

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

Council Coordinator Carmen I. Balboa facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: None

ABSENT: Woerpel

TOTAL: 8

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - Hi, Councilmen. Nice to see you. I want to say, "Welcome to City Hall to our Wallace little kids, and teachers, and parents here. Nice to see you all. We do this every two weeks. The Hammond Council and the Mayor get together every two weeks right in this building, so, you know, welcome to City Hall. It's nice to see you all." My activity log, it's been three weeks, actually, since we all got together because of the way the last month fell. So I have more than normal, so I apologize in advance. My activity log, I met with the new PNW Chancellor. We've actually met quite a few times. His name is Chris Holford. A nice guy. He was the Provost before he took over as Chancellor. He and I seem like we've been meeting a lot on the Quantum Corridor. There's deadlines quickly approaching with the Quantum Corridor. I know we've been hearing a lot about this. If anybody has questions, we should probably get into it after the meeting or we could set up meetings on the side. But, it's very complex, technical, and it's an amazing opportunity for Downtown Hammond. Purdue Northwest is going to be part of that. I've talked to Councilman Salinas about it, being that it's in his district. I think he agrees that it's a pretty amazing opportunities. Let's just hope it all comes together. Also visited Morton Elementary School. Ms. Raquel Sterczec's class of 1st graders. That was fun. I got to go read to the class. Cargill has been in City Hall recently. It's been the topic of conversation for a while before BP became the topic of conversation. But Cargill, I'm gonna get into this a little more. I'm sure it might be the Councilman might want to bring up some issues with Cargill as well. But, the Plant Manager was in City Hall meeting with me and my team, Environmental, and the City Executives in regards to nuisance noise that's coming from the Dry Out Air Plant. This is not the first time we have talked about this. In fact, I was looking through my notes, my Council notes, of when I talked to you all. Last time we talked about it in here was in 2021. It seems like it's a problem that's gonna be there as long as they have that dryer. And they've had that dryer longer than I've been alive. It was made in 1961. I don't need to tell you when I was born, but that's older than me and it's still in everyday operation at Cargill. And when it hits a certain frequency it makes residents of the 1st District insane. That becomes our problem because those residents in turn call us. So, we've been dealing a lot with Cargill on that. I want to thank Ron Novak of our Environmental Department, Phil Taillon, we've

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - been in extensive negotiations through Economic Development, through Environmental, with Cargill on that problem. That seemed like it was our main problem in the 1st District until it wasn't. BP took over, and we'll get into that in a second. Hosted Mayor's Night Out in the 1st District. Talked a lot about Cargill that night. Then the next day BP became the issue. We'll talk about that in a second. I met with the Union leadership of Operating Engineers Local #399. I had a good meeting. We're getting ready for negotiations next year and Lloyd Osborne came into City Hall. We had a good meeting. I think that's gonna go well. That negotiation. Hosted Black History Month Celebration at the Hammond Sportsplex. This year we were honoring Hammond's African American Firefighters. I thought it was a great event. Obviously, a lot of work went into that. I know we have a committee that puts that event together. I know there's a lot of Council people there, so I want to thank everybody that had anything to do with it. It's always nice to do it at the Sportsplex. I had a Zoom TV interview with Gerry Dick of Inside Indiana Business in regards to the Quantum Corridor in Downtown Hammond. It seems like the topic of conversation lately. I attended a retirement party for one of the City Litigators, John McCrum, from Eichhorn & Eichhorn, retired. They held his retirement party at the new Journeymen Distillery in Valparaiso. Which is pretty amazing. I don't know if you've had a chance to be there. It's amazing what they did with an old industrial plant. I met with the District Manager and the Executive Team at the Hammond Sanitary District Plant. Directly with the employees who were affected by the removal of cert pay. That's been a topic of conversation I've been talking with you all about. I met with the Hammond Police Department upper management at the Captain's meeting. That's a regular meeting. I had a meeting with the Acting CEO of the Lakeshore Chamber of Commerce in regards to the State of the City, Bob Migliorini. Lunch with Mayor Steve Spebar from Whiting regarding the BP loss of power incident. I held my 21st Annual State of the City Address. I want to thank the Council people that were in attendance. I think we had 7 or 8 or nine there. I appreciate you all being there. I met with the school counselors from the School City of Hammond in City Hall. Issued a proclamation in support of them. I had a nice conversation in regards to what's going on with our schools. I met with the CEO of Indiana's Quantum Corridor, Tom Dakich. Talked about the coordination between them, PNW, St. Margaret's in Downtown Hammond, and my Economic Development team. There's a lot of coordination going on right now. Attended the Whiting-Robertsdale Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner at the Dynasty. And last, but not least, attended the Chinese New Year celebration at King Chop Suey on the 1700 block of Indianapolis Blvd. It was super, super, cool. I talk all the time about how diverse we are and all; the different diversities in the City of Hammond, I don't really mention Chinese very often and we had a Chinese New Year celebration. It was the first time I've been a part of that since I've been Mayor. So, that was a great few weeks of work. BP lost power incident, something we didn't really talk about. We all know what happened. BP lost power at their main plant. They made a decision in the interest of safety to burn off all their product on hand and it scared everybody. There was toxic clouds in the sky. Flames as high as I've ever seen them coming out of the plant. It was a scary day. We're doing a lot of internal evaluations about how things worked that day. I didn't think that communication with BP went well at all that day. They weren't talking to us. Nobody knew anything until towards the end of the exercise. But I thought it was completely insufficient what happened. We didn't know what to tell the public because we weren't getting information and that's something we're gonna have to iron out with BP. Because that was a scary day. Action items pending before you, the bond ordinance for Station No. 2, that's Fire House No. 2 in Robertsdale, it's under construction right now but this is all about financing. You guys, when we first came to you all we talked about the build, operate, transfer model and how that was a successful model we used in Hessville, and it was, and we wanted to do it again, and now we're looking at traditional financing as a possible way to save money. So all that we're asking you to do is give

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - us that option. We're gonna take the lowest cost method. So, we were locked in to BOT with our original designation, we're just asking you to give us the option for traditional financing or BOT, whichever is cheaper, we're going to go with. So that's pending before you on 3rd and Final. Also pending before you is a resolution about 24 Marble Street. I've talked to Councilman Salinas about this. It's a 400 thousand square foot industrial spec building. Built on 24 Marble Street. Investment amount, \$35 million. We already approved a 10 year tax abatement for this company, that was done previously with this Council and my staff. Each tax abatement comes with a fee, typically 15% fee. The way our boilerplate language was worded, legally, sort of messed us up. I'll take credit for this, take the blame for this. We're gonna change our boilerplate language read it said we're waiving all fees and we didn't mean for it to waive this fee. This fee is standard whenever somebody gets a tax abatement. So there was a discrepancy about whether they owed the fee for tax abatement, which is always 15%, always paid. So we had to negotiate that fee. They thought they should have paid zero. We thought they should have paid 15%. This is a compromise right in the middle. Okay? I take responsibility for this. I didn't draft the contract but the contract language was ambiguous enough where if we went to court we might have got zero. So, I thought it was a good negotiation. We met in the middle. That's pending before you via Resolution 24R-04. Last, but not least, this is the Event Space Ordinance is up for 3rd and Final that we've been talking about for a few months with you all. This is in regards to the pop up parties we've been experiencing. Somebody has an event space in your district, that event space is usually for a birthday party. It's usually done by 6 p.m. at night, then all of a sudden there's a huge party with four hundred people and it's open til three in the morning and it wasn't designated that way. This ordinance that you guys are pending before you will give us the ability to enforce the zoning code so that these pop up parties can't happen in your district. That's all I got. I know it's a lot. I apologize. I don't try to take up too much of your meeting. So if you have any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

Councilman Woerpel is present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of January 26, 2024 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to approve claims from January 19, 2024 through February 7, 2024. Claim #746 through #1545, inclusive. In the amount of \$19,015,421.70.

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to amend in:
Claim #B1393 in the amount of \$14,046.54 to ASJ Roofing

Councilman Tyler - I think the amendment number is 1546.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (amendment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

AMENDMENT ADOPTED

ROLL CALL VOTE (approval as amended)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED
(as amended)

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- 24-03 Authorizing the Issuance of Bonds to Finance the Costs of a New Fire Station in the City of Hammond, Appropriating the Proceeds derived from the Sale of such Bonds, and other matters related thereto

Dave Matura - I've spoken before you on this very topic. Clark Field and the Fire Station. Let me preface it with that I was never opposed to a new Fire Station or building a new Fire Station, but the location. I thought the City of Hammond couldn't have picked a worse location to choose to put that Fire Station. Instead of embracing the Environmental Center for our children, which the Mayor seems enamored over, he tore the Environmental Center down. And we all know what the state of the environment is and the way the world is heading. I can't think of a more important building in the City of Hammond than that Environmental Center. But now it's located in Merrillville. Lost to the City. No big deal. Huge big deal. Well, that's where the Fire Station's going. Okay, bind issue isn't going to move it back to it's old location, which the Fire Station could have been built just adjacent to the existing one. Tear the existing one down, put the parking lot there. But, okay. It's under construction, \$6 million, that's a lot of money but that's what it is. All of the sudden the County gives \$2 million. So now I read in the paper, now it's \$8 million. I'm thinking, what kind of financing? What kind of planning is this? Then I read in the paper, the administration wants to issue bonds for \$2 million more. And then I thought, well, if I was building a house, I'd have all my financing in order before I even struck the first shovel full of dirt. Then I thought, is there any sort of plan here or is it just kind of by the seat of the pants. So I thought, well, let's not reward this administration by saying, "Whatever you want. You want a bond issue? You want more money? We'll just give it to you and we'll just roll with it." I think it's negligent on the part of the administration to keep coming before the public before you and saying, "I want more money, I want more money, and I want more money." And so, being a bond it doesn't burden us now but it burdens our children into the future. So I think it's not a good idea. I know it's the 3rd Reading, I think that's what it's called. I would ask you to vote against it because all it does is enforce the current administration to sort of roll with the way it goes instead of doing any sort of good financial planning. So I ask before you to considerate a no vote and then maybe the Mayor will scratch his head and say, "Maybe I ought to do my homework before I put a shovel to the ground." Thank you.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC HEARING cont.

Councilman Woerpel - This bond is encouraged by the State. It has no effect on the \$2.1 million we got from the County. That's still getting that. It doesn't add to the cost of the Fire Station. This is encouraged because of the interest rates and the lower bond rating is giving us an option to actually finance it at a lower cost. When I say finance it, \$2.1 million we got from Councilman Hamm and Councilwoman Cid, or was it \$2.4? I think it was \$2.1. That still applies here. This is just another option that the City is given for paying for the Fire Station at the same cost. Which I believe was, I think they said \$6 million. I believe. It doesn't add anything to the cost of the Station. It's just another possibly lower expenses to cover the financing of what needs to be done in order to complete the project is my understanding of what this bond deals with. Does that answer any question on that?

Dave Matura - Well, I believe that initially the Fire Station was \$6 million and then it went to \$8 million because of inflation and that's when the County kicked in their \$2 million. And so that's why I'm confused at this late stage why the Mayor is looking at bonds unless someone, like you said, the state, all of a sudden stepped in, which baffles me because the State just doesn't seem to do much for the City of Hammond and now all of a sudden they're interested in \$2 million out of a \$8 million project. So I'm confused about it. I wish the Mayor were here to speak and clarify it and I don't know if you spend \$2 million on bonds, are you gonna back \$2 million from the Federal money that you got initially. I don't know. I just was perplexed why it's being financed now or another option at this late stage.

Councilman Woerpel - I'm not trying to argue with you. I was just explaining to it as we were discussed it in caucus and the Mayor addressed it in his address is all.

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Salinas - I got a couple of thank you's that I wanted to add. First of which is to Felix Gonzalez, our Director of Public Works. He had a crew out last week that was cleaning on Chicago Avenue, on the north side of Irving Park, all around the park areas as well as under the underpass of the toll underpass. All the debris and trash they collected over all came out looking very nice. So I want to say thank you to the Public Works Department overall. They did a fantastic job. The second thank you I want to say is to Jack Smith, Superintendent of the Sewer Maintenance Department. We had a dip in the road. Somewhat of a sink hole near Columbia and Michigan on the northeast end by Columbia Park. A lot of the vehicles continued to hit that dip. I received several calls from residents regarding it and Jack Smith and his crew went out last week and they were able to repair that. They did a very good job. So I wanted to say thank you to the entire Sewer Maintenance Department.

Councilman Kalwinski - I was one of several concerned citizens, City Officials, and environmental groups who were locked out of E.C. Central High School when the meeting to address the BP Refinery Air Permit renewal was abruptly cancelled. The meeting has been rescheduled at Calumet College. Of course, I plan to attend and others from City Hall, I believe. So the meeting at Calumet College for the BP Air Permit renewal will be on Wednesday, February 21 at 6:00 p.m. on the second floor, Room 200, at Calumet College.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMUNICATIONS cont.

Councilman Rakos - Yes, HC3 wants to announce to join us for the Paint Hessville Green St. Patrick's Day Parade. I believe it's the 6th or 7th, missed one from the Covid, be on March 16th, 2024 at 2:00 p.m. Mayor Thomas McDermott is the Grand Marshall. We'll have Chicago Guard Pipes and Drums will be leading the parade. They are accepting applications for the parade til March 1st. It will start on Kennedy, right at Hessville Park and go to 161st and Kennedy. That will be on March 16th at 2:00 p.m.

Councilman Kalwinski - Tomorrow, Tuesday, the Purdue Northwest Division 1 Ice Hockey Team will be playing in a tournament, Quarter finals, against Roosevelt University at the Ice Cube at 6:35. If you have a chance come out and support them. The Ice Cube is located at Dowling Park, right off of Kennedy Avenue. The game starts at 6:35. Why this is really a treasure is that Purdue moved part of its program from Division 2 to Division 1 and they are excelling in Division 1 this year and have a real good chance to go a distance here. So, if you can come out and support them. They're a good group of guys and I think some new information that might be coming out may be that next year, soon after there might be a women's hockey team.

Councilman Woerpel - I was reminded that Hammond's 5th or 6th Annual 219 Day is this Saturday and it starts at 6 at the Hammond Civic Center. Everybody is invited to come out and attend.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilman Spitale - Brought out 24-01.

Councilman Woerpel - Brought out 24-02 and 24-03.

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Emerson - The CIB Board met on February 5th, 2024 and we dealt with No. 1, \$22,366 for underground fuel tank closure at city owned property at 4703 Hohman in the 2nd District. No. 2, \$1,587,365.40 to fund the Community Crossing matching grant project, resurfacing Summer Street from Indpls. Blvd. To 165th in the 3rd District, and 169th Street from Southeastern to Northcote in the 5th District. No. 3, \$44,146 for improvement to the Hohman Avenue north approach at Sibley in the 2nd District. No. 4, \$23,337.77 to fund Change Order No. 16 for Hohman Avenue Phase One in the 2nd District. No. 5, \$20,500 for Supplemental Construction Engineering on the Little Calumet River Pedestrian Bridge in the 4th District. No. 6, \$57,815 to fund Change Order No. 2, Stateline Road closures in the 3rd District. No. 7, \$450,000 for 2024 Citywide Sidewalk Program.

Community and Crime Watch - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:

Wed., Feb. 14; 1 p.m.; Mt. Zion Pleasantview Plaza

Wed., Mar. 6; Edison Community Watch; 6:30 p.m.; Edison School

Harrison Park Crime Watch; Tues., Mar. 5; 6 p.m.; VFW on Hohman

Hessville Crime Watch - Thur., Feb. 15; 6 p.m.; Jean Shepherd Center

Irving Community Watch; Fri., Mar. 1; 9:30 a.m.; Irving School Art Room

Thur., Mar. 14; Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch; Calumet College; 6:30 p.m.

Please come out to the meetings, you'll find out a lot of information. Particularly up north at the Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch meeting last week we found out that East Chicago Central had closed the meeting for the BP issue. So that was happening in real time, we found that out. You can also find out activities in your

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMITTEE REPORTS cont.

Community and Crime Watch - Councilwoman Venecz cont. - neighborhood and events that are happening in your neighborhood and it's an excellent opportunity to meet some of your neighbors.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE

24-01 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 Councilwoman Venecz, moved for passage.

Councilman Spitale - This ordinance is to create new provision of our indoor events in the City of Hammond. Any concerns and questions can be directed to the Hammond Plan Department. We've had a lot of problems, people using it for other reasons for food services, liquor, people are going in these places and not having everything together. So if there's any problems it goes to the Hammond Planning Department.

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. 9625 PASSED

24-02 Respecting and Ratifying the Actions of the City of Hammond Board of Public Works and Safety related to Traffic Regulation for 2023

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

Councilman Emerson - This deals with six stop signs and two residential parking signs approved by the Board of Works. That's the way we do it now so that we don't just have Council people setting up stop signs all over the place.

Councilman Woerpel - I know that several of them stop signs and the resident only parking signs were in the 5th District and the process that we use through that is once I was alerted to the need for the stop signs, I contacted the Law Department and had them ... I actually contacted the Law Department through a letter requesting that the Board of Works take a look at them. Then after the Board of Works approved them they were given to Public Works to put up and it wasn't just as simple as I want a stop sign by a resident that caused them to go up. But the resident only signs are the hockey rink because there's an issue there with parking and then the other two stop signs, I think one was on Chesapeake and Chestnut and one was on Alexander where it meets Marshal and Nickle Plate Road if I'm not mistaken. I think there was two put up on Chesapeake and three on Alexander there somewhere, 6700 Alexander and Martha.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

ORDINANCE 3RD READING - FINAL PASSAGE cont.

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. 9626 PASSED

24-03 Authorizing the Issuance of Bonds to Finance the Costs of a New Fire Station in the City of Hammond, Appropriating the Proceeds derived from the Sale of such Bonds, and other matters related thereto

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilman Salinas, moved for passage.

Councilman Woerpel - Again, it's my understanding that these bonds are just an option that we're making available for the City. There is other funding involved, as far as what we got from the County Council. And it's also my understanding that if we go this route, because it's the better way to finance it, that the bonds will be paid by the water sales.

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. 9627 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

24-04 An Ordinance Appropriating the Proceeds of the Annual Action Plan and Dealing with Other Matters Pertaining to the Expenditure of Plan Proceeds for Program Year 2024

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved for 1st and 2nd reading with public hearing set for February 26, 2024 and a Council as a Whole meeting on February 26, 2024 at 5:15 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st and 2nd)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTIONS

24R-03 Authorizing the Filing of an Annual Action Plan Application and Designating the Signatories for Payment Voucher on Letters of Credit for the 2024 Annual Action Plan Programs

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

Councilman Spitale - This is for the application for the grant for CDBG Homes ESG Budget 2024.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION R03 ADOPTED

24R-04 Amending Resolution 22R-17 that Approved an Economic Revitalization Area Assessed Valuation Deduction (“Tax Abatement”) for the Qualified Tangible Real Property of Park 24 Hammond, LLC Pursuant to Indiana Code 6-1.1-12.1 to Amend the condition of an Imposed Fee under section 14

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

Councilman Salinas - This deals with 24 Marble Street and Economic Revitalization Area. We’re gonna be giving them a ten year tax abatement. They’ll be paying back a fee to the City at 7.5%.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION R04 ADOPTED

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Tyler, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to appoint Brandon Dorsey to the Hammond Community Corporation.

Councilman Tyler - Brandon Dorsey has served on a few other committees for the City and I believe he was actually on the Hammond Community Corporation before, took a couple years off and just in conversations with him recently, he expressed interest and wanted to join again. So excited to bring him back in this capacity.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

APPOINTMENT ADOPTED

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Diana Davis - Although I know that the School City of Hammond and the City of Hammond are separate. I am here to ask for your help in saving Wallace Elementary. I am asking you to reach out to our Superintendent and the School Board and encourage them to any way that you can. Soon our City will have little to no schools for our children to go to. Wallace has become a community hub and a center for its families and students. To shut the doors to a positive influence on this community will drive a wedge further between communities. We are tax paying citizens and should not be subject to sending our students to another school. Our community has rallied for this school and we are asking you our Councilmen and women to fight with us and back us as we try to save our school. We need your help.

Ken Rosek - The Governors Parkway Bridge continues to be the most expensive and least effective in solving our train issues and will lower our quality of life in Hessville. In response to a letter written to the Secretary of Transportation, Pete Buttageig, the Federal Railway Administration called to inform us on many aspects of the Governors Parkway project they would like the public to hear. No. 1, the FRA opposes Governors Parkway Bridge. They recommend a solution on Grand Avenue. But the Mayor refuses to comply. They said funding for a solution on Grand Avenue is readily available. No. 2, the Mayor always knew Governors Parkway would not solve the problem of safe passage for school children. He always knew. It is reprehensible for years it was suggested by this administration and some Council members that it was going to solve all our problems. This could cost lives. No. 3, Norfolk and Southern Railroad now have agreed with the Department of Transportation, they will no longer park trains in Hessville. This makes Governors Parkway Bridge a moot point. However, we believe a solution on Grand Avenue is still warranted. Did the Common Council believe this project would solve our public safety issues when they approved it? These revelations are eye opening and changes everything we knew about the viability of this bridge. Public safety was a center piece of Mayor McDermott's Governors Parkway Bridge. This was during the time before the bridge design was revealed to the public. Emergency response times will increase in distance and in time. A solution on Grand Avenue will add fail safe second route for emergency vehicles no matter what. The quickest route across the tracks for emergency vehicles is straight down Parrish Avenue across the tracks.

Carlotta Blake King - Good evening. Retired, broker, realtor, advocate for children and the disenfranchised all of my adult life. I was very impressed when I attended the Mayor's State of the City Address and all of the many economic development engines that are moving forward as we speak. But I'm a firm believer that schools drive your economic engine in any city. If your schools are failing, what are your chances of all of this money we've spent being a success? Closing schools, it's my understanding from the past there really hasn't been any real cost savings that has been shared with the taxpayers. The current recommendations to close schools again, where is the true cost savings in closing these schools? Far be it from me to understand what is really going on.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Carlotta Blake King cont. - It's been expressed that all of this is because of the State. Well, I agree, to a certain extent, however, in 2019 the State DUAB, the Distressed Unit Appeals Board, forewarned the board that if you didn't cut spending we will be back to address that issue. Obviously, someone did not heed that warning. Currently, it's my understanding, we're millions of dollars deficit spending. I don't know the real number. The State DUAB is asking us on a dime to balance the budget. Are they held responsible? Of course they are. You don't tell somebody to cut spending and then there's no oversight. No one comes and informs you, didn't I tell you in 2019 as they see that deficit spending increase. That never happened. State Board of Accounts audit us every two years. They should be held accountable as well. Did they tell us we were in a spiral of deficit spending? That's a good question. So, yes, the State is held responsible to a certain degree. So now, it's my understanding that School City of Hammond is facing a major problem. Closing schools is not the problem. Especially two distinct schools that hold specialty programs that are not held at anywhere else in the School City of Hammond. Look at these children. You're going to deny these kids the excellent programs that is curtailed for them and send them to wherever. Senate Bill 1, the retention of 3rd graders if they fail the iReady and iReady test scores. Held back. Those test scores So I behoove you all to take note of this. Because these are your constituents as well.

April Avila - My children attend Edison Elementary. I worked in the PACT Program at Kenwood Elementary as a Paraprofessional. My husband and I, we have lived in Hammond now almost eighteen years. I understand that you do not control the schools and what you're able to do is limited. But, as a parent who has children in the schools, 1st grade, almost all the 1st grade classes at Edison have over 30 children in the classroom with a single teacher. My children's classes have never been under 25 children in that class, and again, that's with a single teacher. In the three years I've worked for School City of Hammond, two years ago my job as a teachers aid for kindergarten was eliminated, and this year, as somebody who is working at Kenwood with the possibility of Kenwood closing, my job, once again, is up to be eliminated. Like Ms. King stated, we believe in Hammond, this is our community. I am very proud to live here. You know, I want my children to have the best education. I want to have the resources for my children's education. But also we are at a point where we had to pull our son, who is in middle school out of the Hammond school system because it was not being offered, his needs were not being met. So I just hope that all of you, as part of our community and as leaders in the community, understand how important our schools are to people who want to move here. They are doing so much Downtown. There's so much to offer in Hammond. But as a parent, right now, I would not. If I did not live in Hammond, I would not be moving to Hammond right now, because of the schools. Right now I struggle with what to do for a job. I might not have a job next year it looks like. Then for my children. So I just hope that, with everything that's going around, that you are, paying attention and listening and our kids really need help. There's no more room at my children's school in Edison. Like I said, the classrooms are already maxed out, the teachers are maxed out, and we're gonna be closing two schools. I just wanted to bring that up as somebody who lives here and somebody who works here and somebody who has children here, just what's kind of going on.

T.J. Gaertig - I just wanted to make a quick correction. The BP public hearing is actually gonna be next Thursday, February 22. It's at Calumet College of St. Joseph in Room 200. It's meeting at 6 o'clock. I wanted to speak on the planned Governor's Parkway project, which is a bridge that the City is planning on building that's gonna go off of Parrish Avenue, cut through the Briar East Woods, that will be destroyed, and go into that

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

T.J. Gaertig cont. - subdivision at 171st and Maryland, that area. It's objective is to solve the problem with parked trains in Hammond. Objective is to help students that need to walk to school not have to crawl over parked trains. I spoke with Tina Blumenfeld and she's the railroad safety and grade crossing specialist with the FRA, Federal Railroad Administration, and she informed me of a lot of things that were news to me. She said the FRA had met with Hammond several times over the past several years. Especially since the public hearing last April regarding the issue of trains in Hessville and an infrastructure project to fix it. She revealed top me that the FRA had suggested numerous times an overpass or underpass at Grand Avenue as the best solution for children's safety and emergency vehicles in Hessville, with regard to parked trains. The FRA recommended to Hammond that a solution on Grand Avenue is the best choice for children's safety, so they don't have to climb over trains. The City of Hammond fought them on this. Instead went with Governor's Parkway, that would bring kids two miles out of their way. Now, of course, they're trying to supplement with a pedestrian overpass that will cost \$5 million and eminent domain a couple of houses so it will be ADA compliant. Why would the City of Hammond go against the suggestion of the railroad safety specialist at the FRA if they cared about the safety of our children? Not only the solution at Grand Avenue the best for public safety, it is half the cost, as reported at the INDOT public hearing last April, of Governor's Parkway. An overpass, so it won't flood, it's half the cost, and it's better for safety.

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

Councilwoman Alexander - I'm confused, when did we leave the regular order of business?

ROLL CALL VOTE (regular order)

AYES: Alexander

NAYS:

ABSENT:

Motion ??? ?/?/?

Councilman Woerpel - It's my understanding Public Expression is over and now Councilwoman Venecz has made a motion to ...

Councilwoman Venecz - To return to Regular Order of Business, which would be New and Unfinished Business.

Councilman Woerpel - To return to New and Unfinished Business then.

Councilwoman Venecz - That is correct.

ROLL CALL VOTE (return to New and Unfinished Business)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 MOTION CARRIED

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

Councilwoman Venecz - Ms. Davis, you were absolutely correct. The School City and the Civil City are two separate entities. We have, we, the Civil City, have nothing to do with what goes on at the School City. We can be invited to and participate in programs but we do not have any say so as to what goes on in the School City of Hammond. The fact of the matter is the referendum failed. I do have an opinion on why that referendum failed. But it failed none the less. So, I appreciate your passion for the education of our kids. I appreciate that. But we have nothing to do with what goes on with the School City of Hammond. Ms. King, however, you stand up here and you make it sound like it is the responsibility of the City Council to keep our schools open. You sit on the School Board. So, I don't understand why ... I have the floor. So, I don't understand how you can stand there and say that this is the fault of the Civil City. It is not the fault of the Civil City. You sit on the School Board. You make the decisions. You talk to the Superintendent. You know what goes on financially. We have an former member of the School Board here, which I'm sure could give us a lot more financial information than what we are being given right now. I want our children to be protected. I want our children to be educated. But, to point fingers at us is just not right. It's just not right. That's all I have to say about that.

Councilwoman Alexander - Point of Order. One, let's bring this back. Let's dial this back. If I knew that this was about to be a show, and we were about to address something to talk to the audience. Which we do not do in our meetings. I would not have voted to go back to New Business. We have not conducted ourselves in this way since I've been here. We will not conduct ourselves now. We understand that what happens in the School City and what happens in the Civil City are two different things. But we can do, is we need to work together, period. But to have disorder in this Chamber, we will not have. Now I'm asking for a motion to go back to the Regular Order and a motion to Adjourn.

Councilwoman Venecz - Second.

ROLL CALL VOTE (regular order)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

MOTION CARRIED

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

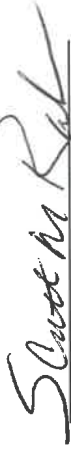
AYES: ALL

2024 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

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

E=ELECTRONIC
P=PHYSICALLY
PRESENT
A=ABSENT

If the member qualifies for an exemption from the "Consecutive - 50" requirements, draw a circle around the E for that meeting/ member.



Scott Rakos, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:



Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 7:05
cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk