

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HOBART  
LAKE COUNTY, INDIANA  
February 4, 2026**

**Call to Order:** Mayor Huddlestun called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance, and moment of silence. The meeting was held with the building open to the public. The call-in number for the zoom connection was available and listed on the agenda and the website.

**Roll Call:** The following members were present in person: Mr. Kara, Mr. Rodriguez, Ms. Winstead, Mr. Brezik, Mr. Claussen and Mr. Waldrop. Absent: Mr. Kopil. Also present: Clerk-Treasurer Longer and City Attorney McCarthy.

**Reading of the Minutes:** Motion by Mr. Brezik, seconded by Mr. Kara to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of January 21, 2026 as presented. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

**Correspondence:** Mayor Huddlestun stated that an Ordinance Committee meeting is scheduled for 7 PM this evening.

**Committee Reports:** There were no other committee reports.

**Chief of Staff Report:** Ms. Clemens stated the Annual Honor and Achievement Awards were presented on January 28<sup>th</sup> at Wildwoods. The honorees were as follows:

Youth Citizen of the Year: Grace Anderson	Senior Citizen of the Year: Dave Stutler
Rachel Rodriguez Award: Don & Jackie Rogers	Tony Wirtz Award: Kenny Evans
Virginia Curtis Award: Jenny Webber	Collaboration & Partnership Award: Dee Bedella
Education Excellence Award: Kacey Allen	Community Impact Award: Israel Hernandez
Firefighter of the Year: Joseph Porcaro	Police Officer of the Year: Corporal Mike Jimenez
Mayor's Honor & Achievement Award: Hannah Webster	

Ms. Clemens also noted the State of the City will be held on Wednesday, April 1<sup>st</sup> at the Hobart High School Auditorium in lieu of a Council meeting that evening.

**Department Reports:** City Engineer Alex Metz reviewed the projects: Wisconsin St.: closing tomorrow for 3 days to relocate Nipsco poles and project will be put out to bid in early March; Linda St. SSO Elimination will be restored and repaved early this year; Festival Park moving along and coordinating with Little Cal for the dam project and will start in fall of 2026; Stormwater Inventory Assessment is moving on to the southern part of the City; 5<sup>th</sup> & Center St. the design is done and utility coordination is ongoing; County Line Culvert replacement will be bid out in March for construction this summer; 38<sup>th</sup> St. Stormwater project is in design phase and hoping to move forward this summer; Hickey St. Reconstruction is undergoing right-of-way acquisition; and the City was awarded a grant to do a traffic study to look at intersections and sidewalks and hoping to add an ADA transition plan to the project.

Public Works Supt. Kent Moore stated the plowing/salting/leaf pick-up is ongoing as weather dictates. The crews are filling potholes and patching as needed. As to salt availability, there were reports of salt shortages and while the City was running somewhat short, we had salt on order but the vendor could not get it to us as scheduled due to weather conditions. The salt we ordered has been delivered and we did not run out. Salt is being mixed with beet juice to expand its usefulness. Kent also gave a shout-out to his crews for the tireless work they put in and to the residents who are kind to the guys in difficult weather conditions.

Fire Chief Enrique Lopez stated in 2025 there were 2 remodels completed at House 2 and 4, the drone updated, annual physicals completed with cancer screenings; training was prioritized; every staff person is trained as an EMT-B status or higher and 65% of our staff is licensed paramedics; over 5000 calls for service in 2025, fire prevention efforts remain strong and community engagement is ongoing. In 2026, a

new rank of Engineer has been added with training provided and staffing has reached a new milestone, the highest in recent memory.

Police Chief Garrett Ciszewski shared that thanks to the efforts of Congressman Frank Mrvan, contained a provision awarding the Hobart Police Department a community funding project in the amount of \$488,000 for the purchase and implementation of body-camera program. The program is expected to begin in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of this year and are currently vetting various companies to assure we acquire the best products available.

Director of Development Marcos Rodriquez stated they have been working on establishing system implementation and processing improvements over the last 9 months while focusing on business expansion and retention. On the residential side, numerous conversations have been ongoing including Steiner Homes along 61<sup>st</sup> Ave. who is very excited about moving forward. On the commercial side we are seeing a lot of interest in the Rt. 30 corridor and expansions of current commercial/industrial businesses such as Daifuku who is looking to add 300 employees. Partnerships with NIRPC and the Forum remain a priority as well as working with the local school systems, the RDC awarding a workforce grant to both the School City of Hobart and the Merrillville Community Schools for specific programs for their students. In 2026 the department will implement a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) program which will allow them to be more responsive and facilitate overseeing the abatements as well as possible development sites. Mayor Huddleston added that there has been interest in the Southlake Mall area for both retail and entertainment possibilities.

Lift Station Supt. Phil Schoon stated the lift station renovation project has been completed, converting the 1988 station over to the new system along with the new additional force main to the GSD and the project came in under budget and ahead of schedule. He noted the new station is safer, more efficient, and allows maintenance to take place without taking down the system. Nipsco also presented a check to the HSD due to the energy efficiency savings this system provides. Mr. Schoon noted this new system should last another 40+ years and will save the HSD a great deal of time and money that was being spent on maintenance of the old pumps and systems.

MRC Director Aimee Schallenkamp reported that 2025 had over 700 members to the MRC, 75% of them from Hobart. Day-trips to casinos, shows and monthly fun parties are well attended and the exercise classes are active and pickleball is played on a daily basis. She noted they serve over 200 meals every week, many with sponsorships of either funding or food preparation. Meal sponsorships are available for a \$250 donation and meals are provided on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In 2026 the hope is to upgrade the computers with new tech equipment and tech classes for the seniors. Powers Health will continue to be the MRC's partner for the wellness program, workshops and general screenings.

Park Director Julie Mandon presented various flyers for programs including the Dueling Pianos Valentines Day event (tickets still available). 2026 will see expansions of programing including fitness programs, canvas painting, and NERF battles. Currently they are coordinating bands for the festival and summer market and working on the designs for Festival Park renovations which will start immediately after the summer market is over.

Building Official Felix Perry stated the Building/Planning/Code Enforcement office has been busy implementing the OpenGov process. He noted that weather has provided challenges for some construction but DR Horton has been moving forward on buildings at a rapid pace and they are excited about the new Luke Development of single-family homes at the Sapper's property along Lake Park Ave. He also noted that over the next week some activity will begin to take place at Public Bar & Rec, weather dependent. Monday the Main Street Station at 235 Main St. is scheduled for demolition which has been in the works for a long time. He also noted that contractors have become quickly acclimated to OpenGov and it is working out very well.

**Approval of the Agenda:** Motion by Mr. Brezik, seconded by Mr. Claussen, to approve the agenda as presented. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

**Unfinished Business:** There was no unfinished business.

**New Business:**

**Resolution 2026-06:** A Resolution to Approve and Authorize the Execution of an Amended Development Agreement between the City of Hobart and Clay Street Devco, LLC: The Resolution was read. Director of Development Marcos Rodriguez stated that this amends the prior development agreement from March 2023 due to unexpected construction delays preventing them from meeting the prior timelines for the tax abatement. Attorney Richard Anderson was present and stated that construction should be completed by the end of 2027. Mayor Huddlestun noted the Board of Public Works approved this at their meeting earlier today and stated the developers have been good partners with the City, acquiring and removing the "Beer Barrel" to make this project work. Motion by Mr. Brezik, seconded by Mr. Kara, to approve Resolution 2026-06 as presented. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

**Ordinance 2026-03:** An Ordinance Amending Ordinance 2025-41 of the Common Council of the City of Hobart, adding a position and amending the salary range for certain positions in the Legal Department for the Fiscal Year Commencing January 1, 2026 and Ending December 31, 2026 and Transferring Appropriations within the General Fund Budget for 2026: The Ordinance was read. Attorney McCarthy explained that while the legal department works with a number of outside attorneys, greater efficiency comes from working with someone in-house allowing better understanding of workflows and greater availability to staff and the various departments. Mayor Huddlestun noted the legal department is stretched to the limit and the additional staff will allow better responsiveness.

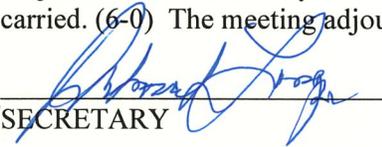
Motion by Mr. Brezik, seconded by Mr. Waldrop, to approve Ordinance 2026-03 on first reading. Roll Call Vote taken. All aye, motion carried. (6-0)

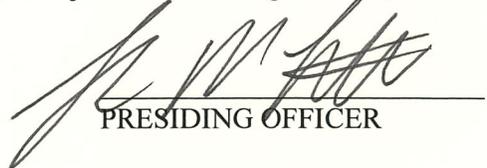
**Announcements:** Joe Conn, 910 Lake St., commented on the impending demolition of Main Street Station and stated the building was built when President Grant was in office. He noted that the City has an engineer's report that says the building can be rehabbed to become a commercial entity and asked the Council and the City to reconsider tearing it down.

Mr. Conn also commented on the cumbersome process the City goes through in responding to public record requests, stating the public access counselor clearly advocates that government is a servant of the people favoring open access to documents and information. He noted the City's process has changed over the years and access now has to go through legal review before providing information to the requester. Mayor Huddlestun noted that when "all" documents are requested, the law department gathers the information requested from each department to assure that the response is accurate and complete.

Mayor Huddlestun asked if anyone had any announcements and there was no response.

**Adjournment:** Motion by Mr. Claussen, seconded by Mr. Kara, to adjourn the meeting. All aye, motion carried. (6-0) The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

  
SECRETARY

  
PRESIDING OFFICER