

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
February 19, 2024
6:00 p.m.

Called to order by Mayor Peter Schwartzman at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call #1: Present: Mayor Peter Schwartzman, Council Members Bradley Hix, Wayne Dennis, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Sarah Davis, and Steve Cheesman, 7. Absent: Council Member Evan Miller, 1. Also Present: City Manager Eric Hanson, City Attorney Marilyn Dye, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz.

Mayor Schwartzman declared a quorum present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Bonnie Ericson gave the invocation.

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from the February 5, 2024, meeting.

Roll Call #2:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

David Warf addressed the Council regarding the loud music and exhaust from cars in his neighborhood on Pine Street. He noted that it is the same people and that he has called the Police and wondered if they could be ticketed for reckless driving. He stated that he is prepared to block the street since he has been living with the noise for three years. He also reported that the vacant house across the street from him, which should have been demolished by now, has people living in it during the night.

Jim Jacobs addressed the Council and stated that Black History Month should be every month, not just February, as there is rich history in our country and every month is "white history month." He noted that the Emancipation Proclamation temporarily ended statutory enslavement of African Americans and over the course of the Civil War, 179,000 black men served. He further stated that the Massachusetts 54th regiment included 30 men from Illinois, 12 of whom were from Galesburg. Almost half of the 600 men of the all-black regiment were killed or wounded. Mr. Jacobs believes that our City should honor the memory of these men from Galesburg.

Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to recess the meeting at 6:09 p.m.

Roll Call #3:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

The meeting resumed at 6:15 p.m.

Mike Spinks, Skate Palace, addressed the Council and thanked the Mayor and Council Member Cheesman for coming out to view the recent graffiti, which he quickly removed. He is aware that the City Council does not plan to provide funding to him, but he wanted to clear up some confusion. He was initially asking for only \$60,000, not the full \$140,000 for the entire project. Mr. Spinks also noted that he wanted to partner with the City in return for the funding. He added that he did send a letter to the City Manager in January 2023 but understands that there was a lot of turnover at that time.

Jaclyn Smith-Esters addressed the Council regarding the crime at Skate Palace. Having a diverse family herself, it shook her to have this hate crime in our community in 2024. She wondered how things like this are still happening in a community that celebrates its history of abolition, embraces the 14th Amendment, follows the Civil Rights Act, and upholds the US Constitution. Yet one month ago, she stated that the City Council voted not to fly the Pride flag and now has chosen not to call a hate crime a hate crime. She asked them to denounce racism and hate for the future of our community and country and that first and foremost their duty as a council member, or anyone who holds an elected office, is to uphold the Constitution. She added that their constituents, community and country are watching.

Louise Wilder addressed the Council and stated that she was the Human Relations Director for the City in the 1960s. She has seen progress in Galesburg and there are black people who work everywhere in town. She has known Council Member Cheesman most of her life and Council Member Acerra is her alderperson, who she would vote for again. She added that we make rules and regulations for people in this community but it's not up to anybody at the Police Department to make people follow those rules. When you see positive things happening in this community, like at the schools, where there are black people in charge and more black people have been hired at City Hall, that is progress. She hoped the Council can continue this progress, specifically highlighting the Gale Scholars program that Council Member Cheesman facilitates, and give credit for what is being done and continue to work on things that still need to be done in our community.

CONSENT AGENDA #2024-02

All matters listed under the Consent Agenda are considered routine by the City Council and will be enacted by one motion.

24-2002

Approve Resolution 24-03 authorizing the temporary closure of Main Street for the River 2 River Cruise Night, August 16, 2024.

24-2024

Approve Resolution 24-04 authorizing the temporary closure of Main Street for the 2024 Railroad Days, June 25-30, 2024.

24-8002

Approve bills in the amount of \$1,263,215.50 and advance checks in the amount of \$80,310.90.

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Consent Agenda 2024-03.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**24-1000**

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve Ordinance 24-3722 on final reading amending Section 113.043 (C) of Chapter 113 of the Galesburg Municipal Code regarding the limitation on the number of Class C-1 liquor licenses.

Roll Call #5:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS**24-3003**

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve the bid from Hein Construction in the amount of \$1,534,000 for phase two renovations of the Hawthorne Pool building. It is expected that work would be complete by the end of August.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

- A. Traffic Advisory Committee report for February.
- B. City Manager Hanson thanked Deputy Chief Seitz and the GFD crews for their work and quick response to the downtown fire earlier today. He also thanked GPD and other departments for rerouting traffic and making public safety a priority.
- C. The City Manager recognized Kraig Boynton, Transit Manager, and his staff for the recent award of seven new paratransit buses. Two of the buses will be electric and will come complete with charging stations, the first in the fleet.
- D. Also noted that a workaround has been identified for the upcoming Polar Plunge this weekend since it is likely that Lake Storey will still be closed. He encouraged everyone to support the event and Special Olympics.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member White, to sit as the Town Board. The motion carried.

TOWN BUSINESS

24-9002

Trustee Dennis moved, seconded by Trustee Acerra, to approve Town bills and warrants to be drawn in payment of same.

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$752.68
General Assistance Fund	\$3,212.11
IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	\$4,735.55
Audit Fund	
Total	\$8,700.34

Roll Call #7:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Trustee White moved, seconded by Trustee Acerra, to resume as the City Council. The motion carried.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member White echoed what the City Manager said about the buses and feels that they are very important to our community. He also reported that this is Black History Month and he's had conversations with people who feel that African Americans are usually portrayed in relation to slavery but instead they are intelligent, smart people. He encouraged everyone to look into

the history of people such as Dr. Justina Ford, Granville T. Woods, and Frederick McKinley Jones. He also named all the young men who lost their lives from the Massachusetts 54th Regiment that Mr. Jacobs was referring to in his comments from Galesburg, and stated that they are the reason why he wants to fly their battle flag under the American Flag -- to honor their lives.

Council Member Acerra stated that many of the individuals that Council Member White mentioned were wonderful inventors, and one of the things we should celebrate in our country is our patent system, and noted a wonderful exhibit at the Putnam Museum. She further stated that the beauty of our country is that our founding fathers recognized that in order to move forward as a country, we needed to protect those that came up with the concept of intellectual property. Many of the people she heard mentioned tonight were famous inventors and she hoped we could celebrate all the inventors today, including those who are African Americans.

Council Member Davis stated that they have heard several comments tonight, in addition to emails to the City Council, regarding the racist slurs that were graffitied at the Skate Palace. She added that it can sometimes be frustrating to sit in that seat and try to figure out how to respond both personally and as the City Council. She feels that there have been some great suggestions about the moves that they can make as a Council to bring forward proclamations and resolutions again regarding racism. She wants to see a community in a world where the thought of committing a crime like that and saying horrible things like that doesn't even occur to someone. This is a commitment for her to take steps toward bringing back the framework for a resolution or a proclamation to address the recurrence of racism that we are unfortunately seeing in this City. She thanked the community for banding together and making sure that people get taken care of and that those messages get taken down.

Council Member Cheesman stated that Mrs. Wilder is someone that he has the utmost respect for and he thinks that everyone can learn a great deal if they sat down and talked with her. She has a plethora of information and experiences and believes that people's lives would be better from listening to her. He noted that in terms of Mr. Spinks, he absolutely condemns the graffiti and thinks it's important to move to something positive to show that our town has a lot of good things happening. He also stated that yesterday he was able to visit Taste of Candy and read a number of essays and saw many local authors have their works on display.

Council Member Cheesman reiterated that we have a number of athletes and teams, as well as organizations such as the Knox County CEO program, that are making contributions in our community and should make us proud to know that we're in good hands as we go forward with our youth. He also wanted to reinforce what Council Member White and City Manager Hanson talked about with the City's transportation system and its importance in our community. The City continues to do things with the study and is adding services that are going to serve the community well into the future. He also stated that yesterday, in another state, two police officers and a firefighter were killed in the line of duty. His son is a firefighter paramedic in Peoria, and we have a great Galesburg Police Department and Fire Department, and they all put their lives on the line every day. He hopes that we all appreciate their sacrifices and service. He also offered his condolences to Council Member Hix on the death of his mother.

Council Member Hix thanked the Mayor for trying to control the situation tonight where one of the members of the audience who was speaking didn't think he had to follow rules. He commended him for the way he handled it.

Mayor Schwartzman expressed his condolences to Mr. Hix and his entire family. He also thanked Mr. Warf for addressing the Council and appreciates him continuing to keep the Council updated with this difficult situation. He plans to get an update from the City Manager and Police Chief and will contact him later this week. He implored people to be respectful in their neighborhoods.

The Mayor stated that this is Black History Month and he's very proud of all the wonderful events that have occurred thus far. He was at the Support Group for African American Affairs event this past weekend, which was a wonderful event with more than 150 people in attendance. This was just one of the many events that we've had in our community to support black history and African Americans. He stated that the racialization of the graffiti that we saw in our community has been tragic. This was the first time that he had witnessed racialized graffiti and everybody should be horrified at this deplorable act. He assured the community that he spoke with the City Manager immediately afterward and an investigation is underway.

On a very positive note, this month, just since the last time Council met, there was a young woman who became the leading scorer in the history of Silver Streaks basketball, Kiarra Kilgore. The Mayor also thanked Council Member White for his list of names, many who go back generations. We have been seeing on social media, more representation of the generations of the past that have lived in Galesburg, some back hundreds of years. There is a lot of history to be celebrated and the City's 200th anniversary is coming up. As we look back, some of the people in this community have been here for many generations and call Galesburg their home. He added that he is glad he adopted this as his home and his family's home.

Mayor Schwartzman continued by saying that this is a good month to celebrate and that we can do it together united. He thinks that one of the challenges we face in this country is that we're too divided. We have to recognize that we all breathe the same air, we all drink the same water, we all go to the schools in our community, go to the same restaurants, stores, recreational facilities and parks. Finally, he pointed out that he teaches weather courses and he has looked at the forecast for the rest of this month and it is set to be unseasonably warm, so he hopes everyone can enjoy the rest of February.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to adjourn into executive session at 6:50 p.m. for the purposes of discussing approval of the executive session meeting for September 18, 2023, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) and Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

Roll Call #8:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

During the Executive Session, Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to adjourn the Executive Session at 7:21 p.m.

Roll Call #9:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

There being no further business, Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Roll Call #10:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Mayor Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk