

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on April 10, 2023 in the Hammond City Council Chambers and was available to be viewed at gohammond on Facebook, gohammond.tv live and per Zoom.

Council President Scott Rakos presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander

ROLL CALL

PHYSICALLY PRESENT: Alexander, Spitale, Venecz, Torres, Emerson, Rakos

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Tyler

ABSENT: Kalwinski, Woerpel

TOTAL: 7

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - Megan updated us, City Controller updated us, with the 2nd Quarter 2023 Gaming budget distribution sheets. First Quarter total revenue for the city, \$2.9 million, almost three, which is significantly down. Being honest with you, Hard Rock has taken a significant chunk, as predicted, out of the gaming revenue from Horseshoe Casino. I think last time we codified it, it's in the neighborhood of the 30 percentile. So it's significant, we expected that, that's why we fought so hard during that legislative battle. Obviously, we weren't successful. We knew it was gonna change the market. It has changed the market. I don't know if this is the new normal, but I would anticipate this is the new normal. This reiterates what we did during the campaign when we changed the way we spend gaming money. How much trouble we'd be in right now under the old system, and I thank you again for having the foresight to change the way we'd done business for decades in Hammond because if we were spending money based on what we used to collect, based on what we're collecting now, we would currently be digging a hole and that's how we used to do business for a long time. So, I want to say thank you to the Council for having the foresight to change that problem and I think right now we're really, really, benefitting from that change. So, thank you. I wanted to talk to you about litigation in the Sanitary District that's been going on for nine years. I'm happy to report it's finally completed, as of this week. It's an incredible long term issue we've been dealing with, with multiple counsels. Same Mayor, but I think it started right around 2015 when we got sued by our customer communities of Highland, Whiting and Griffith. We sort of pushed the issue and got sued for it. We tried to change the contract, it was poorly written decades ago and it was binding us big time. We couldn't pay the bills based on the contract. The contract was decades long. Had we stuck with the contract, as it was written, Hammond residents and Hammond Sanitary District would be in red ink for decades. We got sued by Whiting, Highland and Griffith. Over the years, Whiting beat us in court, all of them beat us in court the first time. Then the USEPA got involved, because USEPA has a problem with this whole thing as well because we're getting over filled with water from our customer communities and our customer communities are also violating the Clean Water Act and if we can't get the money from our customer communities to comply with our with our consent decree, and we couldn't, we can't comply with the consent

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - decree which means we're gonna continue dumping water into the Grand Calumet, ultimately into Lake Michigan. So the EPA gets involved, even though we lost the court case it brought attention to that issue, so I'm glad we brought this issue up. And I want to say thank you to Mayor Spebar, the Mayor of Whiting, for the first person to settle with the Hammond Sanitary Department on behalf of the City of Whiting. He broke the ice for us, and I told him that today actually, when Mayor Spebar settled it put everyone else on notice that he was doing the right thing, Whiting previously wasn't doing the right thing, and the EPA agreed, Whiting settled, and then after Whiting settled it made it easier on Griffith who was very close to settling. The most hard core community we were dealing with was Highland, who had a whole host of problems that were much larger than the City of Hammond's problems believe it or not. Highland has major Clean Water regulations they have to comply with now. The USEPA settled between, mediated the settlement basically, between Hammond Sanitary District and the Town of Whiting, Hammond Sanitary District's gonna receive quite a bit of money in the rears from the Town of Whiting. Rightfully so, money that we have to put towards the USEPA's Consent Decree with the Hammond Sanitary District. I don't want to worry you about that, that's not coming now. But it will be coming within the next three or four years. We're gonna have to deal with this issue of complying with the Consent Decree from the USEPA, but I'm very happy to say that the Town of Highland settled. That was monumental for us. Monumental for the City of Hammond Sanitary District. It's gonna help properly fund the Hammond Sanitary District so that we could start complying with this Consent Decree, which is not going away, Council. We have about twelve or thirteen more years to comply with the USEPA Consent Decree. It's gonna significantly involve a significant amount of money, and it's gonna be painful. So let's just put ourselves in the right frame of mind. We're not talking about in 2023, but I will be coming back to talk to you about this and Marty will be, and it's gonna be big numbers we're talking about and we don't have room to negotiate. This is a Consent Decree, it's the Federal Government requiring us to do these improvements. So, I'll be back to talk about that. But the Town of Highland settling was huge for us. Whiting, again, settled with us. Griffith is in the process of settling. It's great news. We've been in litigation for close to a decade with those communities and it's finally done. So that's huge. I'm very happy for Marty. I'm very happy for the Sanitary Board. I'm very thankful for all the lawyers that worked so hard on that case. It was brutal, and it's over. Thank God. So, anyways, I wanted to start off talking about good news. Over the last two weeks I spoke with School City of Hammond officials as I indicated to you all. I talked to them about Gavit High School. I talked to them about Clark High School. I talked to them about other vacant School City of Hammond properties and I just want to say to the Council, I know that people don't get to see the inside of government very often, and I've watched the School City for 20 years as your Mayor, and I haven't always been impressed with what I've seen, being honest with you. I tell you what, I'm really impressed with Scott Miller's team. I think he's done a very good job. I want to say it on the record, I think it's really refreshing what's going on at the School City right now. If you haven't seen what's going on, I suggest you take a look. I had a great meeting with the School Board and I thought it was excellent. I think they're doing a great job, I want to be on the record saying that, and I think they're heading in the right direction to help us deal with these problems. Over the last two weeks we had the Indiana Court of Appeals hear oral argument at Morton High School and there were over a hundred students from Morton High School there. It was excellent. I want to thank Judge Tavitias, who's a Lake County Judge, she was from Lake County, she's on the Court of Appeals now; Judge Margret Robb; and Judge Patricia Riley, for coming to Hammond, Morton High School, and holding an actual oral argument in front of our students. And thankful to the students for being there as well. We held Mayor's Night Out in the 1st

*Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - District. Councilman Mark and I were there along with a number of other Council people, to show you that these things are planned well in advance, Mayor's Night Out happened to be two days after the United States EPA announced the Superfund Designation for that part of our city and we're there two days later with Mayor's Night Out. It was, I thought it was, an excellent Mayor's Night Out. I have to say that the work that we did, the Council and the Mayor, working with our federal representative, Frank Mrvan, and APRA money, getting that designated towards Robertsdale, did a lot of people a lot of favors, including you all on the Council, including you all on the Council, including the people of Robertsdale that want to sell their property right now, we did a huge favor for them. So I want to say thank you for that. I'm really glad we did that. We got with so far as to have people that normally don't complement the City of Hammond, are complementing the City of Hammond, including federal officials at the EPA that are saying they've never seen any city do what we did. So thank you. The disability breakfast was excellent. We had that over the last two weeks. I know a number of you were there. We had the Disabilities Commission hosted the event. Staffed and put on by the Redevelopment Commission and emceed by Anne Anderson. Great job to all. It was a really great turnout. We hosted a fundraiser for Karina Almarez in my office. Thank you for those that donated, \$15 thousand. AS a reminder, Karina is a Hammond Central student with Stage Four Hodgkin's Lymphoma. She is a beautiful, excellent, young lady. We raised \$15 thousand, 100% of which goes directly to her family. Not a penny goes towards anything else. 100% of what we raised goes towards her. So, thank you to the Council members and to people in the public that donated to that, and I got a great hair cut out of it. I wanted to mention to you all that a decision was made at the Sportsplex with the Hammond Park Department. Two decisions were made. One of them was to put sand volleyball courts at the Sportsplex. Starting this summer, we're going to have sand volleyball leagues at the Sportsplex. It's gonna be built by the Department of Public Works employees. Funded by Mayor's Gaming money. We expect to have four courts up and running with a fence around it, running this year, and remember we have a bar out there. It sounds like it could be a good time. So, if you're interested in playing or you know anybody that would be, they'll be talking teams out there. That will be happening this summer. And last, but not least, a decision was made to ... April 22nd we're gonna have a press conference at MLK Park. April 22nd's a Saturday. We're holding a press conference that morning. I believe it's set up for 10 o'clock, where a number of public officials will be speaking. We're gonna have hot dogs. We're gonna have music. We're gonna have basketball. Prior to April 22nd, getting ready for that announcement, we have Public Works, Park Department, changing the way we do business around MLK Park. We're making it a lot harder to park your car in this neighborhood. We're not going to allow street parking at all anymore. We're going to tow cars away that are parked improperly. We're gonna ticket cars that are parked improperly. The entire purpose of what we're doing is to make it harder to drive there and to play sports in that park. I want to remind everybody that it is possible to do that and we do have a big parking lot located right behind City Hall where everybody that wants to play there will have to park. If they're on the street they'll be ticketed and towed. Straight up. We're gonna hold a community event where we talk to the community and we're gonna basically ask them to take ownership of the courts because if we have any more violence there, I pledge to the Council and to the neighborhood, I will turn them into pickleball courts and we won't have violence in a pickleball court, I could guarantee you that. I don't want to do that. I love the way MLK Park is right now, but we are not going to tolerate violence in the neighborhood, in a park named after Dr. King behind City Hall. We're not going to tolerate it. So that's my report to the Council. I don't know if you all have questions. I apologize for the long report, but we've been doing a lot of stuff.

Councilman Kalwinski and Councilman Woerpel are now in attendance.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of March 27, 2023 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to approve the claims from March 22, 2023 through April 05, 2023. Claim #1967 through #2322, inclusive. In the amount of \$18,057,804.92.

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilwoman Alexander- At our next meeting, we will select the scholarship recipients for the Common Council Scholarship and then the fourth Monday meeting in May will be the day that we award those scholarships to those recipients. I also want to give my condolence out to the Dennis family for the loss of Mr. Ben Dennis they're from the 3rd District. I want to keep that family in our prayers. Thank you.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Woerpel- We approved \$542,004.08 for Stateline closures through Rieth Riley Construction. We also approved \$62,000 for Stateline closures through Construction Engineering. We also approved \$215,905 for Hohman Avenue Striping 165th to Douglas through Traffic Management Company. We also approved \$1,000,000 for 2023 annual resurfacing program through Milestone Construction.

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:
Community Watch at Mt. Zion Pleasant View Plaza; Wed., April. 12th ; 1 p.m.
East Ham'd Pullman Crime Watch; Tues., April. 18th ; 6 p.m.; Ophelia Steen Center
Thur., April. 20th; Hessville Crime Watch; Jean Shepard; 6:00 p.m.
Fri., April 14th ; Irving Community Watch; Irving School; 9:15 a.m.
South Hohman Neighborhood Watch; Thur., April 13th ; Trinity Lutheran Church; 7:00 p.m.
Whiting/Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., April. 13th ; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

Council as a Whole Committee - Council President Rakos - Brought out 23-10.

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ORDINANCE 3RD READING-FINAL PASSAGE-

23-10 An Ordinance Respecting and Ratifying the Action of the City of Hammond Board of Public Works and Safety related to Traffic Regulation for 2022

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

Councilwoman Venecz- This ordinance ratifies all of the actions taken at the Board of Works on the Council’s behalf. And finalizes everything and puts it in the record.

ROLL CALL VOTE (23-10)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 ORDINANCE NO. 9599 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to re-nominate Angel Ojeda to the HVAC Contractor’s Board. His term expires April 25th of 2023 and this will renew him for another two year term.

ROLL CALL VOTE (re-appointment)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 RE-APPOINTMENT ADOPTED

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

TJ Gaertig- I just saw a couple of newspaper articles that I thought were really cool. The first one is about the pedestrian bridge on Calumet opening in May. Um, the article said the new pedestrian bridge hopes to improve safety by lifting walkers and bikers over the traffic. It’s making Hammond a more walkable city. There was another article in the Times saying that the Indiana Dunes was the 4th most attended national park in the country last year. Uh, which is insane to me. According to the article, it had over 2.8 million visitors in 2022. And visitors to the Indiana Dunes spent an estimated \$156 million in 2021. It goes to show that the Dunes we have here have been valuable to people from all over.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Linda Anguiano- I'm speaking tonight, it may come as no surprise, on the bridge through Hessville Dunes and I just want to express my concerns for the students. The application says the main purpose is to protect the students from either jumping over trains or underneath the train connection and with this design, apparently, according to another article in the Times, this bridge is. It's making progress, but this bridge doesn't help kids. It adds a two-mile distance. Now, today, the weather is beautiful and the kids wouldn't care. That bridge doesn't serve every student. I think that the new pedestrian bridge that TJ talked about is great, about Hammond becoming a more walkable city. So, I'm going to push for my win-win solution. I know the Mayor has told me it's not possible, but I always believe things are possible. This bridge doesn't solve that problem

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


AYES: ALL

2023 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan		Feb		Mar		Apr		May		Jun		Jul		Aug		Sep		Oct		Nov		Dec	
	9	23	13	27	13	27	13	27	10	24	8	22	12	26	10	24	14	28	11	25	23	13	27	4
Katrina Alexander	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Dan Spitale	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Pete Torres	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Barry Tyler	E	P	P	E	P	P	P	E	P															
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P															
Initials	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG																	

E=ELECTRONIC
P=PHYSICALLY
PRESENT
A=ABSENT

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



Scott Rakos, President
Hammond Common Council

ATTEST:


Robert J. Golec, City Clerk

Time: 6:00 p.m.
cb/dw

Prepared by
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Hammond City Clerk