



# City Of Hammond Parks & Recreation 2023 Year in Review



## 2023 Board Summary

The Board of Park Commissioners for the City of Hammond met for regularly scheduled meetings on the first and third Wednesday of each month. Some meetings in 2023 were held via Zoom in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the state of Indiana due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

The Board members remained the same in 2023, John Vezmar remains the president of the board.

Mayor Thomas M. McDermott Jr. thanks the board members for their commitment to the Park Department.

Lori Dedelow, Marcus Taylor and Andrea Edwards continued to serve as members.

Smith Sersic also remain as the legal representatives for the Hammond Park Board.

A statement of receipts and disbursements will be provided by the City Controller’s office. This report is in accordance with IC 26-10-4-7 (e)

## 2023 Board of Park Commissioners

John Vezmar, President

Andrea Edwards, Vice-President

Marcus Taylor, Member

Lori Jean Dedelow, Member

*Legal Services provided by Smith Sersic Attorneys at Law.*

## 2024 Goals

Following are some of the 2024 goals for the Hammond Parks and Recreation department.

- Find a solution to create more volleyball space at the Sportsplex to support the growth of the sport in Hammond.
- Create more parking space at the Sportsplex to support guests of our building and the brand new YMCA for 2025.
- Revisit the plan to add foot golf into Columbia Park, build new playground at Gibson Park.
- Investigate opportunities to enhance park experiences with equipment, painting, fencing and new trees where available.
- Start work on the Harrison Park pond dredging and revitalization project.
- Continue the removal of dead trees throughout the city parks.

## Parks and Recreation Administrative Staff

- Jim Taillon, Administrator
- Aileen Ibarra, Special Events Coordinator
- Devin Wick, Parks Superintendent, Forestry
- Matthew Marcum, AFO, Rec Facilities Ops Mngr.
- Kymerli Roberts, Sportsplex GM
- Chrissy Nelson, Sportsplex Asst. GM
- Sebastian Contreras, Sportsplex Ath. Supervisor
- Brian Erminger, Sportsplex Athletics Supervisor
- Devin Ellis, Sportsplex Athletics Supervisor
- Josette Perkins, Sportsplex Office Manager
- Tabitha Dempsey, Sportsplex Hospitality Manager
- Maria Martinez, Assistant Hospitality Manager
- Adrian Santana, Sportsplex Event Staff
- Annisha Gillespie, Civic Center Manager
- Rosa Maldonado, Bookkeeper
- Anna Mamala – Senior Programs Coordinator
- Juan Soto, Jean Shepard CC Manager
- Craig Faught, Field Maintenance Manager



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## Park Projects Completed in 2023



*Pictured left:* A new HD video sign board was installed on Kennedy Avenue by Dowling Park to help promote the park and businesses located around the park.



*Pictured right:* The ADA ramp into the Jean Shepherd was improved and repaired.



*Bottom Right:* An updated Veterans Memorial was completed on the bike trail.

The Hammond Civic Center updated the steam rooms in each locker room for women and men.

## Park Projects Planned For 2024

**Civic Center ADA Ramp** – Plans for an updated and repaired ADA ramp to enter the Hammond Civic Center is currently being planned for 2024.

**Harrison Park** - Harrison Park was awarded a \$100,000 grant from the Lake Michigan Coastal Program to dredge out the bottom of the Harrison Park pond for the purpose of returning the pond to a live body of water to not only help the drainage of the park, but to return fish to the pond. Mayor McDermott Jr. and Councilman Tyler are committing \$50,000 each to match the grant awarded to the LMCP.



**Columbia Park** – Plans to add a foot golf course are being discussed. Foot Golf is a course designed to play golf, but with a soccer ball. The popularity is growing throughout the country and Hammond wants to be one of the first cities to incorporate a course into a public park.





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## 2023 Urban Forestry Report – By: Devin Wick

The 2023 forestry report for Hammond shows more good signs of returning to pre Covid levels of care with another year of improvement. The efforts to remedy the dead, dying and dangerous trees has remained the same for the last few years. This year’s total being two hundred and fifty-two trees removed in 2023. We are putting forth every effort to increase our rate of removals and alleviate the back log of tree issues created during the pandemic.

Our effort to remove problem trees is continuing to reduce the issues being reported every month. Our numbers for 2023 dropped for a fourth straight year to 236 new issues being reported for an average of 20.5 risk assessments per month. That is down from 2020 when we were at 40 assessments per month, 2021 at 31 assessments a month and 2022 at 25 assessments per month.



The help of our forestry partners, community volunteers and a mandate from Mayor Thomas McDermott Jr. to plant more trees, we were able to plant 269 new trees in 2023. We were also able to increase the donation of indigenous trees to the community and donated 200 trees to Hammond residents at our annual flower giveaway.



Finally, thanks to the wise stewardship of our urban forest, Hammond has maintained its status as an Arbor Day Association “Tree City” for the fourteenth year in a row.

## 2023 Hammond Sports Hall of Fame Inductees

The 2023 Hammond Sports Hall of Fame took place at the Hammond Civic Center once again in March and saw seven new members inducted.

The 2023 class included: **Juan Alba**, Gavit High / multi-sport athlete and Notre Dame Track and Field. **Roy L. McPipe**, Hammond High, Eastern Montana College basketball player. **Mark Allen Nagy**, Hammond High multi-sports, Butler University shot putter. **Jim Tarka**, Bishop Noll boys’ cross country & track and field coach. **1972 Hammond Edison Little League Team**, World Series runner up compiled a 12 – 0 record on the way to the US Title only losing to Taiwan in the world series in Williamsport, PA. **Louis Kasanovich**, Veterans Category, 1940’s Hammond High and Indiana University football player. Congratulation to all of the new inductees.



The 2024 Hammond Sports Hall of Fame Induction dinner will take place on Tuesday March 12<sup>th</sup> at the Hammond Civic Center.

For information go to: [www.hammondsportshalloffame.com](http://www.hammondsportshalloffame.com)



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## Record Crowds Continue For 2023 Festival of The Lakes



The growth of the Festival of the Lakes crowds continues to impress city officials. This year we saw over 55,000 visitors over the five day event. This was also the first year the city added a fully ticketed event on Saturday July 15<sup>th</sup> for Lil Wayne. We had over 14,000 visitors on that night, which only trails Sunday night's record crowd of over 19,000 guests. Last years acts continued the tradition of appealing to all NWI residents as we started the week with Twista, Ashanti and Ja Rule on Wednesday, Ingrid Andress and Brothers Osbourne on Thursday, Local H and Stone Temple Pilots on Friday, Lil Wayne on Saturday, and Luis Angel "El Flaco" to finish up the Festival on Sunday. The Festival of the Lakes is a week long celebration of the city. But it is more than just concerts though, as the kick off / sponsor party for the Festival started the Friday prior at 18<sup>th</sup> St. Brewery. Some other events surrounding the week long celebration included The Mayor's Golf Tournament, Senior Day Event, Polka Party, Hot Rod Car Show, Fishing Derby, Gospel Brunch, 5K run and, of course, the Carnival and food court were rewarded with huge crowds too.

The 2024 Festival will be the 20<sup>th</sup> annual and is sure to not disappoint. Stay tuned for the announcements of all of the acts. The event will take place July 17<sup>th</sup> through the 21<sup>st</sup>.

[www.festivalofthelakes.com](http://www.festivalofthelakes.com)





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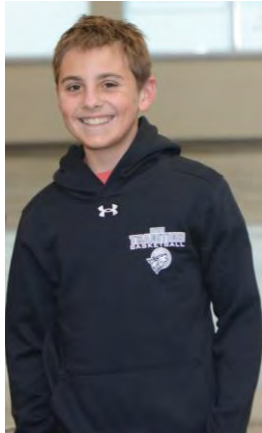
## Sportsplex Revenues Top 1.2 Million In 2023 – By Kym Roberts



The Hammond Sportsplex once again exceeded the one million dollar mark in revenue and continues to expand its reach in Hammond and Northwest Indiana while also adding some regional and national events. On September 7<sup>th</sup> the Sportsplex opened four new top of the line sand volleyball courts in front of the building to expand our volleyball offerings. The building serves as a training facility for Purdue Northwest baseball, softball and soccer teams during the winter months. We host the Division II Midwest Region Volleyball Crossover event. The facility also serves as an off season training facility for local professionals playing internationally.

The Sportsplex continues to offer space for the local community as well. It hosts birthday parties, local basketball and soccer leagues and is the perfect big venue for fund raisers and company parties. The lounge on the 2<sup>nd</sup> level is perfect for business meetings.

Call 219-853-7660 to reserve.



## Hammond Sportsplex Programs Continue To Grow In 2023



The Hammond Sportsplex is home to multiple clubs offering residents an affordable option to youth sports. Since our teams have their own facility, it cuts down on the costs associated with travel leagues. We bring the tournaments to us.

The Northwest Tradition Basketball program is now under the direction of Indiana Northwest Associate Head Coach Devin Ellis. Coach Ellis brings a wealth of knowledge and player development to the Tradition Program.



Velocity 219 volleyball program will enter it's 6<sup>th</sup> season in 2024 under the leadership of Brian Erminger. The program continues to show growth with over 200 new players to the program. We now have National Level teams, a competitive boys program, a sand program and an in house program for those that want to learn and play the game.



Hammond F.C. Rec and Rec Plus are the newest programs offered at the Plex under the leadership of Sebastian Contreras. We have indoor winter leagues at the Sportsplex but also offer an outdoor season at the Hessville Soccer Complex. FC Kicker's is a beginners program for kids wanting to play soccer with fun drills and games.



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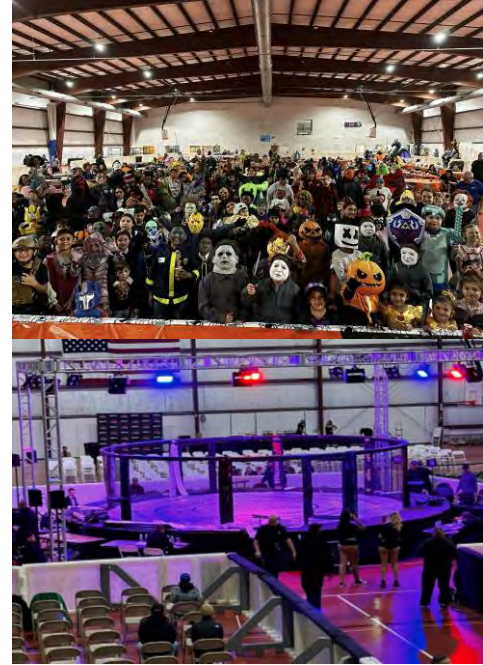
## Jean Shepherd Community Center – By: Juan Soto

The Jean Shepherd Community Center continued its tradition of hosting community driven events like the monthly blood drives, Hammond flower giveaway, indoor garage sales and the very popular Monster Mash event.

The JSCC also continued to host family focused private events at affordable rates on a weekly basis. These include: gender reveals, birthday parties, graduations, anniversaries and group meetings like Coffee with a Cop. The Jean also hosts youth sports teams practices and events in the evenings and weekends. Volleyball, basketball and soccer teams use the facility to prepare for tournaments. The building also hosts remote control airplane competitions where pilots fly their planes through an obstacle course.

The JSCC team was happy to have JF Mahoney Drive improvements done, a new ramp entering the building, and Dowling Park Pond enhancements, all which were completed in 2023.

To book your event, please call 219-554-0155.



## Hammond Civic Center – By: Annisha Gillespie

The Hammond Civic Center is the home to the most affordable work out facility in the city. It has a swimming pool, jacuzzi, steam room and tanning bed in the lower level of the building. Improvements to the steam room were completed in early 2023 and new equipment is also in the works for 2024.

The main floor is home to the Hammond Sports Hall of Fame and each years inductees featured on glass covered plaques that span the interior walls. The annual Inductee dinner is hosted at the Civic Center.

The Civic Center hosted Dianna Williams & the Dancing Dolls of Lifetime's "Bring It" television show for the second year in a row. The Shrine/ Carden International Circus was back in 2023 and continued to have big crowds attend the six shows scheduled over the Thanksgiving weekend. (Below). A new 115 spot parking lot was built in August to help with parking and 2023 marked the return of the Season's Splendor Craft and Vendor show. The annual event will be back in 2024. The Civic Center also hosted MMA events, concerts and multiple basketball events.

To host your event at the Civic Center call 219-853-6378



**Season's Splendor**  
Craft & Vendor Show

October 14, 2023  
10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Civic Center  
5825 Sohl Ave  
Hammond, IN

Free Parking  
219-853-6378

Free Admission




APRIL 14-16, 2023

**BUCK & DIE**  
MAJORETTE TRAINING CAMP & COMPETITION  
INDIANA

AGES 6-18 | NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED | \$249/ DANCER

IT INCLUDES:

- APRIL 14 TRAINING CAMP (8AM-5PM)
- APRIL 15 TRAINING CAMP (8AM-5PM)
- APRIL 16 TRAINING CAMP (8AM-5PM) & COMPETITION (7PM-10PM)
- SHIRT, T-SHIRT, HAT, AND MORE!
- FREE PARKING & TRAILER RENTAL!
- FREE ENTRY!

INCLUDES:

- CONTEST ENTRY!
- WORKSHOP!
- PROFESSIONAL MAKEUP!
- FREE TRAVEL BAGS & MORE!
- FREE ENTRY!

HAMMOND CIVIC CENTER: 5825 SOHL AVE. HAMMOND, IN 46320  
WWW.BU4L.NET | WWW.BUCKDIE.MYIMPACTTICKETS.COM



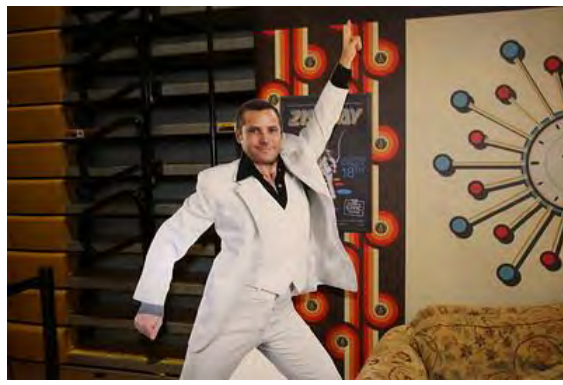
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## Hammond Special Events Review – By: Aileen Ibarra



**219 Day Celebration** was another success in 2023. Disco Circus took the stage and did not disappoint as the dancing lasted through the night. The 2024 version of 219 Day will take place on 2/17/2024, will have a western theme. Tim Gleason & The Whiskey Disco will be the headlining act. We hope to see you there.



**Cinco De Mayo, May.** The Annual Cinco De Mayo event was held at the Hammond Civic Center in 2023. The culturally inclusive event celebrates all backgrounds and is well attended. Food was offered by El Gran Taco of East Chicago and Mariachi Estrellas de Chicago and DJ Dale provided the entertainment.



**Juneteenth, June, MLK Park:** This holiday commemorates June 19, 1865. The date on which enslaved people in Galveston, TX. finally received the news they were free. Today, our nation sees this day as a chance to reflect on the grievous legacy of slavery as we strive to deliver the full promise of America to every American. Mayor McDermott Jr. is shown to the right addressing the crowd at MLK Park





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## Hammond Special Events Review Continued – By: Aileen Ibarra



**Veterans Appreciation Day Parade, November.** The 10<sup>th</sup> annual Veterans Day parade was held on a day with beautiful weather. The Grand Marshal was Specialist E-4 Jeffery Scott Long. Program ceremony after the parade was held at the corner of 173<sup>rd</sup> and Kennedy in Hessville Park featuring Choir of Books, Bands and Brushes.



**Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony, November.** This year's tree lighting had live reindeer once again and an indoor craft area for the kids. It was the 4<sup>th</sup> annual lighting and this year the Hammond Academy of Performing Arts Choir and Dance team performed.

**Hammond Holiday Parade, December.** The long-standing Hammond holiday tradition kicked off the first Saturday of December, as it has for many years. The Parade went north down Indianapolis Blvd. from 175<sup>th</sup> street to 167<sup>th</sup> street ending at the Hammond Sportsplex. This year's event also included the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Santa Sprint Fun Run. A one mile run down Indianapolis Blvd. that was free to those that signed up.

