters, Operating Engineers, this is the year. And I know that Police and Fire are usually the first ones we knock off. We've already invited Police to begin negotiations which is sort of unprecedented reaching out the first week of January saying let's get going. I anticipate ... well, first off, let's be honest. I think Police needs to be realistic as a lot of the problems we have we've pretty much taken care of. We've raised starting pay for our officers by over 10%. So, a lot of the heavy lifting that we were anticipating doing next year, we've done it already. And I do want to point out, I love the Hammond Police Department and I love the Hammond Fire Department. But right now we don't have Firefighters quitting in droves. We have Police Officers quitting in droves. I mean, they're different jobs and, you know, we have to do what we have to do. If I had an emergency situation in the Fire Department where we couldn't get a firefighter and keep him employed and they were leaving us left and right, we would have to do something. That's where we are in Police right now, Councilwoman. We're just dealing with the problems that we have before us. But I do appreciate the Hammond Fire Department, you know. And we're gonna be negotiating that contract as well. That answer you question?

Councilwoman Alexander - Yes.

Councilman Kalwinski - A couple questions if you please. First, the 3rd and 4th quarter gaming distribution dollars, I've not received that. Has anybody received that report yet? For 3rd and 4th quarters? Maybe it's a question for Megan.

Mayor McDermott - Yeah, probably. I don't prepare that myself.

Councilman Kalwinski - So we usually are told we are getting it right after the quarters so we haven't got it for the 3rd quarter yet. Of course 4th quarter just ended. I wonder the status of that. And the second thing is, just following up on the flooding event from the fall. I asked some questions last time were here and then I went back to State Rep Jackson who said that really the process would begin with you asking for FEMA, or the State to implement a process to have FEMA look at this. So, I've come back to you to see has the City requested anything yet.

Mayor McDermott - We did through the State early on with everybody else. I haven't heard anything. But, I mean, I guess the bigger question is, Councilman Mark, you know, unfortunately, we have basement backups in the City of Hammond every year. It is a fact. You know, every time we have a basement backup are we gonna call Washington, D.C. I guess that's the bigger question. I mean, shortly before we had a flood in the 1st District, I know Councilman Barry was dealing with devastation in the 3rd District. I know the year before that, my district got it. I just, personally, feel that it's a stretch to call FEMA. That's how I personally feel. I think that when you have a basement backup, like my basement backed up, I didn't call Joe Biden. Well, it was Obama at that time.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Kalwinski - My point is that, how do we know whether we qualify for anything if we don't send it up the ladder and see.

Mayor McDermott - Well, have you called anybody?

Councilman Kalwinski - I think it's supposed to come from you.

Mayor McDermott - Wow, okay. So the answer to the question that I asked you, is when we have basement backups you think that we call FEMA every time? Because maybe that's something you should pass around on the Council. Like if a tornado tore through our city devastating houses, yeah, you call FEMA on that, right? When you have a storm and you have basement backups, do you call FEMA? I don't know the answer to that. I don't see a city ordinance that tells me. But I don't feel it's appropriate, personally. Maybe that's just me. Maybe that's something the Council should chew on. When do you call Joe Biden? Do we call him when we've got a basement backup? Because we'll be calling every year. We'll be calling two or three times every year. That's something maybe you guys should talk about, Councilman.

Councilman Kalwinski - Maybe so. So what I'm hearing then, we're not doing anything at this point in time.

Mayor McDermott - I haven't heard anything, Councilman Mark. I mean, if this is I have a lot of things going. But, like, maybe you should call. It's your district. I mean, maybe you should call them. I mean, I know a lot of people are pointing out in Cal City, you know, I want to point out, Illinois, Democratic Governor, Democratic U.S. Senators, Democratic Congressmen, Democratic City. I haven't heard anything come from Indianapolis. I haven't heard anything. I don't know if it's because of the State. I don't know.

Councilman Kalwinski - I think it bears conversation among us then.

Mayor McDermott - Sure.

Councilman Kalwinski - Thank you.

Mayor McDermott - Because we do have basement backups, unfortunately, once or twice a year. I bet you, I've been Mayor twenty years, I don't know, unfortunately we've had a lot of basement backups. It's unfortunate. But I don't think that's anything new either. I mean, we've been having basement backups since my father was Mayor.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of December 18, 2023 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz , supported by Councilman Tyler , moved to approve the claims from December 29, 2023 through January 3, 2024. Claim #1 through claim #191, inclusive. IN the amount of \$7,265,284.00.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried

8/0/1

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

23-35 An Ordinance to Further Appropriate from the Arpa Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund for Purposes That Fulfill the Intent of the American Rescue Plan Act (Version 3.0)

23-36 An Ordinance Vacating a 15 Foot Portion of Alley Lying between Sherman Street to the South and Summer Street to the North and West Parcel Line of Lot 42 to the East Line of Lot 12, and the Southeasterly 20 Feet of Lot 42 in the 2nd Block of Steel Car Works Addition in the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana

Mike Miller - Owner of 2030 Summer Street. I just wanted to tell you what we're gonna do with it. We're working with Brian Poland of the City and he asked us to resubdivide our property when we bought it twenty years ago. It was incorrectly done and he's asked us to clean that up and we're working with him and he asked us and Councilman Tyler is sponsoring us to make these changes so we can get our subdivision plat survey fixed.

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Tyler - Just wanted to submit a copy of the letter that we all got from the Haluska family regarding the property located at 626 177th Street in Hammond on the record. And I also want to announce that there is a meeting regarding the Memorial Park development this Thursday at 5:30 p.m. at the Ophelia Steen Center.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community and Crime Watch - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:
Thur., Jan. 18; 6 p.m.; Jean Shepherd Center; Hessville Crime Watch

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Brought out 23-35 and 23-36.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

23-35 An Ordinance to Further Appropriate from the Arpa Coronavirus Local Fiscal Recovery Fund for Purposes That Fulfill the Intent of the American Rescue Plan Act (Version 3.0)

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

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried 8/0/1 ORDINANCE NO. 9623 PASSED

23-36 An Ordinance Vacating a 15 Foot Portion of Alley Lying between Sherman Street to the South and Summer Street to the North and West Parcel Line of Lot 42 to the East Line of Lot 12, and the Southeasterly 20 Feet of Lot 42 in the 2nd Block of Steel Car Works Addition in the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, moved for final passage.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried 8/0/1 ORDINANCE NO. 9624 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

25-01 An Ordinance Amending Ordinance No. 8514, Being: An Ordinance Establishing a Zoning Plan for the City of Hammond in order to Provide for Orderly Growth and Development within the City, all in accordance with the Comprehensive/Land use plan; for purposes of Amending Various Titles to Incorporate Provisions for the Definition and Regulation of Event Spaces

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved the proposed ordinance to the Council as a Whole Committee on Monday, January 22, 2024 @ 5:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd Reading)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried 8/0/1 MOTION CARRIED

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

RESOLUTIONS

24R-01 A Resolution of the Common Council of the City of Hammond, Indiana, Approving Plan Commission Resolution PC 2023-01 as Written Order and Finding of Fact Approving Redevelopment Commission Resolution the Modified and Amended the Boundaries of the Gateways Redevelopment Area to Include the River Drive North Subarea Expansion Area and Approved an Amendment to the Redevelopment Plan for the Gateways Redevelopment Area

Councilman Emerson, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved for adoption.

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, moved to suspend the rules to allow the public to speak.

ROLL CALL VOTE (suspension of rules)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried

8/0/1

RULES SUSPENDED

John Haluska - I'm one of the owners of Haluska enterprises. The other owners are my family members. They're here with me this evening. Councilwoman Alexander, at the pre-meeting you had asked what happens to Reapers Realm is this goes through. To answer your question, Reaper's Realm will be devastated. There will never be another Reaper's Realm. I'm sure of that. If this goes through. Probably though, more important than that, it will devastate myself, my family, and my other family members. Mentally devastate us, financially devastate us. Without being involved in that property, and we've been there for thirty four years now, we've been on this property, I don't know how we survive. I do want to mention, if I may, we had no clue, not one, that there was any changes in plan for this property until I opened up the paper one day on December 21st and here it is on the front page. Hammond moves to seize river front. Nobody in the City of Hammond, not one person contacted anybody from our business, anybody from our family, and said, "This is what we're planning on doing". And this didn't just happen on December 21st, this has been in the plan stage for a while. But nobody showed us the courtesy of telling us anything about that. So what happens, we, of course, sign contracts. I signed a contract with Lamar Advertising for billboards the day before this article came out. I had no idea. I had no idea whatsoever. So now what do we do with contracts that we signed. We signed contracts for product. What do we do with all that? This is going to be devastating to us. I haven't had a decent nights sleep since I read this article. I'm asking that you please, please, we've been there for thirty four years. That's a long time to be in the City of Hammond as a business. We pay over \$100 thousand in taxes every year. A very large portion of that goes to the State of Indiana for training to firefighters. We pay that every year. We cooperated with the City of Hammond on every venture they've ever asked to be in on. As I explained in that letter, I hope you all had a chance to read that letter. I'm asking you please, please, do not pass this ordinance. I'm not trying to offend anybody, but this ordinance doesn't take into account at all the personal devastation that will occur to my family. We've employed thousands of Hammond residents through the years. That employment opportunity will be gone. Once we're gone, it's gone. It won't be back, and many of them come back every year. And this isn't minimum wage.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

RESOLUTIONS

John Haluska cont. - This is a decent salary for every single one of them. We're asking you please help us out. Please do not pass this ordinance. And if you feel you don't have any room not to pass it, I'm asking you to please at least table it for three years. Let us get out at a pace that will financially not devastate us. Thank you.

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to return to the regular order of business.

AYES: ALL

Councilman Emerson - I would like to thank the Hammond Plan Commission, the Hammond Redevelopment Commission, for their work in developing the River Drive North Area Expansion Area. And I agree with the Mayor. We have Madvek's, White Castle, and Billy's Steak place that used to be Subway at 175th and Calumet. I think I see restaurants all over the City, basically, and I'm proud to say that it's time for the 4th District to join the other parts of the City. Thank you.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

AYES: Spitale, Venecz, Salinas, Tyler, Emerson, Rakos

NAYS: Alexander, Kalwinski

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried

6/2/1

RESOLUTION NO. R01 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved to appoint Cynthia Jasso to the Board of Zoning & Appeals.

Councilman Emerson - I've worked, my other job, with Cynthia for twenty years and she is a fine person and I think Councilman Salinas is doing well to appoint her. She was at our department back in the day and has been employed by the School City of Hammond for a long time and I support her.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment-BZA)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried

8/0/1

MOTION CARRIED

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to reappoint Councilwoman Venecz to serve on the H.A.S.T. School Board.

Councilman Spitale - It is a three year term and Janet has served for the past nine years.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment-HAST)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried

8/0/1

MOTION CARRIED

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved to appoint Councilwoman Alexander, Councilwoman Venecz and Councilman Rakos to the Gaming Advisory Board.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment-Gaming)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried

8/0/1

MOTION CARRIED

Council President Rakos - The other appointment that needs to be made is for the Capital Improvements Board. We have four people that put in for it, four Councilmen, and there's three position openings. So unless somebody wants to pull their name, we will have an election. I have ballots made here. We can pick three and then we'll collect the ballots and we'll have the Clerk tally them.

Councilwoman Venecz - Who are the four candidates?

Council President Rakos - Rakos, Kalwinski, Salinas and Emerson. We're gonna do a ballot situation. We'll have to do it electronically with you, Councilwoman Venecz. You can text me and I will pass the text message on to the Clerk, if that's agreeable to the Council.

Councilman Rakos	7 votes
Councilman Kalwinski	4 votes
Councilman Salinas	5 votes
Councilman Emerson	7 votes

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Tyler, moved to appoint Councilman Rakos, Councilman Salinas and Councilman Emerson to the Capital Improvement Board.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment-CIB)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

Motion carried

8/0/1

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

T.J. Gaertig - Congratulated Councilman Salinas. Gave a summery of the Governor's Parkway Development Plan in Briar East Woods. The Grand Avenue overpass doesn't destroy forests and costs half as much, does not flood, is better for school kids, is better for emergency vehicle response times, please look into that.

John Capski - Inquired on installing a handicapped parking sign at 6435 Ohio Avenue.

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

AYES: ALL

Jan. 4, 2024

To: Hammond City Council Person
Scott Rakos

Fm: John Hluska and Family

Ref: Property located at 626 177th Street in Hammond

I am forwarding you and your fellow council members this letter regarding The Council vote on the property located at 626 177th Street in Hammond. It is our understanding that the city is in the process of moving to take over this property. It is also our understanding that the Hammond Council will be asked to vote on this matter at their Jan. 8th meeting. We respectfully ask that you and the other council members vote no on this project.

I and my family have been involved with this property for approximately 35 years as tenants renting the property from the Meyer Family. We have run Good Times Fireworks and Reapers Realm Haunted Attractions from this location. It came as a shock and big disappointment to learn that the city was in the process of moving to take over this property.

I and my wife and Brother and Sister all rely on our business, which is run from this property, for our health insurance. All of us are patients of Mayo Clinic for various reasons and my wife is not eligible for Medicare for 2 ½ years. For her to lose her only insurance and I and my Brother and Sister to lose our secondary insurance would be a tremendously difficult situation to be in.

We have tried to be a good Hammond based business for all these years. As Reapers Realm Haunted Attractions and Good Times Fireworks we have provided employment opportunities to hundreds of Hammond citizens each season. In the extended course of our business we believe it is safe to say that we have employed thousands of Hammond residents.

As Reapers Realm we have provided hundreds and hundreds of free admission tickets to various people and organizations to give out to those who could not otherwise afford to attend. As Good Times Fireworks we have donated tens of thousands of dollars in fireworks to people and organizations for various displays and celebrations. We have proudly donated to Hammond Churches and civic

organizations such as the Hammond Hurricanes and the Hammond Firefighters union. Hluska Enterprises also donated 100% of the money for the Hammond Park Department to purchase all of the playground equipment at Rich's Park which is located at Harrison Ave. and River Drive.

We have also paid tens of thousands of dollars in fireworks sales tax to the State of Indiana which is used to help train Firefighters.

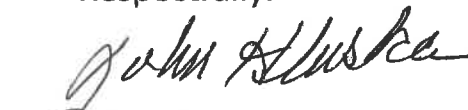
In All of our business ventures we have always strived to create a safe environment by employing numerous Hammond Police and Firefighters to be on the property so as not to be a danger or burden to the City of Hammond.

We also allowed the construction company that demolished the Unity Church and build the pedestrian overpass at Calumet Ave. and 177th Street to use the large field on the east side of the property for over 2 years to store equipment and materials to complete the project without asking for any rent money from the company or the City of Hammond.

I and my family members ask that the Hammond City Council please put this re development plan on hold for at least 3 years to enable us to better prepare for the future and ensure that all family members are provided with insurance coverage.

We have also sent a letter to Mayor McDermott asking for assistance with this project.

Respectfully.



John Hluska
219-808-9085

2024 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
8												
Katrina Alexander	P											
Dan Spitale	P											
Janet Venecz	E											
Mark Kalwinski	P											
Pete Torres	P											
Barry Tyler	P											
Bill Emerson	P											
Dave Woerpel	A											
Scott Rakos	P											
Initials												

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

ATTEST: 
Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 7:05 p.m.
cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk