

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
March 17, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Called to order by Deputy Mayor Steve Cheesman at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call #1: Present: Deputy Mayor Steve Cheesman, Council Members Bradley Hix, Wayne Dennis, Evan Miller, Dwight White, and Heather Acerra 6. Absent: Mayor Peter Schwartzman and Council Member Sarah Carrington, 2. Also Present: City Manager Eric Hanson, City Attorney Dan Alcorn, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz.

Deputy Mayor Cheesman declared a quorum present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Deputy Mayor Cheesman gave the invocation.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from March 3, 2025.

Roll Call #2:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the minutes from the November 4, 2025, Executive Session meeting.

Roll Call #3:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Reverend Andrew Jowers addressed the Council, stating that it was an honor to see Deputy Mayor Cheesman fill in for the Mayor. He wanted to bring the topic of good governance before the Council, stating that he felt it was even reflected in the evening's prayer. He explained that good governance refers to how public institutions conduct public affairs and manage resources, with a goal of creating a system that is free from abuse and corruption, while upholding the rule of law and respecting human rights. He noted that key characteristics of good governance include participation, rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. Reverend Jowers provided examples of good

governance, including appreciation shown for Cooke Park at the last meeting, the 2020 Council vote to keep water on for residents delinquent on payments, the renovation of Hawthorne Pool, and the H.T. Custer Park project. He encouraged the Council to distinguish themselves by demonstrating good governance.

Mark Wiechert addressed the Council and wanted to present them with a list of health risks involved with a residential area being near a sheep farm. He noted that many of the risks are spread from sheep by contact, either directly or indirectly. He gave the City Clerk a copy of information for distribution to the Council regarding several diseases and infectious organisms.

Penny Wiechert addressed the Council stating that they have lived in their house on Canterbury Court for 30 years. She wanted to remind the Council about the star of Galesburg, Lake Storey. People swim, fish, and walk on the pathway, not to mention the campgrounds, which are always full during the Fourth of July. She noted the smell of the sheep and that, if the wind were blowing in that direction, it would compromise all the things that Galesburg is famous for, like the fireworks, the campgrounds, and the hot air balloon race. She asked the Council to think clearly about what they are doing to all the people that live in that neighborhood.

Greg Chockley addressed the Council regarding the potential problems with sheep and solar panels at Castlebury and South Lake Storey Road. He emphasized that the neighborhood is not against the use of solar panels, as many residents have them on their houses. However, an overwhelming majority is opposed to an out-of-state solar company's attempt to install solar panels over 30 acres within City limits, covering land that is already residentially zoned and subdivided and part of the approved Comprehensive Plan for residential development. He added that this would be a loss of prime development land and an additional revenue stream of property taxes. The residents appreciate the communication and feedback from staff and Administration, but the Council is the only governing body that has the power to create an ordinance to address this unique issue. The County and State have stringent guidelines in place, but unfortunately, the City does not. He hopes the Council can take action to protect the residents and suggested a moratorium on all projects until an ordinance is in place or allowing the County or State ordinance to take precedence. Mr. Chockley gave the City Clerk information for distribution to the Council.

Darla Krejci addressed the Council as a board member of Ages, the community organizer of the Walk of the Dead Haunted Trail, along with other board members and volunteers. Halloween is a multi-billion dollar industry in the United States with over 70% of the US population participating in Halloween events in some way. They are proud of their economic input to the City and the tourism that it brings to the community. In the last two years, and in three of the last five years, they have been voted a top 10 Halloween attraction in *Haunted Illinois*. In cooperation with the City, they were able to operate all eight nights in October and had approximately 977 participate in the Haunted Trail. The Parks & Recreation Director, Don Miles, was given a check for \$5,780, which represents this year's revenue. Over the eight years they have been operating, they have contributed \$46,000.

Curt Kramer, Knox County Humane Society, addressed the Council and asked for their support and approval of the three-year contract that is on the agenda for animal sheltering services.

Gayla Pacheco addressed the Council and thanked the City for the new Cooke Park. She also thanked the Mayor, City Manager, the City Council, former Parks & Recreation Directors Tony Oligney-Estill and Elizabeth Varner, as well as current Director Don Miles and his staff. They worked diligently with the grants and continue to work with the park.

She also thanked Representative Swanson and Senator Halpin, who were very helpful leaders, and contributed to working as a team for the park project. She noted others who helped on their committee for the Park, including Stephanie Jackson Grimes and Karen Ford Kelly.

Glenn Busse addressed the Council regarding the mention of good governance. When he was teaching government, the level of government that people most attune with is local government, where many know each other and work together for the good of the community. He knows that there aren't many people in the City of Galesburg who would appreciate having a solar farm in their backyard and hopes there is a solution to this issue.

CONSENT AGENDA #2025-06

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

25-2008

Approve Resolutions 25-07 and 25-08 for the Section 5311 and Downstate Public Transit Operating Assistance Grant Applications Special Warranty 5333(b) and Certificates and Assurances.

25-3005

Approve the bid from Burriss Equipment in the amount of \$52,887 for the purchase of a new Wacker E3602 EZ36 mini excavator to be utilized by the Cemetery Division.

25-5002

Receive the December 31, 2024, Quarterly Investment Schedule.

25-6001

Approve the appointment of Mike Panther to the Library Board, term expiring June 2027.

25-8005

Approve bills in the amount of \$1,106,346.78 and advance checks in the amount of \$215,782.07.

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Consent Agenda 2025-06.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, and Cheesman, 6.
Nays: None
Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.
Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

25-1001

Ordinance on first reading authorizing the submission of the Section 5311 and Downstate Public Transit Operating Assistance Grant applications for the period July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, to provide public transportation.

Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to suspend the rules and place agenda item 25-1001 on final reading.

Roll Call #5:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, and Cheesman, 6.
Nays: None
Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.
Chairman declared the motion carried.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve Ordinance 25-3747 on final reading authorizing the submission of the Section 5311 and Downstate Public Transit Operating Assistance Grant applications for the period July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026, to provide public transportation.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, and Cheesman, 6.
Nays: None
Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.
Chairman declared the motion carried.

Deputy Mayor Cheesman noted that during the City Manager Report, City Manager Hanson and City Attorney Alcorn would be reporting on information about the solar farm and the sheep issue.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

25-3006

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve the bid from Sherwin Industries, Inc. in the amount of \$67,228 for the purchase of a 2025 Crafcro SuperShot 125 D Single Axle crack sealing machine for the Street Division.

Roll Call #7:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, and Cheesman, 6.
Nays: None
Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.
Chairman declared the motion carried.

City MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Hanson stated that staff had a lengthy discussion with Canterbury residents and has followed up to keep the Council updated. He spoke with Representative Swanson about this project, and they share concerns about the State's language regarding the sheep and the extra points the State offers on permit applications for companies using this maintenance plan.

Staff is currently drafting a specific ordinance to regulate solar and wind projects within the City. He noted that the City has substantial drainage easements that comprise roughly a quarter of the project size, which the Council is under no obligation to waive, and which could significantly alter the project plan. Staff is also looking into screening requirements.

The City Manager believes the City has sufficient opportunity to reengage the company on this project, express the neighborhood's concerns, and potentially alter the proposal without jeopardizing the City legally. He noted that the City has existing large-scale solar projects adjacent to residential developments, and must be mindful not to treat one development differently than another. He reiterated that staff is taking all available options to protect the City and residents' interests and bring this to a better conclusion.

Deputy Mayor Cheesman stated that this project is part of his ward and that staff have worked diligently on finding solutions. He is impressed by and admires the neighborhood's passion and concern and reiterated that this is a complicated, complex project. He thanked the Administration, including the City Manager, City Attorney Alcorn, and Director Gugliotta, for working behind the scenes to find ways to reach a favorable outcome for this project.

City Manager Hanson also announced that the annual Easter Egg Hunt will take place on April 13th, just one of the City's great programs that the Parks & Recreation Department staff put a lot of work into. He also added that this month marks 26 years of service for both Fire Chief Hovind and IT Manager Orlee Lucero. He stated that the City is very fortunate to have these two individuals, and he appreciates their years of service, expertise, and friendship.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

25-4021

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a service contract between the City of Galesburg Transit and Knox College to provide students, faculty, and staff unlimited rides March 2025 through February 2026.

Roll Call #8:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4022

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve a service contract between the City of Galesburg and the Knox County Veterans Assistance Commission

to provide participants with curb-to-curb paratransit service as well as unlimited fixed route rides from the date of City Council approval through June 30, 2026. Rides will be tracked and billed at the current fare rates.

Roll Call #9:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4023

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve a three-year agreement with Prairieland Animal Welfare Center.

Roll Call #10:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4024

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve a workers' compensation settlement agreement with City employee Zachary Parmenter in the amount of \$24,870.77.

Roll Call #11:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 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

25-9006

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	\$8,872.07
General Assistance Fund	\$9,399.88
IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	

Total	\$18,271.95
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Roll Call #12:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-9007

Trustee Miller moved, seconded by Trustee Acerra, to approve the agenda for the Annual Town Meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, April 8, 2025.

Roll Call #13:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Hix thanked his friends, Bill and Jess, who were in the audience. He also thanked Greg Chockley for an excellent job presenting to the Council and his concise remarks.

Council Member Dennis thanked everyone for their well-wishes on his recovery from a cracked rib.

Council Member Miller thanked City Manager Hanson and Acting Police Chief Legate for their input and promptness on issues from constituents in his ward.

Council Member White thanked everyone who attended and spoke about the issues with the proposed solar farm. He reminded citizens that the Council represents the City and its residents and expressed hope that those who left the meeting would read the information presented by the City Manager. He also encouraged people to view the City Council meeting packet and sign up for notifications on the City's website. He emphasized that the City is very transparent and wants the public to be involved and informed. Lastly, he noted the tumultuous times we are in and encouraged people to look up Leviticus 23:22 and apply it to their lives.

Council Member Acerra stated that the meeting was a testament to citizen involvement, and she appreciated the many people who attended and contributed to the community. She specifically recognized Ms. Hodge, Ms. Pacheco, Ms. Krejci, Mr. Kramer, and Mr. Chockley, and commended them for taking action where it was needed. She also credited City staff for their responsiveness.

Council Member Acerra noted that her own civic involvement began with concerns about the trains, and she assured those in attendance that the City administration is addressing their

issues in a timely manner. She expressed that she understood the concerns about having livestock near their homes. She concluded by stating that by working together, we make the City a better place, and she is very proud of Galesburg today.

Deputy Mayor Cheesman thanked those who spoke during the Public Comment portion of the meeting. He echoed the comments made about the solar project and its complex situation and thanked staff for working on solutions. He noted that there will be a municipal election within two weeks that involves both the City Council and the school district. He stated that there are a number of fine candidates running for office, and that no matter the outcome, he looks forward to working with the Council and continuing the good work that they have been doing. The City has made terrific progress, and that is because everyone has worked together and sought out common ground. They have achieved solutions for all of Galesburg and all of its citizens and gave tremendous credit to the City Manager and his staff, whose expertise, experience, instincts, and leadership have been invaluable. He wished all the candidates the best on April 1st.

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to adjourn into executive session at 6:56 p.m. for the purposes of discussing approval of the executive session meeting for January 6, 2025, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) and Personnel 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(1).

Roll Call #14:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

During the Executive Session, Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Hix, to adjourn the Executive Session at 7:42 p.m.

Roll Call #15:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

There being no further business, Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Roll Call #16:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Mayor Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk