



**Galesburg City Council
Regular Meeting Minutes**

DATE: August 17, 2026, 6:00 p.m.

PLACE: City Council Chambers, 55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, IL

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Peter Schwartzman, Council Members Wendel Hunigan, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Greg Saul, and Steve Cheesman.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Members Angelica Mangieri and Charles Reynolds.

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Eric Hanson, City Attorney Dan Alcorn, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz.

Called to order by Mayor Schwartzman at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call #1: Present: Mayor Peter Schwartzman, Council Members Wendel Hunigan, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Greg Saul, and Steve Cheesman, 6. Absent: Council Members Angelica Mangieri and Charles Reynolds, 2.

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 Parade

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting of August 3, 2026.

Roll Call #2:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jessica Kurtz, White Haven Circle in Castlebury Estates, addressed the Council on behalf of neighborhood residents regarding the UGE Solar Farm Project. She stated that a neighborhood committee submitted FOIA requests, reviewed documents, sent unanswered letters to Council Members, and met with UGE representatives. They request a City Council review of the project, believing UGE violated its agreement, noting that similar nearby projects were repealed. The project occupies 30 acres slated for single-family housing that could accommodate professionals moving to our community. The group also believes that UGE has missed deadlines, and detailed letters received through FOIA requests, specifically DRC correspondence which granted UGE until Jun 3, 2026 to achieve substantial construction, but only minor prep work has occurred. She requested better transparency and a meeting since residents feel misinformed.

Bill Kurtz, Castlebury Estates, addressed the Council and stated that the residents of their neighborhood ask that the City Council re-examine the solar sheep project impacting their neighborhood. He stated that the Planning and Zoning Commission recently voted 8-0 to recommend denying annexation for two other solar projects due to conflicts with the future land use map and residential zoning—reasons that apply equally to Castlebury. Last week, UGE representatives met with Castlebury residents claiming they wanted to be good neighbors. However, he feels that good neighbors don't act behind people's backs, beginning early work without public or City Council knowledge. When they asked for vegetative barriers to block the eyesore, the UGE representative gave a weak excuse and even mocked how Galesburg handled the situation, letting them do as they pleased. On June 4, 2025, Galesburg approved the site plan with contingencies and notified UGE of Ordinance 152-136, reconfirming approval on August 13, 2025. This ordinance voids approval if substantial construction is not initiated within one year. Aside from wooden stakes being placed earlier this month, no construction has occurred, meaning UGE has missed the deadline twice. He strongly urged the City Council to pause this project, launch an investigation, and require UGE to follow current solar procedures. He added that Castlebury Estates residents feel abandoned and urged the City Council to stand up for them.

Council Member Cheesman noted that while he usually avoids speaking during Public Comment time, he will share remarks on solar energy at the end of the meeting. Addressing claims about contacting Council Members, he emphasized his commitment to listening but stressed that he can only investigate or assist if residents reach out directly.

CONSENT AGENDA #2026-15

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

26-5007

Receive Quarterly Investment Schedule

26-8014

Approve bills in the amount of \$1,231,744.72 and advance checks in the amount of \$360,338.50.

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, to approve Consent Agenda 2026-15.

Roll Call #3:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS**26-2015**

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Resolution 26-14 authorizing staff to apply for the 2026 Open Space Land Acquisition and Development (OSLAD) Grant for improvements to Lincoln Park.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-2016

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve Resolution 26-15 approving a utility and access easement agreement for the airport solar project.

Roll Call #5:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS**26-3030**

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, to approve the bid submitted by Economy Roofing & Insulating Co. Inc. in the amount of \$188,300 for the partial roof replacement at City Hall.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

26-4053

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve a development agreement with ILPEA Industries, Inc. to provide up to \$200,000 in economic development assistance to support job retention and expansion at the Galesburg facility at 611 South Linwood Road.

Roll Call #7:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-4054

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the proposal submitted by Massie Massie + Associates in the amount of \$228,000 to provide design services and construction phase services for improvements to Standish Park.

Roll Call #8:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-4055

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve an agreement with Ameren for gas infrastructure relocation for the Lake Storey Shared-Use Path project.

Roll Call #9:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

TOWN BUSINESS

26-9016

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$15,978.77
General Assistance Fund	\$4,876.13
IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$20,854.90

Roll Call #10:

Ayes: Trustees Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Trustees Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Cheesman stated that moving forward after the Castlebury housing situation, the City realized there were no existing local ordinances to stop these kinds of developments. In response, the City attempted to enact legislation to gain local control and establish fair guidelines for residents. However, during the final moments of last fall's veto session, the State passed legislation allowing solar farms to be placed anywhere within municipalities, overriding local authority to halt them.

He adamantly expressed to the residents impacted by these developments that he shares their concerns and stands with them in opposing these installations right next to their homes. He added that he wanted to be clear that this is not an argument against solar energy itself but rather about preventing these facilities from being placed directly in residential neighborhoods.

He encouraged everyone who shares these concerns to reach out to the Illinois Speaker of the House, the Senate President, and our local state representatives to advocate for changing this state law. For his part, he will be exploring every available option to prevent these projects from moving forward. Beyond taking valuable farmland out of service, these locations represent prime areas for needed housing development—a critical issue both locally and across the state and nation. Should all legislative and legal avenues fail, the City will strictly enforce every applicable ordinance and standard to hold solar developers fully accountable.

Council Member Cheesman stated that he has already organized and participated in meetings regarding both proposed locations, and that he remains fully committed to

supporting residents. Representing and assisting citizens is his top priority, and he encouraged anyone to contact him for further information or assistance.

Council Member Hunigan stated that city parks build community and thanked Parks and Recreation Director Don Miles for upgrading and maintaining Galesburg's exceptional park system. He added that at Kiwanis Park, the local NAACP hosted a well-attended back-to-school picnic with donated supplies, which is where Tom Simkins and 30 volunteers refurbished the skate park at no cost to taxpayers. The Dale Kelly Park on West Tompkins Street now features new playground equipment, green space, shelter, and leash-friendly areas, thanks to a land donation from former Knox County Regional Superintendent Bonnie Harris and her family.

Council Member Hunigan noted that upcoming projects include \$1.2 million in possible grants for Lincoln Park and \$2 million for Standish Park to enhance downtown. Lastly, he invited the community to the Cooke Park dedication, made possible by Gayla Pacheco and her committee, on Wednesday, August 26 at 11:30 a.m.

Council Member White highlighted Standish Park as another excellent initiative that provides a wonderful opportunity for broader community interaction, uniting Knox College students and staff with residents from all corners of the city is good *news* (North, East, West, South) and allows the community to connect as one city in a shared space.

Council Member White also encouraged everyone to research two historical figures: Macon Bolling Allen and Benjamin O. Davis.

Mayor Schwartzman stated that he was glad to be back and thanked Council Member Cheeseman for overseeing the meetings in his absence. His mom is watching today and added that he was fortunate to visit her twice this summer and hopes she returns home soon. He also echoed Council Member Hunigan's gratitude to Parks & Recreation Director Miles. He and his staff deserve great respect for their hard work securing and navigating state grants for park improvements, successfully managing these projects despite recent equipment delays.

The Mayor noted that with school starting, drivers need to be careful as many children are commuting and may not be paying full attention. In local sports, he also announced that Galesburg football plays Dunlap this Friday out of town, then Limestone at Van Dyke Field on the 28th. He hopes the community supports all our sports teams and added that Knox's first football game is on September 26.

Lastly, Mayor Schwartzman announced that Galesburg will host the Midwest Showdown Scrabble tournament over Labor Day weekend (September 5–7). This will be the fifth tournament, with over 60 expected participants. He hopes the community will extend a warm welcome to these guests as they contribute to the local economy.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member White, to adjourn into executive session at 6:39 p.m. for the purposes of discussing the executive session meeting minutes from May 19, 2025, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) and Litigation (5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11)).

Roll Call #11:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

During the Executive Session, Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, to adjourn the Executive Session at 8:08 p.m.

Roll Call #12:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

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 8:08 p.m.

Roll Call #13:

Ayes: Council Members Hunigan, White, Acerra, Saul, and Cheesman, 5.

Nays: None

Absent: Council Members Mangieri and Reynolds, 2.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk