

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on May 23, 2023 in the Hammond City Council Chambers and was available to be viewed at gohammond on Facebook, gohammond.tv live and per Zoom.

Council Vice President Barry Tyler, Jr. presided.

City Clerk Robert J. Golec facilitated.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE was recited by all.

Invocation by Councilwoman Alexander

ROLL CALL

PHYSICALLY PRESENT: Alexander, Spitale, Venecz, Kalwinski, Torres, Emerson, Woerpel, Tyler

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Rakos

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - Good to see everybody, welcome back. I missed the last meeting. The Chief of Staff, Phil Taillon gave the message from the Mayor and I read over the meeting minutes and Phil mentioned a couple things I wanted to reiterate on so my reports going to be a little bit longer, it won't be too long. Last meeting Phil mentioned the accomplishments of the Capital Improvements Board. I sent all of you a copy of the Capital Improvements Board Cumulative Summary. You should have all received that before the last meeting. To summarize, \$16 million in multi-district expensive projects were approved by the Capital Improvements Board up through last year. Projects that were hard to finance with our old system of distributing gaming moneys. I'm very proud of that. Phil also mentioned that the system wasn't perfect, and I agree with that as well. It's a new thing we started and, you know, obviously, some times you don't work things out perfectly the first time. So, if there are suggestions on how to make Capital Improvements Board better, I'm all ears. So, thank you. I wanted to point that out. Phil also mentioned the Gaming Advisory Committee has recently donated \$520 thousand in not-for-profits, mostly not-for-profits located in the city of Hammond. We went back and tallied all of the gaming money that we have distributed since I've been Mayor, going all the way back to 2004. We've given \$11 million out to not-for-profits in the last twenty years. Which these are great not-for-profits in our city that help a lot of people. I'm very proud of that. Last but not least, I wanted to point something out for Councilman Tyler, he was very instrumental in insuring that we created a rainy day account. It was something that he was talking about a lot when he first became a councilman. We created the rainy day fund when we created the Capital Improvement Board along with the Gaming Advisory Committee. I'm happy to report that we have \$1.4 million in the rainy day fund sitting there just collecting interest. So that's great news. So I think we should all be very proud of ourselves when you think about in the last four years what we've done. We've changed the way we do finances in the city of Hammond. I know a number of you mentioned that during your campaigns. That we spend money that we only have instead of spending money that we anticipate and that in itself was huge and quite frankly if we didn't do that we'd be experiencing a lot of trouble right now because Horseshoe Casino's gaming revenues have been down pretty dramatically over the last year. Under our old system it would have taken us a year to react to that. Over the last few weeks I've attended, on behalf of the city, Anti-Semitism

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - training with region political leaders and numerous law enforcement officials at the temple in Munster. It was put on by the Jewish Federation of NW Indiana. I attended along with Chief Andy Short and Chief Jeff Long. Attended the funeral of Rajesh Bhagwandeem, who is the young man who was murdered on 165th Street in Hammond. I attended that with Chief Long and Chief Short. That was a road rage incident, very tragic. Attended the Lake County Community Advancement meeting featuring Hal Slager with my Economic Development team. Also, with the Economic Development team attended the ICSC Conference in Las Vegas, along with the Redevelopment Commission as well. MLK Park is open. Up and running, very proud. Everything has gone very well so far. The parking is working very well. So it's been a very positive experience so far. We opened it on May 6. We held a press conference, myself, Councilman Tyler, Councilwoman Alexander were in attendance. Chief Short, Pastor Polk, Coach Larry Moore from Hammond Central basketball team was there. I think we all impressed upon the people using the park that we need to take care of this park better and let's just hope everybody is listening and it keeps on being a great place that it always has been. Megan gave me an update about the new software system that's going in. In 2021 we all committed to purchasing new financial and permitting software. Our previous system was over 30 years old. So you could imagine it was fairly out of date by that time. I think we were still using dos when I took over as Mayor. The new software is called Tyler Technologies. It is being implemented in three different phases. The finance portion concluded on May 1st and the city is now live for accounts payable and accounts receivable. Which was a big first step. This took a couple years to get ready for. Second phase is focused on the permitting and licensing, which starts in mid May. The third phase focuses on HR and payroll. This phase is set to begin in late June. The new software will make operations more efficient for both city employees as well as the general public. The Sanitary District and the Water Department are also in the process of moving to the same software. So, for the first time in over three decades we've upgraded our software system and it'll affect how we do business and how the public does business with us. I want to congratulate Megan. That's been a monumental job that she's been doing. Toward the Northwest Indiana Hohman, LLC, which is the bank located on, the former Bank Calumet Building, to remind you, that's a \$28 million investment. One hundred market rate units. Eight thousand square foot of retail space. They received \$6 million in TIF. We had to change that because of some things that happened with inflation and supply chain issues. Everything's going really well there. I know the Council also had a tour of the building. I think it's going swimmingly. Looking forward to it opening. I met with firefighters at Station 8. I forgot what shift it was but we had our normal meeting with them. We held Mayor's Night Out in the 2nd District. I want to thank Councilman Torres for hosting a lively Mayor's Night Out. Well attended. Update you on Norfolk Southern update, we had a community meeting on Norfolk Southern. The Governor's Parkway proposal is a \$12 million bridge. We will be receiving about \$10 million from INDOT. INDOT's designing and constructing the bridge. We are merely bystanders watching this take place. What we do is give the other 20%, that's about all we do. If we're chosen by INDOT to go ahead and go forward with this. I acknowledge that Governor's Parkway in itself does not solve 100% of the problems that were identified in Hessville when you have stopped trains. But I think this is going to solve a lot of them, 75% of the problems. The other 25% of the problems are caused when kids who live south of Orchard, south of Scott Middle School, they get blocked by the Norfolk Southern that are tempted to use, to cross the trains by foot or to climb over the stopped trains. That situation won't be solved most likely with Governor's Parkway. However, I do want to point out that the city's administration is in discussion with Norfolk Southern as we speak. The Federal Railroad Administration is involved. It's going very well. I think that I'll be happy to report, down the road, that we're gonna solve the other 20-25% of the other problems in Hessville, which is the kids that are

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - tempted to climb over stopped trains. I, myself, spoke with the CEO of Norfolk Southern. We had a great conversation. Federal Railroad Association is very involved. Secretary Pete Buttigieg is paying attention and very involved from Washington, D.C. I think that for the first time in a long time, people are listening to us and our complaints about trains. Without that article in ProPublica, none of this is happening. So I do want to say thank you to those reporters that did that article. It got attention across the country. It's a scary situation. So, a couple more things, I'm almost done. Four sand volleyball courts are being added to the Sportsplex, we knew that. The Department of Public Works' employees are doing the project. I'm funding it out of Mayor's Gaming. They got it dug out. Everything's on order. It should be up and running by summer. The Festival of the Lakes line up is set. I think most people know the line up. Wed., July 12, Ashanti and JaRule; Thur., July 13, Brothers Osborne; Fri., July 14, Stone Temple Pilots; Sat., July 15, lil Wayne, ticketed event; Sun., July 16, El Flaco. Last but not least, I know today we have a resolution on the agenda to dedicate an honorary street designation in honor of Frank Van Til. Everybody in this room knows who Frank Van Til is. He's a legend in the city of Hammond. Born in 1946. His first home was on the corner of Jackson and Vine, in the back of the first Van Til's grocery store. Van Til's Supermarket, where he worked in many capacities including egg sorter, stocker and produce, before becoming a store manager. He's been awarded, Frank Van Til's been awarded Lakeshore Chamber's Man of the Year, Lakeshore Chamber's Business of the Year, he's been given key to the City of Hammond and the community is desirous of recognizing Frank Van Til's service with a fitting and appropriate tribute which is designating the 6800 block of McCook Avenue to commemorate and remember the efforts sacrifice and all of the great things that Frank Van Til did for the city of Hammond. So, I want to thank Councilman Woerpel for carrying the ball on that situation because we couldn't have done it for a better person. If there's not any questions, I apologize to the Council for my long report and wrap up my report. I'm not sure if there's questions, Councilmen.

