

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
June 3, 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, Evan Miller, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Sarah Davis, and Steve Cheesman, 8. Also Present: City Manager Eric Hanson, City Attorney Jason Jording, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz.

Mayor Schwartzman declared a quorum present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

A moment of silence was observed in lieu of an invocation.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from May 20, 2024.

Roll Call #2:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anthony Hutchings, Florence Avenue, addressed the Council and stated that his taxes increased by 47.7% and that he has done nothing to his home. He feels that Galesburg is trying to drive people out of Galesburg and that there are other ways the City could be making money such as the marijuana tax and gaming tax. He wondered if he had any recourse or if he is just supposed to pay the bill even though he is struggling and has a wife and kid.

Mayor Schwartzman thanked him for his comment and noted that this will be addressed later in the meeting.

Dave Selkirk, Golf Commission, addressed the Council with an update on Bunker Links. He noted that this Thursday is the course's Centennial outing, with over 144 players, and invited everyone to come out and enjoy the event, which will also feature music at the end of the tournament. On a side note, he stated that if anyone watched America's Got Talent last night, there was a young lady on the show, and she happens to be married to Richie Hanks, Galesburg, the daughter-in-law of Jim and Kay Hanks.

Tom Simkins addressed the Council as a member of Trinity Lutheran Church. He wanted to encourage the Council to support agenda item 24-2012, which is the purchase from the Knox County Trustee. One of the properties is at Kellogg and Ferris, which has been a long time coming. He also wanted to thank Steve Gugliotta for all his continued work on this project and that he thinks with this property, a project that has been discussed could really beautify downtown Galesburg.

CONSENT AGENDA #2024-10

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

24-3020

Approve the bid from Tiles in Style LLC in the amount of \$23,045.46 for the sealing of Parking Lot A.

24-5005

Receive the March 31, 2024, Investment Schedule.

24-8009

Approve bills in the amount of \$1,740,306.50 and advance checks in the amount of \$560,323.46.

Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Consent Agenda 2024-10.

Roll Call #3:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

24-1008

Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller to approve Ordinance 37-3730 on final reading amending Appendix X of Chapter 77 of the Galesburg Municipal Code by allowing parking on East Ferris Street east of Kellogg Street on Sundays only.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-1009

Ordinance on first reading amending the zoning for the property at the northeast corner of Saluda Road and Huston Street from R2, Tow Family, to R1A, Single Family.

24-1010

Ordinance on first reading amending the zoning for the property at 755 North Henderson Street from B1, Neighborhood Business, to B2, General Business.

24-1011

Ordinance on first reading amending the zoning for the properties generally located south of First Street and between Pennsylvania Avenue and Michigan Avenue from R1A, Single Family, to B2, General Business.

24-1012

Special Ordinance on first reading vacating the alley located between Lincoln Street and Nelson Avenue.

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Hix, to suspend the rules and move agenda item 24-1012 to final reading.

Roll Call #5:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve Special Ordinance 24-623 on final reading vacating the alley located between Lincoln Street and Nelson Avenue.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-2012

Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve Resolution 24-11 authorizing the purchase of 57 North Kellogg Street and 332 East Ferris Street.

Roll Call #7:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

24-3021

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve the bid from Monroe Truck Equipment in the amount of \$316,845 for the purchase of three dump bodies/snowplows/tailgate salt spreaders, two mid-mount side wing plows and a stainless-steel V-box salt spreader with hydraulic controls for the Public Works Department.

Roll Call #8:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-3022

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve the bid from Mechanical Services of Galesburg, Inc. in the amount of \$26,725 for the replacement of the generator at the Brooks Street Fire Station.

Roll Call #9:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Hanson explained that he wanted to be very clear that his comments about the recent property tax bills are reflective of questions that he and others at the City are getting, and not a critique of the job of the Township Assessor's office. He noted that it is a very challenging task, and one that candidly is not usually very well understood. Relative to the tax rate, the City's tax rate this year is the lowest it's been in more than a decade, and declined roughly 8%. The City's overall tax rate has declined every year since 2017. Though the decrease in the rate was 8%, the levy went up slightly, approximately 3.9%, and was more than covered by the growth of the EAV.

The City Manager reported that the total levy for the City represents only 25% of the property tax bill, which also includes the Library. The levy request that Council approved last November was a little over \$10 million, of which 50% went to public safety pensions, and \$2.6 million or 26%, went to the general operations of the City. The Library, of which we are responsible for including in our levy request but not do not manage, was another \$1.8 million or 18%. He also noted that additional funding went to IMRF and Social Security. City Manager Hanson emphasized that this has occurred in each community he has been a part of and it's always a challenging endeavor.

Council Member Miller asked if the City Manager was aware of the property tax breakdown. City Manager Hanson stated that property tax information can be found online and in Knox County, District 205 receives about 50%, with the City at 25%, County at 20%, and then it begins to drop off substantially. He did note that in Illinois, school districts are typically high because one of their sole sources of revenue is property tax compared to other taxing bodies that have

other sources of revenue. He added that the school district in the community where he came from was over 60% of the property tax bill.

Council Member White asked if a person is going to struggle to pay their taxes, is there any assistance they can get. The City Manager stated that while he can't speak to all the agencies that may be out there, obviously there is a process with which to challenge your assessment and try to lower it. He would recommend they contact the Assessor's office for more information.

Council Member Hix stated to that point, there is a timeline for the appeal process for an assessment review, and that time has passed. He has been contacted by several people about their property taxes as well, and noted that next year property owners can fight their assessments during the appeal process. Mayor Schwartzman stated that several months ago when the assessments came out, some were so egregious that he did refer those citizens to Representative Swanson for assistance.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

24-4038

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve a minor plat of the People's Lumber and Coal Company Subdivision.

Roll Call #10:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-4039

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve an agreement between the City of Galesburg and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) and the 2024 Classification and Salary Schedule for personnel represented by AFSCME.

Roll Call #11:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-4040

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve the purchase of the Electronic Citation and Electronic Crash software and hardware for use with the current records management system with ProPhoenix in the amount of \$102,644.29. This cost is shared with Knox County.

Roll Call #12:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

TOWN BUSINESS

24-9010

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$4,148.62
General Assistance Fund	\$7,711.15
IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	\$4,718.24
Audit Fund	
Total	\$16,578.01

Roll Call #13:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-9011

Council member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the Decennial Committee Report.

Roll Call #14:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Trustee Davis thanked everyone for their hard work on something that the state mandated to all Townships and appreciates the staff who put together the report.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Dennis noted the building at Prairie and Main Streets is down and the site is beginning to look good.

Council Member Miller stated that he drove around Ward Three this weekend and was impressed with the upkeep of many of the homes and yards. He stopped and talked to some of his constituents to see what they think needs to be fixed or taken care of in the City and appreciated the input. He wanted to let everyone know that he heard them and will be working with the City leaders to improve things. He is also glad to see the building downtown gone and hopes someone builds something new to help our downtown prosper.

Council Member White thanked everyone who has been involved in getting individuals with PTSD help, especially in light of the fact that this is national PTSD month. He noted that veterans suffer, especially those who have been at war, and he found out that women suffer a lot, as well as African Americans. He asked everyone to be aware that there are people who are struggling and encouraged everyone to look up the seven signs of PTSD.

Council Member Acerra stated that it has been good to get out and see so many homes and has been impressed with people doing a great job with their yards. She also indicated that she is aware of the property tax increases, and while the assessments did come out a while ago, it didn't specify what the dollar amount would actually be in terms of an increase. This has been quite shocking to a lot of people, herself included, and it's going to be rough when people have a fixed income or not. There are many of our neighbors who have houses that need a lot of work, or maybe they're disabled, and that's where she thinks we all have to help each other out and be good neighbors. If you see somebody's home where maybe they haven't mowed their yard or perhaps they're ill, we all have to be supportive of one another.

Council Member Acerra stated that on a positive note, she wanted to say how excited she is that the disc golf course is weeks away from being, especially since she was a big proponent of that. She hopes that we'll get some more people coming to town playing disc golf and feels that it's a great thing to get out and be healthy.

Council Member Davis again thanked the entire group who participated in putting together the Decennial Committee Report. She noted her appreciation of Council Member White bringing up that this is PTSD Awareness Month, which is hugely important and has such a large impact on many lives. She also stated that June is more commonly known as Pride Month. The thoughtfulness of talking about PTSD during this time is deeply impactful because it is also really common in the queer community and a lot of people have experienced incredible levels of horrible treatment. This treatment includes physical violence, all types of abuse, whether physical, emotional, psychological, discrimination in the home, in the workplace, or in schools. She stated that she hears stories about young people who have been kicked out of their homes due to being gay or transgender and really appreciated hearing about PTSD because it is an important conversation to have during this month, too.

Council Member Davis recognized Pride Month by announcing that it was kicked off with a great celebration at Lake Storey park on Sunday. She thanked all the individuals and organizations

who participated and that it was beautiful to see a community come together and to celebrate who they are, regardless of what sorts of trauma they have experienced, but come together, and acknowledge everything that they have overcome and will continue to overcome.

Council Member Cheesman wanted to mention the opposite end of the spectrum that is usually discussed, our seniors. He added that his family was fortunate enough to celebrate his dad's 95th birthday recently and knows that our community has a large contingency of senior citizens and they add a great deal to our city. He feels that their wisdom and experience are priceless and that we should tap into it as often as possible. He added that they bring a tremendous amount to our city, and he's grateful for them and what they offer to us.

Council Member Hix stated that the Township Assessor is in the room tonight and that Mr. Hutchings could possibly talk to her after the meeting. In general, he thinks that taxes are high in Illinois and that's one of the challenges our entire state has, especially with economic development, as well as housing. He stated that as a realtor, he has had clients who were coming in from other states, excited about looking at a house and canceled appointments because they looked at the tax bill. He feels it can be especially difficult for people who get to retirement age even though there is a senior freeze on property taxes. He added that this is why he voted against the sales tax increase that the Council had in front of them several months ago.

Mayor Schwartzman wished a belated happy birthday to Council Member Cheesman's father, as well as Council Member White who recently had a birthday. He thanked the AMVETS, as well as the VFW veterans and American Legion veterans for the honor of letting him march with them in the Memorial Day parade last Monday. He added that the weather cooperated and it ended up being a beautiful day for the parade. He thanked Chief Idle and his staff for being there to celebrate it as well, along with the Firefighters that were in attendance.

The Mayor reiterated that it is PTSD month and a lot of people don't know that it exists, but when he talks to the residents, this is something that comes up often, especially with people concerned about the fireworks, particularly this month, as we approach July 4th. He asked that everyone keep that in mind when they are setting off fireworks at your home, which is illegal regardless. Please be respectful of your neighbors who may have PTSD and know that it is a really serious issue.

He thanked Council Member Davis for bringing up the fact that this month is also Pride Month, which he thinks is very significant. In the past, the City has presented proclamations, which he is proud of since Pride Month has been recognized nationally since 1970. He further explained that the first example of a Gay Pride Week was in June 1970, and 50 years past that particular momentous day, the federal government designated it as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month in 1999, and in 2009 it was LGBT Pride Month. The Mayor indicated that we are celebrating in Galesburg and he is glad there was an event this past weekend to celebrate and asked that everyone keep those individuals in mind whether you're a member of that community or an ally of that community.

There being no further business, Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to adjourn the regular meeting at 6:53 p.m.

Roll Call #15:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Mayor Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk