

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
September 15, 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 Wendel Hunigan, Evan Miller, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Greg Saul, and Steve Cheesman, 7. City Manager Eric Hanson, City Attorney Dan Alcorn, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz. Vacant: Council Member, Ward 1, following the resignation of Council Member Bradley Hix, effective August 31, 2025.

Mayor Schwartzman declared a quorum present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Bonnie Ericson gave the invocation.

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from September 2, 2025.

Roll Call #2:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Michael Bennett, Executive Director of the VNA, addressed the Council and expressed his gratitude to several Council Members who met with him individually. He noted that possibly his previous discussions may not have fully conveyed the depth of his passion for the VNA, but he emphasized his role as an advocate for seniors in the community, highlighting VNA's century-long commitment to Knox County elders. He outlined VNA's current impact, noting the delivery of 3,400 meals monthly, incurring \$22,000 in food costs alone. He explained that the VNA must raise approximately \$120,000 locally each year to unlock \$700,000 in federal funding.

Mr. Bennett stated that the VNA is requesting a \$50,000 yearly commitment from the City of Galesburg to provide a stable financial base and assure that Knox County seniors will not be forgotten. He presented over 850 signatures from community members who support the VNA and believe in the importance of senior care and stability. He hoped the Council would join the community in supporting seniors, and urged them to make a decision that reflects leadership and a lasting legacy for Galesburg.

Debbie Sugai, President of the Galesburg Historical Society, addressed the Council regarding the Churchill Middle School building, now owned by Rob Benedict, and the church bell which was a gift to Churchill from Mrs. Rose Hoben. She noted that the plaque for the bell is in possession of the Historical Society, who acquired the bell earlier this year. The group proposes to remount the bell at the original site of the Churchill Junior High School, located on the corner of Broad and Simmons Streets. Mr. Benedict has expressed strong support for this idea and wishes to be involved in the project. Ms. Sugai assured the Council that the City would not incur any cost for this project, as the Historical Society will fully manage and fund it. While the logistics are still being worked out and the project will not start for a while, she wanted to come before the Council as a crucial first step is obtaining approval from the City to place the bell.

Mark Kelly addressed the Council and urged them to continue and expand financial support for the VNA, which is crucial for them to secure federal funding, prevent major service disruptions, and ensure that community neighbors are not left behind. He acknowledged the City and County's past support for the VNA and highlighted the local match requirements for funding. He feels that cutting VNA funding without adequate time to secure alternative matching funds would be deeply unfair and harmful. Many VNA programs are planned on a yearly basis, and without sufficient funding, they may be unable to deliver essential services such as meals and counseling.

Mr. Kelly warned that if the VNA cannot provide its services, caregiver burdens would increase, as family members might have to step in without the respite VNA programs offer. Seniors might require more intensive interventions, potentially leading to increased hospitalization, commitment to assisted living facilities, greater isolation, poor nutrition, and deteriorating health. He also believes that any City investment in the VNA would yield a return, as increased federal dollars brought into the community benefit everyone. He stated that the City has a moral obligation to support the dignity and independence of seniors. He pointed out that if the VNA funding is cut, other local services, such as emergency services, hospitals, and County social services, would experience burdens.

Catherine Packingham, agency director for a local small business, addressed the Council. Her business employs 77 caregivers and serves 84 seniors in Galesburg and surrounding areas. She stated she has been working with the VNA for approximately five months and has witnessed their extensive reach and positive impact on the community. She emphasized her dedication to caring for seniors throughout her life, and advocated for City funds to be allocated to senior care. She explained that while her company is for-profit, there are limitations to the services they can provide, such as meals or specific types of care. In these instances, she relies on organizations like the VNA to supplement the care for seniors. She thanked the Council and stressed the importance of preventing the community's most vulnerable members from failing.

Reverend Vince Marolla addressed the Council and City leadership regarding funding for the VNA. The VNA accepts donations but does not charge for its services, and no one is turned away due to inability to pay. For two years, VNA Director Michael Bennett has sought necessary funding to continue the organization's community service. He stated that funding the VNA is not

just about money, but about compassion for those in need, and a commitment from elected leaders to address the needs of the vulnerable.

Reverend Marolla stated that despite the claims of insufficient funds, he believes the City possesses ample financial resources to allocate funding to the VNA. He questioned whether the commitment to the vulnerable was present, noting that the Council voted to give another non-profit over \$900,000. He also stated that this organization received subsidies but offers limited membership and programming only to paying members. The VNA serves everyone in need throughout the community and he reminded the Council that the City had historically assisted in funding this organization. He stressed that the needs of those that the VNA serves are vital for a healthy community.