Councilman Woerpel - It's more of a comment than a question, but there's been quite a few people stating that the trains aren't a problem in Hessville no more. I know, since the last Council meeting I've been out there ten times in ten days there were trains blocking the crossings out there. You stated that the railroad contacted you about, you know, after that meeting and it's not like the city's sitting back and doing nothing about it. I mean, I've heard the comment being made, "Oh the trains aren't a problem no more. They just disappeared." That's not the case.

Mayor McDermott - Well, I've heard a couple things, Councilman Woerpel. I've heard that we've been in discussions, active discussions, with Norfolk Southern and FRA (Federal Railroad Administration) and from what I, I don't live in Hessville, I live in Woodmar. I drive through Hessville almost every day. I haven't ... I saw a train stopped there the other day. But from what I hear from people that live closer to the tracks, is that it's gotten better since the ProPublica article. Now, if this is the case, I don't want to bet Hammond's future, Hessville's future, on it's gonna stay that way a year from now, five years from now, ten years from now, when everybody forgot about that newspaper article. The fact is, the only way to get us around and over these stopped trains is to build bridges. It's not gonna get stopped by the State of Indiana because the State is powerless. You're not gonna see it stopped by the city of Hammond because we are powerless. Washington, D.C. isn't doing anything about it. If we build bridges, they can't stop us. So, I think between the two proposals that we are talking about, which is Governor's Parkway, the bridge that INDOT's financing, that's gonna take care of most of the problem, and I acknowledge there still are some problems, that's why we're talking about the second

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - bridge. We have identified an area where the bridge would work. We’ve identified what would be necessary for that to happen and now we’re trying to wrap up the resources to get it done and if we do both of these bridges, I could look anybody who lives in Hessville straight in the face and say, “We fixed your problem.” We did. It’s still gonna stop. Those trains are still gonna stop, but we’ll be able to function in Hessville. We’ll be able to get ambulances to your house. We’ll be able to get police officers to where they need to be. Right now, we can’t guarantee you that. So, if it has gotten better, Councilman Woerpel, I’ve heard that from people in the community but I wouldn’t bet our future on it. Because we got their attention right now. I think you hit while the iron is hot and the iron is white hot right now. That’s why we’re working with them. I do acknowledge it may have gotten better recently, but like I said, I wouldn’t bet on it.

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS

Councilwoman Alexander - Just to briefly talk about what the scholarship is, the Hammond Common Council gives out fifteen \$1 thousand scholarships to Hammond Indiana High School graduating seniors. Not too long ago we drew those names and today will be honoring those recipients. The scholarship is given to all of our Hammond residents and that’s including the Whiting-Robertsdale area. Because I know there’s been some confusion, some residents were given a call and were not understanding. So, I wanted to make that part clear. Today we have Dr. Amy Rauch, Director of Secondary Education; We have Ms. Jennifer Rycerz, Assistant Principal at Hammond Central; We have Jeremy Hicks, Principal of Morton High School; and Bill Danko, the Assistant Principal of Morton High School, here today. I do want to recognize Laney Kaminsky, the Executive Assistant for Secondary Curriculum at the School City of Hammond.

HAST

Elizabeth Guzman; Attending Ball State University to study Marine Biology

Camila Marquez; Attending Purdue University NW, majoring in English

BISHOP NOLL

Jacqueline Orozco;

HAMMOND CENTRAL

Carolina Barragan; Attending Indiana University NW, majoring in Radiologic Technology

MORTON

Janeea Cole; Attending Calumet College, majoring in Criminal Justice

Megan Whitford; Attending Purdue University NW, majoring in Early Education

America Guerrero; Attending Ball State University, majoring in Business Information Systems

Kaylee Jackson; Attending IUPUI, studying Nursing

Braelynn Norwood; Attending Purdue University NW, studying Biology

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

DISTRIBUTION OF SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS cont.

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to suspend the rules to take a group photo.

ROLL CALL VOTE (suspension of rules)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RULES SUSPENDED

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to return to the regular order of business.

ROLL CALL VOTE (regular order)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of May 08, 2023 and place on file.

ROLL CALL VOTE (approved minutes)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

MINUTES APPROVED

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims from May 03, 2023 through May 17, 2023. Claim #2807 through #3152, inclusive. In the amount of \$11,379,954.52

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilman Woerpel- I want to remind everyone that they will hold the Police Memorial Service on Thursday, May 25, at 2 pm, outside the police station. And not only is the entire council invited, but so is the public. Thank you.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Community and Crime Watch Committee - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:

- Community Watch at Mt. Zion Pleasant view Plaza; Will not meet until August.
- East Ham'd Pullman Crime Watch; Tues., June. 20th ; 6 p.m.; Ophelia Steen Center.
- Edison Community Watch; Edison School; Will not meet until September.
- Tues, June 06th ;Harrison Park Crime Watch; VFW; 6;00pm
- Hessville C.W.; Thur. June. 15th ; 6 p.m.; Jean Shepherd Center
- Irving Community Watch; Will not meet until September.
- South Hohman Neighborhood Watch; Will not meet until October.
- Whiting-Robertsdale C.W.; Thur., June. 08th ; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

Councilwoman Venecz- I wanted to reiterate. Councilman Woerpel announcement for the annual memorial at the police station this coming Thursday, at 2 pm. Um, please come out. These are men and women who have given their life. So, we can sleep at night knowing that they are there to protect us. So please come out and show your respect to these men and women. I would also like to announce that the free Security Light Program is coming up. This is for 2023. There are 60 lights available, which means 10 lights per district. You must own and live in your Hammond home. You must provide proof of homeownership. And you must provide a valid driver's license or state ID. Uh, applications will be taken in person only from June 12th through June 16th. On the 3rd floor of City Hall, in room 316. Uh, this is sponsored by Mayor McDermott, Hammond Community Watch, Hammond Community Development, and Hammond Urban Enterprise Association. Uh, this is a great opportunity for our residents to light up their property to deter crime. So I urge everyone to come to City Hall between June 12-16. Because supplies are limited, they're on a first come first serve basis. So, I want everyone to remember that community is not just about me, but it's about us. Thank you.

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Woerpel- We approved \$36,900 for Marquette Greenway Trail Kennedy to Cline Supplemental Engineering Plant Survery. We also approved \$300,000 for 2023 Sidewalk Program with J&J Newell Concrete Contractors. We also approved 300,000 for 2023 Roadway Maintenance Pavement Preservation Crack Sealing. It was also stated that Sidewalk Program and the Crack Sealing Program \$50,000 will be spent in all 6 Districts.

ORDINANCE 3RD READING FINAL PASSAGE

None

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

None

RESOLUTIONS

23R-05 A Resolution of the Hammond Common Council to Dedicate an Honorary Street Designation in Honor of Frank Van Til

Councilman Torres, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved for adoption.

Councilman Woerpel- The mayor in his speech pretty much read the resolution word for word. And anybody that is confused about where this might be it's the 6800 block of McCook Avenue, it's the Street that runs between Vantil's Supermarket, and what used to be the Walgreens I think now is a liquor store. And at one time it was a Blockbuster Video. There is one resident that lives on that street. And again, it's an honorary naming and even the one resident agrees with the honorary naming. Thank you.

Councilman Emerson- By way of information and I thank Councilman Woerpel for sponsoring this. There are a series of pictures and they may be at other stores. But on 169th Street, on Jackson & Vine, the house that he first started out with and the store was in the front. And other pictures of supermarkets that the Vantil family has owned. So, it's 169th it's right near the shopping carts. So if you are in that store, look at some of those pictures. Thank you.

Councilman Torres- I ask to be a co-sponsor on this resolution.

Council Vice President Tyler- Clerk Gloec, please let the record reflect that the entire council would like to be listed as sponsors.

ROLL CALL VOTE (adoption)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

RESOLUTION NO. R05 ADOPTED

Councilman Woerpel- I forgot to announce this there will be a street dedication and a time and date to be named later. It depends on the health of Mr. Vantil, and when the City can line all that up.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilman Emerson- The following Monday, uh, May 29, 2023. The MoHawks sponsored the Memorial Day Parade. The lineup is at 10 am the step-off is at 11 am. And I mention this because on Memorial Day, uh, we honor all those that never returned from battle, and all gave some and some gave all. And we honor those that gave all that day. Thank you.

Councilman Kalwinski- After the parade which ends at St. Casimir, there will be a memorial service with prayer, laying of wreaths raising of the flag, a gun salute, and songs played by a band. And then after that, you'll be welcomed to the Hammond MoHawks at 141st and Calumet for refreshments, chips, and hotdogs. Thank you.

Council Vice President Tyler- Councilman Kalwinski, do you have a start time for that? I know you said right after the parade. Is there an estimated start time?

Councilman Kalwinski- After the parade. I can't give you a time for that. 12-12:30 probably.

Councilman Woerpel- Earlier this afternoon, I don't know how many of you got them on the south side of Hammond. But I got several text messages, phone calls about pretty much all the railroad crossings in Hammond being blocked not by a train. But they put barricades up and they're pretty much all blocked. And from the best that I've been told is that's not a city project that is the railroad, it's self-doing work on the intersections. And how long they're going to be blocked, I wouldn't anticipate a long time. But I wasn't given an answer on how long that would take. So, I told a couple of people if I got an answer, I would let them know. So, I'm letting you know it's got to do with work on the actual crossings. Thank you.

Council President Rakos- It is the railroad working on the individual crossings 173rd and Grand I was told is back open. Unclear...

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Carl Plaense - I would like to congratulate Mr. Rakos, my councilman, on his recent victory in the primary election. My current employer is Volunteers of America. And they have a program called SPACES, which is an acronym that stands for Suicide Prevention And Community Education Services. It's pretty much common knowledge that 22 Veterans a day are taking their lives for different reasons. Our program is open to Lake and Porter Counties. And I'm the local Indiana Representative. We are VA-funded. It's a grant, but we have a lot more mobility than the VA does. I will be around and if anyone needs contact information, I will be available after the meeting. Thank you.

TJ Gaertig- Happy Memorial Day, everyone I just wanted to encourage everyone to get out to the Briar East Woodland Dunes. The forest is looking very vibrant and also very clean. We will plan another Dune cleanup. I would like to also remind everyone that the deadline for written public comment on the INDOT Public Hearing for Governor's Parkway Bridge is coming up this Friday. The proposed bridge does not help with children climbing over trains. The railroad has offered to help with the construction of a pedestrian bridge. And as the mayor noted, the blocking of train crossings has declined since the ProPublica article was published. It seems like we are now in a time of new opportunities thanks to the railroads, cooperation, and media.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC EXPRESSION cont.

Tj Gaertig- coverage. I think we should jump on this and choose a better plan for an underpass. You can find more information about the Dune cleanups and the INDOT Public Hearing on the Facebook Page of Hessville Dune Dusters. Thank you.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE (adjourned)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

MEETING ADJOURNED

2023 HAMMOND COMMON COUNCIL ATTENDANCE RECORD OF
ELECTRONIC AND PHYSICAL PRESENCE

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	9	13	27	10	8	22	10	14	11	23	27	4
Katrina Alexander	E	P	P	P	P	P						
Dan Spitale	E	P	P	P	P	P						
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Pete Torres	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Barry Tyler	E	P	P	E	P	E						
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Initials	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: 6:45 p.m.
cb/dw

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk