

Galesburg City Council Regular Meeting
City Council Chambers
55 West Tompkins Street, Galesburg, Illinois
November 6, 2023
6:00 p.m.

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

Roll Call #1: Present: Mayor Peter Schwartzman, Council Members Bradley Hix, Wayne Dennis, Evan Miller, Dwight White, Heather Acerra, Sarah Davis, and Steve Cheesman, 8. Also Present: Interim City Manager John Schlaf, City Attorney Jason Jording, and City Clerk Kelli Bennewitz.

Mayor Schwartzman declared a quorum present.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Reverend James Hailey gave the invocation.

Proclamation: National Apprenticeship Week

Presentation: Galesburg Promise

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve the minutes of the City Council's regular meeting from October 16, 2023, meeting.

Roll Call #2:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

City Attorney Jason Jording opened the sole sealed bid received from Bywater Development Group, LLC, in the amount of \$305,000.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Lee, representing the Chamber of Commerce as its Board Chairman, addressed the Council. He stated that the Chamber's goal is to be an advocate for their membership and that local businesses are the lifeblood of the community and that every local dollar spent in Galesburg stays in the community. He hopes that citizens remember this with the upcoming holiday season approaching and consider all options before purchasing.

Council Member White left the meeting at 6:40 p.m.

Pam Gaither, Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, addressed the Council and stated that their organization works together for the greater good of the community. She also announced a

new initiative that the Chamber has started to collaborate and garner collective support from their nearly 400+ chamber members to allow their voices to be heard. They will be sending out a monthly member survey, which is designed to take 15–30 seconds to finish, with important questions that impact the community. Results will remain anonymous and will be communicated with appropriate contacts in an effort to share the collective thoughts of the membership. The first question was *“Would you be in favor of increasing taxes for infrastructure?”* Gaither reported that out of their 376 Chamber members, only 50 responses were received, and they realize this is not a huge response for this new initiative. Results were 24% said yes, 68% said no, and 8% said “other.” She also reiterated that the busy small business holiday season has started, and they are promoting to shop locally. She thanked the Council for their service to the community.

Council Member White returned at 6:42 p.m.

Jerry Ryberg addressed the Council and stated that this past August, Fire and Police personnel were in the gazebo in Standish Park, and suddenly it now needs to be torn down. This is a place that the homeless go and pick up items that people have left. He views this as republicanism and shows that they don’t care for the needy or homeless.

Pastor Antonio Franklin addressed the Council as a representative of the local NAACP chapter. He stated that last week, their president, Pam Davidson, asked the Council to fly the Black American Heritage flag, which celebrates black culture, history, and celebrates inclusion and equity, and shows the community stands up against racism. Recognizing heritage flags in the community is a way to pay tribute to the contributions they have made to the community, shows respect for everyone, and is even a conversation starter among people. He hopes the Council embraces diversity and not stifles it.

Reverend James Hailey displayed the Black History banner that has been recognized for many years in our country. He feels that the flag should have the opportunity to be flown since black Americans built America. He noted that people are not going to stand by and let the Council do everything their way.

Dave Warf addressed the Council and stated that he lives on Pine Street and deals with speeding vehicles and loud music. He asked about installing speed bumps and the Mayor noted that the request would be taken to the City’s traffic commission.

Jeanette Chernin addressed the Council and stated that she is the secretary for the NAACP and that three weeks ago she sent correspondence to all of them requesting that the Black Lives Matter flag be flown. She also inquired if the appraisal for the 905 Maple Avenue would soon be released since it was paid for with taxpayer dollars.

Council Member Hix left the meeting at 6:55 p.m.

Holly McDorman addressed the Council and feels that there is an organized effort to rid freedom and the celebration and history of groups such as the black, queer, and women. She

feels that heritage groups should be able to fly a flag to be seen and heard and believes the current ordinance as written is too strict. The City is made up of mixed people and backgrounds and in order to show that the City is thankful to them for choosing to live there, they should be allowed to fly a flag.

Dez Stenger, new president of PFLAG, addressed the Council and does believe a flag policy is the right thing to do; however, it is too strict. It was asked that they revisit it, listen to everyone in attendance, and be open to changing it.

Council Member Hix returned to the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Bernie Cowan addressed the Council and stated that he left Galesburg in 1991 and had hoped it had changed when he returned, but found it's the same and the same results are being repeated over and over. He appealed to the Council to be more progressive, look towards the future, and move forward. One little step the community made was when the Mayor was elected and now everyone needs to get on board. The City has gone through a lot of city managers, which they get rid of, and now won't be able to get the "cream of the crop." He also feels Council needs to look at the flag ordinance again and to get out of their comfort zone and wished some of them could be black for a while.

Harry Bulkeley addressed the Council and gave a rundown of important Galesburg individuals who are buried in Hope Cemetery. He noted that the cemetery's only means of revenue is a trust and that they are in need of assistance.

Jack Templeton, treasurer of the Hope Cemetery Trust, stated that the cemetery is older than Galesburg and that a funding request had been emailed to the Mayor in the spring. The cemetery is inactive with no more spaces to sell, which means no income. Typically, annual expenses range from \$14,000 to \$16,000 with the trust generating approximately \$8,000. They are requesting an annual donation from the City of \$10,000. He noted that he has spoken to Council Members White and Acerra since Hope Cemetery is both Wards Four and Five.

CONSENT AGENDA #2023-21

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

23-5011

Receive the Investment Schedule as of September 20, 2023.

23-6010

Approve the reappointment of David Christensen, Airport Advisory Commission, term expires September 2026.

23-8020

Approve bills in the amount of \$740,343.34 and advance checks in the amount of \$1,303,560.96.

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve Consent Agenda 2023-21.

Roll Call #3:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried by omnibus vote.

23-4108

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve a Minority and/or Woman Owned Business Startup Assistance Program Grant for up to \$10,000 for 309 Sparkle and Shine Cleaning.

Roll Call #4:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-4109

Council Member Acerra moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to approve a Minority and/or Woman Owned Business Startup Assistance Program Grant for up to \$10,000 for Fisk Design Group, LLC.

Roll Call #5:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

PASSAGE OF ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS

23-1027

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve Ordinance 23-3714 on final reading amending Chapter 37 of the Galesburg Municipal Code regarding the display of flags on City property and uniforms.

Council Member White stated that directly after the meeting on October 2nd, he sent a request to the City Manager to fly the Black Lives Matter flag, which was prior to the code being considered. He was told that he could request this be added, without the consent of other Council Members, but the request was denied. He wondered why his request to add it to the agenda was rejected and why the rules don't fit everyone. If it had been added, the City Council could have discussed and voted on the item since there have been two meetings held since his request.

Council Member White explained that a citizen requested that the last flag be flown and it was honored. He thought integrity was important and believed had it come before the Council it would have passed.

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to defer agenda item 23-1027 to the December 6, 2023, City Council Meeting.

Roll Call #6:

Ayes: Council Members White and Davis, 2.

Nays: Council Member Hix, Dennis, Miller, Acerra, and Cheesman, 5.

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion failed.

Council Member White thanked those who voted no for not acknowledging the African Americans who helped build this country. He noted that it was stated that the LGBTQ flag was flown so that people felt safe and welcomed, and people voted their faith for the Right to Life flag, and doesn't understand why the same isn't being done now. He added that the City just celebrated the accomplishments and history of the Boxcar People and that the same respect and honor should be given to the African Americans.

Mayor Schwartzman stated that Council Member White could amend the ordinance. Council Member White noted that he is in favor of the ordinance but wanted consideration given to his request. Council Member Miller added that no flags should be flown at City-owned buildings but that he would be in favor of having a flag pole in Standish Park.

Council Member Davis stated that she has heard a lot about this ordinance tonight and that she does not believe the comments and remarks were meant to attack or degrade anyone. She commended those who are staying out of the political realm of the discussion. She does, however, agree with Darla Krejci's words from a past meeting where she stated that the introduction of this flag policy was purely retaliatory in nature and that there was no problem until the flying of the pride flag made people uncomfortable. She added that discrimination is sneaky and it is becoming exhausting fighting the same battle.

Roll Call #7:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: Council Member Davis, 1.

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-1028

Council Member Hix moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve Ordinance 23-3715 on final reading amending the authorization of the proceeds from the General Obligation Bonds, Series 2023, be used for various projects.

Council Member White named several streets that are on the resurfacing project list and noted that most are not heavily traveled and their locations are not known to most citizens. These

unknown roads are the ones that members of the Council want to spend \$2.5 million on and take away from the bond money. He feels this has all been a ruse to keep others from spending the money and limiting the amount for a community center.

Council Member Acerra stated that the task of finding the worst graded streets was given to the Public Works City Engineer in response to the survey results showing constituents ranked them higher than anything else in the community. She reiterated that she looked at this survey when formulating her opinion on a community center and roads in an effort to respond to constituents. She is in favor of a community center if programming is given priority, and at no time has this been a ruse.

Council Member Hix added that the number one issue from his constituents and the survey results are roads. He feels it is insulting to the City Engineer to question his integrity on how the roads were chosen after his professional assessment.

Council Member White agreed with listening to constituents but noted that those in his ward have more economic problems than those in most of the other wards. His concern is that many times those south of Main Street get nothing or are looked at as being less important. Council Member Miller added that his ward is also a lower rent district, but he is proud of it and thanked the Public Works Department for taking care of issues and assisting with the upgrades to the park.

Council Member Hix noted that several streets, including Monmouth Boulevard, McClure Street, and South Seminary Street, have been large projects for the City in recent years. Council Member White stated that he had to wait 70 years for Monmouth Boulevard to be rehabilitated.

Council Member Cheesman stated that he has listened for two hours and is disappointed in the conversations being had without any compromise or common ground. He understands that everyone has strong opinions but that they need to move forward together. He added that he would like to see money spent on roads and a community center and is pleased to see all the activity in town such as the Dale Kelly and Lancaster parks. He is dismayed that there is so much spewing about an underlying conspiracy theory.

The Mayor stated that he also supports roads but that there is so much false narrative. The bond money, \$5.3 million, was intended for a community center and somehow a \$2.5 million hard cap spending limit was released, without even waiting until the Community Center Task Force had finished their work. He noted that the sales tax increase would generate \$10 million over the next 10 years, which was to be used to fix roads.

He believes that there is not a compromise there since many of these discussions and decisions have been made behind closed doors between all Council Members except two and him. They have been ignored and wondered why there was no dialogue. He noted that he supports this vote because the investment is worth making on our roads.

Council Member Cheesman stated that the Mayor's statements make it sound as if decisions were made without his knowledge, when in fact he had discussions with him prior to this vote.

Roll Call #8:

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

Nays: Council Members White and Davis, 2.

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Mayor Schwartzman called for a recess at 7:56 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 8:03 p.m.

23-1029

Ordinance on first reading amending Special Service Area Number One to extend the \$1.50 levy an additional ten years.

23-1030

Special Ordinance on first reading approving the 2023 Property Tax Levy in the amount of \$10,088,040, which is an increase of 3.92 percent compared to the 2022 tax levy extension.

Interim City Manager explained that the increase that a number of citizens saw on their property is entirely separate from the City of Galesburg and is done by the Township Assessor. He added that the rate that was established by the City last year was approximately 2.45% and this year it has been lowered to 2.36%. The City has reflected a reduction in the property tax rate and any revenue will be directly related to the assessments.

23-1031

Special Ordinance on first reading approving the 2023 levy for the Special Service Area #1 (Downtown Area) in the amount of \$188,088.

23-1032

Ordinance on first reading dissolving the Tax Increment Financing Fund and Redevelopment Project Area 3 (Regency TIF 3).

23-1033

Ordinance on first reading adopting the 2021 editions of the International Building code, the International Residential Code, the International Mechanical Code, the International Fuel Gas Code, the International Existing Building Code, the International Fire Code and the 2020 edition of the National Electric Code.

Fire Chief Hovind noted that there are no significant changes in the codes for the Fire Department. Community Development Director Steve Gugliotta stated that the current codes are eleven years old and once the new ones are approved it will hopefully encourage development.

BIDS, PETITIONS, AND COMMUNICATIONS

23-3035

Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Davis, to approve the bid from Sullivan Door Company in the amount of \$62,115 for the salt building overhead door replacement.

Roll Call #9:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 6.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Abstain: Council Member Miller, 1.

Chairman declared the motion carried.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

- A. The FY 2024 budget is available for inspection at the Public Library, the City Clerk's office, and on the City's website.

Interim City Manager Schlaf also addressed the situation with the Standish Park gazebo. He stated that City staff were in the gazebo for an informational staff gathering and noticed major issues, which facilitated an inspection. The inspection was done by City inspectors, an architect, and others who concluded that the structure needed to come down as quickly as possible. Efforts are underway to replace it in 2024.

Mr. Schalf also reported that the appraisal for 905 Maple Avenue would be made available at the next City Council meeting.

MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS (AGREEMENTS, APPROVALS, ETC.)

23-4110

Council Member Miller moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the proposal from Nelson-Nygaard in the amount of \$119,988 to complete a comprehensive audit and analysis of the public transportation system. Community Development Director Gugliotta reported that the County would be included in the study and thanked Kraig Boynton, Transit Manager, for his work in moving the audit forward.

Roll Call #10:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-4111

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Acerra, to approve the Minor Plat of the Greenspace Subdivision.

Roll Call #11:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.
Nays: None
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-4112

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the 2023 Classification and Salary Schedule for Fire Battalion Chiefs.

Roll Call #12:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.
Nays: None
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-4113

Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member White, to approve and accept the surfacing and installation of the engineered wood fiber safety surfacing and playground equipment as part of the statewide funding initiative with Illinois Parks and Recreation Association, Playcore, and GameTime for Lancaster Park playground equipment.

Roll Call #13:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.
Nays: None
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-4114

Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the settlement agreement for Marston v. Galesburg in the amount of \$18,787.50.

Roll Call #14:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.
Nays: None
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

23-4115

Council Member Dennis moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to approve the purchase of insurance coverage for city liability, property, and vehicles, from the Illinois Municipal League Risk Management Association in the annual premium amount of \$462,518.

Roll Call #15:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.
Nays: None
Absent: None
Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

TOWN BUSINESS

23-9022

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

Fund Title	Amount
Town Fund	
General Assistance Fund	\$1,231.11
IMRF Fund	\$12,435.20
Social Security/Medicare Fund	\$3,309.07
Liability Fund	\$2,467.84
Audit Fund	
Total	\$19,443.22

Roll Call #16:

Ayes: Trustees Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

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

CLOSING COMMENTS

Council Member Davis reiterated that it is easy for discrimination to sneak into discussions and people have their personal reasons for voting the way they do; however, it is hard to deal with the same conflict over and over and not get emotional. She thanked those who articulated their viewpoints so well and hopes that people don't pretend these issues don't exist but instead work together to solve them.

Council Member Cheesman thanked Council Member Davis for her comments. He added that he took the flag ordinance to heart and his vote is not meant to show disrespect to any other organization or individuals and believes the simplest agreement is to only allow the flags noted in the ordinance.

Council Member Cheesman also stated that he has completed six months as a City Council Member and that it has been an honor and privilege to serve. He knows he has made mistakes too, but the Council has made some significant accomplishments, with more to come. There have been many challenges as well but he hopes they can all find common ground, compromise, and be open to listen with respect to others ideas.

Council Member Hix congratulated Golf Pro Bryan Luedtke on his success in the Senior PGA in Florida where he made the first cut and was in the top 100.

Council Member Dennis stated that he also does not tolerate discrimination and voted for the flag ordinance according to the wishes of his constituents.

Council Member Miller thanked City staff, especially Parks & Recreation Director Elizabeth Varner, who have been working on HT Custer Park. He said it is being used by people in his ward, and they are all appreciative. He also reiterated that he does not believe any flag, other than the U.S. flag and state flag, should fly at a City-owned building.

Council Member White announced that the City has a new cell phone app for the bus routes and that though it has a few bugs, is definitely a feather in the cap of the City. He also noted that he attended the GAVC open house, where students made some items on the CNC machines. He thanked staff and the South Side Task Force for their initiative on Lancaster Park, which had been very neglected.

Council Member White also stated that Aaron Gavin, City Engineer, did a good job with providing the Council with street projects and that it was not his fault that he was given specific parameters. He did not want his comments to be construed as an attack against him. He also added that flying the Black American Heritage flag in the City of Galesburg acknowledges that they belong here too. He noted that Judge Bulkeley named two African Americans when he was talking about the history of Hope Cemetery.

Council Member Acerra stated that she talked about the survey earlier and it was also brought up how to rank items that are important to the community. She noted that a question was asked in the survey about what should receive the most emphasis by the City over the next two years, and the only item that ranked higher than streets/sidewalks was attracting more industry and related jobs. To increase the City's tax base means that job opportunities will need to be increased as well and she believes the Council has a good path to move forward with this initiative based on the presentations tonight.

Council Member Acerra stated that she is excited to know that Galesburg has a strong education community, including the information presented on the National Apprentice proclamation. She would love to see some of these programs in Knox County so that students can be reached earlier. She is also very happy to have conversations with Carl Sandburg College on the Galesburg Promise, and loves that it has enhanced opportunities for many of our citizens.

She also stated that she has not forgotten the importance of the appearance of our community and that it is something she feels strongly about. She reported that there is spray paint on the utility box at the corner of Losey and Broad Streets and asked that it be looked into. She hopes that the City can be more conscious of the vandalism and that maybe stronger ordinances need to be put into place. She is also very happy to see all the work on the parks as well as the green space near the Churchill building.

Council Member Cheesman announced that the City should acknowledge and honor our Veterans, specifically Council Members Dennis and White.

Mayor Schwartzman reported that a group of individuals planted several trees near the new library and the Dale Kelly Tot Lot. He thanked everyone for their hard work, as well as putting in a fence at the Tot Lot. He noted that the dedication for the Boxcar People was amazing and had a great turnout. There are four locations that will have plaques and several individuals who lived in boxcar were able to attend the ceremony as well.

He also reported that several from the City attended the Legislative Luncheon at Knox College last week and heard from State Representative Dan Swanson and State Senator Michael Halpin. They are from two different political parties but talked about how they get along and compromise with each other; something we could all learn from.

The Mayor announced that there will be a Veterans Day celebration on Saturday, November 11th, 9 a.m. at Walmart, and noted that both his grandfathers were war heroes. He also reported that he is looking forward to giving the State of the City address at the Chamber's Thanksgiving Luncheon on November 20th where he will talk about all the positive growth the City has seen. He noted that everyone may not agree with each other on everything but that we are all neighbors and need to coexist. We need to have empathy and respect for each other.

Council Member Cheesman moved, seconded by Council Member Miller, to adjourn into executive session at 8:56 p.m. for the purposes of discussing approval of the executive session meeting for September 18, 2023, 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(21) and Litigation 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(11).

Roll Call #17:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

During the Executive Session, Council Member White moved, seconded by Council Member Dennis, to adjourn the Executive Session at 9:28 p.m.

Roll Call #18:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

There being no further business, Council Member Davis moved, seconded by Council Member White, to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:28 p.m.

Roll Call #19:

Ayes: Council Members Hix, Dennis, Miller, White, Acerra, Davis, and Cheesman, 7.

Nays: None

Absent: None

Chairman declared the motion carried.

Peter D. Mayor Schwartzman, Mayor

Kelli R. Bennewitz, City Clerk