

The regular meeting of the Hammond Common Council of the City of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana was held on December 4, 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.

A moment of silence was observed.

ROLL CALL

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

ELECTRONICALLY PRESENT PER ZOOM: Alexander, Tyler

ABSENT: Spitale

TOTAL: 8

MAYOR'S ADDRESS

Mayor McDermott - Seems like we were just here. Not very often we do back to back City Council meetings, but with this being December, I thank the Council for having two meetings this month and it's good to see you all again. So my report is not as long as normal because I only have half the days and it was a holiday, as you all know. So first off, the activity log for this week, I met with the personnel in Hammond Firefighters Station 1, with my administration. We do that once a month. We go to different stations and different shifts and meet with the leaders of the department and the shift on duty. It seems like, first off, most of the body is focused on upcoming contract negotiations we have with the Fire Department. So we talked a little about that. We also talked about problems that we're having with the Fire Department, I think I mentioned it last time I spoke to the Council, about people abusing 911 for lifts and things of that nature. I think that's something we're probably gonna have to discuss between the Council and the Mayor. So anyway, it was great to talk to them. I met with personnel from the Hammond Sanitary District in regards to the proposed CMSF Facility in South Hammond. This facility is being considered for the area around Starbuck's, like the whole area over there, Aldi, the hotel down there, there's no small with these types of facilities. I want to point that out. They're storm water facilities. Treatment of storm water. They're aesthetically pleasing. Obviously this is gonna be seen by a lot of people and most importantly, well, first off, this applies towards our consent decree. So this project will be millions of dollars, tens of million of dollars. But all the money that we spend on this project will help us with our consent decree. During heavy storm events, as we all know, the water is treated in our 2nd District, right off Columbia Avenue and we have customer communities like Griffith, like Highland, like Munster, Whiting. But the water down south, particularly, during a heavy storm event needs to be pumped to the plant in the 2nd District. Treated in the plant and dumped into the Grand Calumet River. This facility will help us during heavy rain events by keeping the water down south. Storm water doesn't need to be treated the same way as sewage does and we'll treat the storm water down south and release it into the Little Calumet. Which will dramatically help us during heavy rain events like the ones we're been experiencing in the 1st District. So, anyway, that will be, more on that will be coming down the line. We'll have to have lots of conversations in the future about that. But we were just talking at the 30 thousand foot level about the concept. I did hold a pizza party with all the Public Works

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott cont. - employees on Wednesday last week and celebration of Eddie Banda day, is what we called it. Recognizing Eddie Banda for doing his part in helping the Hammond Police Department catch a copper wire thief in the City of Hammond. I want to thank North Hammond Aurelio's for coming up huge for us that day. At noon, North Hammond Aurelio's made over a hundred pizzas for us. Obviously we paid for them, but that is a pretty big task to ask in the middle of the work day. North Hammond Aurelio's saved the day, so thank you. Met with officials from the Hammond Area YMCA to get updates on the project, the biggest YMCA in the country is under construction right now in the 3rd District. They're on track, on schedule, for opening sometime next year. Which is wonderful. I attended the Holiday Parade. I want to thank all the Council people that attended the Holiday Parade. I think it was an excellent turnout this year. I had a really good time and the weather was perfect. Can't beat that. Also, a number of people in the administration attended the Northwest Indiana reception of the Indiana Society of Chicago's annual dinner. I want to thank the Council people and the members of my administration that attended that event. That's what I have, as far as my activity log. I do want to talk to the Council about a leadership change that we are experiencing in my administration. In the interest of transparency, I'd like to keep the Council up to date with what's going on, and we're undergoing leadership changes in the Hammond Sanitary District. Over the last few days, I've met with all four of the Mayor's appointees to the Hammond Sanitary District and I'm gonna be asking the Hammond Sanitary District Board to approve my recommendation to remove Marty Wielgos in his role as CEO of the Hammond Sanitary District. Marty's been in this leadership role for over a decade and he's done many great things for the Hammond Sanitary District in his role as CEO. For those wondering why after all this time we made this move, I've got three primary reasons for a leadership change. First is, Hammond Sanitary District is responsible for processing all the wastewater and storm water from the largest community in Northwest Indiana, us. Also, Hammond Sanitary District has multiple communities to contend with as well. For the same reasons, Munster, as I indicated, Whiting, Highland and Griffith, and we also have an estimated \$250 million consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S.E.P.A. to comply with over the next fifteen years. These three major factors are gonna require close coordination between the Mayor's Office, between you all, the Hammond City Council, the Hammond Sanitary District Board, as well as our customer communities. This is all gonna have to be closely coordinated and it's imperative, with all these things coming up, that the Mayor be on the same page as the leadership of the Hammond Sanitary District. And it's become clear to me that myself and Mr. Wielgos see things far too differently to continue forward as a team. As a reminder to the Hammond Council, the Mayor appoint four members to the Board of Directors for the Hammond Sanitary District. I appoint four in my role and the Town of Munster appoints one. We have to follow republican, democrat. We have to follow certain parameters. So, four out of five are appointed by the City of Hammond's Mayor. And I want to let the Council know that I've informed the leadership from each of our customer communities about the change, the proposed change, in the Sanitary District as well. I spoke to the leadership Rick Ryfa, of the Town of Griffith. I spoke to Dustin Anderson, the Town Manager for the Town of Munster. I spoke to Mark Herak, the Town Treasurer of the Town of Highland. I talked to Mayor Steve Spebar, the Mayor of the City of Whiting. Informed them of the leadership change. Right now the plan is to leave the CEO position vacant through the holidays. Then we'll make a decision early next year on a permanent replacement for Mr. Wielgos. Obviously, this wasn't anticipated and we're dealing with this. It was sort of a short term thing, but it was necessary. And I'm available to answer any questions if you all have any about anything. But I did want you to know what was going on in the Sanitary District.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Councilman Tyler - In terms of the changes that you said would impact the flooding incidents in your 1st District...

Mayor McDermott - Not just the 1st District.

Councilman Tyler - That was gonna be my follow up question.

Mayor McDermott - I'm sorry I was trying to...it's probably hard through electronic but I was acknowledging Councilman Kalwinski who's been the latest Councilman to have to deal with this. Councilman Barry, I know you've dealt with a number of issues as well as other district Councilmen. So I apologize, Councilman Barry, I wasn't trying to insinuate that it's not gonna help the 3rd District. It's gonna help all of our districts. Especially the further north you are. Because we'll be taking hundreds of millions of gallons of water that we would normally have to pump to Hammond's 2nd District for treatment, instead we'll leave it in the 5th District, treat it there, and put it into the Little Calumet River as opposed to pumping it at north which will save us a lot of capacity to deal with the storm water. I apologize, Councilman Barry. That's a good question.

Councilman Kalwinski - All that discussion is actually a good segue into this article that was in the paper. POTUS declares Cal City a disaster relief area. That was on November 22. And so, congratulations to Cal City for getting that status. And at the very last sentence's are Hammond is seeking a disaster declaration from Indiana so it gets funds to rebuild infrastructure. I wonder if you could elaborate. What does that mean?

Mayor McDermott - I don't know what it means. I didn't write the article, Councilman. But I can tell you that through Representative Carolyn Jackson, we made contact with the Governor's Office who is aware of what happened in the city during a heavy rain event. I haven't heard anything other than they referred us to FEMA. We've contacted FEMA.

Councilman Kalwinski - The city is in touch with FEMA?

Mayor McDermott - Well, we've been in touch.

Councilman Kalwinski - Right, okay.

Mayor McDermott - I think that, and this is something, I mean, I know you're very aware of the state line Councilman, and I know you're very aware of the difference in administration the two states have. I don't know if that's playing a role in Washington, D.C. I'm not sure. But, I can tell you that we have not received the same kind of red carpet that Calumet City has. Even though it was the same event. But in fairness, they suffered much more damage in my opinion, commercial damage. And I'm not minimizing what happened in the 1st District, Councilman Mark. Because anybody that gets water in their basement suffers psychological damage and physical damage, no doubt about it. I'm not trying to compare one to the other, but ...

Councilman Kalwinski - My question, I guess, is, so has FEMA denied any assistance towards Hammond or is FEMA looking at Hammond and up to make a decision? Where are we?

MAYOR'S ADDRESS cont.

Mayor McDermott - Good question. I'll have to get back to you on that. I could tell you that contact has been made. I haven't heard from it since. I heard, and I'm just talking off the top of my head, Representative Jackson mentioned something to me a couple of weeks ago at lunch but nothing ... I read the same article you did and I was sort of shocked to be honest with you because we're not getting the same reception, Councilman.

Councilman Kalwinski - All right, so we'll just get follow up.

Mayor McDermott - Sure, I'll follow it up.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

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

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved to approve the claims from November 28, 2023 through November 29, 2023. Claim #8695 through claim #8914, inclusive, along with the resubmission of claims #8422 and #8423. In the amount of \$1,728,117.88

ROLL CALL VOTE (claims)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Spitale

Motion carried

8/1/0

CLAIMS APPROVED

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

COMMUNICATIONS

Councilwoman Alexander - Just wanted to remind everyone we are having our holiday treats toy giveaway on December 21st. We are accepting donations until December 15th. Donation locations are all of our Hammond Fire Departments, Hammond Morton, Hammond Central, and also the 2nd Floor Council Office, and the Civic Center. Which is where the giveaway will be given on December 21st form 6 to 8. Pretty soon we will be releasing the request for people to sign up for it. We're just really hoping that the community are (unclear) you all and everyone will continue to support going to buy unwrapped new toys for the giveaway. Thank you.

Councilwoman Venecz - Where would someone apply for it?

Councilwoman Alexander - The application will be online.

*Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk*

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Alexander, Spitale

Motion carried 7/2/0 MOTION CARRIED

23-32 Creating a New Fund (Fund #2483) for the Rural and Small Department Violent Crime Reduction Program Funds awarded to City of Hammond Police Department

Councilwoman Venecz, 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 with a meeting set for Monday, December 18, 2023 at 4:45 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Spitale

Motion carried 8/1/0 MOTION CARRIED

23-33 Creating a New Fund (Fund #2502) for the Diesel Emission Reduction Supplemental Environmental Project Funds allocated to the City of Hammond

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd Reading by title, and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee with a meeting set for Monday, December 18, 2023 at 4:45 p.m.

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Spitale

Motion carried 8/1/0 MOTION CARRIED

23-34 Creating a New Fund (Fund #4655) for the Funds allocated to the City of Hammond by Lake County, Indiana for the Construction of Fire Station No. 2

Councilwoman Venecz, supported by Councilman Woerpel, moved the proposed ordinance to 1st and 2nd Reading by title, and referred it to the Council as a Whole Committee with a meeting set for Monday, December 18, 2023 at 4:45 p.m.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES cont.

ROLL CALL VOTE (1st & 2nd)

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

NAYS: None

ABSENT: Spitale

Motion carried

8/1/0

MOTION CARRIED

RESOLUTIONS

None

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None

PUBLIC EXPRESSION

None

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	E	18
Dan Spitale	E	P	P	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	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	P	P
Pete Torres	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Barry Tyler	E	P	P	E	P	P	E	E	P	E	E	E	P	P	P	P	P	E	P	P	P	E	E	P
Bill Emerson	P	P	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	A	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P
Scott Rakos	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	P	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	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: 6:30 p.m.
cb

Prepared by
Robert J. Golec
Hammond City Clerk