

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
November 4, 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 Wayne Dennis, Bradley Hix, Evan Miller, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Sarah Davis, and Steve Cheesman, 8. Also Present: City Manager Eric Hanson, City Attorney Dan Alcorn, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz.

Mayor Schwartzman declared a quorum present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Bonnie Ericson gave the invocation.

Proclamation: Veterans Appreciation Month

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from October 21, 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

Martin Reichel, financial secretary for the Library Board, addressed the Council and stated that he has been on the board since before the turn of the century and that it is very gratifying for him that the Library has a beautiful new home. He would like to see the City Council return the money that was taken out of the Library's budget as they are in desperate need of it. The Library was built without local taxpayer dollars, so he noted that the City should have some money that could go toward refunding the money that they removed from their budget.

Mr. Reichel stated that the Library is facing some challenges, one being the homeless people and vagrants camping out on Library property, in some cases, harassing the staff. They added to their budget a part-time security person so that staff wouldn't have to deal with these situations while they're trying to do their job at the Library. He respectfully requested that the City put the money back in that they removed from the Library's budget.

Holly McDorman addressed the Council and read the following portion of the Respect Life Proclamation, "respect for life is a fundamental principle that unites people of all backgrounds,

beliefs, and walks of life, as it calls upon each of us to recognize the inherent value of every person.” She wanted to let the Council know that this month is Transgender Awareness Month, and the transgender community is a population that is very vulnerable to violence, especially murder, and laws that are very discriminatory, even in our community. She stated that several years ago, there was a post about her daughter where people threatened her and very few of the Council said anything in support of her or showed her compassion and dignity. She added that not too long ago, there was a post by someone in the community about the transgender community and how they would be violent to members of that community. But, according to the proclamation read at the last meeting, transgender people are also human. She noted that the Council is not helping the homeless, queer community and other members of this town. Instead, they voted against a community center that would help those in need, as well as voting against homeless shelters and other things because of fiscal responsibility, and are not speaking up and helping those in Galesburg that actually require respect for their lives.

CONSENT AGENDA #2024-19

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

24-3047

Approve the use of the 2024-2025 State Bid for bulk rock salt in the amount of \$84.03 per ton from Compass Minerals America, Inc.

24-4072

Approve an amendment to the agreement to remove the dirt pile at the Transit Maintenance Facility which provides an extension of time period allowed for its removal.

24-8018

Approve bills in the amount of \$993,673.82 and advance checks in the amount of \$913,725.43. Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Consent Agenda 2024-19.

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

24-1020

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Ordinance 24-3741 on final reading adjusting various rates and fees collected by the City of Galesburg.

Roll Call #4:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-1021

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve Ordinance 24-3742 on final reading amending Chapter 93, Section 93.22, regarding calls for lift assistance and establishing a fee for non-emergency, mobility-related service calls.

Roll Call #5:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-1022

Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve Ordinance 24-3743 on final reading amending Chapter 94 of the Development Ordinance regulating the length of abatement for tall grass and weed nuisances from ten days to five days.

Roll Call #6:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-1023

Special Ordinance on first reading approving the 2024 Property Tax Levy in the amount of \$10,453,414, which is an increase of 2.66 percent compared to the 2023 tax levy extension.

Mayor Schwartzman asked what the budget impact would be if the Public Library Board's tax levy request amount was fully restored. City Manager Hansen stated that it would add approximately \$51,000 back into the budget. He noted that the corporate levy that funds parks and the general operations for the City is also taking a \$77,000 reduction in order to meet obligations such as funding the Library and statutory pension obligations. If added back, this would require the property tax rate to increase.

Council Member Acerra asked for information on past levy requests from the Library. The City Manager reported that in the budget document that Council was provided, there is a four-year snapshot of every line item for the City, including the Library's. He summarized that there has been roughly an 18.9% increase over the last four years. This is a total increase, not an annual increase. He also stated that many of the increased expenses are due to the building such as insurance, utilities, etc., as well as personnel costs.

Council Member Hix stated that he remembered having a work session on the pensions, as well as the corporate budget, and this is the first time he has seen any detail on the Library's budget. He is concerned that there is this much of an increase being requested at the last minute. He believes there should have been more communication from their board.

Council Member Acerra asked for clarification on the salary increases for Library staff. City Manager Hanson explained that according to their submitted budget, full-time salaries appear to be going up approximately \$99,000 and temporary salaries upwards of \$45,000. All total, roughly \$176,000. He again noted that the Library is a larger facility with more services and assumes some of these increases are from an operational side. He is unaware of what those are since the City only received the budget recently. He reiterated to Council that 20% levy increases every four years, whether from the City or the Library, is not sustainable.

The City Manager noted that the final levy request isn't due until the latter part of December, so if additional questions come up, or adjustments need to be made, Council has that discretion to wait on its approval. He also wanted to emphasize that staff treated the Library's request the same as the City's, at the same percentage, and that it was not an arbitrary number. He feels that both the City and the Library were treated fairly and given an equitable portion of the increase, which is what has resulted in the recommended levy. He noted that the recommendation being presented did result in a loss to Parks & Recreation in their general operations of \$77,000.

Council Member Miller stated that several constituents talked to him last year about the increase in their property taxes and he ran for Council on the platform of common sense and accountability. For those reasons, he cannot ask the citizens to pay higher taxes.

24-1024

Special Ordinance on first reading approving the 2024 levy for the Special Service Area #1 (Downtown Area) in the amount of \$174,250.

24-1025

Ordinance on first reading amending Chapter 118 of the Galesburg Municipal Code amending the limitation on video gaming licenses and other gaming regulations.

City Clerk Bennewitz stated that this ordinance is coming before the Council because there were various discussions about the number of establishments that are requesting gaming machines. Staff was asked to put together a draft ordinance limiting the number, or adding a moratorium, very similar to the limitation on liquor licenses. The main point of discussion on this ordinance has been the limitation, or the temporary moratorium, but she noted that the City has very little regulations on video gaming and encouraged the Council to consider those sections of the ordinance as well.

Clerk Bennewitz explained that there is a misconception that the City regulates gaming, when, in fact, the City has absolutely no say in gaming licenses. If an establishment has the proper liquor license, an on premise license, they can apply for gaming to the Illinois Gaming Board. She also noted that establishments are allowed to have six gaming terminals in their establishments, which is a regulation set by the state.

Council Member Acerra asked if any communities have regulations or ordinances on how establishments advertise their gaming. City Manager Hanson stated that he is familiar with it

and some communities do not allow the big banner signs through their sign code, but it also then takes substantial enforcement efforts as well.

Council Member Hix asked if an establishment surrendered their license, would it go back into the inventory or would it be removed. City Clerk Bennewitz stated she would clarify but she believes it would return to the inventory, similar to the liquor licenses. Once available, another establishment could apply.

Mayor Schwartzman stated there is an alternative to this ordinance that indicates a moratorium, which would be to cap the limit at 200 or some other number. This might allow more flexibility than a moratorium.

Council Member Cheesman stated that he has tried to operate in a common sense way, and be open to all kinds of ideas and take a look at the true pros and cons of this situation. He understands this is the first reading, therefore, as more information comes to him, he will consider it since he does not have his mind made up. However, at this time he does not support the ordinance. There is a free market in this kind of situation, and he feels that the government would be interfering with private businesses, which is something that is already done way too much. He feels that these are personal decisions that people make and not decisions that we as a government should be making for them.

Council Member Cheesman also stated that the City makes a significant amount of money off of gaming machines, as well as the businesses, and not just off of the machines, but also the food and beverages that people are buying when they're in those particular establishments. This helps them stay in business and help our economy. He cited his final reason as the most critical, which is not knowing the reason that the City wants to set a moratorium on gaming. He believes if people are going to gamble they will find a place to do it. People will move on to other things, and in the process, the City will have reduced the amount of revenue that businesses make as well as the City. He added that he does agree it needs to be regulated but does not believe that putting a moratorium on this would do anything to solve any issues with people that gamble.

