

MINUTES
HAMMOND SANITARY DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
MARCH 28, 2023
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The Board of Sanitary Commissioners of the Sanitary District of Hammond, Lake County, Indiana held a regular meeting at 4:07 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 4:07 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, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Commissioners Absent: Dye

District Personnel Present: Marty Wielgos, Chief Executive Officer
Joseph Allegretti, District Counsel
Matthew Muta, Deputy District Manager
Rachel Montes, Business Manager
Jeffrey Massey, HSD
Dan Zander, HSD
Sharon Szany, HSD
Robert Szczudlo, HSD
Jack Smith, Sewer Department
Kaleigh Boyle, HSD
Jessie Amezcua, HSD

Others Present: Ken Schoon, Munster Town Council

Other Present via Zoom: Michael Hickey, MJHY

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Dimopoulos stated that the first order of business is the consideration of the March 14, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes.

Hawkins **moved** and Rubio **seconded** to approve the March 14, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 4-0.

Chief Executive Officer's Report

Chief Executive Officer, Marty Wielgos, stated that as they briefly discussed in the executive session, they are continuing to work with their three customer communities (Whiting, Highland and Griffith) and working on amendments to contract. He is happy to say they are slowly itching

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forward so there is positive progress. Not as quickly as he would like, but at least it is positive progress. They had one little stumbling block with Whiting because they are really close to signing that with a term that was in the contract that could be interpreted several different ways. So, Joe was on the phone with corporate counsel from Whiting along with Jeff and a couple of other folks and he thinks they are going to have that worked out to make everybody comfortable and happy. He will project that the Whiting amendment to their contract should be finished no later than the end of the upcoming month, April. He is very optimistic with both Highland and Griffith. He remembers having a conversation with the mayor a few months ago that he projected it would be March. Unfortunately, that is probably not going to happen, but once again with those two communities the issues are far greater than what they were with Whiting. One would think that trying to get those issues worked out and slightly different for each of the two communities are going to take a much longer time than Whiting was. They are moving in the right direction, so he is happy to report on that.

Commissioner Hawkins commented that when Marty started working with the three customer communities, he was fortunate enough to be in some of those meetings and he did not have grey hair yet.

Marty laughed and said that it has been a while. There is no doubt about it, but if you look back on all of the years when they started this with the court cases and the Indiana Supreme Court, he thinks the reason they were able to move forward with the Board back then and again today is because of all the positive decisions because they were up against all odds way back then when they started this process. Look at where they are today. They are finally getting very close to getting to where they hoped and wanted to be all those years ago. He is very happy about that and happy with the Board's resilience, support, support from the administration, good legal teams they have had because they have always continued fighting. They are very close right now.

CONSULTANT REPORTS

MJHY

Mike Hickey stated that IDEM reached out to him last week. They want to set up a meeting with him and HSD to talk about disinfection at the CSO basin, so he is in the process of setting that up with IDEM and Jeff. That is all he has to report, but would be happy to answer any questions.

The Board considered the Bank Reconciliation Document dated February 28, 2023 (2).

Business Manager, Rachel Montes, explained that there is a second one due to having to add a new bank account they opened at Old National that she did not have a bank statement for online, so she received statement after they presented the last Bank Reconciliation. It was for \$0 so there are no monetary changes.

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Miller **moved** and Hawkins **seconded** for the approval of the Bank Reconciliation Document dated February 28, 2023 (2).

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio
Nays: None
Motion **carried** 4-0.

The Board considered the Claims Approval Docket 03-28-23.

Rubio **moved** and Miller **seconded** for the approval of the Claims Approval Docket 03-28-23.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio
Nays: None
Motion **carried** 4-0.

President Dimopoulos called for Old Business

Marty said the only thing he will bring up is that he is working with Joe, Sharon Szany, and Rachel about something they talked about. Years ago, there was talk about establishing an education fund here at the District for District employees. They are going to model it after the City of Hammond's educational fund. They are looking to fund it at the amount of \$50,000 a year with various increments. \$3000 being probably the highest someone can apply for on a yearly basis, but it must be directly related to what is done here at the Plant. You cannot have an employee say they want their pilot's license. He thinks it is healthy to do that and in an environment where they are constantly thinking of ways to retain employees, this is just one extra level that will give them opportunities on the benefit side. He thinks it is something that good and hopes the Board will agree because it will need to be done via Resolution and then they will put a plan together to present on how they plan on running the program. One interesting note that he learned the other day on almost the same subject of retention of employees because they know they cannot always give it in dollars because there is a limit they have budgetarily, how much they charge, how much revenue they take in. He learned from a company last week that they have become creative with employee retention. One of the things that they said was they offer the premiums that the employee pays for their portion of the health insurance that depending on the number of years that the employee has, that that would eventually get down to zero on their participation. So, he did the numbers and actually the numbers make sense. If you look at a group of 100 employees that you are trying to retain and you have one person who says they have an offer to do x,y,z for another \$2.00 an hour because that is where they are kind of fighting—if you do the multiplication across the board on what that would cost with the benefits and everything that adds to that \$2.00 (Perf and everything else), it kind of made sense that maybe if they run into that, that is another area they can look at for employee retention. Premiums that they would have to pay right now—he asked what our individuals' premiums are.

Rachel answered \$30.00 for single and \$60.00 for family per pay.

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Marty said that is pretty low with a lot of coverage. Imagine in the mindset of an employee when they do not have to pay anything because all of their health insurance is covered. As part of that program with benefits because he keeps saying when an employee tells them that somewhere like the mill is going to steal them away and they say they are going to make \$4.00 more an hour, he can say okay and then ask them what are their benefits. They will probably reply that they have pretty good benefits, but the insurance premium is a little higher. He can ask them if they are going to be working all year long and if they are, for how many years because they are known to hire a bunch of people on a project and then as soon as that project is done, they lay everybody off and then what are they going to have. He has talked to the department heads that if they have employees saying they are leaving because they are being offered more elsewhere, that he wants to talk to them. He wants to make sure that they understand truly what they have here at the District and truly what his feeling is what they are going to walk into outside because the grass is always greener on the other side. The environment that they are in today with people that they have talked about who do not want to work or have any inkling about wanting to go back. Over seven million men is the number they were talking about between the ages of 25-45 have no desire to go back to work. How they are supporting themselves, he has no idea, but the point is that he thinks they need to become more creative because it cannot always be dollar for dollar matching. That is impossible and to him, it is a dead end because where does it stop. He is just bringing that out for general discussion because he thinks what he needs to do is look at other things to make it desirable to stay here as compared to the outside and what they may be trying to draw them away on.

Commissioner Rubio commented that she thinks one of the things Marty needs to look at is career architecture. Where is the plan for someone coming in, where are they going. What is in the next one to two years versus the next three to five years. What is that architectural structure look like for them. To have someone who says they know by doing this and accomplishing this, this is where they are headed and this is where I see a future with this company for them because if people are coming in and they do not see that and they are not having those regular conversations, those one-on-one development and opportunities for their future, that is where they are saying, well if I am going to be in the same job the next five years what am I doing.

Marty replied that is a good point. That is why he wants to actively get involved with Rachel on the newer employees who have been here less than three years. There are also different levels of certifications here (class I, II, III, IV) and when you get to the class IV which is available to every single employee in this plant, it is an extra \$10.50 an hour which adds an extra \$20,000 yearly. That is a pretty nice incentive for an employee. To get back to what Commissioner Rubio was talking about, what they have seen recently with the mill is that they have gotten extremely aggressive and are getting appealing to someone who has been here for ten or eleven years, so they are already vested. The employee thinks they are already vested here, so they can go and make another three or four dollars an hour more and they are only in their late 20s maybe early 30s, that is what is catching the District here. They do not have a true problem with it now, but he is looking into the future because he knows the job market is going to continually get harder for the employer. Look at what Chicago and the State of Illinois has just passed. Any employee

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in the State of Illinois if they work 40 hours a week can get two weeks off for any reason paid. He does not know how those employers are going to manage that, but that is right next door. He has always believed in trying to look as far into the future as you can to look at ideas, possibilities and solutions to address those types of questions before they become a question that is asked to him today from somebody here that works at the plant. He is really aggressive and proactive on that because he has always believed that raising and competing with the salaries and the hourly is not the answer. It is not the answer because it can only go so far until it starts to strangle the entity internally because they just do not have the revenue to make it all work. He gets that and remembers years ago looking through all the financial statements and Commissioner Hawkins asking if they ran out of black ink. They have come a full circle all of those years and are very prepared to look at that. He speaks a lot out and he is going to start speaking out more to schools because there is a golden opportunity especially in this environment that to tell every one of those high school seniors that they will never be anybody unless they get a college degree is not true. It may be true for some, but not all. The District is one of those options because you can come here and he has seen people spend thirty years here and retire, make a great amount of money, support a family, have a house and the greatest benefit that he knows of that no industry can compare to and that is what employees need to be reminded of on a regular basis. It is the whole package. So, when someone says they are being offered more, he can tell them to look at the whole package. Let's compare apples to apples and make sure they are looking at all of the benefits. He just wanted that out there for conversation.

President Dimopoulos commented that he thinks it is a great idea that Marty talks to them before they decide to jump ship, so they do understand.

President Dimopoulos called for New Business

There was no new business to discuss.

President Dimopoulos called for Reports from Commissioners

There were no reports from Commissioners.

President Dimopoulos called for Public Expression

Councilman Ken Schoon of Munster said the only thing he would like to say is that he is sad to still see public expression at the end of the meeting again.

President Dimopoulos called for a motion to adjourn the meeting

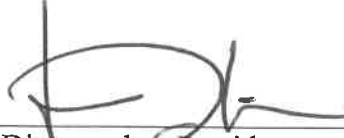
Miller moved and Rubio seconded for adjournment.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Nays: None

Motion carried 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

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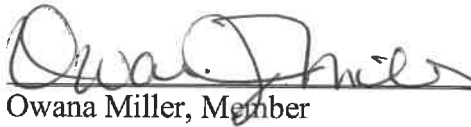
Sam Dimopoulos, President



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