Shirley Chu addressed the Council as a daughter, mother, business owner and a Galesburg community member. She stated that Galesburg adopted her as its own after she immigrated to this country and shared her sadness about the potential loss of rights and privileges for seniors. She noted that 80% of her restaurant's customers are seniors and she does what she can to support them. She suggested that if 50 businesses in town would contribute \$200-\$300 annually, it would be beneficial; however, she recognized this might not be a shared sentiment and urged the Council to assist the seniors.

CONSENT AGENDA #2025-18

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

25-8017

Approve bills in the amount of \$932,075.85 and advance checks in the amount of \$293,760.66.

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Consent Agenda 2025-18.

Roll Call #3:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

25-1016

Special Ordinance on first reading authorizing the Purchasing Agent to sell retired and confiscated items, or abandoned property, through an online public auction service.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, to suspend the rules and advance 25-1016 to final reading.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Miller, White, Acerra, and Saul, 4.
Nays: Council Members Hunigan and Cheesman, 2.
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Special Ordinance 25-630 on final reading authorizing the Purchasing Agent to sell retired and confiscated items, or abandoned property, through Purple Wave, an online public auction service.

The City Manager clarified that auction details will be available on social media and the City's website. The "Notify Me" option on the website also allows individuals to receive auction notifications.

Council Member Miller explained his motion to move this to a second reading, noting that much of the surplus consists of items such as file cabinets, dump trucks, and police cars, and noted the recurring issue of storing these items. He suggested expediting the disposal of this surplus equipment, ideally before winter, which would alleviate challenges associated with snow plowing in areas where vehicles and other equipment are currently stored.

Council Member Cheesman expressed his respect for Council Member Miller and those who supported the motion, but he believes that while there are instances where he has voted to move items directly to a final reading, many items are scheduled for both first and second readings for a crucial reason: to allow the public sufficient time for due diligence. This process is not about the Council, but about allowing the public to gather information, explore issues further, or conduct additional research. In this situation, he feels the public should have the additional time and will be voting no to proceed to a second reading.

Roll Call #5:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, and Saul, 5.
Nays: Council Member Cheesman, 1.
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-2026

Council Member Hunigan moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve Resolution 25-23 authorizing the acceptance of ownership of 1970 East Main Street and a license agreement allowing temporary access for the prior owner to remove personal property prior to demolition.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, Miller, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 6.
Nays: None
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

Council Member Cheesman expressed appreciation for the Council and Administration's urgent approach to addressing these issues. He noted that while procedural steps often cause delays, it is beneficial for everyone to see these matters resolved. Council Member Hunigan agreed and stated that the City is taking the blighted property and making it safe for the community.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

25-3039

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the bid submitted by TW Gunworks in the amount of \$57,729.96 for the purchase of firearms and accessories for the Galesburg Police Department.

Chief Legate clarified that the Department will provide officers with red dot optic sights and the necessary training, should they choose to utilize them on their issued firearms. Some officers currently have these optic sights on their firearms.

Roll Call #7:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-3040

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the proposal submitted by K-Com Technologies, Inc., in the amount of \$29,500 for the installation and conduits on various communication and water towers in the City of Galesburg.

Roll Call #8:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

25-4055

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Budget Adjustment #1 for the budget year ending December 31, 2025.

City Manager Hanson clarified that the City typically does this process once or twice annually and explained that while staff strive to anticipate all expenses, unforeseen grants, or unanticipated expenditures, occasionally arise. These adjustments account for anticipated and approved expenses, including items ordered late in 2024 that were approved by the Council but

not expended until this year. This is an action to officially reconcile items that have already received Council approval, ensuring budget alignment for year-end closure.

Roll Call #9:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4056

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Hunigan, to approve a Facade Grant Agreement with One Percent Better, LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$18,525.70 or 50% of the actual final project costs, which is less.

Roll Call #10:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

25-4057

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a Major Project Grant Agreement with Thrushwood Farms Quality Meats, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

Roll Call #11:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Council Member Cheesman acknowledged Ken Springer, City Manager Hanson, and all involved with this project and added that this is the most substantial economic development for the City and community in a long time. Thrushwood Farms is highly respected with local ownership and noted the Orange Cup agreement as well, and believes the City will see long-term benefits from both projects.

City Manager Hanson noted that the Maytag location should be operational by October 1st and anticipate hiring for this location to begin this fall. Council Member Acerra added that this project highlights the critical need for housing and knows that staff are working on this initiative. She noted that she is committed to promoting housing development, which is vital for supporting job growth.

25-6005

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the appointment of Angelica Mangieri to fulfill the remainder of Ward One Council Member until 2027.

Council Member Cheesman expressed his support for Mrs. Mangieri's appointment to the Council and had a positive conversation with her last week. He was impressed by her willingness to listen, learn, and contribute, and believes that she will be a valuable member.

Council Member Miller stated that he had a productive meeting with Mrs. Mangieri, which focused on City business, including strategic planning initiatives, and he fully supports her appointment.

Mayor Schwartzman noted that this is his third time presenting a nominee for a Council vacancy, and commended the Council's thorough attention and due diligence to the matter. He feels that their collaborative efforts have fostered an environment of open communication and teamwork. He feels that Mrs. Mangieri will be a valuable asset to the Council and instrumental in advancing the City's progress.

Roll Call #12:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

TOWN BUSINESS

25-9022

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$13,854.93
General Assistance Fund	\$10,431.57
IMRF Fund	\$3,752.05
Social Security/Medicare Fund	\$4,028.79
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$32,067.34

Roll Call #13:

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

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 that he has a picture of himself next to the Churchill bell. He's glad the Historical Society plans to move it and believes the City will be helpful. He was also pleased that the weapons are being purchased from a Galesburg company.

Council Member White also reported that today is September 15th, and on this day in 1963, four African American schoolgirls were killed in a bombing at the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Addie Mae Collins, Denise McNair, Carole Robinson, Cynthia Wesley, were the victims. This was three weeks after Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech and three months after Medgar Evers' assassination in Jackson, Mississippi, which was an act of racial violence during the Civil Rights Movement. Two of the murderers are now deceased, one of whom died in prison for the crime, and two were indicted.

On the morning of the bombing, a white man was observed exiting a vehicle and placing a box under the steps of the 16th Street Baptist Church. Soon after, the bomb detonated, killing Denise McNair (11), Addie Mae Collins (14), Carole Robinson (14), and Cynthia Wesley (14). The four girls had been attending Sunday school classes in the church. Additionally, 22 other people were injured in the blast. He added that Civil Rights activists blamed George Wallace, the governor of Alabama, for the killings. Nicknamed "Bombingham," the city had endured over 40 bombings since World War One. A week after the bombing, Wallace had told the New York Times that to stop integration, Alabama "needed a few first-class funerals."

Council Member White stated that a witness identified Robert Chambliss, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, as the man who placed the bomb. He was arrested and charged with murder and possessing 122 sticks of dynamite without a permit. In October 1963, Chambliss was found not guilty of murder, but received a \$100 fine and a six-month jail sentence for having the dynamite. The case remained unsolved until the Attorney General of Alabama requested the original FBI files on the case and discovered that the organization had accumulated substantial evidence against Chambliss that had not been used in the initial trial.

On May 18, 2000, the FBI announced that the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing had been carried out by a splinter group of the Ku Klux Klan, the Cahaba Boys. It was claimed that four men—Chambliss, Herman Cash, Thomas Blanton, and Bobby Cherry—were responsible for the crime. Cash was deceased, and Blanton and Cherry were arrested. Both have since been tried and convicted.

Council Member White emphasized the current issues of murder and violence in the country, stating that they must cease and that all individuals should treat each other humanely. He expressed concern that failure to do so would lead to the disintegration of society, the nation, and the country, and stressed the necessity of ending partisan rhetoric.

Council Member Acerra stated that after Council Member White's remarks, she felt it was important to recognize that we need to see the spark of God in everyone and be kind to each other. There have been horrible things happening of late, and people are refusing to see

humanity in one another. She noted that there is a lot to be proud of with regard to Galesburg, and added that she had a fantastic time this weekend, enjoying the downtown. She thinks that the work being done downtown looks incredible, including the sidewalks and landscaping. She also had a chance to visit the new Fisk Bier and Wine, and highly recommends it. She saw Mama Mia at the Orpheum Theater, the jewel of downtown and noted that the Theater just received a preservation grant. She expressed that our community has a lot to be proud of and feels that Galesburg has kind and caring people.

Council Member Greg Saul also expressed his concern that discussions have become too extreme and questioned the idea that one should "die for what you believe in". He believes people are too easily offended by others' opinions, suggesting that while individuals have a right to voice their views, some take it too far. He stated that he recently turned 68, and has felt a significant and negative shift in interactions within society.

Council Member Cheesman offered his agreement with Council Member White and that these things have to stop. He noted that we can all control our own actions, and that's where we need to start being accountable. He thanked the seniors who are vital to the community's success, having built its foundation, and noted that ensuring their well-being has always been one of his top priorities. He added that Thrushwood Farms and Orange Cup, local businesses, are the economic backbone of our community. He stressed the need to support their success, as they contribute significantly to Galesburg.

Council Member Cheesman also highlighted resources for staying informed about City business, specifically mentioning WGIL's morning program with Jay Redfern, which incorporates City Manager Hanson. He commended their ability to explain City Council meetings and other topics in depth, making it a valuable source of information. He commended the collaborative spirit within the City Council, acknowledging that disagreements are natural but that the focus remains on finding common ground and achieving positive outcomes for the community.

Council Member Hunigan stated that an involved electorate is critical for the health and vitality of our community, and thanked a coalition of nine constituents from his Ward for their willingness to attend a meeting with City Manager Hanson. This discussion focused on critical issues facing the Ward, including significant concerns about deteriorating and vacant properties, abandoned cars, speeding vehicles, illegal burning, excessive noise, and landlords neglecting property maintenance. He added that poorly maintained properties negatively impact property values, reduce government revenue, increase crime, pose fire risks, and perpetuate a cycle of decay. He thanked the City Manager for facilitating the session and involving key staff and Administration.

Council Member Hunigan also announced that he would be attending his first Illinois Municipal League Conference in Chicago from September 18th to the 20th, along with over 2,000 other elected officials. He hopes to find visionary city planners or officials who can offer ideas for renovating the abandoned Weston School site on Mulberry Street, and thanked the taxpayers for the opportunity to attend the conference. He closed by stating that we are living in unsettling, turbulent, and perilous times.

Council Member Miller stated that there have been three terrible incidents in the last two weeks, including a young lady being killed on a subway train going home, a radio personality shot, and another school shooting. He believes that regardless of gun control measures, undocumented individuals will still acquire them. He noted that he owns guns, and none of his have ever been used to harm anyone. He feels that the root cause of these problems lies with individuals and our nation's mental health crisis. He noted that no viable plan for addressing mental health has been found and that this is an area that we desperately need to improve.

Council Member Miller stated that Galesburg is wonderful and home to many good residents, and that everyone must strive for unity. During his time on the Council, he has even witnessed hate and hateful acts in the Chambers. He feels that the Council is working together, and in looking at the Council's achievements over the past 18 months, 95% of issues are resolved with a unanimous vote, demonstrating their strong consensus on City matters. He added that he has met with the Mayor multiple times and another meeting is planned for this year. His only request is for everyone to get along and collaborate for the betterment of our City.

Mayor Schwartzman stated that the community and those watching, have seen a transformation in the Council and the civility that is shown to one another. The Council is continuing to grow and project a positive image of the community, something that everyone can be proud of. He added that there is still much to do and continued investment is required to attract residents. The City has brought jobs, thanks in part to KCAP, but agreed that without adequate housing, we will likely lose opportunities.

Regarding upcoming events, the Mayor also noted the IML conference in Chicago this week, which most of the Council will be attending. It's a great chance to connect with other council members, mayors, and city managers, sharing ideas and gaining insights into what's happening across our state. This will be his fifth year, and he hopes to learn new things and bring those ideas back to our community.

The Mayor also mentioned that the Linwood and East Linwood cemeteries will have their fall cleanup week September 22-26. If anyone has items they wish to retrieve, they need to contact the City. He noted that there's a helpful post on the front page of City's website about the cleanup.

The Mayor announced that Knox College held its convocation today, marking the start of the academic year. The student body represents 32 states and 20 countries, and this is his 28th year teaching at Knox. The keynote speaker at convocation was his colleague, Mr. Mark Schroyer, a physics professor. He came to Knox in 2005, and raised his family here; both of his children are now in college. He stated that his speech was profound and deeply moving and he has asked him to share it with the community. He encouraged everyone to listen to or read his speech when it becomes available. Mr. Schroyer didn't grow up in Galesburg but has lived here for many years and his dedication to our community, his respect for it, and his ability to bridge the gap between the college and the City were truly evident in his address to the new students.

Mayor Schwartzman stated that he spent the weekend in Galesburg playing Scrabble, and thanked Tuesday Cetin, Director of the Community Arts Center, for the location where it was held, adding that the event had tremendous support from many local restaurants and organizations. They had 45 players; several from the Galesburg area, but over 30 came from out of state, including Georgia and Maryland. He stated that the players were incredibly impressed with the community and he believes that sometimes you need an outside perspective to fully appreciate what we have.

There being no further business, Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member White, to adjourn the regular meeting at 7:14 p.m.

Roll Call #14:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Mayor Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk