

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
February 2, 2026
6:00 p.m.

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

Roll Call #1: Present: Mayor Peter Schwartzman, Council Members Angelica Mangieri, Wendel Hunigan, 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 3, following the resignation of Council Member Evan Miller, effective December 31, 2025.

Mayor Schwartzman declared a quorum present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

A moment of silence was observed in lieu of an invocation.

Presentation: Honoring the Retirement of K9 Officer Zeus

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from January 20, 2026.

Roll Call #2:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kiersten Sheets, Trajectory Energy Partners, addressed the Mayor and City Council and presented the City of Galesburg Parks & Recreation Department with a \$10,000 donation check for south side park improvements. This donation is part of the community benefit commitment related to the South Side Community Solar Project, which was selected for the community-driven community solar program administered by the Illinois Power Agency, as outlined in a commitment letter from November 2022. She stated that the South Side Community Solar project is currently under construction, with operations expected to begin this year. The 15-acre site is located between Locust and Lombard Streets, just west of the Mary Davis Home. This project is expected to deliver substantial benefits to the Galesburg community, with an estimated annual savings for local residents, particularly south side residents, totaling \$162,000. A dedicated 50% discount for south side residents is expected to equate to approximately \$450 per household annually.

Ms. Sheets also stated that this project is anticipated to generate approximately \$300,000 in total local tax revenue over its lifespan. She noted that Trajectory Energy Partners is pleased to make the donation and reiterated their commitment to the partnership with the City of Galesburg and bringing the project's full benefits to the community.

Mindy Knapp addressed the Council representing the Midwestern Humanitarian Center. She stated that the citizens of Galesburg need accessible warm shelter during the cold weather and they are currently seeing people using the police station as a warming center, which raises questions about societal responsibility. She feels that the real issue is not the choices people make that lead to homelessness, but rather the collective failure to ensure that everyone has the option of a warm place to stay. She believes that shelter options are limited with the Rescue Mission having a capacity of 40 people, and the Iowa Court warming center holding 20. The police station is being used as a temporary warming center, but there seems to be confusion about its official status and rules.

Ms. Knapp stated that the high flow of people at the police station creates logistical and safety challenges, including cleanup, managing individuals with mental health issues, and enforcing rules. For instance, while one can sleep in a chair, there are only four available, leaving many others without a seat. Also, people are often told they cannot eat or use the bathroom. She also questioned the reports that some people choose to remain outside and noted that she repeatedly informs people on the street about available warming options. She reiterated that the community must work together, and that people have a fundamental right to be warm, eat, and rest. Homeless individuals are not defined by negative stereotypes; they are survivors who have endured immense hardship. The City must acknowledge this reality and act now to help them during this cold period and begin planning for similar issues during the hot summer months.

Laura Porter addressed the Council and stated that she is the founder of a nonprofit wanting to address the issue of multiple large, yet sound, empty buildings within Galesburg. Examples include the former Public Library, the former Eagles building, and the vacant spaces at the former Cottage Hospital. Her organization is prepared to assume responsibility for one of these unused properties and plans to secure grants, form partnerships, and utilize volunteer labor to transform one into a vital community asset, focusing on transitional housing, youth services, and a general resource hub. She noted that this initiative requires no City funds.

Ms. Porter is requesting that the City Council initiate a formal process to allow nonprofits to apply for access to these unused buildings through either a low-cost transfer or a long-term lease. She feels this is a practical solution that will curb blight, save taxpayer money, and provide much-needed stability for our community members. She is currently collecting signatures from residents who support reviewing these vacant buildings for community use and urges the Council to take the first step by permitting nonprofits to submit adaptive reuse proposals for these properties.

CONSENT AGENDA #2026-03

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

26-2002

Approve an MFT Resolution for the 2026 Intermittent Resurfacing project in the amount of \$650,000.

26-3003

Approve the bid from D & D Pavement Solutions, Inc. in the amount of \$19,989.18 for the sealing of Parking Lots D, M, and the Lakeside Recreation Facility drive and eastern parking lot.

26-4006

Receive the updated zoning map.

26-4007

Approve the renewal of seven flood insurance policies; five renewing for a one-year term through March 2027, and two policies renewing in April and September. Total cost for all seven policies is \$33,834.63.

26-4008

Approve consultant engineering services for material testing for asphalt and concrete for calendar year 2026 with Bruner Cooper & Zuck, Inc. and IMEG Consultants Corp.

26-8002

Approve bills in the amount of \$563,347.22 and advance checks in the amount of \$446,910.32.

Council Member Mangieri moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Consent Agenda 2026-03.

Roll Call #3:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

26-1001

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Mangieri, to approve Ordinance 26-3764 on final reading amending Appendix X of Chapter 77 of the Galesburg Municipal Code prohibiting parking on the east side of Willard Street from Fifer Street to Yates Street during school hours.

Roll Call #4:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-2003

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve Resolution 26-02 showing support and commitment of local funds for a Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant Program application for a project planning study at the South Street railroad underpass. The total estimated cost of the Project Planning study is \$3,650,000. The City's contribution would be \$365,000.

Council Member Saul raised the question about the likelihood of securing the grant funding this year. City Manager Hanson noted that the previous year's application successfully advanced through all review phases but was ultimately not funded because the money simply ran out. The City was strongly encouraged to reapply and updates were made to the application, including the addition of an environmental component, which is seen as a positive factor that will help expedite the project.

Roll Call #5:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

26-4009

Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the retirement of K9 Officer Zeus and donated to Officer Jake Taylor. Police Chief Legate noted that the next academy for canine officers will be in March.

Roll Call #6:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-4010

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve a minor plat of the Davis & Sons Storage Subdivision located at 688 US Highway 150E and 671 Knox Road 1400N and is currently a storage unit complex.

Roll Call #7:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-4011

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Saul, to approve a minor plat of the Ladner Land Subdivision located at 123-129 Knox Highway 31 and is currently two residences with multiple acres of vacant property, including a pond.

Roll Call #8:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-4012

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Cheesman, to approve the change order with Interstate Power Systems in the amount of \$22,372.70 for additional repairs to Fixed Route Bus 1701.

Roll Call #9:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

26-6001

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve the appointment of Charles (Chuck) Reynolds to fulfill the remainder of Ward Three Council Member until 2027.

Roll Call #10:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

TOWN BUSINESS

26-9002

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	\$5,497.35
General Assistance Fund	\$5,872.49

IMRF Fund	
Social Security/Medicare Fund	\$4,509.51
Liability Fund	
Audit Fund	
Total	\$15,879.35

Roll Call #11:

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

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Trustee Saul moved, seconded by Trustee Mangieri, to resume as the City Council. The motion carried.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Mangieri welcomed the newest Council Member, Chuck Reynolds. She noted that she didn't have the opportunity to work closely with Evan Miller during his tenure but has spoken with Mr. Reynolds and feels positive about their potential collaboration. She hopes he will feel the same sense of welcome that she did when joining the Council.

Council Member Hunigan honored resident Rodney Bunch for his induction into the GHS Hall of Fame, Class of 2025. He stated that Mr. Bunch has been a friend for 50 years, was a member of an undefeated GHS football team, taught for 21 years, and is a co-founder and long-serving mentor in the "Streak Dads" high school mentoring program, started in 2013. The program provides positive role models; Mr. Bunch volunteers five days a week, offering conversations and one-on-one support for students' tough issues, filling a void for students with absent fathers, as one student shared. He also noted that Council Member Dwight White is also a "Streak Dads" mentor.

Council Member Hunigan also shared an encounter at his church on Sunday with a homeless man who was cold, hungry, poorly dressed and sought assistance. He reported being permanently expelled from the Rescue Mission and suspended for ten days from the police station, without providing reasons. Council Member Hunigan noted that with colder weather approaching, many of these individuals need more than a meal, and he and his pastor are asking what they can do to help needy individuals and assist community members lacking safe, stable housing.

Council Member White clarified his comments from the last meeting about being "blessed," emphasizing that the sentiment was intended for everyone, regardless of whether they support him, share his views, live in the same area, or differ from him in color, race, ethnicity, or religion. He expressed his distress and hurt over the current national climate, which he perceives as increasingly ugly and recounted a personal incident where a conversation about feeling sad over the murdered VA gentleman led to an angry person reporting him for talking politics.

Council Member White expressed his sorrow over the national distress caused by individuals feeling entitled to end another's life due to differing opinions. He emphasized the multi-ethnic heritage of the United States, asserting we are all Americans. He also stated that he finds it hurtful that people born and raised here, or those seeking a better life here, are being told to leave. He urged everyone to step up, speak up, and do what is right when they witness ugly treatment or words and to search their heart, their soul and their spirit.

Council Member Acerra stressed the importance of finding shared humanity, citing a podcast about the unity achieved through dialogue and focusing on common ground. She commended local public safety, sharing a positive example where a police officer paid for a young man's gym membership instead of arresting him for sneaking in, calling it an extraordinary act of kindness. She also praised the Fire and Police Departments for their rapid response to a large fire today.

She also announced that she is organizing a statewide student human resources conference on March 28th, an event co-sponsored by the Illinois State Human Resources Society and the Oak Brook Human Resources chapter. Though it is a few months away, she wanted to promote the opportunity to any junior college or four-year university students who are interested in a career in human resources. The full-day event will feature professional development sessions on topics such as optimizing LinkedIn profiles and improving interview skills. She is grateful for the support of many professional volunteers from across the state who are dedicated to helping these students advance their careers.

Council Member Saul congratulated Canine Officer Zeus on his retirement and wished him good luck with all the naps he's planning to take. On a personal note, he stated that Galesburg gained a new resident as he completed the move of his mother-in-law from Keithsburg to Galesburg. He's grateful to everyone who assisted with the move.

Council Member Cheesman stated that he greatly admires the worthwhile and meaningful comments made by the Council. He also wanted to congratulate Mr. Reynolds and looks forward to working with him and feels he will be a great addition to the Council. He also stated that he has known Rodney Bunch for a long time, and taught and coached with him. He is a remarkable individual who has contributed immensely to our town and helped so many people.

He expressed his gratitude and appreciation for all the contributions made during Black History Month and feels it is important to honor, remember, and learn from the people who have achieved so much, often overcoming great obstacles. He would like to acknowledge them all as great Americans who did their part, making invaluable contributions. He also noted that we are seeing progress at the former mall, little by little, such as the activity with the Sears building. He understands that there is much more to do, but things are definitely moving in the right direction.

Council Member Cheesman indicated that he visited the warming center, as he did last year. He noted that Mayor Schwartzman also brought food there and he wanted to check on their operations. He wanted to reinforce a request they recently sent out regarding needed donations: washcloths, dish rags, hygiene items (for both men and women), laundry soap, book

bags, and food (as they no longer receive the same food donations). He noted that there were openings at the shelter tonight, as there are most nights, and hopes the community can help people in those situations. He also wanted to thank the City Water Division staff who had to go out Friday morning in sub-zero weather to repair a water main on Seminary Street.

Since the topic was noted earlier, he reported that Knox College recently hosted speakers promoting civil discourse amidst political differences, demonstrating how to listen, respect, and converse civilly, even on non-negotiable issues. The key takeaway, mirrored in our own interactions, is the need for civil listening and mutual understanding, recognizing that respect for one another is non-negotiable. The speakers, Cornel West and Robert George, conveyed that message well; treating everyone with dignity is a high priority. We all share the goal of making the world, and America, better, requiring everyone's civil participation.

Mayor Schwartzman stated his appreciation for the comments regarding the two speakers, Dr. George and Dr. West, noting that their visit was a truly special event in his 28 years at Knox College. Despite the very cold night, the event was well-attended by both community members and students. The topic of civility, active listening, and open-mindedness is incredibly relevant to our community. He recalls them making the point that we all hold beliefs—some true and some false—but we don't always know which is which. Acknowledging this humility allows us to be more respectful in our dialogue and decision-making.

The Mayor appreciated Council Member Cheesman's willingness to visit the warming shelter to see the situation firsthand, which is a difficult undertaking. He met with the City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and several facility staff today to discuss improvements and future plans. The Council will soon have opportunities to contribute to this conversation, particularly concerning funding and how organizations can help. We know the need is great and continues to grow and he thanked everyone in the community who has reached out and supported those who are struggling.

Mayor Schwartzman thanked the great team of Officer Taylor and Officer Zeus. He also is very pleased that the Council voted unanimously to appoint the new Council Member and deeply appreciates the support, as making these appointments is a challenging responsibility. He's looking forward to Mr. Reynolds participating on the Council and in our community, and to the continued work on many important issues. There is a lot happening behind the scenes in 2026, some of which is already up for a vote, and more will be coming forward soon.

Lastly, the Mayor wanted to thank Ms. Sheets and Trajectory Energy Partners for their ongoing commitment to Galesburg. This commitment extends beyond entrepreneurship to the service they provide and the significant savings they have brought to many residents. As electric bills continue to rise, we need every tool available to help people manage their costs. He thanked them for the contribution for the south side parks.

There being no further business, Council Member Saul moved, seconded by Council Member White, to adjourn the regular meeting at 6:56 p.m.

Roll Call #12:

Ayes: Council Members Mangieri, Hunigan, 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