

MINUTES
HAMMOND SANITARY DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSISONERS MEETING
NOVEMBER 16, 2021
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The Board of Sanitary Commissioners of the Sanitary District of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana held a regular meeting at 4:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of the Administration Building located at 5143 Columbia Avenue, Hammond, Indiana.

President Dimopoulos called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He stated that the Board held an Executive Session prior to the meeting to discuss personnel and litigation matters in accordance with Indiana Codes.

Commissioners Present: Dimopoulos, Dye, Garay, Hawkins, Miller

Commissioners Absent: N/A

District Personnel Present: Marty Wielgos, Chief Executive Officer
Joseph Allegretti, HSD Attorney
Matthew Muta, Deputy District Manager
Jeffrey Massey, HSD
Dan Zander, HSD
Robert Szczudlo, HSD
Jack Smith, Sewer Department
Kaleigh Boyle, HSD
Jessie Amezcuca, HSD

Others Present: Mike Hickey, MJHY, LLC
Natalie Cook, Donohue
Ken Schoon, Munster Town Council

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Dimopoulos stated that the first order of business is the consideration of the October 26, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes.

Dye **moved** and Hawkins **seconded** to approve the October 26, 2021 Board Meeting Minutes.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Garay, Hawkins, Miller

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Chief Executive Officer, Marty Wielgos, stated that the only thing he has to report is actually the year is winding down, so a lot of their employees are taking their vacations because it is the perfect time to do that between now and the end of the year. They were in a meeting with the Mayor Monday morning (about 20 different Department heads) and it was discussed that the Mayor is going to do an executive order talking about all new hires- both full-time and part-time- that are

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either hired by the City or any of the outlying entities including the Hammond Sanitary District will be required and have to have a Covid vaccination or they will not be considered to be hired by any of the departments. That is for both full-time and part-time new hires. As soon as they get the executive order, he will present that at the next meeting. Other than that, the Plant is running very well. Weather has been very cooperative, but it is starting to get colder. If you think about I though, it is already almost the end of November and then you only have December, January, February and March, so he is sure that Jeff Massey is happy about that. No real issues with any employees and like he said, the revenue streams (knock on wood) have not changed at all. They have been extremely consistent and he has seen no flux to be worried about with the Covid, so as compared to other departments, the District has not experienced any of that. He is very grateful fore that. Other than that, Mr. President, he would be happy to entertain any questions from the Board.

PERSONNEL REPORT

President Dimopoulos commented that the Board did receive a Personnel Report today.

Dye **moved** and Garay **seconded** to approve the Personnel Report.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Garay, Hawkins, Miller

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0.

FINANCIAL REPORT

President Dimopoulos stated that Business Manager, Rachel Montes, is on vacation.

Marty added that he would answer any questions that the Board may have.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Safety Report

There were no questions or comments.

GIS Report

There were no questions or comments.

Sewer Maintenance Report

There were no questions or comments.

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CONSULTANT REPORTS

MJHY, LLC

Mike Hickey stated that the Board should have a copy of his status report. Just a minor update on the CD (Consent Decree) status report. They did submit that on November 9th on behalf of HSD, so that quarterly report was submitted. In regards to the Long-Term Control Plan, they are still waiting to meet with Griffith. They met with Highland on October 19th, but they have still not heard back from Griffith, so he will keep them updated.

Marty asked Mike Hickey to talk briefly for the Board and their listening body about the rising of costs that his agency has found.

Mike Hickey responded that they have updated the Long-Term Control Plan in 2018, 2019 and 2020 and the past two times they updated it, they looked at inflation and cost increases and they were about 1% each year. They took a quick look about a month ago to just see what it would be from September of 2020 to September of 2021 and it was 8.7%. A big difference from previous years. They are going to have to keep track of that and he thinks it is going to get worse as the year goes on, but for the calendar year of September 2020 to September 2021, it was 8.7%.

Marty added that the main reason he wanted to have Mike talk briefly about that is because their revenues are rate-based and locked in. They get no tax revenue whatsoever. Other than the Sewer Department who sees a very small amount. All of their revenue is based on rate and those rates are locked in. What they have is a rising cost far more than what is normal when comparing previous years (1% to 8.7%), but they have locked in revenue. He watches it very closely and he hopes they can continue to manage their finances as well as they have in the past and also that some of that can be absorbed in projects or other things that they just do not have to do right now, but it is inevitable that he may have to come to this Board and say they have to do something because of the fact that those costs have not come back down and are still rising, but their rates are locked in. He just wanted to bring that to the Board's attention.

Commissioner Garay asked Jeff because she remembers he had mentioned to them earlier this year about costs (especially chlorine) that the cost of chlorine was impacted due to shortages and weather-related issues on the east coast. She asked if he has seen any information that is going to improve.

Jeff answered no. It is actually going higher than what it was and now it has affected just about any chemical. They use polymer here and the polymer costs have gone up tremendously as well. Most of this polymer is actually made in Germany so not only is it more expensive to get, but trying to get it here is a whole other story. The cost as far as the chemical use here in the Plant has more than doubled.

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President Dimopoulos commented that he thinks they are going to continue to see rising costs for at least another year or two. He said they have all gone to Home Depot recently- the price of wood is through the roof. One sheet of plywood is \$80.

Marty said that one thing he also wanted to point out is that their timing in their construction projects including the screws couldn't have been better. They were almost eight months ahead of the Covid. If they would have waited or stalled especially with the 14-million-dollar project across the street. He asked if they could imagine what that would have cost them if they were in the midst of it and couldn't finish it if they hadn't budgeted enough money. That would have just been a horrible, horrible situation. Especially with the screws. Taking the decision to just not do one or two, but to do them all because they were all really bad and didn't really have any life left. Some good decision making on the staff.

Donohue

Natalie Cook commented that the Board has a status report from them as well and she would be happy to answer any questions.

The Board considered the Bank Reconciliation Document dated October 31, 2021.

Miller **moved** and Hawkins **seconded** for the approval of the Bank Reconciliation Document dated October 31, 2021.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Garay, Hawkins, Miller

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0.

The Board considered the Claims Approval Docket 11-16-21.

Miller **moved** and Garay **seconded** for the approval of the Claims Approval Docket 11-16-21.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Garay, Hawkins, Miller

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0.

President Dimopoulos called for Old Business

There was not any old business to discuss.

President Dimopoulos called for New Business

Marty stated that he just wanted to add that what came out of Monday's meeting with the Mayor was something that he has said more than once about the Hammond Sanitary minutes. He had indicated to all the other twenty Department heads on Monday that he reads all of their minutes. Every department. He does not know how the Mayor gets it done, but he does because he knows he gets sharpies from him on various things that are talked about in the minutes. He said and told

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all the other departments that they should look at the Hammond Sanitary board minutes because he said they are the best, very complete and includes all of the information discussed from the time the Board meeting started until the time that it ended. He feels so comfortable that he only has to read the minutes and he knows everything that is going on at the Sanitary District, so that goes kudos to Kaleigh because she puts those minutes together and he has not only said it this past Monday, but he has said it at several other meetings. He thinks Owana has been at some of those where he compliments the District's minutes. Good job to Kaleigh on that.

President Dimopoulos called for Reports from Commissioners

There were no Reports from Commissioners.

President Dimopoulos called for Public Expression

Ken Schoon of Munster stated that he has a suggestion for the Hammond Sanitary District and that is that they toot their horn a little bit more than they have in the past. He would dare say that most people in Hammond and all of Northwest Indiana have no idea how polluted this Grand Calumet River was sixty years ago. He grew up very close to the river. As a teenager and a preteen, there was never a thought of going into the water. It smelled so bad and was covered with oil. At one time, the Grand Calumet River was on fire because there was so much oil on top and somebody through a cigarette down or something of that sort. He would think that most people have no idea how bad it was and he would bet that an awful lot of older citizens here have no idea how good it is now. That change has come about because of organizations such as the Hammond Sanitary District not working alone of course, but with EPA, IDEM and the other communities that are on the Calumet River have made a big difference. He and other people think they need to let others know what has been done over the last fifty years or so. A very good friend of his (Lee Botts), an environmentalist, produced a documentary titled Shifting Sands on the Path to Sustainability. That documentary was nominated for an Emmy about three years ago. It was extremely well done and shown about every two or three months on channel 56 (WYM). The number differs on whether you have cable, which provider, whatever. Mrs. Botts knowing that Ken Burns had a companion book to go with his series on the National Parks wanted a companion book to go with for a documentary and so she asked him to do it. He realized when he came on for a liaison for Munster that none of them knew who he was, but he knew who they were. He had worked with the District before. Don Woodard and he communicated a lot. He helped with the previous book from plants that are growing here throughout the facility. He passed out a signed copy of book to all Board members, Marty and Attorney Allegretti.

President Dimopoulos asked him to state his name for the record.

He introduced himself as Ken Schoon from Forest Avenue in Munster.

Ken explained that one copy is for the District and said that he hopes it will not spend much time on the shelf. Lend it out to people who need it and when it comes back, lend it to somebody else. They all thanked Mr. Schoon for copy of his book.

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Marty added that one thing he learned early when he took over running the District was education and letting the people in the City of Hammond and the surrounding cities know exactly what they do. They have made it a top priority and effort over the last eight-nine years to do more tours and reach out. He tries to do speaking engagements to different community groups to talk about what they do and this phenomenal plant that they have sitting in Hammond, Indiana because it is so unique and so valuable to their daily lives. He has made it an effort. He is the chairman of the Challenger Learning Center here in Hammond and they are under their capital campaign to move to the old Walmart site right by the new Sportsplex. Part of what is going to be in housed into the new facility is not only everything that they do in the Challenger, but they are expanding it to recycling, wastewater treatment and potable water. They will actually have a space for the Hammond Sanitary District dedicated within this new site and a mini working plant so that they can reach out to the youngest of their children to show them and get them interested in what they do and when they flush the toilet where it goes and what is done with it and then they put it back into Lake Michigan so that it can go through the recycling process and potable water and all over again. They are doing that. The Hammond Water Department is going to have a space next to them. He thinks it is important. The taxpayers should be able to come and see what their tax dollars and how they are spending that in this facility because the 12-14 years he has been here, it is still remarkable. When he still walks out to the Plant and joins one of the tours, he is still amazed and learns things that he thought he already known because it is just really, truly a great process. He thanked him and reiterated that they are reaching out and loves the community to be involved. They invite both the young and the old to come visit and then he tries to go out as often as he can to speak to these various groups to speak about exactly what they do.

Ken Schoon replied that if people on the West Coast trusted what they did, there would be less of a water shortage because they would be reusing the water that was treated by their sanitary districts because there is nothing more impressive than at the end of that process to take a drink of the water that is the effluent and drink it in a public meeting. There are a lot of Senators that will not do that.

Marty said he has challenged the Mayor to do that. He is getting closer. He said that their water source is their new liquid gold and he has said that for a long time. Now, people are realizing it because of the fact that water is becoming a little shorter and scarce. He thinks there is a golden opportunity to continue doing the educational part that he thinks is as important as running the plant and letting the taxpayers know exactly what their dollar has bought because they have something truly that not only services Hammond and Munster, btu they service all of Whiting, all of Griffith and all of Highland. They rely on the District. Without the District, they are in big trouble.

Commissioner Garay asked Matt Muta to announce the ceremony.

Matthew Muta commented that this Friday, November 19th at 10 o'clock at Irving Park behind the baseball fields in right field, they are hosting a memorial service for Pat Moore, Sr. who was

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a Commissioner on the Board for several years. Like he said, it is this Friday, November 19th at 10 o'clock at Irving Park, so all are welcome to attend.

President Dimopoulos called for a motion to adjourn the meeting

Miller **moved** and Dye **seconded** for adjournment.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Garay, Hawkins, Miller

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 4:18 p.m.



Sam Dimopoulos, President



Michael Dye, Vice-President



Michael Hawkins, Sr., Member



Owana Miller, Member

Monica Rubio, Member

ATTEST:



Rachel Montes, Secretary

Kaleigh Boyle, Assistant Secretary

Board Minutes Prepared By: Kaleigh Boyle