

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
February 17, 2025
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, Evan Miller, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Sarah Carrington, and Steve Cheesman, 7. Absent: Council Member Wayne Dennis, 1. 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.

Semenya McCord gave the invocation.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from February 3, 2025.

Roll Call #2:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Dennis, 1.

Abstain: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Reverend Andrew Jowers, president of Unity in the Community Alliance, addressed the Council stating that he emailed three Council Members regarding the consideration of naming a street after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He is hoping that this item can get on a future Council agenda. He also stated that he has seen yard signs for candidates and he hopes that those individuals who say they represent all city residents and make the life of all residents better, attend the upcoming candidate forum.

Glenn Busse addressed the Council and stated that he is a resident of Canterbury Court and a company from Alpha has indicated they would like to build solar panels, with the addition of sheep, in his backyard. There was to be a Planning and Zoning meeting this week to review a variance about how close to the property line the project could be; however, the project developer withdrew, but the issue is still very concerning to him and his neighbors. He noted that his neighbors are very angry about the situation since no one has come forward and made them aware of the project initially.

Mr. Busse added that they are concerned and feel that something needs to be done before the project breaks ground, specifically regarding the zoning. He stated that he talked to someone who used to be on the Commission who told him there are a lot of different definitions of what could go in multifamily zoning, including solar farms, and possibly sheep in that situation. He understands that there is a housing issue in Galesburg and he believes that area would be an ideal place for housing to develop. If solar panels and sheep are there, property values will decline and people won't be interested in moving out there. He also stated his concern about why a company from Alpha has decided that this location is the only place that they build this solar farm. He reiterated that the entire neighborhood is concerned about what's happening and that Council will be hearing more from them in the future.

Mark Rasmussen addressed the Council and thanked them for the Urban Ag Grant he received in 2023. He has been able to enjoy many fruit tree orchards over the years on various properties throughout the City, which have been very well received by the neighborhoods. He has welcomed the volunteer garden help and expanding friendships.

Demarkius Medley addressed the Council and stated that he received an Urban Ag Grant 2023 that saved his farm and is a direct investment in Galesburg's future, creating local jobs, increasing food security and revitalizing under utilized land. This initiative not only promotes sustainability, but also strengthens the local economy by keeping resources within the community. These projects provide fresh, affordable produce to residents, support educational programs and encourage entrepreneurship. He believes his efforts as an urban farmer has inspired many young people of color to explore careers in agriculture where diversity and innovation are needed by showing that farmers can be both profitable and impactful. Mr. Medley stated that he has had the opportunity to lobby for critical legislation such as the Farm Bill and hemp related policies that directly impact Galesburg businesses and economic growth in our community. He hopes to fight for more programs like this and empower local entrepreneurs to drive economic growth and uplift our community.

Alex Theobald addressed the Council on behalf of Walt and Annette McAllister, who received an Urban Ag Grant in 2023 for their project, Libby's Corner. The majority of their grant money was reinvested directly back into the local economy at places like Tractor Supply Company, Menard's, Farm King, and local growers. Volunteers at the orchard have included the Girl Scouts of America, Temple Shalom Synagogue, the Galesburg Public Library, FISH Food Pantry, and Knox College. These groups have enjoyed volunteering to plant trees and cultivate the area as a part of their community engagement program. The project has also brought the neighbors together and they have begun to water and trim the area as well cultivating their own neighborhoods, enjoying the benefits together. He added that Libby's Corner is the very first site people see as they come into town on the train from the West, and it's the last site that they see going back home, and is a shining example of the City and its priorities. Mr. Theobald expressed that he and his wife were at a Council meeting a year ago for a separate grant and they believe that the grants are an important part of the city. Additionally, he added that it was a point of pride that they have been able to help feed and bring the community together in their way as an extension of the Libby's Corner project.

CONSENT AGENDA #2025-04

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

25-2004

Approve a Supplemental Motor Fuel Tax Maintenance Resolution for street maintenance for the 2025 calendar year.

25-2005

Approve Resolution 25-04 in support of the Illinois Housing Development Authority's Home Repair and Accessibility Program.

25-4014

Approve a technical services agreement with WIRC to apply for an IHDA Home Repair & Accessibility Program Grant.

25-5000

Receive annual wrecker rate schedules from various towing and storage services.

25-8003

Approve bills in the amount of \$820,889.05 and advance checks in the amount of \$519,150.71.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Consent Agenda 2025-04.

Roll Call #3:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, Carrington, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Dennis, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

25-2006

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Resolution 25-05 authorizing execution of the Illinois Public Works Mutual Aid Network Agreement.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, Carrington, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Dennis, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Hanson thanked those who have participated in helping Kyle and Abby Small in their time of need and noted that these are the difficult times when communities like this show their true colors and how we care for one another. The community's fundraising efforts to support the staff, Police Department, and dispatch are greatly appreciated. This speaks well to the character of our city and community. He also noted that the City issued a press release regarding the Galesburg Fire Department ranking second in the State of Illinois in the 2024 Fill the Boot Campaign for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Galesburg placed second in the State of Illinois, trailing only behind Chicago. He also thanked all the firefighters who participated and the community members that helped fill the boot.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

25-4015

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve a service contract between the City of Galesburg and the Warren County Housing Authority (WCHA) to provide WCHA residents unlimited fixed route rides from March 1, 2025, through December 31, 2027, which will be tracked and billed at the current fare rates.

Roll Call #5:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, Carrington, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Dennis, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4016

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve an agreement to provide the National Railroad Hall of Fame access to 225 South Seminary Street for initial steps in property development.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, Carrington, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Dennis, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4017

Council Member Carrington moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a work comp settlement agreement with City employee Richard Neal in the amount of \$68,000.

Roll Call #7:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, Carrington, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Dennis, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

TOWN BUSINESS

25-9004

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$11,936.37
General Assistance Fund	\$5,979.01
IMRF Fund	\$3,719.79
Social Security/Medicare Fund	\$3,950.84
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$25,586.01

Roll Call #8:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, Carrington, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee Dennis, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Acerra shared an interesting historical fact about Galesburg that she found online. On February 17, 1929, Edward John King, a US Representative from Illinois with strong ties to Galesburg, passed away while in office. King moved to Galesburg in 1880, attended local schools and Knox College, and later served as the Galesburg city attorney. He was a member of both the Illinois House of Representatives and the US House of Representatives. Notably, he voted against declaring war on Germany in 1917. King passed away in Washington, DC, and was buried in Hope Cemetery. Council Member Acerra also noted that on February 17, 1958, Galesburg experienced a record low temperature of -19 degrees.

Council Member Acerra acknowledged the Landmark Commission and announced that they recently had a historian from the University of Illinois speak about the importance of historic preservation, historic buildings, storytelling, and looking beyond architectural integrity to the significance of buildings in our community.

Council Member Carrington discussed emails she received regarding her comment at a previous meeting regarding a well-known figure's Nazi salute. She emphasized the importance of

recognizing those who defend Nazi behavior and those who condemn it, stressing that such behavior is intolerable and inhumane.

Council Member Cheesman commended the residents from the Canterbury Court subdivision, including Mr. Busse, for their active participation in the government process by voicing concerns about the solar construction project near their neighborhood. He expressed support for solar energy but acknowledged their concerns and his desire to see the area zoned for housing, referencing the City's recent housing study. Council Member Cheesman also noted that the Mayor asked several individuals to give an update on their Urban Ag Grant project during Public Comment. In the future, he would like to have the update as an agenda item so that Council Members could ask questions and have dialog with the applicants.

Council Member Hix welcomed Glenn Busse, his 10th-grade teacher, and thanked him for encouraging him to join Youth in Government, an experience that got him interested in government. He also welcomed his brothers, Keith and Kevin, who were visiting from Georgia and Texas and decided to attend the City Council meeting.

Council Member Miller expressed his gratitude for being invited to Graham Hospital's Evening in Red fundraiser, which raised money for a new piece of equipment for Galesburg. He acknowledged the attendance of other Council Members and the Mayor, and thanked Graham for their contributions to the community, including the opening of their new clinic on the south side of town. However, Council Member Miller voiced his concern about the railroad crossings in that area, which are frequently blocked, sometimes preventing fire, police, and ambulance services from reaching the south side of town. He asked that the City Council and staff explore solutions to prevent this part of town from being isolated due to blocked crossings.

Council Member White recognized Jon Sibley, III, a Galesburg native and current Boston University student, for his nomination to the Institute of Responsible Citizenship. He expressed hope that Sibley, who interned for U.S. Senator Elizabeth Warren, will return to Galesburg and contribute to our community. He also acknowledged Black History Month and shared his thoughts on the 1857 Mountain Meadow Massacre. He also talked about becoming emotional watching the movie *Glory* at the Orpheum Theatre, talking about the struggles of the characters and the experiences of people of color in World War I and World War II. He emphasized that despite being second-class citizens, they volunteered to fight for their nation. Council Member White also expressed concern for Galesburg citizens facing job losses and other hardships, urging everyone to support and look out for their neighbors during these difficult times.

Mayor Schwartzman also recommended the movie *Glory*, stating that 12 men from Galesburg left to fight in the Civil War after training in Massachusetts, and many did not survive. Representative Dan Swanson read a proclamation at the event, which he had previously read in Springfield. The Mayor expressed pride in hearing the proclamation again and encouraged the community to reflect on the courage and determination of the Galesburg men who fought in the Civil War.

The Mayor also mentioned the solar project, stating that most know that he is an advocate for solar energy worldwide. He has assisted the City in making some progress in that area and he is also concerned and has been contacted by several residents in the Canterbury subdivision. He wasn't aware of the project and had not spoken to anybody involved with the project until he heard the news story. He also believes that there are zoning issues that need to be addressed but doesn't know if the City has any power to move this in a different direction. He echoes Council Member Cheesman's point that the City needs new housing, and there are opportunities to expand housing in that area, as well as some other areas. Lastly, he expressed that it was recently announced that the Railroad Hall of Fame will soon begin their amazing development. There's a lot of money that's come in from outside of Galesburg to make that project happen and that it's taken almost 20 years to get off the ground. He stated that Julie King deserves a lot of credit, as well as the board of directors that has worked on the project for several decades to see it to fruition. He added that Bob Bondi was also a very integral part of bringing it to Congress and getting Galesburg designated as the location for a Railroad Hall of Fame, a national museum for our City.

There being no further business, Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member White, to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

Roll Call #9:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Miller, White, Acerra, Carrington, 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