

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on March 25, 2024 in the Hammond City Council Chambers and was available to be viewed at gohammond on Facebook, gohammond.tv live and per Zoom.

Council President Scott Rakos presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

A moment of silence was observed for Charles Comer.

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Tyler

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

Due to technical audio issues, votes cast by Councilman Tyler were hand signals as Zoom was not able to broadcast voice. He was seen showing up and down hand signals for his votes.

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - My report to the Council on the March 25th meeting is my activity log for the last two weeks. We had the 38th Annual Hammond Sports Hall of Fame at the Hammond Civic Center. I know there was a number of Council people there. We all appreciate you coming. We honored new inductees into the Hall of Fame, six new inductees, Dennis Hardesty, Marie Herring, Andy Juscik, Dr. Joseph Markovich, Damon Rogers and Joseph Golvis. Congratulations on being inducted in the 38th Class of the Hammond Sports Hall of Fame. Had meetings with the Emergency Communications Team. This team has been meeting often over the last year and it was accelerated after what happened at BP Amoco. We got together and I challenged this group to come up with some type of action plan that would make it easier during emergencies, like the BP Amoco situation we had a couple months ago. We couldn't communicate well with our residents and I thought this was a hindrance to communicating that we were, you know, the situation what was going on up there. This task force came up with a program, a software program they've been studying called Everbridge. We've decided to go forward with this at the cost of \$16,500 a year. You'll be hearing more about this in the future. But this is a comprehensive alerting package that covers both emergency and non-emergency alerting to the citizens of Hammond. Once the software is implemented, we'll be able to send forced emergency alerts to the citizens of Hammond that are in the affected area of the emergency. Like if we were flooding and we wanted to alert everybody within a particular area, we could do so. Like is there was a tornado coming, other emergencies like BP Amoco, if we were getting proper reports from them we could echo them to our citizens in a forced alert. Which is the loud alert that we get on our phones. It's forcing it onto your phone. We also have non-emergency alerts that you're able to do with this system where you can opt in to that system, sort of like we do with Hammond 311. So, we're gonna be talking more about this with our residents. I imagine this is going to be able to be accessed by phone through some type of app sort of like we do already with the Hammond 311 system and I'm looking forward to breaking that out in the coming weeks. Had the Annual Disabilities Breakfast at the Dynasty. I

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - appreciate the Council people that attended that as well. We honored some businesses and individuals that helped greatly with this particular community. The business award went to the Ramada Inn; the individual Adult Award went to Kenneth Zubeck, Individual Adult Volunteer Award went to Trina Cantrell Ross; Caregiver Award to Margaret Smith; the Youth Award to Tracy Newt; the Charles Nagy Award went to Jessica Simmons; and the Mayor's Commission Distinguished Honorary Award goes to Pamela Ballentine. Thank you to all of them and to all of the people that were nominated. Had the honor of serving in HC3's Annual Hessville Parade, right down Kennedy Avenue. I was the Grand Marshall this year. I appreciate HC3. I know Councilman Rakos has a lot to do with that parade. We had excellent weather and a big crowd. Thank you very much to HC3 for letting me be the Grand Marshall and it was really cool to go down the brand new Kennedy Avenue. It's really, with the shrunken down Kennedy Avenue, it's perfect for parades. So, looking forward to going all the way down Kennedy like that. I had a phone meeting with the CEO of Franciscan Hospitals. The CEO of the entire hospital chain. It was our second meeting in the past couple months. I met today with three Council people and we went over the site plan that I talked about with the CEO. We had a conversation about the old hospital site. Issues with the parking garage that's on that site. The type of fill that's gonna be used on the footprint of that and other economic development matters. So, I think it was a productive meeting. So, appreciate Mr. Leahy for reaching out and, like I said, it's good that we're finally communicating between us. I met with the F.O.P. negotiating team regarding the proposal the F.O.P. gave to us in regards to significant pay raises they are looking for. I've been trying to keep the Council up to date on that. I'm willing to discuss this with you guys, I'd rather do that in some type of Executive Session or one on one if you don't mind, as opposed to talking about it publically. I think the initial negotiating meeting with the F.O.P. went well. It was very positive toned the whole time. I think that they have a problem right now with keeping people in the ranks. We understand that's a problem and I know the Council is aware of that as well. We've been talking about this for a while. So, we'll keep you in the loop on that, obviously. I met with the President and Vice President of Hermits Baseball League in regards to a proposal they want the City to consider and we're gonna move forward and talk to Councilmen and other people about that, if it would be feasible. Appeared on the Panel of Mayors at the Annual LCEA Breakfast in Briar Ridge Country Club. LCEA is Lake County Economic Alliance. I appeared with Gary's Mayor Eddie Melton, Hobart's Mayor Josh Huddlestun, Crown Point's Mayor Pete Land, and Merrillville's Councilman Shawn Pettit. I made the case for our city and why it's important to invest here. I think it was a good appearance. We were on the front page which is good for business, I think. Met and interviewed twelve senior level Hammond Fire Fighters. I posted the NO. 2 job in the Hammond Fire Department. I think that's probably the first time that's ever happened. I know Clerk Golec should probably shed more light on that, but these jobs don't get posted very often. We posted it, twelve people applied. I'm interviewing all twelve of them and I think the interviews went great. One of those twelve is gonna be our next Deputy Chief. Which means we're not gonna bring somebody from outside of the Department. Appeared on WJOB with Chancellor Holford on Purdue Northwest's weekly radio show. Spoke about the Impact Lab that Purdue Northwest wants to put in Downtown Hammond, Dowling Park, Sportsplex and the future of PNW. I think it was a good meeting. I had a meeting with the leadership of the Hammond Boxing Club about fundraising and it's possible future locations. I attended the retirement party for our Fire Chief Jeff Smith, retiring after thirty two years on the force. Bernie Grisolia, the new Chief, he's the Deputy Chief transitioning into the job of Fire Chief. Is slowly assuming responsibility. So, if you have something big, I'd call Bernie first, because Smitty is sort of in that mode where he is transitioning out and Bernie's transitioning in. So if you have anything in the Fire Department you could still call the Chief, obviously, but you might want to get to know the new Chief a little better.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - So, good news, the Food and Beverage Proposal was signed by Governor Holcomb and is in law. So, next step for us is to present to the Hammond City Council our proposal and, obviously, we have to debate it here locally and decide if we're gonna go forward with that. But, that's the first time in 20 years of being Mayor that a Hammond only bill has passed the General Assembly and then signed by the Governor. So, I guess you stick around for twenty years and anything can happen. That's all I got. Unless you have any questions, I appreciate the Council giving me this time.

Councilman Kalwinski - Regarding Downtown Hammond and the 200 unit site, the building that was gonna house 200 units in Downtown Hammond.

Mayor McDermott - You're talking about the Taylor Row, the one that didn't go forward?

Councilman Kalwinski - What happened?

Mayor McDermott - It's finance. Well, there's a couple. We had three developments going with housing Downtown. One of them the bank is full systems go. They are gonna be leasing apartments in the spring. We had Taylor Row, I forgot which one was which. I believe Taylor Row was the one that was across the street from the Towle Theater. Alright, that one was a difference of opinion. That's a fair statement. I'm not trying to say, we've done business with this person in the past. I don't think he didn't, we had a difference of opinion about the future of Downtown Hammond, okay. And it's not gonna work if he was a large landowner and basically, we bought him out, okay. It was our property to begin with, we ended up buying it back from him. And we're looking at another developer for that piece of property. The one across from me, I believe that's the one you're talking about. That one is sort of failing for a lack of financing right now. Interest rates are real high. The banks are requiring a lot more. That one is struggling on financing. It's still a go, theoretically but we have to financially get the money. Not if we, the developer.

Mayor McDermott - I gotcha, hard times. For the one we bought out, how much did we have to put out for that?

Mayor McDermott - I'm going off the top of my head, it wasn't a lot. I mean, when I say it wasn't a lot, it was less than a million for that property and the buildings.

Councilman Kalwinski - Less than a million, you said?

Mayor McDermott - Yeah, I don't remember exactly.

Councilman Kalwinski - Thanks.

Mayor McDermott - And I don't want to throw stones. This developer that we were working with, we had a disagreement with, we did great business with in the past. So I was hoping that we'd go two for two and it didn't work out. Sometimes that happens. You know, if you're going to be vesting a lot of money in Downtown Hammond, you got to see things the same way the City does.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Salinas, supported by Councilwoman Alexander, moved to approve the minutes of March 11, 2024 and place on file. AYES : ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to approve the claims from March 12, 2024 through March 19, 2024. Claim No. 2472 through Claim No. 2945, inclusive. In the amount of \$8,913,106.92.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Salinas - I'd like to just make a reminder, I'm hosting my 2nd Annual Easter Egg Hunt this Saturday, March 30th at Columbia Park. This Easter Egg Hunt will start promptly at 12 o'clock noon sharp. It's for children ages 12 and under. There will be free photos with the Easter bunny. There'll be golden eggs that will win them prizes such as Easter baskets. The Hammond Fire Fighters will be there as well participating handing out some prizes and supporting the community. Should be a fun event if we get some good weather. We have some sponsors as well for the event. Sponsors include La Hacienda Azteca Mexican Restaurant; McCoy and Sons Towing; Walmart Supercenter; and El Taco Real Mexican Restaurant. I'd also like to take the time to say a big thank you to the Hammond Public Works Department and Supervisor Juan Serrano. I put a ticket in requesting clean up under the Hohman Avenue Bridge near Strack & Van Til's. The area is pretty heavily debris all over the place, a few mattresses, some large items. Supervisor Serrano was able to put a crew together today and clean up the area. It's not 100% clean because there's a lot of debris everywhere scattered from the dumpsters both at Family Dollar and Strack & Van Til's but we're hopeful that some of our community clean ups that we're targeting this summer should pretty much should pick up the area completely. So, I want to say a big thank you to the Public Works and Supervisor Serrano, specifically.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board Committee - Councilman Emerson - Our next scheduled meeting will be Thursday, April 18, 2024.

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:
Community Watch at Mt. Zion Pleasantview Plaza; Wed., Apr. 17; 1 p.m.
East Hammond Pullman Crime Watch; Tues., Apr. 16; 6 p.m.; Ophelia Steen Center
Edison Community Watch will not meet in April

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

COMMITTEE REPORTS cont.

Harrison Park Crime Watch; Tues., Apr. 2; VFW on Hohman; 6 p.m.
Hessville Crime Watch; Thur., Apr. 18; 6 p.m.; Jean Shepherd Center
Irving Community Watch; Fri., Apr. 12; 9:30 a.m.; Irving School
South Hohman Avenue Neighborhood Watch; Thur., Apr. 11; 7 p.m.; Trinity Lutheran Church
Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., Apr. 11; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilman Kalwinski -
Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association; Tomorrow, Tues.; 6:30 p.m.; Hammond Mohawks Club

Councilman Salinas announced the Mayor’s Night Out on Wednesday, March 27 at 6:30 p.m. in the 2nd District at Irving Elementary School.

ORDINANCE 3rd READING - FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

24-07 An Ordinance to Appropriate Funds in the Hotel/Motel Innkeepers Tax Fund for Economic Development Purposes 2024

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

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st and 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

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to reappoint Richard Spitale to the Building Contractors Board.

Councilman Woerpel - He’s sat on this board, probably, I don’t know, eight to ten years now and he’s more than qualified.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 APPOINTMENT ADOPTED

Councilman Woerpel, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to reappoint Ron Kotso to the HVAC Contractors Board.

Councilman Woerpel - We all know Ron. He's been the owner of Koto Furnace Company for about thirty years now, formerly Kuppinger, but this is just a reappointment as well.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 APPOINTMENT ADOPTED

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to appoint Ron Lubas to the Electrical Board.

Councilman Kalwinski - Mr. Lubas has been on the board for a number of years and operates and owns his own electrical company in the City of Hammond.

ROLL CALL VOTE (appointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 APPOINTMENT ADOPTED

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

T.J. Gaertig - I come bearing great news. Yesterday we had a fantastic clean up at Briar East Woods on Parrish Avenue. We had around forty people cleaning up and many just stopped by to reminisce and show support. There must have been thirty or forty bags of trash pulled out of there. Places like this are really important to people. They make Hammond a great place to live. It would extremely effective if, to clean up the woods, if the City of Hammond were to host a clean up there. If we were to build Governor's Parkway it would destroy it.

Ken Rosek - I have not so great news for you. The Governor's Park Bridge will endanger the lives of residents. The Mayor and his administration put profits over public safety when they designed this bridge. The road was supposed to be for the mothers to pick up and drop off their children form school. It does nothing for the mothers and children. The pedestrian bridge does nothing to help as well. Governors Parkway is a three mile detour for autos. Two miles for pedestrians. Emergency response times will add time by closing the fastest route

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Ken Rosek cont. - of Parrish Avenue. There are two fire stations on either side of the tracks for that very reason. Will they be closing one of the Fire Stations.

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

AYES: ALL

2024 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Katrina Alexander	8 P	12 P	11 P	25 P								
Dan Spitale	P	P	P	P								
Janet Venecz	E	P	P	P								
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P								
Alfonso Salinas III	P	P	P	P								
Barry Tyler	P	P	P	E								
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P								
Dave Woerpel	A	P	P	P								
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P								
Initials	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: 6:35 P.M.

cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk