

5:45 p.m. Public Hearing: Closeout of DCEO Grant

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
August 18, 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, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Greg Saul, and Steve Cheesman, 6. 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: Labor Day

Presentation: Adam Sampson, Knox County YMCA. The formal presentation will be on file in the City Clerk's office.

In summary, Mr. Sampson presented a detailed plan for a \$900,000 expansion, including a teen lounge and play zone for children. The YMCA serves 8,700 members, with 150 employees, and provides subsidized programs for 522 families. The expansion aims to increase membership and improve community services. Council Members discussed concerns about accessibility, transportation, and the need for a separate community center. Comments highlighted the need for affordable programs and equitable access.

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from August 4, 2025.

Roll Call #2:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Schwartzman reminded the public that they would have three minutes to present their comments to the City Council. He asked that everyone show civility and let everyone be heard.

Pam Davidson addressed the Council in opposition to the City funding the Knox County YMCA. She opposes allocating \$900,000 in taxpayer money to a private, non-profit corporation when the City should be investing in its own community center. Other cities, such as Rock Island, Macomb, and Peoria, have their own facilities. She noted that many have Boys and Girls Clubs which are independently owned and not affiliated with a YMCA. Her priority is to have a union-labor facility that serves the south side of the community where basketball hoops and other amenities can be installed. She opposes using taxpayer money to fund private industries, believing the community shares her opinion.

Rick Welty addressed the Council as a lifelong member and current board member of the YMCA, expressing his strong support for the organization. He emphasized the positive impact the YMCA has had on his life since childhood, where he learned to swim, play basketball, and found a social environment. He also noted his current commitment to mentoring young boys, initially at GHS North and now at Lombard. He stressed the importance of the YMCA providing a safe and constructive space for children and strongly recommended that the Council consider providing financial assistance to the YMCA.

Demarkius Medley addressed the Council, expressing his support for the proposed \$900,000 grant to the Knox County YMCA for a teen room and indoor playground. He feels that this is more than just a construction project; it's a vital lifeline for the City's youth, offering safe and positive spaces that keep kids off the streets, builds community, and gives families a reason to stay and thrive in Galesburg. He shared that when his family moved from Chicago, his brother found opportunities at the Galesburg Youth Athletic Club (GYAC), which provided him with structure, mentorship, and a safe place to grow, noting that the YMCA is currently exploring partnerships with GYAC, which could significantly expand access to programs for children.

As a board member of the Galesburg Library Foundation, he mentioned ongoing discussions with Adam Sampson about the Library's potential role within a larger community center. He envisions a collaborative space where the YMCA, Library, GYAC, and other community organizations could operate under one roof. This hub would provide education, mentorship, recreation, and enrichment programs all in one centralized location, benefiting families and youth across the City. He believes the teen room and indoor playground will offer children a safe space to play and learn, contribute to reducing youth crime, strengthen partnerships between nonprofits and City services, and make Galesburg even more family-friendly. He urged the Council to approve the grant.

Christopher Lopez addressed the Council and stated that he has been a YMCA member for 13 years, including six years as an employee. When he moved to Galesburg in seventh grade, the YMCA was his primary option, offering an alternative to potentially harmful street activities. They accepted him and helped him through a challenging youth. He strongly urged the approval of the grant and believes it is not only a step in the right direction but also a step towards unity between the City of Galesburg and the YMCA.

Quantrell Cook-Polk, an employee of the Knox County Sheriff's Office, addressed the Council and shared his personal experience with the YMCA. He stated that he has lived in the area for

11 years and noted growing up in the poverty-stricken area of McKnight Street, and benefiting from programs that provided bag lunches. His sisters were part of the Solutions Program and are now Gale Scholars, which has had a significant positive impact on his family. He explained that when his family struggled financially, the YMCA found ways to help, such as lowering membership fees or granting free entry. He expressed that providing financial support to the YMCA would greatly benefit the community and help keep many kids off the streets by providing them with activities and resources.

Holly McDorman addressed the Council regarding the YMCA grant. She believes they are not prepared to receive the money and that several of the responses to questions were non-committal and lacked concrete answers. One significant concern she has is that if approved, the YMCA would have total occupancy by the end of construction and the City would have no say in its operations. If the City contributes \$900,000 for this expansion, she believes the City and the community of Galesburg deserve a voice in how it's run and its operations. She noted that she has been an on-and-off member of the YMCA throughout her adult life. Through a period when she had very limited income, she approached the YMCA, explained her financial situation, and was told that she would need to pay \$5 a month. This was a calculated fee that she couldn't afford and demonstrates that the YMCA is not truly accessible for everyone, whether due to transportation costs, membership fees, or other factors. She believes this is why the City needs a free community center.

Jerry Ryberg addressed the Council and stated that the Illinois Shines program provides free solar panels to citizens. He will soon be getting these panels, which will lower his electric bill significantly. Anyone interested can contact him for a referral.

Tracy Robertson, Knox County Board, addressed the Council regarding concerns about allocating taxpayer money to the YMCA. While appreciating the YMCA, she expressed concerns about transportation for children, especially those not living near the high school or junior high. A key concern was how students would get home after walking to the facility from the schools, and suggested that the project should not proceed until a reliable transportation solution for children is established. She also raised concerns about minority staffing at the YMCA, emphasizing the importance of diverse representation beyond just referees for games. Ms. Robertson proposed a satellite YMCA on the south side of town to serve all three sections of Galesburg, similar to the downtown satellite. This facility should be City-owned rather than privately owned and urged Council to vote no on the proposal.

Linda Miller addressed the Council and stated that with this proposal, the City would be improperly using a portion of the general obligation bond funds authorized for the cost of acquisition, construction, or renovation of an existing facility for the purpose of a community center. She believes that giving \$900,000 to the YMCA for a youth center does not fulfill the promise of creating a community center. She also feels that this venture does not qualify for funding because it's not a true community center, nor is it for the entire community. The City is being asked to provide a significant sum with no guarantees about who would be served, how, or under what rules.

Ms. Miller believes this facility would be limited to teens and children and would require a YMCA membership, which excludes those who cannot afford membership or secure scholarships, leaving out many who require support. A true community center serves all ages instead of having generational segregation. She asked that the City not allocate her tax dollars to the YMCA for a project that deviates from the stated goal of a community center. The YMCA should operate on its own dues, not rely on taxpayer subsidies for its wish list. She reiterated that she feels it is unacceptable to view a \$900,000 payment as a quick fix for a community center and that there are dedicated individuals working to make a genuine community center a reality.

John Peterson addressed the Council and stated that currently, the YMCA offers a variety of group fitness classes, including high-intensity training, strength and toning, cardio, and mind/body programs. The facility is well-equipped with staff dedicated to helping members achieve their fitness goals. They also have an aquatic center and multiple gyms with equipment and a free weight room. He added that a significant program offered by the YMCA is Rock Steady, a class designed for individuals with Parkinson's disease, as well as those with other health issues or simply looking to exercise. This class focuses on core strength, range of motion, flexibility, posture, gait, and even voice exercises. He noted that Carl Sandburg College has partnered with the YMCA for the past two years, sending student nurses to observe and participate in this program, which has proven beneficial for all involved.

Margaret Hall addressed the Council and noted that the old downtown fire station, prior to it becoming Iron Spike, had the VNA approach the City about converting it into a full-time center. This request was denied at the time, as the building was considered a landmark and therefore could not be altered. She suggested that the Council might want to research accessibility at facilities like Lakeside, noting that while it is a very nice facility, playing pickleball there is reportedly prohibitive. She expressed concern that while the City provides amenities, they are not always accessible to everyone.

She stated that Carver Center received a significant amount of money for rebuilding after it burned down and that no one has been able to answer the question about whether this money was ever returned, recommending this as an area to investigate if the City is considering a public project. Concerning Rotary Park, she noted that it's a good location for seniors and for children to play. She highlighted that it is the only location where people can sled without hitting a tree. She argued against adding pickleball courts there, proposing that Bateman Park or the City's property on Fifth Street would be more accessible options for residents on the south side of town. Ms. Hall recounted that 20 years ago, when she was on the City Council, a feasibility study was conducted on the Maple Street Fire Station. It was deemed unfeasible for any development then and has remained empty for two decades. She believes that at this point, little can be done with it except turning it into a parking lot for the Bateman Street Park.

Candy Webb addressed the Council and asked them not to allow the YMCA to take \$900,000 of taxpayers money. She doesn't have an issue with the YMCA, and feels that Adam Sampson and his staff do a fantastic job for our community, children, and seniors. In 1998, she was turned down for membership, having three kids that needed assistance at the time. For this reason she

doesn't go to the YMCA. She noted that since 2014, she has been asking the City for money for a community center on the south side of town; the community center replacement for the one that was sold by the City. That particular community center had birthday parties, anniversaries, weddings, and many other events in conjunction with the south side of town. She added that people on that side of town can't get to the YMCA or out to any other places on the north side. Many of these individuals are the very people who require the assistance, need the facility, need a place for their kids to go, and parents need somewhere for their kids while they are working two or three jobs to make ends meet. The City could use the help of the YMCA to create a true community center and not just another YMCA facility.

Mindi Knapp announced that Galesburg recently celebrated its 30th annual Heritage Days, an event that saw an incredible turnout despite the extreme heat. She stated that an Abraham Lincoln reenactor delivered a moving speech, reminding attendees that "all people are created equal." That message served as a reminder for fostering an inclusive environment within the community. She stated that she is a Planet Fitness member, and mentioned past difficulties in accessing YMCA services due to income limitations. She raised concerns regarding homelessness, particularly children, noting the increasing numbers of youth who have been kicked out of their homes. She also questioned the YMCA's drug policy and discipline strategies for children within a closed environment, especially given current challenges in schools.

Council Member Hix left the meeting at 7:19 p.m.

Ms. Knapp focused on the growing homeless population, and stressed the urgent need for an investment in housing and more jobs. She acknowledged the importance of community activities like pickleball courts, but that these should be secondary to establishing a financially stable town.

Council Member Hix returned to the meeting at 7:22 p.m.

Mary Lou Cochran addressed the Council regarding the proposed eight pickleball courts at Rotary Park, which is adjacent to her property. She is not opposed to pickleball in general and has friends who play, but objects to the revised plans for the park due to its residential location. She suggested that other, non-residential areas in Galesburg would be more suitable. She presented articles supporting her concerns about pickleball noise to the City Clerk. She referenced the articles that recommended pickleball courts should be several feet from residences to ensure harmony between players and homeowners. Ms. Cochran stated that the primary reason for her opposition to the proposed courts is their proximity, being less than 600 feet from residences. She urged the Council to table the proposal and re-evaluate to find a solution that accommodates both homeowners and pickleball players.

Gene Cochran, who lives near Rotary Park, addressed the Council regarding the proposed pickleball court location. He clarified that he is not opposed to pickleball itself, having played sports throughout his life. However, he strongly objects to the Rotary Park site. He likened the sound of pickleball to roofing, but unlike roofing, which is temporary, pickleball noise is continuous. He cited experts who recommend courts be 500 to 800 feet from homes to allow

sound dissipation. The proposed Rotary Park location, with homes on three sides, places courts approximately 250 to 300 feet away. He provided examples of cities facing complaints and even lawsuits due to poor planning and court placement in residential areas. He urged the City to grow the sport responsibly without alienating homeowners, suggesting numerous alternative, non-residential locations such as Lakeside Recreation Center, Lake Storey, Hawthorne Center, and Ice House Park. He asked the Council to use common sense and avoid creating conflict between pickleball players and residents who enjoy their backyards. He requested they reconsider the location choice and consider placing the courts in a non-residential area.

Council Member Cheesman left the meeting at 7:27 p.m.

Bob Colwell addressed the Council, expressing his and his wife's decision to retire in the area because of Rotary Park, which they consider a community park. He stated his confusion regarding the proposal to install courts there and emphasized that in his experience, these types of facilities are always located in recreational areas, never within neighborhoods. He raised concerns about parking, especially given the park's current busy periods where cars already spill onto the street. Mr. Colwell shared that recently a neighbor, who learned about the proposed pickleball courts, expressed that they would not have moved to the neighborhood if they had known about the project. He suggested that this issue could negatively impact property resale values. He urged the Council to reconsider the location of the proposed courts.

Council Member Cheesman returned to the meeting at 7:31 p.m.

James Clark addressed the Council and stated that he has lived in Galesburg for six years and wanted to express his gratitude to the City Council, Mayor, City Manager, Director of Parks and Recreation, and all involved in the construction of new pickleball courts. He began playing pickleball last year and has since played in numerous communities. He indicated that the Galesburg pickleball community is exceptional, noting that they are welcoming to new players. He presented statistics on the sport's rapid growth, including the fact that pickleball has been the fastest-growing sport in the U.S. for four consecutive years and globally, 812 million people play.

Mr. Clark pointed out the increasing commercial interest in pickleball and noted the involvement of high-profile individuals, including actors and professional athletes. He added that the United States hosts two professional pickleball leagues: the PPA (Professional Pickleball Association) Tour, which will visit the Quad Cities in 2026, and Major League Pickleball. He also highlighted that it's accessible to all ages, and provides low-impact cardio, among other health benefits. It also has many social benefits, creating connections, combating depression, loneliness, and anxiety.

Damian Thomas addressed the Council and stated that he currently attends the University of Illinois, but still cares about matters of the community. His background is in aerospace and sustainable aviation, where they consider the sound produced by plane engines. This experience leads him to agree with concerns about noise complaints from pickleball courts. There's conflicting information on ideal court distance, with some suggesting 300 feet and

others 600 feet. In his experiments, environmental variables are taken into account, and believes it's crucial to find a solution that satisfies everyone. He also noted that he has concerns about the proposed YMCA project. In his personal experience, growing up on the south side of town in a family involved with drug dealing, he sees the YMCA as introducing too many "middlemen," potentially complicating access for people who prefer not to deal with paperwork, like his family members. He believes the City should prioritize direct engagement between community members, the Police Department, and youth from the south side.

Aguy Isala addressed the Council and stated that he has lived in Galesburg since the age of seven. He feels that there is nothing to do in town for young people and that's why he believes more pickleball courts are crucial. He has been playing pickleball for two years, and noted that the courts are busy most days. It's a free sport, no one has to pay YMCA fees, and at Bateman Park, players have unlimited access beginning at 6 a.m. The sport is experiencing massive growth and anyone can compete regardless of their skill level. He added that many of his friends can't afford a YMCA membership.

Keira Spillman addressed the Council and stated that she initially considered pickleball an "old person sport" until about a year ago, when she began playing with friends. As an employee at a local church and a high school leader, she has witnessed the sport's positive impact on various age groups within the community. She noted that she sees young people playing outdoors, especially after hours, often at the pickleball courts and appreciates how it has fostered intergenerational connections, allowing younger members of the community to interact with older individuals.

Pam Colwell spoke to the Council regarding the proposed pickleball courts at Rotary Park and stated that while it's a great sport, it is best suited for non-residential areas. Her main concern is the current green space at Rotary Park, which is actively used for soccer and flag football, and does not want the space to be taken away from the children. Ms. Colwell raised concerns about parking, noting that many visitors drive to the park and use parking spaces. Eight pickleball courts could potentially accommodate 32 people, which she believes would overwhelm the current limited parking availability.

Carol Erickson addressed the Council, stating that while the YMCA's plans are commendable, Galesburg should not financially support them at this time. She believes that if Galesburg already had a fully functioning, centrally or southerly located Community Center that served everyone, the situation would be different. The current priority should be a community center that caters to those who cannot easily access the YMCA or might not feel accepted there. She stated that she has never played pickleball and has no objections to it, but suggested incorporating pickleball courts into the proposed community center, addressing both issues simultaneously. She hopes the YMCA can secure its own funding or wait until funds become available.

CONSENT AGENDA #2025-16

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

25-6004

Approve annual membership with the Western Illinois Regional Council (WIRC) in the amount of \$15,997.20.

25-8015

Approve bills in the amount of \$1,110,428.81 and advance checks in the amount of \$566,236.13.

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve Consent Agenda 2025-16.

Roll Call #3:

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**BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS****25-3023**

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the bid from Fowler Enterprises LLC in the amount of \$55,700 for the demolition of the former Maple Avenue Fire Station located at 647 Maple Avenue.

Roll Call #4:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

The Mayor called for a recess at 7:45 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 7:52 p.m.

25-3034

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the bid from Johnson Trucking & Blacktopping in the amount of \$34,596 for the sealing of Parking Lots D, I, and the Lake Storey Pavilion parking lot.

Roll Call #5:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-3035

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the bid from Grosche Irrigation Co., Inc. in the amount of \$132,775 for two test wells in Oquawka.

Roll Call #6:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-3036

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Hix, to approve the bid from Civil Contractors Inc. in the amount of \$547,618.92 for the construction of pickleball courts at Rotary Park.

Council Member White reported receiving no calls from constituents within his Ward regarding the proposal. However, he did receive calls from other citizens, with the majority expressing opposition rather than support. He stated it's rare that he doesn't want to be at a Council meeting, but that tonight was one of those meetings, adding that this vote and the next are difficult. He sympathizes with the residents near the proposed courts and isn't sure he would want pickleball courts next to his house. He wondered if those who want the courts would want them in their own backyards.

Council Member White wished that the proponents and opponents of the courts had discussed this project together and presented a solution to the City, rather than leaving the decision to those on the Council who have no personal stake. There are no pickleball courts in the Fourth Ward, and not having received any calls, he has been an impartial listener. He understands why the City is placing the courts in this location due to existing infrastructure, and if a new facility was constructed, costly restrooms and parking would have to be part of the plan.

Council Member Acerra addressed the pickleball issue, stating that she has been involved with it since her election to the Council. She added that she has never received a noise complaint about the Bateman pickleball courts, which are in Ward Five. Initially, she would have preferred to put additional courts in her Ward, however, City staff conducted their due diligence to find the best location. She acknowledged the common complaint about amenities being concentrated on the north side of town. Having grown up near Rotary Park, she expressed her desire for more recreational options for youth and emphasized the importance of having activities accessible on the west side of town also.

Council Member Acerra expressed trust in City staff's thoroughness regarding setbacks and noise-abating construction materials. She highlighted her personal experience with noise, having initiated the Quiet Zone and living next to train tracks. She assured that pickleball noise is not comparable to what some in the community have endured with trains. She urged the public to trust the City staff's measures to ensure the new location makes sense for everyone. She noted that she understands the concerns about a previously peaceful and underutilized

park potentially attracting more people, but reiterated that it is a public park. She stated that she would be voting in favor of the pickleball courts at Rotary Park.

Council Member Miller would like to see a community room built on the former nursing home property on Fifth Street. He also supports the development of H.T. Custer Park, hoping it becomes a premier park. He would like to see the addition of pickleball courts on the south side of town, noting the area's need for more public amenities. Addressing the concerns about noise, he points out that he lives near train tracks and a busy road (South Chambers Street), and that noise is a part of his daily life. He stated his intention to vote in favor of the pickleball courts.

Council Member Cheesman agreed with Council Member White's opinion regarding the difficulty of making these tough decisions, emphasizing that he approaches every decision with diligence and a commitment to doing what is right. He then outlined his personal decision-making process, especially pertinent given the evening's agenda items. He stated that his process begins with respecting all viewpoints, as he values diverse perspectives since they help in providing informed decisions. He highlighted the exceptional research conducted by City Manager Hanson and staff, who always exhaust all avenues to provide the Council with the best information. He stated that he also conducts his own research, seeking any missing information or unanswered questions that could influence his decision.

Council Member Cheesman further explained that he weighs the positive and negative aspects, striving to make the best decision for the citizens and the specific situation. He acknowledged that many respected individuals hold opposing views on these issues and that sometimes the best decision emerges from a set of imperfect options, stressing that often there is no ideal solution. Regarding the proposed pickleball courts, he noted that the growth in the sport is not a fleeting trend and there is a genuine need for facilities. He pointed out that Rotary Park possesses the necessary space and infrastructure, allowing for construction within the current budget. Addressing the concerns about noise, he stated that he spoke with residents in the residential area near Bateman Park, and they were not bothered by the noise. While acknowledging it could be a potential issue, he does not feel it warrants a "no" vote. His personal concerns included the walking path, sledding, and the parking. He stated that if the proposal passes, these areas would require monitoring. Council Member Cheesman expressed that considering all factors and his research, he would be voting in favor of the pickleball courts at Rotary Park.

Mayor Schwartzman inquired if there are any components of the plan that include noise preventative elements. City Manager Hanson discussed the substantial landscaping plans, though specifics are still being finalized. The drawing illustrates two significant landscaping areas, positioned on either side of the entryway on the neighborhood side of the plan. He stated that staff also explored additional sound barrier options, but the decision not to accept a bid for the sound barrier was based on the belief that the City could install it more cost-effectively in-house.

The City Manager acknowledged the valid concerns of the community and that the City aims to be a good neighbor if the plan is approved. The intent is to continuously address any issues that may come up, ensuring the park works well for both those utilizing it and the residents living nearby. He also noted that there are no lights connected with this plan. If warranted, the approval of lighting would come before the Council.

Roll Call #7:

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

Nays: Council Member Saul, 1.

Absent: None

Abstain: Council Member White, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-3037

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the bid from D&T Demolition LLC in the amount of \$19,710 for the demolition and clean-up of 173 Garfield Avenue.

Roll Call #8:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-3038

Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to reject all bids for the Park Maintenance Building addition.

Roll Call #9:

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

City Manager Hanson announced the kickoff of the annual MDA Fill the Boot event, which will take place on the next three Fridays. He strongly supports the initiative, noting that Galesburg is second only to Chicago in terms of dollars raised in Illinois, and ranks among the top five in the Midwest. He commended the tremendous efforts of the staff, noting that his family and City staff are significant supporters. He also acknowledged the community's exceptional support and encouraged residents to participate by donating. He thanked Chief Hovind and his staff for their excellent work and representation of the community.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

25-4049

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a Revolving Loan in the amount of \$100,000 with JPCD Holdings, LLC, and Dante & Dory's, LLC, for the future phase of their project at 354 East Main Street.

Roll Call #10:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4050

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a settlement agreement with Chad Simmons in the amount of \$15,750.

Roll Call #11:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4051

Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve an agreement with the Knox County YMCA for a one-time grant in the amount of \$900,000 for the construction of a childcare area and renovation of a teen room.

Council Member White expressed his opposition to allocating bonded money, clarifying that "bond" refers to a loan, and believes taxpayers should not be responsible for repaying borrowed funds given to the YMCA, especially if residents also have to pay membership fees. He emphasized the importance of thoughtful decision-making, and given that the presentation and the vote to allocate funds were both scheduled for the same day, he requested tabling the discussion until the next meeting to allow for further conversation and consideration.

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Hunigan, to table agenda item 25-4051.

Roll Call #12:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, and Saul, 3.

Nays: Council Members Hix, Miller, Acerra, and Cheesman, 4.

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion failed.

Council Member White again expressed his reservations about allocating taxpayer money to a private entity, arguing it constitutes a terrible use of City funds. He recalled a decision to reallocate \$2.5 million of the \$5 million bonds towards road improvements, acknowledging he wasn't in favor of the proposal, but its approval directly benefited the community. He emphasized the ongoing efforts to establish a community center, noting an upcoming discussion with an organization that understands how to fund a center. He urged the Council to participate

in this conversation before committing taxpayer funds. Council Member White also raised concerns that the YMCA, which is located in Knox County, had not sought financial assistance from the Knox County Board.

Council Member Cheesman stated that he believes that sometimes external service providers offer superior solutions for community needs, exceeding the City's capabilities. He envisions a multi-component community center, with the current project as one part and a potential south side facility offering a community room and other services. He noted that amenities the City currently provides have a cost, making a completely free model unsustainable. He highlighted unknown operating costs for a City operated community center and advocated for partnerships with experienced organizations for better outcomes. This project would have a one-time cost, noting that if the City operated its own facility, it would divert funds from other critical City needs. He also pointed out the City's difficulty in getting and retaining staff.

Council Member Miller stated that he has always supported a community center but opposes City operation due to staffing issues, and questioned the City's ability to offer services similar to the YMCA. He believes the City cannot afford additional facilities given its limited budget, and reminded the public that 51% of their tax dollars go to the School District. He feels that government agencies should operate like a business and feels that partnering with the YMCA, while not a complete solution, would address many issues.

Council Member Hunigan expressed his support for the YMCA but believes the decision is being rushed. He is in favor of tabling the discussion to allow for more public input, and will be voting against the item tonight.

Roll Call #13:

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

Nays: Council Members Hunigan and White, 2.

Absent: None

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

25-9020

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	\$10,699.12
General Assistance Fund	\$7,136.05
IMRF Fund	\$3,752.05
Social Security/Medicare Fund	\$4,168.22
Liability Fund	

Audit Fund	
Total	\$25,755.44

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 stated his disappointment in tonight's votes and will be watching and monitoring the projects.

Council Member Acerra acknowledged that many of tonight's discussions and votes brought out strong opinions, and she expressed her appreciation to everyone who shared their views. She believes the new pickleball courts at Rotary Park will contribute to making the community's parks more inclusive and accessible to all ages. She noted that the courts would be placed a suitable distance from residences, and that the family friendly park, with its existing splash pad and ball field, will be enhanced with the new pickleball courts. Regarding the YMCA, she views the decision as a good investment for children and working families, citing the YMCA's proven track record. She highlighted that the funding would help expand much-needed programs and that a City operated center at Churchill was not feasible. Council Member Acerra expressed her openness to funding a smaller initiative on the south side that would cater to all ages, and hopes that discussions with various entities, including the YMCA, would take place regarding potential partnerships. She believes the decisions made tonight will unify Galesburg and strengthen the community.

Council Member Saul wished the City employee injured on Carl Sandburg Drive a positive recovery. He shared that he understands how Council Member White feels regarding the Rotary Park decision, and noted his opposition to the proposed pickleball courts.

Council Member Cheesman offered condolences for Sharky Younes, the 40-year manager of La Gondola, who recently passed away. He added that he has a wonderful family and always showed a lot of generosity toward the community. He also reflected on the Council's challenging decisions and the strong feelings involved. He emphasized that these decisions were made without malice and with the utmost respect, believing the choices made will ultimately improve the community. He feels that these projects offer more opportunities, which he views as a positive development and hopes that the Council will continue to pursue positive initiatives and seek collaboration.

Council Member Hix announced that this would be his last Council meeting, explaining that he and his wife are moving out of the City limits. He expressed his gratitude to various individuals and City Departments, thanking them for their help over the years and his gratitude for working with them. He reflected on his time, having worked with 15 different Council Members, and acknowledged that while he and his colleagues didn't always agree, he respected each of them. He knows that everyone on the Council has the City's best interests at heart, even with different philosophies. He added that he would miss being on the Council, and wished everyone well and hoped they would continue to do what they believe is best for the City.

Council Member Hunigan announced that the Kiwanis Skate Park is currently undergoing significant repairs as the park's structures had deteriorated to a structurally unsound condition over the years. This week, 30 volunteers supervised by Tom Simkins, completely transformed the park by removing old material and making the skate park almost brand new. This project was a collaborative effort between the City and volunteers.

He also extended congratulations to the Galesburg NAACP and its volunteers for a successful "Back to School Community Cookout" held on August 8th at Kiwanis Park. This event was well-attended, with over 250 parents and children, with approximately 200 backpacks distributed to students. He thanked the City, including the City Manager, City Council Members, and the Police and Fire Chiefs, who were able to attend, despite the hot weather. He also noted that Cooke Park hosted a similar event to welcome students back to school.

Council Member Hunigan recognized the Galesburg Historical Society, clarifying that the organization has not disbanded, although they are actively seeking a new home. Those who would like to assist with the organization can contact its president, Deb Sugai.

Council Member Miller had no comments.

Council Member White addressed Council Member Hix, stating that he had heard the rumor about his move and knows they have had struggles before, but is sad to see him go.

Mayor Schwartzman stated that he was not expecting Council Member Hix's announcement, acknowledging their six years of shared service. He recalled a past conversation between them, highlighting it as a testament to the power of honest human connection. The Mayor thanked Council Member Hix, particularly for his work at the Airport, stating it is in a much better place today due to his efforts.

Mayor Schwartzman highlighted the challenging meeting, a departure from the near-unanimous votes of the past several months. He acknowledged the significant public participation, emphasizing his support for community input and noting that many, including his mother, were viewing the meeting or would watch the recording at a later date. He feels that these contributions are evidence of the community's strength and its dedication to democratic principles. He knows that not all Council Members, including himself, endorsed every item that was approved.

The Mayor highlighted the many positive outcomes from the meeting, including the demolition of a decade-long blighted house, the opening of a new downtown business, and other developments that will bring positive things for Galesburg. He appreciated the civility demonstrated during the meeting, a marked improvement from two years prior, and thanked the City Manager for that. He underscored the importance of respect with each other in the community since residents frequently encounter each other. Despite disagreements, he believes the meeting served as a good example of how the community can move forward together.

There being no further business, Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to adjourn the regular meeting at 8:55 p.m.

Roll Call #15:

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