

MINUTES
HAMMOND SANITARY DISTRICT
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING
AUGUST 15, 2023
www.hammondsd.com

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, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Commissioners Absent: N/A

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

Others Present: Mike Hickey, MJHY
Natalie Cook, Donohue
Councilman Barry Tyler, Hammond City Council
Matthis Guttierrez, Hammond Resident
Elizabeth Reyes, Hammond Resident
Ernie Dillon, Hammond Resident
Herro Rosado, Hammond Resident

Others Present via Zoom: Karley Nichols, Hammond Resident

The meeting started with the Pledge of Allegiance.

President Dimopoulos stated that the first order of business is the consideration of the July 25, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes.

Rubio **moved** and Miller **seconded** to approve the July 25, 2023 Board Meeting Minutes.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 4-0.

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Chief Executive Officer, Marty Wielgos, stated that as they briefly discussed in the executive session, working with staff and working with Councilman Tyler and also Owana and her department, they were talking about a couple of things. That was to kind of redesign how they fund the backflow preventer valve. What they presented in the executive session today and will present at their next Storm Water meeting in two weeks is that they want to up it from \$1,000 to \$2,000 for those that have that valve installed with a proper contractor and with the guidelines they have to get the reimbursement. But, also adding another part working with Owana's department and federal money where then the low to moderate income folks that meet the federal guidelines, they will be able to use some federal money to fund those valves for certain folks who are homeowners and homeowner occupied. By matching the District's \$2,000 and some of those federal dollars, they think they can help those folks with a limited budget obviously to get them almost 100% covered. Two pretty exciting changes to the program and he was happy to hear in the executive session that the Board is in favor with that. So, at the next Storm Water meeting they will do that because it is a Storm Water funded program, so they will present the proper paperwork to move that program forward.

President Dimopoulos commented that he thinks it is going to be a great thing for the Sanitary District because that is an expensive venture to put in one of those valves and like they talked about in their executive session that the cost probably deterred a lot of people from getting them installed because they could not afford the price even with the \$1,000 reimbursement. It is very expensive, so now with Owana's help, the District can up their portion of it with the federal dollars in place and hopefully help all of these lower to moderate income families and get them covered 100%. The \$2,000 increase will at least help the people who are not in that bracket to help them also get them installed. It is a good thing.

Marty responded that is all that he has, but would take any questions from Commissioners.

PERSONNEL REPORT

There was no Personnel Report.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Business Manager, Rachel Montes, had nothing to highlight, but will take any questions.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Sewer Maintenance

No questions or comments.

Safety

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. The only thing he has to report is the quarterly consent decree report was submitted on time on August 9th.

DONOHUE

Natalie Cook commented that the Board has a status report from them as well. They are starting to see more activity on the CMDF project design there and she would be happy to answer any questions regarding it.

RESOLUTIONS

The Board considered Resolution No. 22-2023: RE: A Resolution Authorizing Execution of a Professional Services Contract with Hubbell, Roth & Clark, Inc. (HRC)

Dye **moved** and Hawkins **seconded** to approve Resolution No. 22-2023.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0.

The Board considered the Bank Reconciliation Document dated July 31, 2023.

Dye **moved** and Miller **seconded** for the approval of the Bank Reconciliation Document dated July 31, 2023.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0.

The Board considered the Claims Approval Docket 08-15-23.

Hawkins **moved** and Rubio **seconded** for the approval of the Claims Approval Docket 08-15-23.

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0.

President Dimopoulos called for Old Business

There was no old business to discuss.

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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

Marty asked that before they start public expression if the resident speaking would state their name loud and clearly and their address so we have that on file.

Matthis Gutierrez from 248 Dyer Boulevard. He is a registered nurse and he is here because of the recurrent, persistent problem they are having with the backflow of sewage water into his basement. He never had this problem until the streets were repaired going on about 15 years ago when they did the whole street of Dyer Boulevard. The problem is persistent and it is a public issue. It is a public health issue. He has reported it already to the state level and he will continue to report it until something is done about it. He knows the gentleman addressed the backflow valves, but in addition to that there is also the sewer concern. His house runs directly to the main line and the other two homes come across and connect directly to his. That was exposed when the streets were done. He knows the City was made aware of that, but no one addressed it. They ignored it and now the problem still persists. That is his concern. His basement has never leaked. He does not even have a little sump valve. He has a little main drain where the condensation of the furnace and the AC come in it. This last time, there was a lot of water and mud and leaves and whatever else is in the sewer line. That is all he has.

Elizabeth Reyes from 255 Dyer Boulevard. She stated that she recently paid for the camera and she is connected into her neighbor's line also. She also has had sewage and ongoing flooding issues too consistently. She has had six floods in three years.

Jack Smith responded that he would just like to state that some of these houses they are talking about on Dyer Boulevard have their gutters connected into their lateral lines which that should be eliminated. With that water flow coming off of those roofs and going into a 6-inch line, you are putting much more water into that lateral and that water has no place to go. So, it is going to come up into the basement when you have three lateral lines tied into one. If you have the house on the left and the house on the right that have gutters that are tied in, you are going to cause a hydraulic block coming toward that center and the water is going to stay in those basements. Until they get those issues fixed, it is going to keep happening.

President Dimopoulos stated that he believes there is a City Ordinance that we are not allowed to hook up our gutters to our storm sewer line.

Ernie Dillon from 5963 Park Place. He is a homeowner in the neighborhood where the flooding continues. A little bit of history because he has been a precinct committeeman there 54 years and his daughter for the last 20, so they are representing the citizens and the homeowners. A little

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history about Hammond- you are right, but not exactly as it comes to the issues about the drains. West Hammond is the oldest part of the City and it is over 100 years old. All of their sewer systems are quarry tile. Park Place one time many years ago flooded and it cost them thousands of dollars individually to put the butterfly valve in and put the line in and dig up the sidewalk and so on and replace it. As it relates to Dyer Boulevard and the surrounding neighborhood, there is hundreds and hundreds of apartment buildings in two square blocks. He means hundreds of residents in those apartment buildings who contribute to the usage of those sewages to the sewer system and they are coupled with the homeowners. When you couple hundreds and hundreds of additional people other than a homeowner in an area that is three blocks square, you are going to get a lot of additional water and sewage and flooding and such. He knows some of the residents, them in particular, contracted and paid for themselves to analyze the sewer system at one home to see if the sewer system is connected to the neighbor's sewer system. In other words, 100+ years ago, they built a street and built a sewer line and the sewer line going from the main line to the home comes to the sidewalk and then spreads to two houses. In other words, house #1 and house #2 merge in the middle of the yard and then it goes out to the main street. He asked if anyone was aware of that. That is the problem with all of the homes with the double sewage system. He is here to tell them what he has told them, but also to share a common ground to fix it in the most inexpensive way and the easiest way for the homeowner especially because it is mostly on the homeowner to repair that and he understands that, but there has to be a common ground between the City and the homeowner. He knows Marty talked about some funding mechanism for a butterfly valve and his thought is that the sewer line goes down the parkway in the middle of Dyer Boulevard. He knows you cannot dig up the parkway- that is not feasible, logical or practical to do anything. He is just thinking outside of the box and he will let anyone add to it. Those are his concluding remarks, so someone else can speak. He asked can a butterfly valve be put on the homeowner's double line out by the street where it comes in and have that butterfly valve protect and cover the comeback of the water to avoid the flooding at that location assuming they agree on it because then you have a lot of logistical concerns. What they have here is quite a dilemma no matter what you do. He understands the City wants to help the homeowners (he knows that) and they are here to express their concerns and work with the City in anyway they can and representing the homeowners in the precinct that he lives. He had that issue himself and he paid for it and it cost him several thousand dollars years ago.

Marty said this is not a question-and-answer session, but just an opportunity for the public to speak. He did, however, want to clarify with what Ernie is talking about. Whether it be home #1 or home #2 come into one line that goes out to the street, backflow preventers can be put on each one of those homes so that each of those homes are equally protected. That is the way engineering tells him that it could be solved with the way they are uniquely connected in a y form, so that is what from what he is being told the right way to do it rather than putting one backflow preventer at the point of connection that goes to the y out to the street. Unless, Engineering tells them differently that is where they are today. He just wanted to clarify that to make sure that is the understanding.

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President Dimopoulos added that he believes what Marty is saying is correct because then the homeowner is responsible for their home, so then they can activate the valve if necessary and they are not counting on somebody else doing it on the street if it was put there for three houses rather than just one. Each homeowner needs to have their own valve that way they can control it, turn it on and off whenever they want. He thinks they are doing it the right way.

Karley Nichols from 260 Dyer Boulevard. She moved in in 2020 and was immediately having massive, huge flooding issues. She had a local Hammond company (Salyer) dig her pipe up and do a sewer cleanout. She paid about \$6,000 for them to come diagnose the problem. They were telling her that part of the issue is that there were still cast-iron pipes. She is not sure if that is her entire neighborhood or not, but she had them replace all of her pipes from her home out to the street. It was \$6,000, but she got a quote and basically if that did not work and did not solve the issue with any backup or anything like that, it would have been over \$30,000 for them to dig all the way into the middle of the street and diagnose the problem from there. She does not have the solutions to this, but she does know that she does not have the money to be repairing and doing this every couple years. It is a public health issue, so she has escalated this to the EPA and numerous other people. You can pass out a bunch of cleaning supplies, but when your basement is being flooded with sewage almost every time- and she does not want to say significant amount of rain because a lot of times it happens with minimal amounts of rain. You still have some type of backup and a bottle of bleach is not going to do it. It is not safe. She said she has a three-year-old daughter and she knows a lot of them share the same struggles with this and she is just not finding an efficient and sufficient solution no matter who she is talking to. She had someone come out from the Sanitary Department and she signed a piece of paper and he pretty much told her that the City of Hammond has not replaced it because it cost too much money. It is one of those things where if it costs too much money for the City of Hammond, it absolutely costs too much for individual homeowners. She is just hoping as are her neighbors because they have all had plenty of conversations that something can be done further from here because like she said, it is becoming a public health issue. She does not think anyone is coming here complaining that they have clear water coming in their basement from time to time. She hopes that is taken into consideration.

President Dimopoulos commented that before they go any further, he just wanted to state that they do have a Councilman here today and they normally do not get Councilman here visiting, so he did want to thank Councilman Barry Tyler from the third district for coming today. He said they all appreciate him coming out today.

Herro Rosado from 241 Conkey Street. He knows Karley who just spoke personally along with many of his other neighbors here today. They got flooded a couple years ago and he came down here to express his concerns and he believes he talked to Marty over there and that is when they gave out the \$500 flood relief checks. He had one of his best guys come over to his house and he was not there that day. His wife is a sick woman with health issues and he was not there that day, he was in the field working, but he came home and she told him that the gentleman had stopped over. So, when he came over here, Marty said well one of his best guys said that the water he had

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in his basement was coming from the walls and puddling up because it needed to be waterproofed. Absolutely not. He lives there and is dealing with it. Black stuff comes up in the basement and it has been doing this for some years now. He has videos from his neighbors where it comes up as a geyser and it is really scary looking. Hopefully, between the City and the residents here in Hammond they can come up with a solution. He knows a gentleman who lives all the way over on 173rd and White Oak and he had the guy come out and put in the \$3,000 valve which failed so he pretty much lost \$3,000. So, he went over there and helped him with an irrigation because it was puddling up outside and backing up in his sump pump and he is not a technician or plumber or anything, but hopefully once again he will say he hopes everyone can come up with a solution because this has been an ongoing problem. It is scary and it is a health issue. He knows they do not have the answers, but he prays they can come to a solution because some of them have been here for decades. He comes home sometimes and can see where the leaves came up or the little helicopter things came up so there is a whole line of them coming down the front lawn and it flooded all the way up to there. A lot of his neighbors have had to throw a lot of things out and you can smell the mildew. He goes all over the City beautifying homes, that is what he does. Half of it is charity and the other half is a small business he runs year-round to help the little guy get by just like he is trying to get by by supplementing his income.

President Dimopoulos called for a motion to adjourn the meeting

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

Ayes: Dimopoulos, Dye, Hawkins, Miller, Rubio

Nays: None

Motion **carried** 5-0. The meeting was adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

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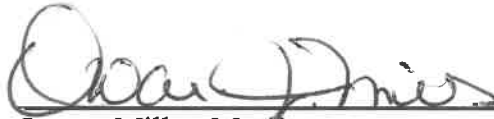
Sam Dimopoulos, President



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