

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
May 19, 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, Wendel Hunigan, Evan Miller, Heather Acerra, Greg Saul, and Steve Cheesman, 7. Absent: Council Member Dwight White, 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.

Reverend James Hailey, Allen Chapel AME, gave the invocation.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from May 5, 2025.

Roll Call #2:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the minutes of the City Council's executive session meeting from March 17, 2025.

Roll Call #3:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Proclamation: Poppy Days

PUBLIC COMMENT

Reverend Andrew Jowers addressed the Council stating that the meeting tonight has significantly less attendance than the last one and that he hopes those absent are watching in order to stay informed. At an earlier Council meeting, he introduced the concept of good governance, which he feels is particularly relevant at the beginning of the new Council Member terms. He hopes those serving represent their entire ward, regardless of who voted for them, which embodies good governance. He stated that good governance involves public institutions

managing public affairs and resources ethically, free from corruption, upholding the law, and respecting human rights. Reverend Jowers believes that Galesburg would be a better place if everyone was united as one community, setting aside their differences. He added that he recently wrote an article about a nation at war with itself over race. This issue has long impacted productivity, well-being, and potential, and he is willing to discuss this uncomfortable subject with anyone.

Reverend James Hailey addressed the Council and thanked the City Clerk for inviting him to offer the invocation. He acknowledged the devastating tornadoes in Missouri and Kentucky, and the various weather events across Texas, the East Coast, and the West Coast. He feels that Galesburg could one day face similar challenges, and in that event, he believes the city's response will be to ask everyone for their prayers. He asked everyone to take a moment of silence to pray for those affected by these events.

Mindy Knapp addressed the Council and stated that Galesburg faces a significant problem regarding the lack of accessible public restrooms for its homeless population. She believes that existing organizations are not adequately meeting the growing needs and the housing crisis is evident in unoccupied buildings, many with squatters. Downtown Galesburg is struggling with businesses and economic hardship and because of this, the homeless are essentially barred from using restrooms at public businesses. She expressed concern that the City prioritizes infrastructure like streets and sidewalks, even though children no longer walk to school, over providing public restrooms for both visitors and the unhoused population.

Bruce Cook addressed the Council and stated that he had to overcome alcoholism many years ago and heard the victim mentality and complaints he now hears from homeless individuals. He stated that while compassion from individuals, organizations, and religious institutions is valuable, ultimately, it is the responsibility of these individuals to actively work towards improving their own lives. He noted that he experienced homelessness for over a decade and advised shedding self-imposed limitations, accepting help without complaint or expectation, obeying laws, and respecting others' property to earn respect. He does not support a tent city for the homeless, as it signifies an inefficient handling of the situation.

CONSENT AGENDA #2025-10

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

25-3014

Approve the bid submitted by Brown Excavating, Inc., in the amount of \$122,389 for the demolition and clean-up of six properties.

25-3015

Approve the bid from Mechanical Services of Galesburg, Inc., in the amount of \$24,600 for the demolition and clean-up of the old fire training tower and the paint building at 2233 Veterans Drive.

25-8009

Approve bills in the amount of \$3,220,101.90 and advance checks in the amount of \$1,008,394.89.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, to approve Consent Agenda 2025-10.

Roll Call #4:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

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

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Ordinance 25-3751 on final reading amending the zoning from R-3A, Multi-Family to R-1A, Single Family, for the property commonly known as 3176 Dover Lane.

Roll Call #5:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-1007

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Ordinance 25-3752 on final 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.

Roll Call #6:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-1008

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Hix, to approve Ordinance 25-3753 on final reading amending the zoning from B-1, Neighborhood Business to B-2, General Business, for the property commonly known as 1120 North Henderson Street.

Roll Call #7:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Hanson announced the upcoming opening of Lakeside Pool for the Memorial Day weekend, and commended Parks & Recreation Director Miles and his team for their preparation efforts. He also highlighted the release of the 2024 Annual Report, which reflects discussions from the Council's last August strategic planning session. The report is available on the City's social media and will be discussed with the Council in more detail in the near future. He noted that the report showcases staff's excellent work in providing important information to the public.

Council Member Hunigan asked about the definition of a strategic plan. The City Manager stated that he believes effective organizations operate with a clear plan where they strategically identify goals, budget accordingly, and execute tasks efficiently and on schedule. He views the Council's actions last year as a positive step in this direction and hopes this approach continues. He feels that this planning should serve as the foundation for daily operations and guide the community towards its broader objectives.

The City Manager reported that he believes the City's top priorities include capital projects (infrastructure, streets, sidewalks, parks, sewer, water), facilities, public safety, and parks and recreation. These priorities support the broader goal of economic development, which includes job creation, housing, and business growth.

Mayor Schwartzman asked about information on the recent awarding of an EPA Brownsfield grant. City Manager Hanson announced that the City received a \$1.2 million grant from the US EPA for brownfield remediation. These funds will support site assessments of the former gas station on the hotel property downtown, as well as other potential sites in the area. Additionally, a significant amount of funding was awarded for the complete cleanup of the old Knox Laundry site located on Ferris and Kellogg Streets. The City Manager commended Director Gugliotta and his team, along with all city staff, for their excellent work in securing state and federal resources to address local issues.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

25-4040

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, to waive normal purchasing policies and approve the quote from Gatekeeper in the amount of \$34,517.29 for the purchase of cameras for the Public Transportation fleet.

Roll Call #8:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4041

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the purchase and installation of a new radiator for a CAT 3508 generator at the Oquawka Water Treatment Plant in an amount not to exceed \$39,218.94.

Roll Call #9:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4042

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a proposal from Aviaway Bird Control Services in the amount of \$54,000 for falconry services in the downtown area.

City Manager Hanson explained the falcons, being predator birds, are controlled by handlers to create flight patterns that drive the crows away from nesting areas. He noted he has seen this method work effectively in another community. He also explained that the City is trying to seek non-disruptive solutions that avoid weapons, loud noises, and other problematic distractions, given the numerous complaints received by both staff and the City Council. If successful, this method could potentially be expanded to other areas in the future. He also believes that the core idea is that the falcons would fly several times daily to deter crows and other birds from nesting downtown.

He also explained that the intent was to try this method for a year to see if it worked, not to commit the City into any long term arrangement. If it is found to be effective and the City wants to expand services, other partners could be explored, such as the County and the Downtown Council.

Roll Call #10:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

TOWN BUSINESS**25-9012**

Trustee Cheesman 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	\$16,239.40
General Assistance Fund	\$3,636.58
IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$19,875.98

Roll Call #11:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Hunigan, Miller, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-9013

Trustee Acerra moved, seconded by Trustee Cheesman, to approve an agreement for services with Property Evaluation and Tax Advisors, LLC, in the amount of \$19,300 for analyzing commercial properties in the Township.

Township Assessor Laura Williams stated that this agreement would be specifically for reassessing 39 multifamily apartment buildings. This partnership also offers the potential for broader reassessment efforts if needed. The company's services include fieldwork, inspections, and creating sketches, a feature that will eventually benefit the County by providing visual and data information on their website. PETA will also utilize comparable sales data, accessed through CoStar, a resource too costly for the Township to acquire independently. She also noted that Quincy has successfully employed PETA's services for commercial reassessments. She believes that this collaboration provides the Township with valuable resources and expertise in property reassessment.

Roll Call #12:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Hunigan, Miller, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: Trustee White, 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 Cheesman highlighted the significant contributions of various organizations and groups within the City. He attended the Galesburg High School awards night and was impressed by the numerous scholarships provided by individuals, groups, and businesses, which emphasized their role in supporting youth. He expressed gratitude for these efforts, specifically mentioning the Hispanic Latino resource group's scholarship program in memory of community members. He also commended the City's effectiveness in securing grants, which benefit various

initiatives, as demonstrated by recent and ongoing projects. He noted that the Gale Scholars recently had a skating party at Skate Palace and encouraged residents to support local businesses to strengthen the community.

Council Member Cheesman also stressed the importance of spring clean-up efforts and maintaining properties, urging all residents, including rental property owners, to help keep the City clean and appealing for both residents and visitors.

Council Member Hix expressed his appreciation for City staff and directors, specifically mentioning the quick IT support he recently needed. He also thanked Director Miles and his staff for their work at Lincoln Park during the Fishing Derby, and Director Gugliotta's staff for addressing constituent concerns about lawns and overgrowth. He acknowledged his communication with Director Gavin on various issues as well and commended the professionalism and responsiveness of all staff and directors in addressing concerns.

Council Member Hunigan acknowledged Council Member Cheesman's excellent work with the Gale Scholars Program and noted his recent interview on WGIL where he reported that the students impressively maintain an average 3.7 GPA. Council Member Hunigan noted that he is also involved with the Support Group of African American Affairs and mentioned their upcoming recognition of youth. They also have a Galesburg High School scholarship recipient with a 4.0 GPA.

Council Member Miller commended Public Works Director Gavin and the Street Division for their prompt response in cleaning up a significant amount of clay and gravel dumped by a contractor on Michigan and Grand Avenue. He noted that staff stayed late to address the issue and he helped them ensure the street was safe. He thanked all City staff, including Streets, Parks, Police, and Fire Departments, as well as those working at City Hall. He believes staff consistently does exceptional jobs and deserves more recognition for their often unseen, day-to-day efforts.

Council Member Acerra also expressed appreciation for City staff, noting the progress of various initiatives and the great state of the parks. She highlighted the significant contributions of volunteers across the community, including those supporting the Parks & Recreation Department with projects such as tree planting. She recognized the involvement of parents and leaders in youth organizations such as Boy Scout and Girl Scout troops, emphasizing that the community benefits from their efforts. Council Member Acerra acknowledged the concern expressed earlier regarding homelessness in the community and believes in the good intentions of area shelters and facilities. She mentioned her visit to The Lighthouse outreach center, echoing the sentiment of the increasing number of community members helping to make a positive difference.

Council Member Saul expressed gratitude to the School District, sharing a personal experience of his autistic nephew's excitement at graduation and the importance of inclusion and the joy on the students' faces when receiving their diplomas. He also thanked the attendees for Poppy Days and shared a story about his father, Ken Saul, a World War II veteran who captured

Hermann Göring's headquarters in Germany. The flag from that headquarters, donated by his mother, is now at the VFW. He urged everyone to remember the sacrifices of those who gave their lives for freedom and to recognize that Memorial Day is a day of remembrance, not just a day off.

Mayor Schwartzman expressed his appreciation for Council Member Saul's sentiments regarding his father and shared that he wears a poppy to honor his two grandfathers who fought and were injured in World War I and World War II. He emphasized the importance of remembering the sacrifices made by veterans and educating young people about this history. He highlighted the VFW Museum, suggesting that young people visit, such as the Gale scholars. He also reflected on his daughter's recent college graduation, noting that she attended Galesburg's public schools along with many of her friends who also started their education in the City and have excelled, and acknowledged the excellent school system and the dedicated teachers. He reminded citizens that with school ending soon, everyone needs to be extra cautious of young people who will be out and about on bikes, skateboards, and crossing streets.

Council Member Cheesman recognized Mrs. Alice Johnson, a 95-year-old representative of the Galesburg Legion Auxiliary, for her many years of dedication to Poppy Days. He noted that Mrs. Johnson exemplifies the significant contributions that individuals like her have made to the Legion and the community.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to adjourn into executive session at 6:57 p.m. for the purposes of discussing approval of the executive session meeting for May 5, 2025, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) and Personnel (5 ILCS 120/2(c)(3).

Roll Call #13:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

During the Executive Session, Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to adjourn the Executive Session at 8:18 p.m.

Roll Call #14:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

There being no further business, Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:19 p.m.

Roll Call #15:

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

Nays: None

Absent: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Mayor Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk