

5:30 p.m. Reception: Outgoing & Newly Elected Officials

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
May 5, 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, Sarah Carrington, 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.

Pastor Antonio Franklin, Full Gospel Church, gave the invocation.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member White, 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, Carrington, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Mayor Schwartzman thanked outgoing Council Members Wayne Dennis and Sarah Carrington for their service to the City and community and City Clerk Bennewitz presented them with gifts.

City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz reported the following were elected in the Consolidated Election held April 1, 2025, per certification from the Galesburg Board of Election Commissioners:

Mayor	Peter Schwartzman	2,918 votes
City Clerk	Kelli R. Bennewitz	4,580 votes
Ward Two Council Member	Wendel Hunigan	321 votes
Ward Four Council Member	Dwight L. White	172 votes
Ward Six Council Member	Greg Saul	508 votes
Township Supervisor	Kimberly A. Thierry	3,069 votes
Township Assessor	Laura E. Williams	4,116 votes

Knox County Circuit Judge Chad Long gave the oath of office to the following: Mayor Peter Schwartzman, City Clerk Kelli R. Bennewitz, Ward Two Council Member Wendel Hunigan, Ward

Three Council Member Dwight White, Ward Six Council Member Greg Saul, Township Supervisor Kimberly A. Thierry, and Township Assessor Laura E. Williams.

Roll Call #3: Present: Mayor Peter Schwartzman, Council Members Bradley Hix, Wendel Hunigan, Evan Miller, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Greg Saul, and Steve Cheesman, 8. Also Present: City Manager Eric Hanson, City Attorney Dan Alcorn, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz.

Proclamation: Letter Carriers' Stamp Out Hunger Food Drive Day

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Jacobs expressed his gratitude to Wayne Dennis for his years of service to the Second Ward and for his support of youth sports in Galesburg. He noted his past support in Mr. Dennis' previous elections, clarifying that his lack of support in the latest election was not personal. He felt that it was time for Wendel Hunigan to join the Council and contribute his perspectives. Mr. Jacobs also thanked Sarah Carrington for her service.

Walt McAllister addressed the Council and stated that he is excited to see Wendel Hunigan on the Council. He also wanted to make sure that Mayor Schwartzman received credit for the Scrabble tournament that was held recently. He noted that there were 50–60 people in attendance, spending the weekend in local hotels and eating at local restaurants. He also thanked Darla Krejci and Jeanette Chernin, who were instrumental in putting the tournament on, and he looks forward to seeing it grow.

Mr. McAllister stated that he and his family were among the first recipients of the Urban Ag Grant and wanted to provide an update. He stated that he had submitted his final receipt and that 90-95% of the grant funds were reinvested in Galesburg through local equipment and tree purchases. Their orchard has hosted visits from various groups, including the Girl Scouts, public library, Knox students, and synagogue members. He noted the orchard's visibility from Amtrak, serving as a final view for westbound departures and an initial impression for eastbound arrivals. Mr. McAllister believes the investment will not only benefit the local economy immediately but also increase surrounding property values in the coming years. Future plans include incorporating public art to enhance the area and attract more investment.

Sallee Wade, a wellness educator and a writer, addressed the Council and felt that with the new Council Members, she would read a light-hearted story about where the City is now. She stated that when our country was founded, there was a conflict about the symbol for newly hatched democracy, and thankfully, the bald eagle won. People have been terrified of getting out of their flock, becoming hateful and fearful toward other flocks that don't look, think or talk like them. Becoming overly focused on wealth and power, like turkeys, has led to a call for awakening in the United States. She stated that hope includes healing for the earth and for each other, and that without hope, despair prevails. Eagles, with impressive wingspans and flight capabilities, symbolize strength, clear vision, high perspective, resilience, and forward momentum.

Candy Webb addressed the Council and congratulated all of them for being able to work together. She announced that Galesburg's Juneteenth Celebration would begin on June 13th and continue for a full week, even though Freedom Day, or Juneteenth, is officially on June 19th. Event details will be released soon for the celebration.

Mary Lou Cochran, a resident whose property adjoins Rotary Park, addressed the City Council. She stated that she and a neighbor had gathered 66 signatures from nearby residents and regular park users who oppose the Council's approval of pickleball courts at the park. Ms. Cochran read the petition: "We, the undersigned, are opposed to the proposed installation of six pickleball courts with lights at Rotary Park. We request that the Galesburg City Council and the Director of Parks and Recreation find an alternative location away from family homes." She expressed the neighborhood's disappointment that the Council approved the proposal without consulting the residents and park users most affected. Their opposition stems from concerns about the noise generated by pickleball and potential light pollution from future court lighting impacting their homes. Ms. Cochran emphasized that Rotary Park has historically been closed between sunset and sunrise to ensure neighborhood peace, referencing the City's noise and light ordinances. She also raised concerns about parking, noting that pickleball players would likely occupy all of the available parking spaces, forcing parents with children to park on the street. She reiterated that Rotary Park is intended as a family park and underwent renovations several years ago following discussions with the neighborhood and park users. She urged the Council to reconsider their vote and engage with the community members who will be most impacted by the proposed courts.

Mindy Knapp addressed the Council, stating that the average annual cost to taxpayers for a homeless person is approximately \$35,000. Homelessness significantly impacts the community by straining resources, impacting public health and safety, and eroding social cohesion. "Social COVID" refers to the degree to which individuals in a society are bonded and feel a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Homelessness also increases the cost of emergency services, shelters, and healthcare, and can negatively affect the local workforce and economy. Galesburg prohibits encampments, forcing these individuals to seek shelter in public spaces like the Library, storefronts, small businesses, and garbage bins, to protect themselves from weather, harassment and sexual assault. She noted that some community members are housing homeless individuals on their porches and in their garages. The City's warming center only has eight beds, and the Rescue Shelter has 15–20 beds for women and 30 for men. The separation of men and women in shelters to protect each sex is not being maintained, with instances of men sleeping in women's areas and both men and women being sexually abused. Ms. Knapp urged the City to take action to help the homeless community.

Charles Little addressed the Council regarding homelessness, suggesting the City conduct another needs assessment. He stated that current facilities are insufficient to meet the demand, which is reflected in Knox County Housing's waiting list. He cited an individual who was 95th on the list and often stayed at the Library. He also shared his experience of becoming homeless after a landlord agreement fell through. He described challenges in securing employment due to lacking a secure place to keep belongings. Regarding shelter options, he explained about a bloodstained mattress at the Galesburg Rescue Mission, and being asked to leave the City's

warming center based on principle rather than stated rules. He emphasized the Library's role as an educational center, not a shelter, and urged Galesburg to assess the actual number of homeless individuals and consider a facility offering not just accommodations but also mental health support, rehabilitation, and job assistance.

Pastor James Hailey, Allen Chapel AME, congratulated Wendel Hunigan, their church's superintendent of Sunday school and trustee member. He knows he's going to do a great job as a Council Member and has the church's support. He is looking forward to the future with the Council.

Andrea Bejarano-Robinson addressed the Council, stating that she moved to Galesburg nearly two years ago. She expressed concern for the safety of her children, who are no longer able to walk outside or play in their own yards without being followed, and that she also experiences this when walking her dog. She noted an incident captured on her video camera, and emphasized the need for children to freely walk in their neighborhoods and play in their yards without fear, stating that she no longer feels safe in Galesburg. She welcomed the new Council Members and noted that she lives in the Second Ward. She concluded by stating that the children of Galesburg deserve a happy, healthy learning environment and safe neighborhoods.

Bernie Cowan addressed the Council commenting that as he was observing the swearing in of the new Council, one thing that bothered and disheartened him was that there was one Council Member who did not clap or offer congratulations to Wendel Hunigan.

Robert Cain addressed the Council and thanked Knox College for their recent event, and added that Knox hosted one of the best drone shows he had ever seen. He welcomed the new Council Members and knows that they are all capable of working together. He knows Galesburg can be a fantastic town and continue to grow, and appreciates all of them and the work they have done.

Dan Leonard addressed the Council, stating he has resided in Galesburg for over ten years. He mentioned that some Council Members might recognize him from Mass, St. Vincent de Paul Food Pantry, his assistance to local residents, Bethesda Food Pantry, and Knox County Right to Life. He noted that for the past eleven months, he has been homeless and is uncertain if he will ever have a permanent home. Earlier today, he received a no-trespass notice from a police officer for being in the Police Department lobby, prohibiting him from entering or remaining in the Public Safety Building or City Hall. He explained that he was able to attend tonight's Council meeting solely due to official business and urged the City to start a discussion regarding homelessness.

CONSENT AGENDA #2025-09

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

25-2014

Approve Resolution 25-12 approving the funding for the City's share of the construction costs for the Safe Routes to School project, estimated at \$39,802.60.

25-4036

Approve the disposal of four paratransit vehicles and two fixed route vehicles that are beyond their useful life.

25-5003

Receive the December 31, 2024, and March 31, 2025, Investment Schedules.

25-6002

Approve the following appointments:

Sandy Wood, Fire & Police Commission, term expiring April 2006

Mark Thomas, Planning & Zoning Commission, term expiring June 2028

25-8008

Approve bills in the amount of \$786,003.99 and advance checks in the amount of \$541,103.17.

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Consent Agenda 2025-09.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**25-1006**

Ordinance on first reading amending the zoning from R-3A, Multi-Family to R-1A, Single Family, for the property commonly known as 3176 Dover Lane.

25-1007

Ordinance on first reading amending the zoning from R-3A, Multi-Family and I, Institutional to B-3, for the property commonly known as 167 North Kellogg Street.

25-1008

Ordinance on first reading amending the zoning from B-1, Neighborhood Business to B-2, General Business, for the property commonly known as 1120 North Henderson Street.

25-2015

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Resolution 25-13 establishing a moratorium on the acceptance, processing, and approval of new applications for Solar Energy System.

Council Member White stated that he feels a 120-day wait for solar energy business decisions is too long and could discourage businesses. He would rather see a 90-day limit instead.

Council Member Acerra sought clarification that the proposed timeframe would enable the City to establish comprehensive regulations, given the current absence of any rules. City Manager Hanson affirmed this, clarifying that it would apply solely to future solar fields and related projects. He added that this ordinance would allow the City to develop regulations and aim to present them to the Council in early August. Council Member Miller agreed that regulations are needed.

Roll Call #5:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Abstain: Council Member Hunigan, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-2016

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Resolution 25-14 appointing the Director of Finance as the City Treasurer.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS**25-3012**

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the bid submitted by Yemm Chevrolet in the amount of \$52,497 for the purchase of a 2025 RAM 3500 cab/chassis to be utilized by the Water Division.

Roll Call #7:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-3013

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the bid submitted by Victory Lane Ford in the amount of \$39,518, with trade, for the purchase of a 2025 5500 cab/chassis to be utilized by the Water Division.

Roll Call #8:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT**MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)**

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to remove agenda item 25-4033 from the table.

Roll Call #9:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4033

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, 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).

Roll Call #10:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4037

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve a preliminary engineering agreement with Terra Engineering for the East Main Street Improvement project.

Council Member Hunigan inquired about the impact of the East Main Street Improvement project in the Second Ward. City Manager Hanson responded that this project aims to comprehensively improve the roadway to enhance safety. He pointed out existing issues such as sidewalks located directly at the curb, limiting pedestrian space, and power utility poles situated on sidewalks. The project will create a more favorable and safer environment for all users, including vehicles, cyclists, and pedestrians, as well as improving the road surface.

Council Member Cheesman thinks this project has potential to help this area of the community that has needed improvements in all ways, from aesthetics to safety to drivability. He added that this is a gateway to the City and it has been neglected for a long time.

Roll Call #11:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4038

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a Minor Plat of the Knight Subdivision.

Roll Call #12:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4039

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve a joint funding agreement with the Illinois Department of Transportation for the Safe Routes to School project.

Council Member Cheesman emphasized the importance of the City adding sidewalks to improve walkability for school children and the public. He believes the community largely supports prioritizing sidewalk construction in areas where they are incomplete or needed. He specifically mentioned Seminary Street, where the sidewalk currently ends near the newly constructed Graham Clinic.

Roll Call #13:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, 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

25-9011

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

Fund Title	Amount
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Town Fund	\$317.21
General Assistance Fund	\$5,207.12
IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$5,524.33

Roll Call #14:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member White reflected on the historical significance of Council Member Hunigan's election, noting that he is the fourth African American elected to the City Council and the fifth to serve. He recalled a painful experience where a colleague questioned the vote of an appointed African American Council Member and emphasized that Council Member Hunigan was elected and that his vote would count. He expressed pride in serving alongside Council Member Hunigan, marking the first time in Galesburg's history, a town founded on abolitionism and freedom, that two African Americans have been elected to the Council. Council Member White encouraged residents to visit the City's webpage to stay informed and make their voices heard, adding that the Council aims to act in the best interest of Galesburg as a whole.

Council Member Acerra expressed gratitude to Wayne Dennis and Sarah Carrington for their dedicated service to the community, acknowledging that being a Council Member takes commitment. She also congratulated Council Member White on his re-election and welcomed Council Members Hunigan and Saul. She invited the new Council Members to have further discussion on agenda items, and offered herself as an additional resource for preliminary discussions before votes.

Council Member Cheesman expressed gratitude to the retiring Council Members for their dedicated service and welcomed the re-elected and returning Council Members. He is looking forward to their contributions. He wished everyone, especially the Mexican community, a happy Cinco de Mayo, and emphasized the historical significance of the day beyond its commercialized aspects. Council Member Cheesman stated that he attended the Thrive Community fundraiser, and commended the compassion and care demonstrated by individuals working and volunteering in various community organizations.

Council Member Cheesman highlighted the upcoming induction of the Gale Scholars class of 2029, and believes they are an impressive group of academically strong and well-rounded

students from diverse backgrounds. They all underwent a rigorous selection process, and he is looking forward to their future impact on the community. Sharing personal news, he announced the birth of his first grandchild, Beau, born to his son Carson and daughter-in-law Morgan.

Council Member White left the meeting at 7:21 p.m.

Council Member Hix welcomed the newly elected and returning members of the Council. He acknowledged the collective service of the outgoing members, and is looking forward to collaboration with both new and returning members. He expressed gratitude for the letter carriers who work tirelessly in all weather conditions, and encouraged residents to support letter carriers and contribute to the food drive.

Council Member White returned to the meeting at 7:24 p.m.

Council Member Hunigan expressed gratitude to the voters of Galesburg for their trust and affirmed his love for the City. He thanked his wife and his late parents for instilling in him values of honor and decency. He also acknowledged the encouragement of friends and neighbors, and specifically thanked Pam Davidson and Jim Jacobs. He also recognized Council Member Dennis, the City's longest-serving member, for his past accessibility to constituents, including his own family, as well as the youth of our community. He noted that Dennis maintained respect throughout the campaign and has established a high standard of service during his time as a Council Member, which he will strive to uphold.

Council Member Hunigan stated his two reasons for running: the decline and need for renewal in his ward, and his strong belief in constituent services. His goals as a Council Member include urging the Mayor, City Council, and City Manager to focus more on the Second Ward and the drug houses within it and greater Galesburg. He also wished everyone a happy Cinco de Mayo.

Council Member Miller agreed with many tonight who expressed concerns about homelessness in Galesburg. He highlighted a new resource, "The Lighthouse," located at the corner of South and Pearl Streets. He attended their recent ribbon-cutting ceremony, and noted their dedication to helping underprivileged individuals. He expressed his support for this initiative and assured the public that the City Council is committed to finding solutions for this population.

Mayor Schwartzman acknowledged the community's challenges on homelessness and the necessity for a unified City Council effort to tackle the issue. He emphasized the significant time commitment of Council Members and the crucial role of community support in achieving these goals. He is happy and optimistic with the Council and noted the importance of unity in our community, and rejecting divisive political influences.

The Mayor reported that there was a positive meeting at the Library, attended by City and Knox College administrators, and noted it was a rare instance of collaboration focused on shared interests. He added that this is something long-time residents likely had never witnessed

before, and thanked City Manager Hanson and Knox College President Dr. McGadney for their leadership and vision in encouraging this partnership.

The Mayor also acknowledged the “Trolls” group for their work in maintaining the trails at Lake Storey and Hy-Vee's participation in their cleanup efforts. He also highlighted the success of the CEO event at Carl Sandburg College, celebrating the entrepreneurial spirit of local young people. He stressed that their success contributes to the community's positive image, attracting investment and visitors.

Mayor Schwartzman stated that the Council will need to focus on investing in housing, a known need that has become more urgent, and hopes to address this with community feedback. He concluded by thanking those in attendance for their attention and noting that their energy inspires him.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member White, to adjourn into executive session at 7:35 p.m. for the purposes of discussing approval of the executive session meeting for March 17, 2025, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21), Property Acquisition, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(5), and Litigation, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

Roll Call #15:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

During the Executive Session, Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to adjourn the Executive Session at 8:17 p.m.

Roll Call #16:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

There being no further business, Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Roll Call #17:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Mayor Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk