

5:50 p.m. Public Hearing: Knox College Bond Issuance

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
April 21, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Called to order by Mayor 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, and Steve Cheesman, 7. Absent: Council Member Sarah Carrington, 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.

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

Proclamation: Arbor Day

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from April 4, 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.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Noah Selkirk addressed the Council, stating that he and his friends used the skate park often, and that he had helped rebuild it several years ago. He expressed concern that the City had used cheap materials during the rebuild, which has led to the park's current state of disrepair. Although he no longer skates, he knows that the younger members of the community love the park just as much as he did and need a safe and functional place to skate. He noted that the City provides many facilities for residents who play baseball or basketball, and he believes the skateboarding community deserves the same consideration. He closed by stating that spending \$20,000 to fix the skate park properly with appropriate materials would be a worthwhile investment.

Sue Hewlett, a member of the pickleball focus group, addressed the Council on behalf of the pickleball community. She expressed gratitude to the City and Council for moving forward with

the project to build six to eight pickleball courts at Rotary Park. She believes this project will benefit the growing local pickleball community and attract visitors to Galesburg. She specifically thanked Cathy Gibson, the new recreation supervisor, for facilitating the opening of Hawthorne Gym for three pickleball courts, and Parks & Recreation Director Don Miles for soliciting bids for design plans and maintaining the playing surface at the Bateman courts.

David Selkirk, chairman of the City's Golf Commission, announced that the American Legion Baseball will have a golf outing fundraiser on Sunday, May 4th. The cost is \$300 for a team of four, and five spots remain. He noted that Bunker Links is pleased to host many golf outings for organizations raising money.

Nate Thierry, representing AFSCME Local 1173, addressed the Council and stated that the union has been engaged in midterm bargaining since September 2024. The union has met with the City six times to negotiate salary upgrades; however, negotiations are currently at a stalemate. He stated that the union has provided salary comparables from other cities to demonstrate why certain positions deserve the same pay, and noted that these cities have comparable populations to Galesburg. He explained that the City has maintained that the cost of salary upgrades is too high; however, the Council is being asked to vote on a new Assistant City Manager position tonight. This new position would potentially start at over \$103,000 per year, while the City maintains they don't have the funding to increase 60 positions. The union requested that the City Council table the agenda item until more information is available.

Mindy Knapp, a resident of Avon, addressed the Council. She shared that she has been in Galesburg looking for work and has spent a significant amount of time at the public library and utilizing the Township's General Assistance. She expressed her passion for helping the homeless community, emphasizing that they are not ignorant and have contributed to the community through their work. She offered to meet with anyone after the meeting to discuss these issues. Ms. Knapp highlighted a major issue: homeless individuals are not allowed to use bathrooms anywhere in town, despite spending money at local businesses. She also mentioned that the Public Safety Building does not permit the use of its bathrooms at night.

Mayor Schwartzman stated that he would be happy to meet with Ms. Knapp.

Holly McDorman addressed the Council and stated that over the last couple of years, she has had the privilege of seeing another side of the community through a Facebook group called We Are Galesburg, which is a wide, diverse, and wonderful community. She added that she knows of many people in our community who are afraid in light of current national events. She feels it is important for Council Members to indicate that they would be a good contact for anyone in their ward and that they would listen without prejudice. She stated that she wants nothing but goodness for the community and thinks it would be great for the Council to hear from the community.

Robert Cain addressed the Council and encouraged them to give serious thought to the assistant city manager position. He also thanked the Tree Commission and the 350 program, and added that he would be planting a tree at his home. He expressed appreciation for the

efforts regarding the homeless issue, and stated that there are many organizations that the homeless don't want to utilize.

Jason Grover addressed the Council and stated that he had an idea similar to the West Main overpass with the flashing light that lets everyone know there's a red light at the other end. He would like to see something similar for the Fourth Street Bridge, going west, so that people were aware there was a train. This would give people the option of turning around instead of waiting.

Anthony Law addressed the Council and stated that he was very proud of the group of students he brought with him from Carl Sandburg College, most of whom were international students. Since August, the students had been keeping track of everything happening in the City. He thanked everyone present for their representation and leadership. He noted that for many students, both at Sandburg and Knox, the Council represents the United States of America, and they call Galesburg home. Law stated that some of the freedoms they share by their commitment to doing what they believe in are lessons, and that the wonderful thing about college, especially when in another country, is that most of the lessons people learn happen outside the classroom. He asked the Council to remember that they represent the USA and stated that while not everyone will always agree, they should also remember that whatever they do, someone is always watching.

CONSENT AGENDA #2025-08

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

25-4030

Approve a five-year agreement with Mobile Communications America, Inc. to provide public safety communication installation, repair, and maintenance.

25-8007

Approve bills in the amount of \$1,215,459.15 and advance checks in the amount of \$51,414.33.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Consent Agenda 2025-08.

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 by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

25-1003

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve Ordinance 25-3749 on final reading directing the sale of 13 vacant City-owned properties.

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.

25-1004

Ordinance on first reading approving a bond issuance of up to \$26,000,000 for Knox College to assist them in refinancing existing debt and to undertake additional capital projects.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to suspend the rules and place agenda item 25-1004 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 Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve Ordinance 25-3750 on final reading approving a bond issuance of up to \$26,000,000 for Knox College to assist them in refinancing existing debt and to undertake additional capital projects.

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.

Council Member Cheesman stated that Knox brings a tremendous amount to our City and this bond issuance will also mean jobs for our community, help Knox, and work towards the betterment of Galesburg. He is glad to be a part of supporting this.

Council Member Miller stated that he hopes with this bond issue that the community sees spectacular things. He added that he travels South Street at night quite a bit and hopes Knox works on improving lighting to help protect their students.

Council Member White stated that he has lived in Galesburg for over 70 years and has likely been through Knox College more than anyone else in the building, even students. He is glad that Knox is moving forward and added that Knox students used to help out at the former community center, Carver Center. They've always been a great asset to Galesburg, and he's glad that he is part of a group that's helping them move forward and continue to grow.

25-1005

Special Ordinance on first reading authorizing the Purchasing Agent to solicit bids for the sale of 18 disc golf baskets.

Council Member Acerra stated that she has spoken with the leader of the disc golf group, and that they believe the sale is a great idea. She expressed that there is sentimental value to the baskets as well and that the group is grateful. She added that the City is seeing great traction with the new disc golf course and improvements to the Kiwanis Park course.

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to suspend the rules and place agenda item 25-1005 on final reading.

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.

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve Special Ordinance 25-629 on final reading authorizing the Purchasing Agent to solicit bids for the sale of 18 disc golf baskets.

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.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Hanson stated that the City will soon send out information regarding the power aggregation program. Due to volatile markets and high commodity prices, the rate wasn't ideal. However, the existing agreement runs through July, and Ameren will bid their base power in May. The City will notify residents within the next week, although no action is required at this time. If the Ameren rate exceeds the current aggregation rate, residents will be advised to stay in the program, and if the Ameren rate is lower, residents will be advised to switch to Ameren. He explained that the City aims to help residents get the best possible rate, and the aggregation program offers no financial benefit to the City.

The City Manager also announced that the City is addressing PFAS contamination in the water. While notices are being sent due to legal requirements, the City is actively working to comply with regulations and reduce levels. He added that significant progress has been made, with five out of six PFAS types at zero and one slightly out of compliance. However, the goal is to achieve compliance sooner than the five-year timeframe given and new test wells are being drilled away

from the river, and the City is committed to proactively addressing this issue to ensure water quality.

Council Member Cheesman expressed appreciation for the City's communication with residents on this topic. Mayor Schwartzman acknowledged that residents are receiving other letters from the community, some with the City's name and logo, which is causing confusion. He reassured residents that they can always call the City for an explanation and noted that he has been receiving calls this week as well. He agreed that communication from the City has been exceptional over the last few years, especially regarding these complicated matters. He emphasized that the City is taking proactive measures in all areas and trying to do the best for all citizens.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

25-4031

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the proposal submitted by Tri-City Electric to upgrade the PSB Auditorium AV system in the amount of \$52,784.66.

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.

25-4032

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the proposal submitted by Farnsworth Group, Inc., for engineering design, bidding, and construction administration services for pickleball courts to be constructed at Rotary Park in the amount of \$26,450.

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.

25-4033

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the 2025 Classification and Salary Schedule for Exempt employees, which creates the position of Assistant City Manager — Director of Community Engagement/Public Information Officer (PIO).

Council Member Acerra stated that the Council has seen comments on this item and that she has been reflecting on it. She thinks this position is very much in line with the City's Strategic Plan and some of the needs that the Council outlined. At that time, there was a lengthy discussion about the importance of doing more to communicate the City's various service offerings to both tourists and visitors, as well as the local community. She noted that she does

see the need for this position, but that there may be an opportunity to slow down and make sure all stakeholders understand the position.

City Manager Hanson stated that if tabled, he would ensure that the new Council Members who take office on May 5th would have a clear understanding of this item.

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Hix, to table agenda item 25-4033.

Roll Call #11:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4034

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the installation of playground equipment and poured in place safety surfacing at Cooke Park by GameTime in the amount of \$200,474.45.

Roll Call #12:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4035

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve an engineering agreement for consultant services for the Airport entrance road and parking lot project.

Roll Call #13:

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 Cheesman, to sit as the Town Board. The motion carried.

TOWN BUSINESS

25-9009

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$10,216.99
General Assistance Fund	\$6,927.20

IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$17,144.19

Roll Call #14:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-9010

Trustee White moved, seconded by Trustee Cheesman, to approve Resolution 25-01 opposing SB2504, SB2217, and HB2515 regarding consolidation of township government.

Roll Call #15:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee Carrington, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Dennis stated that since this was his last meeting, he wanted to thank everyone he has had the pleasure of working with for the past 16 years. He noted that the next Council Member, Wendell Hunigan, will do a good job. He also thanked Mayor Schwartzman for their service together and expressed his appreciation to everyone at the City.

Council Member Miller stated that there is a lot of trash, including tires, couches, and leaves, thrown in the ditches out in the County. Much of it comes from inside the city, and the County has to clean it up, although the City has trash and refuse pick up that all residents pay for. He asked that people think before they throw trash out, as it is destroying creeks and other natural features and noted that water flows between the counties, including Warren and Knox Counties. He believes that everyone needs to work together to not only beautify Galesburg, but also take care of the County.

Council Member White encouraged residents to visit the city's website and sign up for notifications. He emphasized that the website contains a wealth of information about City Council meetings, commissions, grants, and emergency information. He stated that being involved and informed is crucial for residents to have a voice and ensure that the Council can effectively represent their needs and concerns. He expressed gratitude to the City Manager for his outstanding work under pressure.

Council Member Acerra stated that it has been great working with Council Member Dennis and that she appreciated his help in her transition to the City Council. She echoed Ms. McDorman's comments regarding accessibility, adding that she frequently receives calls from individuals both within and outside her ward regarding various issues, including streets, sidewalks, and homes in need of attention, and she enjoys assisting and meeting community members. Over Easter, she met Derek Barton, a helpful neighbor who spent nearly two hours searching for her mother-in-law's dog that had escaped from their home. She also mentioned her role on the WTVF Public Television board, and noted its valuable programming for our community. WTVF will hold a volunteer day on Saturday, April 26th, to clean up their tower property on Coal Street in East Peoria. Anyone interested in volunteering can contact her. Lastly, she announced an upcoming soccer match between Carl Sandburg and Knox College on Sunday, April 27th, at 11 a.m.

Council Member Cheesman thanked Council Member Dennis, noting that he has been a great servant to the City in many ways. He mentioned that the next day was Earth Day and that everyone should do their part to protect the planet, echoing Council Member Miller's statement. He also stated that while he was not Catholic, he believed that reflecting on the Pope's death and learning from his wisdom is valuable.

Council Member Cheesman acknowledged the Gale Scholars who were present at the meeting and mentioned that they had recently completed a mini unit on city government and civic engagement. He noted that the Gale Scholars program has existed for approximately 30 years and is intended for first-generation potential college graduates from low-income backgrounds. The students undergo a rigorous selection process, and if selected, receive a full-tuition scholarship to Carl Sandburg College and Knox College. He added that the program places high expectations on the students and that it has been a pleasure to work with them and see them at the meeting.

He announced that a number of the Council Members are completing their second year of serving the City, and while they are not perfect, they have accomplished a lot. He looks forward to listening and working with everyone and finds it a pleasure to talk with residents, whether it's on the phone or out in public. He closed by saying that Galesburg is a terrific city, and that there were many accomplishments voted on tonight. He hopes to continue to work together with everyone and thanked everyone for the honor and privilege of working for the City and its residents.

Council Member Hix thanked the KCAP group that went to Washington, DC to lobby on the City's behalf for important projects. He noted that he had personal experience lobbying many years ago when he was associated with the Asheville, North Carolina area, and on a lobbying trip they successfully brought back \$4.5 million for their regional airport. He added that, as Mr. Springer said in his interview, he hopes there are many more trips in the future, with different groups advocating for different things. He also announced that his daughter Madison will be getting her master's degree in International Relations in Italy. In closing, he noted that it has been a pleasure to grow from colleagues to friends with Council Member Dennis, whom he has sat next to for six years.

Mayor Schwartzman acknowledged that he had worked with Council Member Dennis for 14 years, and that when he joined the Council, he and former Council Member Allen had mentored him. He stated that Dennis has been part of many successes in Galesburg and that he should feel good about his accomplishments, adding that he would be missed. The Mayor also thanked the Gale Scholars who stayed for the entire meeting, noting that being involved in a community means showing up. He also stated that, as an environmental scientist who has taught at Knox College for the last 27 years, he wanted to mention Earth Day. He expressed that he wished Earth was celebrated more than once a year and encouraged everyone to consider what they could do to make the Earth a better place.

The Mayor also noted that Arbor Day is Friday. He stated that the number of people who have assisted in Project 350 (now 500), including City staff who have volunteered their time, is a testament to the community's vitality. He added that a tree will grow over its lifetime, and every time you pass by it, see it, or come back to visit, you will feel that it is part of your home.

There being no further business, Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to adjourn the meeting at 7:08 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