



City Of Hammond Parks & Recreation 2024 Year in Review

Administrator, Jim Taillon



2024 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. All meetings in 2024 were available via Zoom in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the State of Indiana.

There was one change to the board members in 2024, John Vezmar remains the president and Mike Opinker was added to the board to replace Lori Dedelow.

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

Marcus Taylor continues to be a member and Andrea Edwards continued to serve as Vice President.

Smith Sersic also remained 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)

2024 Board of Park Commissioners

John Vezmar, President

Andrea Edwards, Vice-President

Marcus Taylor, Member

Mike Opinker, Member

Legal Services provided by Smith Sersic Attorneys at Law.

2025 Goals

Following are some of the 2025 goals for the Hammond Parks and Recreation department.

- Oversee the Sportsplex Expansion happening throughout the summer months.
- Pave parking lot behind the Sportsplex and work with construction team on a new parking lot options behind the building.
- Civic Center ADA Ramp improvements.
- Complete the Harrison Pond Park Project, phase one, pond rescue for wildlife.
- Continue improvements at Dowling Athletic Complex and build a deck outside of Flick's kitchen along the east side of the building.
- Request for proposals to do mulching and cutting in all city park playgrounds this spring.
- Complete Columbia Park upgrades. Foot Golf course and new benches along walking path.

Parks and Recreation Administrative Staff

Jim Taillon, Administrator
Aileen Martinez, Special Events Coordinator
Devin Wick, Parks Superintendent, Forestry
Matthew Marcum, AFO, Rec Facilities Ops Mngr.
Jason Bean, Assistant Rec. Facilities Manager
Craig Faught, Field Maintenance Manager
Jill Gajewski, Marketing & Media Manager
Kymberli Roberts, Sportsplex GM
Sebastian Contreras, Sportsplex Ath. Supervisor
Brian Erminger, Sportsplex Athletics Supervisor
Devin Ellis, Sportsplex Athletics Supervisor
Josette Perkins, Sportsplex Office Manager
Crystal Gascon, Sportsplex Hospitality Manager
Maria Martinez, Plex Asst. Hospitality Manager
Julia Villalpando, Sportsplex Financial Clerk
Chrissy Nelson, Dowling Complex Manager
Tabitha Dempsey, Dowling Complex Hospitality
Juan Soto – Hammond Civic Center Manager
Rosa Maldonado, Parks Bookkeeper
Anna Mamala – Senior Programs Coordinator



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Park Projects Completed in 2024



Pictured left:
Pulaski Park transformed one of the tennis courts into three new Pickleball courts and the remaining tennis court was resurfaced.

Bottom Left: A new playground was added in Gibson Park.



Pictured right:
The New Pickleball courts inside the Jean Shepherd Center along with upgrades to the concession area, now called Flick's Kitchen.



The Jean Shepherd Center upgraded the kitchen, Lounge and concession area for guests and members of the facility.

Park Projects Planned For 2025

Harrison Park – Plans to move forward with Phase 1 of the Park project. We will dig out the bottom of the pond to allow wildlife to return while helping flooding during heavy rain storms. Grant money will be used for this project. Future plans include the Man of Steel and upgrades to the amphitheater building and bathrooms.

Columbia Park – Plans to add a foot golf course are being discussed and we will clean up the amenities in the park, including the playground, picnic area and sand volleyball courts.

Hammond Sportsplex – A new building will be added to the Sportsplex complex, allowing all three sports to have it's own building. Volleyball, basketball and Soccer will now have it's own area to allow for more tournament, leagues and practices to take place. This addition continues the growth of the expanding Woodmar area.





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2024 Urban Forestry Report – By: Devin Wick

The 2024 forestry report for Hammond shows more good news with continuing improvement of our Urban Forest and the expansion of our programs and efforts to maintain healthy green spaces within our city. We were able to remove over one hundred and fifty problem trees while assisting our forestry partners to plant over three hundred new trees in our community.

Due to the summer storms of 2024, our risk assessments were slightly elevated from the previous year. We were able to assess three hundred and fifty three trees for an average of 29.5 per month. A nine tree monthly increase from last year. We will be working to decrease our back log of problem trees this year.

With improvement in mind, we were able to secure a grant from the Indiana Department of Natural Resources of \$200K to focus on improving our green spaces. We will now be able to update the Urban Forestry Management Plan, start to create a tree inventory, and begin efforts to reforest historic Harrison Park.

Hammond has maintained it's status as an Arbor Day Association "Tree City" for the fifteenth year in a row.



Our efforts to improve include a McKinney Climate Fellow to intern in our city during the summer. This intern will be working to update our Urban Forest Canopy Cover Summary. The report will create a tree planting plan for the most needed areas focused on urban heat Islands, storm water mitigation and sociodemographic equity. The Fellow will look to secure community engagement to plant 150 new trees.

2024 Hammond Sports Hall of Fame Inductees

The 2024 Hammond Sports Hall of Fame took place at the Hammond Civic Center once again in March and saw six new members inducted.

The 2024 class included: **Dennis Hardesty**, Clark High School / Boxing manager and promoter. **Marie Herring**, Morton High School multi sport coach. **Andy Juscik**, Bishop Noll and Calumet College of St. Joseph coach and athletic director. **Dr. Joseph P. Markovich DC**, Hammond High School and Wabash College three sport athlete. **Damon Rogers**, Clark High School and University of Dubuque (Iowa) basketball player and school Hall of Famer. **Joseph Gulvas (Veterans Category)** A four sport high school athlete at Clark High, this 1947 graduate signed a contract with the Brooklyn Dodgers and played at various minor league levels. Congratulations to all of the 2024 inductees.



The 2025 Hammond Sports Hall of Fame Induction dinner will take place on Tuesday March 11th at the Hammond Civic Center.

For information go to: www.hammondsportshalloffame.com



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Crowds Continue To Grow For 2024 Festival of The Lakes



The growth of the Festival of the Lakes crowds continues to impress city officials. This past year we saw over 60,000 visitors over the five day event. This was also the second year the city added a fully ticketed event on Saturday July 19th for Marshmello, the first major EDM artist in the Festival's history. The Festival continues to put safety on the forefront as we added a clear bag policy, upgraded security measure at the front gate, extra patrol on the streets and new parking lots with shuttle buses to ensure less traffic on Calumet Avenue. The Hammond Police Department implemented new exit traffic patterns for the late night crowds leaving the shows which helped to clear the streets much earlier than usual.

Last years acts continued the tradition of appealing to all NWI residents as we started the week with Blackstreet on Wednesday night, Shinedown rocked the house on Thursday night with pyro techniques blended into the show, Dababy and K Camp shook the house on Friday Night and Marshmello lit up the stage on Saturday. The always exciting finish to the festival saw Calibre 50 excite the huge crowds on Sunday night finishing off the very successful week.

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 18th 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 2025 Festival will be the 21st annual and is sure to get better.

Stay tuned for the announcements of all of the acts. www.festivalofthelakes.com





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Sportsplex Revenues Over 1 Million Again in 2024 – 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. The Sportsplex has begun work on a \$9 million expansion that will be completed by the fall of 2025. The building continues to be a training facility for PNW athletes during the school year. Basketball, Baseball, Softball, Soccer, Track and Volleyball teams all use the facility during the day time hours. The plex also serves as an off season training facility for local professionals competing internationally.

The Sportsplex serves as a central venue to travel clubs, providing a convenient and affordable option for youth programs. The ability to host our own tournaments and leagues substantially reduces the cost of travel programs for NWI families. We are able to bring other travel clubs to us, saving time and money for our athletes families. For information on our programs, go to www.hammondsportsplex.com



Hammond Sportsplex Programs Continue To Gain Foothold In 2024



The Hammond Sportsplex is home to multiple clubs offering residents an affordable option for 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 under the direction of former Indiana Northwest Associate Head Coach Devin Ellis. Coach Ellis brings a wealth of knowledge from his college coaching and player development to the Tradition Program.



Velocity 219 volleyball program will enter it's 7th season in 2024 under the leadership of Brian Erminger. The program continues to show growth with over 300 players in 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.

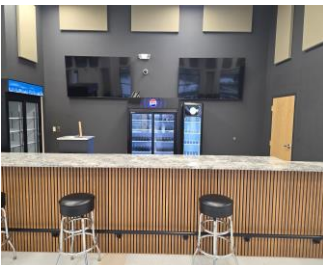
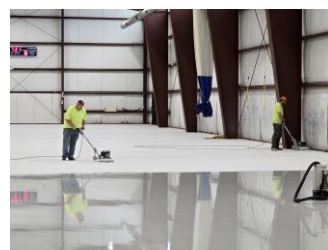
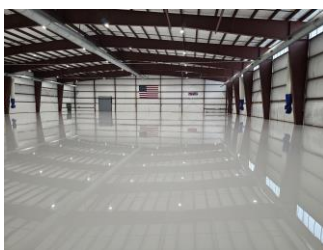
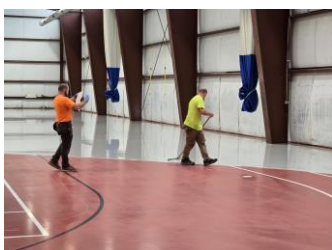


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Jean Shepherd Opens New Pickleball Facility – By: Chrissy Nelson

The Jean Shepherd Community Center has reinvented itself into a state of the art 12 court pickleball facility. The face lift is a welcome change for the facility that has been a hidden gem in the Dowling Park Athletic Complex, but underutilized. Pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the country, and the new facility has already proven to be a success with hundreds of players showing up daily during the first two months of the re grand opening that took place on November 1st. The building closed for two months in early fall to complete the construction of the upgraded facility. The cafeteria in the building was given a facelift too. Flick's Kitchen will have daily brunches from 11am to 2pm with chef Dora creating great food at extremely fair prices. The lounge is open most days until 10pm. Pictures of the transition are below.



The City of Hammond has partnered with 219 pickleball to run drop in play, leagues, clinics and tournaments at the Jean Shepherd. The 219 Pickleball group operates daily from 9am – 12pm and 5pm – 9pm. The Jean Shepherd rents court space weekdays from 12pm – 5pm and on the weekends when space is available. For membership or daily pricing information, scan the QR code or go to www.jeanshepherdcenter.com. For information about 219 Pickleball. Scan the black QR code or go to www.219pickleball.com

FLICK'S KITCHEN





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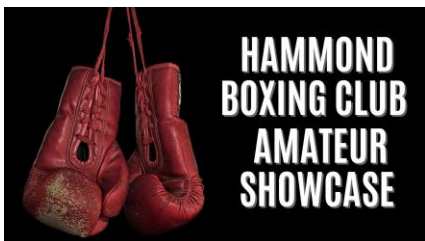


Hammond Civic Center – By: Juan Soto

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, walking track and weight room in the lower level of the building. The work out facility received some new equipment donated by a local YMCA in 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 The Shrine / Carden International Circus again in 2024 and continued to have big crowds attend the six shows scheduled over the Thanksgiving weekend. The Civic Center also hosted a Hammond Boxing Club showcase event in November marking the return of boxing, MMA, concerts and wrestling events to the stadium in 2025. There are more plans for basketball and futsal tournaments to come in 2025. To host your event at the Civic Center call 219-853-6378



Hammond Special Events Review – By: Aileen Martinez

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 175th street to 167th street ending at the Hammond Sportsplex. This year's event also included the 5th Annual Santa Sprint Fun Run. A one mile run down Indianapolis Blvd. that was free to those that signed up.



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 5th annual lighting and the crowds continue to grow. Hot Chocolate was very popular this year as we had a very chilly evening.

Veterans Appreciation Day Parade, November. The 12th annual Veterans Day parade was held on Saturday, Nov. 2nd. The Grand Marshall's were veterans of the Hammond Police Dept. Spencer Lemmons gave the keynote speech. The ceremony after the parade is held at the corner of 173rd and Kennedy at the Veteran's Memorial in Hessville Park.





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Hammond Special Events Review Continued – By: Aileen Ibarra



219 Day - The 2024 version of 219 Day took place on 2/17/2024, it was a western theme. Tim Gleason & The Whiskey Disco was the headlining act. The outfits from our guests were as good as expected. The 2024 version will have a Viva Las Region theme. Hope to see you there.



Cinco De Mayo, May. The Annual Cinco De Mayo event was held at the Hammond Civic Center in 2024. The culturally inclusive event celebrates all backgrounds and is well attended. Food was offered by El Gran Taco of East Chicago and Ballet Folcórico Yolotzin 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 at Freedom Plaza.