Council Member White stated that he looked at the Illinois Gaming Board's video gaming report for Galesburg, and the amount played in September 2024 was \$9,700,000, and they won back \$8,700,000, meaning people lost a million dollars. He knows for a fact that most of the people who gamble really can't afford it and they put their last dime into video machines. He also believes it is sort of a moral issue, and he also understands it's an economic issue. He would like to know how much revenue the City gets in return from the gaming machines and if it's really worth it.

Council Member Dennis stated that the gaming parlors contacted him about the moratorium as they had heard that the State could raise the number of machines allowed from six to ten. He also believes with more establishments and machines, all it will do is split the money.

Mayor Schwartzman addressed the Council and stated that he has studied gaming very extensively and reported on it multiple times to the public. Citizens can find this information on

his websites, and also noted that this subject came up when Council was considering the penny tax. On the video gaming reports, there is an amount played and net wagering activity. For September, they have to factor in all the wins that occur while people are playing, which is \$9.7 million. The funds in is \$3.3 million, which is the actual number that people put in the machine. The City receives 5% of the \$3.3 million, which is approximately \$150,000 for the month of September.

The Mayor stated that there were questions and concerns about having too many machines. He noted that currently, the City has six gaming parlors, but if that number doubled, you could have too many machines, in too many places, and he feels there is a saturation point where basically everybody loses. He also added that in talking to many restaurants that have machines, this revenue is a significant portion of their budget. He questioned the video gaming being distributed through the community, similar to liquor stores. If there were liquor stores on every street corner, people are going to buy more liquor. If the City had more gambling machines on every street corner, people are going to gamble more. He understands that could be that person's choice and that some Council Members have a slightly different perspective on that.

Council Member Cheesman stated his disagreement that just because there are more machines doesn't mean people are going to gamble more. Gamblers will find machines and he doesn't think that more machines means more gamblers.

Council Member White stated that he does not think that limiting the number of gaming establishments the City has will hurt anybody. He also noted that when the Council talked about the push tax, he believed in it, but almost everyone else didn't. In order to get along, he voted against it. He still feels that gambling is a vice, same with smoking cigarettes, and if you want to do it, it's something you have to pay for.

City Manager Hanson stated that this has been a good discussion and hopefully helped people understand the significant size of this business. He reiterated that this is on first reading and encouraged the Council to contact him with questions and that he would get them additional information. He noted that the City has the data of all the net wagering activity back to 2012. If Council would like to provide any feedback to staff, adjustments can be made prior to the November 18th meeting, or the ordinance can also be tabled at that meeting. He applauded the Council for their thoughtful questions, feedback, and inquiries from the media.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

24-3048

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the bid from Revels Turf & Tractor in the amount of \$41,907.45, including trade, for the purchase of a new John Deere ProGator for the Golf Division.

Roll Call #7:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-3049

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve the bid from MTI Distribution, Inc. in the amount of \$89,580.16, including trade, for the purchase of an 11 ft. rotary mower and leaf mulching kit for the Golf Division. It was noted that the life cycle of this equipment is typically eight years.

Roll Call #8:

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

- A. The fiscal year 2025 budget is available for inspection
- B. CIP Updated: City Manager Hansen reported that staff, working with Council, have recommended \$14,725,346 in various capital improvements across City operations. He gave a brief snapshot of some of the following:

Fire central dorm remodel, housing repair program, demolition programs, housing support programs, and environmental cleanup projects. Several information technology projects; a number of which are related to cybersecurity and the various aspects that affect the city, along with Starcom radios for our public safety department. He also reiterated that the money remains from the GO bonds relative to some form of investment in a community center project, in addition to the path project at Lake Story, golf course work, the Cooke School project, as well as the HT Custer ballfield.

The City Manager noted that storm water projects on Carl Sandburg drive, where there has been flooding, are also included, as well as roughly \$1.95 million in street and sidewalk related improvements across the city. The typical vehicle replacement program is in the CIP, as well as the new buses that Transit is anticipated to receive in 2025. City Manager Hanson finally noted that there are numerous water projects, including new meters and water main replacements.

He noted that the Council has completed the Strategic Plan, and those priorities will also be taken into account. Staff will also have time to include those into the projections for 2026 through 2030, as well as some of the infrastructure assessments that the City is doing relative to water and PFAS. He stated that this plan will obviously be subject to change, but 2025 is fairly solidified based on the feedback from Council, from their residents, and the dollars the City has available in the various funds.

Council Member Acerra asked for an explanation of the Starcom radios for public safety. Police Chief Idle explained that historically with Public Safety communications, every department and agency had their own channel and each was on a separate frequency. Starcom is a public/private partnership with Motorola Solutions commissioned by the State which

establishes a single statewide platform for all public safety agencies to share emergency information.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

24-4073

Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a minor plat of the Fritzler Estates Extension Two.

Roll Call #9:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-4074

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve a Minor Plat of the Seminary Square Commercial Resub No. 4.

Roll Call #10:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-4075

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the proposal from Klinger & Associates in the amount of \$35,000 for architectural design, bidding, and construction administration of an addition to the park maintenance building, located at Bunker Links Golf Course.

Roll Call #11:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-4076

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve the renewal of insurance policies from the Illinois Municipal League Risk Management Association (RMA) for liability, property, and vehicle insurance coverage, with an annual premium of \$474,081.

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

TOWN BUSINESS

24-9023

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$951.22
General Assistance Fund	\$9,667.05
IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$10,618.27

Roll Call #13:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

24-9024

Ordinance on first reading approving the Township Budget and Appropriation for the fiscal year beginning January 1, 2025, and ending December 31, 2025, showing the following:

General Town Fund	\$562,900.00	
Audit Fund	\$19,000.00	
Liability Fund	\$13,200.00	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	\$36,000.00	
Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF)	\$36,000.00	
General Assistance Fund	\$429,825.00	
Total Appropriations		\$1,096,925.00

24-9025

Ordinance on first reading approving the 2024 Property Tax Levy for the Town of the City of Galesburg in the amount of \$531,000.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Hix wanted to thank everyone who served in the military, including Council Members White and Dennis, and especially his brother in Texas, Kevin, who is watching tonight. He thanked him for his 20 plus years of service in the army. He also noted that his wife works at the VA and tells him about the people who she gets to meet and the stories they tell of their service. She is very honored to work with them and he wished everyone a happy Veterans Day.

Council Member Dennis also thanked the veterans and noted that he and Council Member White go back a long way. He added that he was in the Navy on a carrier, and is proud that his carrier picked up the first astronaut, Alan Shepard. His ship was the USS Lake Champlain. He thanked the veterans for their service.

Council Member Miller also thanked Council Members Dennis and White for their service, as well as all the veterans for his freedom.

Council Member White stated that he was also in the Navy and was on the USS Franklin D. Roosevelt, helicopter attack light squadron three, the only military unit that never had a home base in the United States of America, being commissioned and decommissioned in Vietnam. He also served on the USS Coronado. He added that he loved his time in the military and that it was a great learning experience. He announced that he went to the GAVC and visited with three young men there who made him some items, each using sophisticated machines. These men have the skills to go out and get a job running these machines today and he takes his hat off to them. He feels this is a great program, and if anyone knows someone who doesn't know what they want to do yet, he urged them to get into the GAVC program.

Council Member Acerra stated that she was very disappointed that she was unable to attend the GAVC event because she definitely supports vocational skills and training, and she thinks there are so many great careers that are available to young people if they learn a trade. She hopes to get to the building soon, but noted that this is a very busy time for her occupation. She also wanted to echo the comments about veterans, adding that she never served, but that she very much admires all the characteristics, discipline, and the way veterans conduct themselves. The service most of all is something that she valued and they tried to instill in their kids, with volunteer work and being engaged with a youth group that worked with the military.

Council Member Davis echoed the sentiment of the Veterans Day proclamation tonight and thanked everyone who has served. She also added that the election is upcoming at both the federal and local level and she thought it was great to walk into City Hall tonight and see a line of people wanting to vote. She encouraged everyone to go out and vote like your life depends on it, and remember that it is your right. She added that she wanted to acknowledge the public comment tonight about November being Transgender Awareness Month and that it is important that we not only recognize but uplift people who are actively being oppressed, victims of threats and of violence. There is so much terror and horror being experienced by trans people right now and noted that she lives with someone who is trans and that she is incredibly aware of this. She still has not seen accountability from some leaders of the City who

have made comments outside of meetings that were shared on social media calling transgender people freaks and implying that someone wants to hit them with a bat.

Council Member Cheesman stated that the Council's agenda and the actions that were taken tonight continue to get a lot of things accomplished that are positive for our City. He again wanted to salute his colleagues that served in the military and noted that our military are our true heroes. He also wanted to thank his 95-year-old dad, who just missed World War II, but served in Korea, had a brother in the Marines, an uncle in the Navy, and another uncle who was killed in World War II. He added that the reason we get to vote is because of all of these men and women who have literally sacrificed their lives for us.

Council Member Cheesman also stated that he is looking forward to the wonderful new VA clinic that will be opening this week, which will add a nice service to our community. He congratulated Carl Sandburg College on the opening of their new science and technology center this last week that will be taken advantage of by numerous students throughout our region and help them become trained in a variety of professions that will contribute to our society. Lastly, he wanted to note that regarding the Vocational Center (GAVC), there were 1,800 students who went through the building last week and that the staff are doing so many good things. He knows that many on the Council are very big vocational fans and that these are the jobs of the future. He is also aware that the City's warming center will begin providing services to those that are in need soon and that this is an important initiative to him and many others.

Mayor Schwartzman announced that there was a legislative luncheon earlier last week, which allowed three of our local state representatives, Senator Anderson, Senator Halpin and Representative Swanson, to be on a panel and to answer questions on many topics. Despite them being in different parties, there was a lot of respect shown among them and a lot of common answers as well. He stated that the GAVC fair was amazing and thanked Ken Springer for all that he does to assist in that as well. He believes the student enrollment is up by 100 students this year, which is phenomenal, and the trajectory continues to go up.

The Mayor announced that November 11th is Veterans Day and he hopes everyone spends that day celebrating their relatives, friends, and neighbors who have served in the military. He added that both his grandfathers served, his oldest grandfather served in World War I, and his grandfather on his father's side served in World War II. He also announced that on November 8th, there will be a big event at the VA for the unveiling of their new building. They have reclaimed the former Bergner's site and will be opening the Lane A. Evans community based outpatient clinic at that site. They are going to offer new services, not only for citizens of Galesburg, but also for the region, and anticipate people coming from hours away to frequent that facility. The Mayor noted that former Congressman Lane A. Evans was a Marine Corps veteran as well.

The Mayor also reiterated that tomorrow is election day and that he hopes everyone gets out, if they haven't already done so, and exercises that right. It's very important that we all do this as part of our civic responsibility, and he hopes our numbers are very high in the Galesburg and Knox County area.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to adjourn into executive session at 7:30 p.m. for the purposes of discussing approval of the executive session meeting for April 15, 2024, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21), Collective Negotiating (5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2), and Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

Roll Call #14:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

During the Executive Session, Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to adjourn the Executive Session at 8:22 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.

There being no further business, Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:22 p.m.

Roll Call #16:

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