

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on November 27, 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.

Moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Tyler

ABSENT: None

TOTAL: 9

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - (Technical audio issues) ... the contractor's gonna return in March, weather permitting, to complete the work on a project completion date of May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Summer Street, Columbia Avenue and Summer Street is expecting to reopen this week. Summer Street east of Columbia, will be open to local traffic through the winter as crew continues with utility work as weather permits. Gas station ordinance update. I already updated you last time. The only thing that's changed since then is, since last meeting, we approved to open at 4 a.m., 4558 Columbia. The Citgo at 3350 169<sup>th</sup> has been approved since the last meeting. BP at 2300 Indpls. Blvd. has been approved. Also, since the last meeting, the Woodmar Citgo at 6845 Indpls. Blvd. has been approved and they're waiting for findings. That's my report, sorry I'm so long. That was a short one too. I don't know if you have any questions.

Councilwoman Venecz - I would like to point out, with regard to the wire theft, my street was one that was affected. I got a call from a neighbor and said the street is black. So I did the 311 app and Ed Banda had been in communication with me. But my point is, a lot of the neighbors on the streets that were affected have the Ring door bell and they communicated with the Hammond Police Department through the program that they have and they were able to see what kind of truck was stealing the copper wires. So, if anyone has a Ring doorbell, please register with the Hammond Police Department. Because it's things like this that can be solved. We see it nationally. How things are solved from someone having some type of security camera. So, thank you to all the residents who were conscientious enough to communicate with the Hammond Police Department.

Mayor McDermott - This is how quickly it goes, thank you, Councilwoman, this is how quickly it goes. Eddie Banda, our employee, got the license plate. Game over. He is like, this truck, with this license plate, was here. They gave me a bogus story. Then we run the license plate and we're like, wow, look at that. This truck is by a lot of our stolen wires. Because we have LPR cameras everywhere. You get us a license plate and they're done. They're done. We got a license plate, we got the bad guy. The bad news is he works for one of our contractors and we do business with this contractor so it's weird that one of their employees was ripping us off and we do tons of business with them so we're working through that issue right now.

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR’S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Torres - Did you say that Hohman Avenue is gonna be done by May?

Mayor McDermott - Hohman Avenue, it will be completed, completed. That’s what they’re telling us now.

Councilman Torres - Both lanes?

Mayor McDermott - Yes, sir. Obviously, we’re not happy about another winter. So, we got the commitment that they’re gonna be there first thing in the spring. I hope they’re telling the truth.

Councilman Torres - I’ve heard that before.

Mayor McDermott - I know. We used to have a saying in the Navy but I’m not gonna say it right now. But it was not a clean saying. But, I hope that they’re not lying. But, Kennedy Avenue is going to be open. I know it’s not you as the 2<sup>nd</sup> District Councilman.

Mayor McDermott - Happy Holidays, thanks.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilman Spitale, supported by Councilman Emerson, moved to approve the minutes of November 13, 2023 and place on file. AYES: ALL

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Spitale, moved to approve the claims dated November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023 through November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023. Claim #8301 through #8694, inclusive. In the amount of \$16,508,931.00.

Council President Rakos, supported by Councilwoman Venecz, moved to pull claims:

#8422	Milestone Contractors North	ARPA	\$530,896.17
#8423	Milestone Contractors North	CIB	\$223,236.24

ROLL CALL VOTE (pull claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS AMENDED

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims as amended)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried 9/0/0 CLAIMS APPROVED  
(as amended)

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*

PUBLIC HEARINGS

23-27 An Ordinance Vacating a 330-Foot Portion of Clinton Street Lying Between the East Right-of-Way line of Hohman Avenue and the West Right-of-Way line of Vacated Lyman Avenue, which Portion of Clinton Street is Located in the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana

No one spoke

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilwoman Alexander - As stated at the last meeting, we're gearing up for our annual Holiday Treats Toy Giveaway and we are requesting donations of new toys that are unwrapped and they can be brought to City Hall on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor in the Council Office, to any Fire Department, to Hammond Central and Hammond Morton, and we're looking for these donations to be given by December 15<sup>th</sup>. Also, if anyone would like to make a monetary donation they can make checks payable to the Ministerial Alliance, as they are a partner with us this year, as well as the Parks Department, the Fire Department, and Hammond Central, and Hammond Morton this year as well. So, we're looking forward to our toy giveaway and with everyone's help we've been able to bless 600 kids last year, and we'd love to bless many more this year. So, if you can help, for of you that in the public, and this is the season to be jolly so we want to continue to bless our students and our family's this year for Christmas just like we did for Thanksgiving.

Councilman Kalwinski - I have two items. The first one is that I received communications that the Pulaski Park Neighborhood Association will have its monthly meeting tomorrow, Tuesday, at 6:30 at the Hammond Mohawks Athletic and Conservation Club at 141<sup>st</sup> and Calumet Avenue. It'll go 'til about 8 p.m. The second item, more somber news, is that I received word that a former City employee, a Superintendent of the Water Department, as well as other responsibilities within the City over the years, Ed Krusa passed away. Many of you in this room know him and knew him. He's really a great guy and arrangements are at the Burns Kish Funeral Home on December 16. I believe from 12 to 4 p.m. The Burns Kish is located on Calumet just south of Ridge Road.

Council President Rakos - Also, the Annual Christmas Toy Drive, please join Knuckleheads Motorcycle Club, HC3, Kempo Jujutso, and the Tattoo Lady, they've been doing Christmas drive for, they call it the Christmas giveaway or toy drive, for a number of years. You can drive off the unwrapped toy at Tattoo Lady, 6817 Kennedy Avenue or also you can make a monetary donation, and also HC3 will be taking monetary donations as well. That goes until December 13<sup>th</sup>. They receive their list from the School City of Hammond Principals, front offices, so they wind up getting the kids get presents and food delivered by Santa on a motorcycle along with the motorcycle club, the Knuckleheads Motorcycle Club. I've been attending for several years now and it's a very neat thing to see. Their toy drive goes until December 13<sup>th</sup>, you can drop off unwrapped gift at the Tattoo Lady.

Councilwoman Alexander - One more announcement, our annual Holiday Parade is this weekend. I know we're all looking forward to it. It's a great time for families to come out. The City does a great job, so I want to give

COMMUNICATIONS cont.

Councilwoman Alexander cont. - kudos to the events committee because they've been putting on all of our events throughout the year and they've done a great job with that. So, come on out to the Hammond Holiday Parade this weekend at 10 a.m. on Indpls. Blvd.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Capital Improvement Board - Councilman Woerpel - We met last Monday. There was one item on the agenda and it was a contract for Lochmueller Group. I believe it was in the amount of \$17,622.43 and it was for a contract that dealt with the Hessville Park area.

Council as a Whole Committee - Councilman Torres - We'll be bringing out 23-27.

Community and Crime Watch - Councilwoman Venecz - Upcoming meetings:  
East Hammond Pullman C.W. - Tues., Dec. 19; Ophelia Steen Center; 6 p.m.  
Edison Community Watch; Edison School; Dec. 6; 6:30 p.m.  
Harrison Park Crime Watch; VFW on Hohman; Tues, Dec. 6; 6 p.m.  
Irving Community Watch; Fri., Dec. 1; 9:30 a.m.; Irving School Art Room  
Whiting-Robertsdale Crime Watch; Thur., Dec. 14; 6:30 p.m.; Calumet College

ORDINANCE 3<sup>RD</sup> READING - FINAL PASSAGE

23-27            An Ordinance Vacating a 330-Foot Portion of Clinton Street Lying Between the East Right-of-Way line of Hohman Avenue and the West Right-of-Way line of Vacated Lyman Avenue, which Portion of Clinton Street is Located in the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana

Councilman Torres, supported by Councilman Kalwinski, moved for passage.

ROLL CALL VOTE (passage)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

9/0/0

ORDINANCE NO. 9616 PASSED

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

23-28 An Ordinance to Erect a Four-Way Stop Sign to Control Traffic on Gostlin Street at Cameron Avenue, Hohman Avenue at Huehn Street, Johnson Avenue at 140<sup>th</sup> Street, and New York Avenue at Dedelow Parkway/126th Street and repealing any ordinances in conflict thereto

Councilman Kalwinski, supported by Councilman Torres, moved the proposed ordinance to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading by title, and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee with a meeting set for Monday, December 4, 2023 at 5:15 p.m.

Councilwoman Alexander - After reading this, just had a question for the two Councilmen. Was there, because I haven't got anything regarding these addresses or anything like that. So, was there any other information that can be provided that supports this?

Councilman Kalwinski - Three of these four locations have been referred to and gone through Board of Works and basically been denied because of numbers. Yet we see and observe as District Councilmen, that these are dangerous areas. So, studies have been done. They've been referred to Board of Works and rejected, and now we're using our alternative, which is something we can do and that is go through the legislative body and pass the law.

Mayor McDermott - I don't have a problem with stop signs. I just have a problem with too many stop signs. And I've seen this happen before, I'm not gonna deny it. A Councilman floating this ordinance, it isn't unprecedented. I just don't think it's appropriate. And I'm not gonna deny it's happened in the past. It has. In fact I can name a few that I hate that went through this process. Which is elected officials choosing where stop signs go. The problem I have with this is we have a City Engineer, who is a professional engineer, who has been certified by the State of Indiana, and he's looked at these four locations and said it doesn't warrant it. So now if we put these stop signs up in spite of our professional engineer's recommendation not to and something happens, they're gonna say, well what studies were done. Oh, our engineer studied it. He said we shouldn't do it. We did it anyway. I just beg the Council, this isn't the way it should be done. It should go through the process of the Engineer, and if he doesn't approve of it .... because I was .... I literally sat down with the Engineer and I said, do you have a problem with certain councilmen? Like if Councilmen Barry for instance, I'm just bringing him up because he's not here. I know he's watching. If Councilman Barry was turned down every single time he went to you, Dean, I could get it where a councilman's coming back and saying, this isn't fair because Dean never says yes. But Dean pointed out, he does say yes. He's says yes to almost every one of you, and he says no a lot more. But this is our Engineer and this is against his recommendation. This ordinance, all four, are against his recommendation. So I can't sign this. If it gets through you all I'm gonna veto it. That's fine if you want to override me, that's fine. But don't blame me when we get sued down the road. I'm gonna point this out that this isn't the way we should do it. That's all. I'm not doing this because I have an enemy or anything. This is just because this isn't the way we should do business. That's why I stayed. God bless you all. Have a nice night.

Councilwoman Venecz - How long does it take to do a traffic study? I mean we've got a meeting coming up when, Monday? Could a traffic study be done between then and now and present us with the numbers?

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES cont.

Councilman Torres - Well the Mayor left, but I was gonna tell him that this is not my idea as an elected official, these are the neighborhood people. I've been here since 2016 and since then they've been asking for a stop sign at that location. At Gostlin and Cameron is the location I'm talking about. A year ago a lady did go to the Board of Works and the Engineer rejected it, because the Board of Works goes by the Engineer's recommendations. So, I just can't see how ... I don't know what numbers they use. I don't know if they counted the pedestrian traffic because kids do cross that street going to school, going to Lincoln. There is a store on the corner on the northwest corner of Cameron and Gostlin. A lot of people use that. There is a stop sign on the block before, on Johnson Street. But going through the process is just gonna get denied again because our Engineer has his, maybe his reasons, but we have our reasons too and we think that we should honor the request of the people that live there especially. It's a highly traveled street and it's gonna get more traffic when the train is completed. So, that was what I was gonna tell the Mayor but he's not here.

Councilwoman Alexander - Not knocking public safety. I just ask that we table this until the next meeting and then maybe we can get Dean and talk to all of us regarding this. Just so we can get an understanding from him and see if we can get that study done between now and then. That way we're not wasting anyone's time but we can get a true understanding of what we should really do here.

Council President Rakos - Is there a second? Motion fails.

Councilwoman Venecz - In due respect to Councilman Torres, we can't operate by the already, always, thinking that it went to the Engineer and it was denied before. What I would like to see, if these proposals have gone to the Engineer and traffic studies have been done, there obviously are numbers and before, in all fairness to all of us, before we vote on something like this, we need to see the numbers. So, Councilman Kalwinski, Councilman Torres, it's your ordinance, get together with the Engineer and get the numbers from the study that was conducted before on each of these intersections and let us review them.

Councilman Woerpel - My only point is, this is 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. We have the opportunity to have the committee hearing that he's called for. I mean, what you said, we need to ask Mr. Button to be there. I mean, we're not voting yes or no on the final passage tonight. This is just 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading and I mean I agree with you that if you, or whoever is ... we can ask Mr. Button to be there or whoever. You know, this, I didn't even know this was an issue until I opened my packet. For me to sit here and say it doesn't warrant it or it does warrant it, I don't know what the hell I'm talking about. I'm just saying that to me, it's only 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> reading and we have a committee hearing set, correct?

Councilman Kalwinski - You're right, it shouldn't be an issue regardless of the numbers. At some point the District Councilman and the at Large's, we're responsible. Like the Mayor has said before about other safety. We're responsible for our districts. We know them. We know our districts. We know the hot spots for various kinds of things. And these are hot spots that are just waiting for something serious to happen. Not that it hasn't already, but apparently not enough. Because numbers tell everything apparently. But we're the law makers. We're the ones that have to go beyond what number tell us and evaluate, process, and do what's best for our districts. And that's why these four intersections are up for ordinance.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (23-28 on 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>)

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

NAYS: Spitale

ABSENT: None

Motion carried

8/1/0

MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Councilwoman Venecz - Just for clarification, when are our next two meetings?

Council President Rakos - December 4<sup>th</sup> and December 18<sup>th</sup>.

Councilwoman Venecz - And on each of those days we will have caucus at 5:30, unless there's a committee meeting and the meeting begins at 6 p.m.

Councilman Woerpel - Just to add, we just put a committee hearing at 5:15 on the 4<sup>th</sup>.

Councilwoman Alexander - Now that we've dealt with that last ordinance, can we put a request in for Mr. Button to be at the meeting to have a discussion regarding that?

Council President Rakos - I think we can do that.

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

Ken Rosek - At Mayor's Night Out the Mayor brought up his last election. Thought he did pretty well going against the machine. He did better than the Mayor in the last two elections. If he thinks he has the support he should put the bridges up for referendum like the School District did. The Mayor talked about a Parrish Avenue underpass. There is no Parrish Avenue underpass option. It is Grand Avenue. There will now be two bridges to achieve the same goal, driving up costs dramatically. There will be collateral damage to our ecosystem. Accelerated Bridge construction would only take days to complete. The city needs to update their construction techniques.

Ken Bastasich - Asked about snow removal for Kennedy Avenue after completion.

George Stoya - Regarding the stop signs, asked how big a picture quantity gives you, is it the total picture? It depends on your point of view and that is a qualitative thing. There is a human factor.

Councilwoman Alexander, supported by Councilman Woerpel, 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	10	24	8	22	12	26	10	24	14	28	11	25	10	23	13	27	4	18
Katrina Alexander	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Dan Spitale	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Janet Venecz	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Mark Kalwinski	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P		
Pete Torres	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Barry Tyler	E	P	P	E	P	P	E	E	P	P	E	E	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	E		
Bill Emerson	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Dave Woerpel	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P		
Initials	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	RJG	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: 6:50 p.m.  
cb

*Prepared by  
Robert J. Golec  
Hammond City Clerk*