



**DEKALB CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
REGULAR MEETING  
May 24, 2021  
6:00 P.M.**

DeKalb Public Library  
Yusunas Meeting Room  
309 Oak Street  
DeKalb, Illinois 60115

COVID-19 Notice: This meeting will be conducted in-person with a physically present quorum and open to the public. The corporate authorities of the City of DeKalb intend to conduct this meeting in compliance with all applicable social distancing and public health requirements. All persons attending this meeting in-person who are not fully vaccinated shall be required to wear protective face masks/coverings. Furthermore, the corporate authorities of the City of DeKalb intend to conduct this meeting pursuant to Illinois Governor JB Pritzker's Executive Order 2021-10 dated May 17, 2021 (the "Executive Order"), which generally prohibits indoor meetings of more than 50 people for Phase 4 mitigations, unless the City of DeKalb determines that it is necessary to invoke the "Governmental Functions" exemption "to ensure the operation of government agencies or to provide for or support the health, safety and welfare of the public."

As a convenience to the public, the City of DeKalb may also provide video, audio, telephonic or internet access for the public to monitor this meeting. The provision of any such remote means of access is not intended to provide for attendance by a means other than physical presence due to the COVID-19 public health emergency, nor is it intended to provide an opportunity for the public to address public officials, make public comment or otherwise participate in the meeting.

Persons wishing to provide public comment or otherwise address public officials in person during this meeting must comply with all applicable rules governing the conduct of this meeting including, but not limited to, the aforementioned social distancing and face covering requirements.

The City of DeKalb is providing the following conveniences for the public to monitor and participate in this meeting:

- Persons wishing to view the meeting from home or elsewhere can tune in to Channel 14 or by following the link provided [here](#).
- Persons wishing to provide public comment but are unable to attend the meeting in person or remotely may forward their comments by clicking on the link provided [here](#). Note that all submissions must be received no later than 12:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting in order to ensure dissemination to the City Council before the meeting convenes.

Zoom Meeting Information

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85467302406?pwd=S3JKeGF4a3VWVK2FIQVA0Vm9SVUNUdz09>

Meeting ID: 854 6730 2406

Passcode: 185950

One tap mobile: +13126266799,,85467302406#,,, \*185950# US (Chicago)

- For those participating via Zoom and wishing to comment during the public participation portion of the meeting, or prior to Council's discussion of a particular item, please click on the link provided [here](#) and add in the Comment Section that you wish to address Council verbally. Note that all submissions must be received no later than 12:00 p.m. on the day of the meeting in order to ensure your name is added to the list of remote speakers.

**A. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

**D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

**E. PRESENTATIONS**

**1. [DeKalb Fire Department Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2020.](#)**

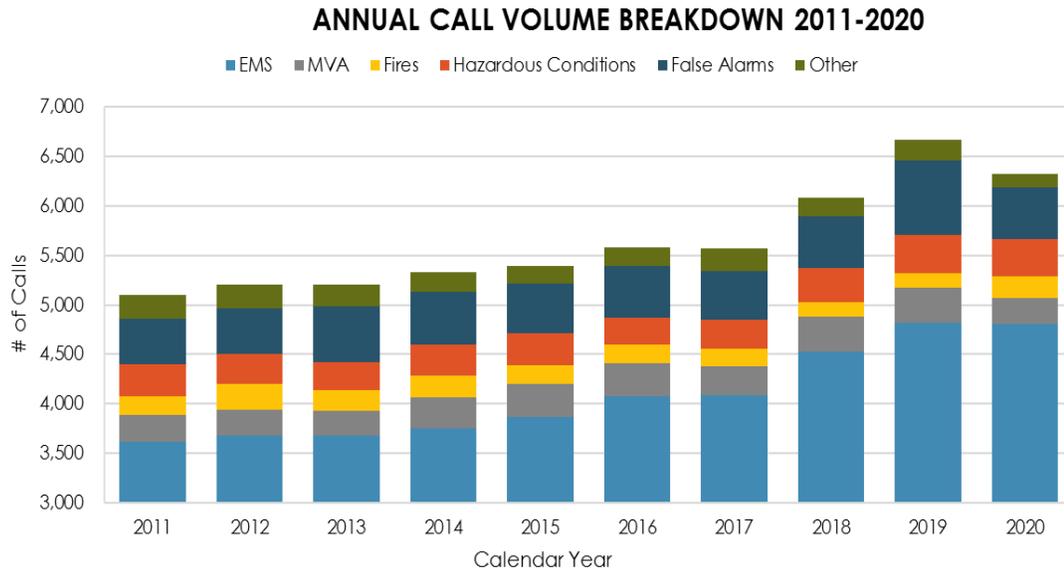
City Manager's Summary: The attached 2020 Annual Report for the DeKalb Fire Department summarizes the department's operations from January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020. We will long remember calendar year 2020 as one in which extraordinary economic and government constraints affected every public service, family, and business in America owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. The services provided by the DeKalb Fire Department were not spared the COVID-19 impacts.

Specifically, the Department

- Adjusted to new medical orders and procedures to provide care to suspected or known COVID-19 patients;
- Protected Fire personnel from virus exposure by changing personnel protective equipment (PPE) requirements, instituting social distancing requirements in the field and in the stations, relentlessly working to secure COVID-19 tests and vaccinations, and developing contingency plans for reduced staffing due to the quarantine of Fire personnel;
- Procured PPE, including N95 masks, disposable gloves and gowns, eye protection, face coverings, and disinfectants from a variety of vendors through the year. Because these commodities were in extremely high demand, the nationwide inventory dwindled, and the costs of these goods increased dramatically. Vendor relationships were changed from time to time to limit costs. At the same time, all medical supplies increased in price, at times as much as 50%.
- Local emergency planning became a priority with high-risk facilities, such as communal-living residences, rooming houses, medical offices, senior homes, and long-term health care facilities. The Department's goals were to strengthen relationships with these populations, monitor COVID-19 cases, develop emergency response plans, and prepare for large-scale treatment and transport scenarios.
- In 2020, the Fire Department responded to 6,325 requests for emergency services. Overall, this represents a decrease of 343 calls compared to 2019 (6,668 calls), but [a look behind the numbers reveals distortions owing to the COVID pandemic.](#) During the early stages of the pandemic (March through May 2020), the Department saw a dramatic decrease in requests for service. Citizens were reluctant to leave their homes, including visits to the hospital, doctor, and other health care providers. Social gatherings came to a halt; schools and businesses closed; and people isolated themselves according to government mandates. However, the Department records

for the full year show roughly the same number of EMS calls, with the COVID-related reductions most prominent in false alarms (which often emanate from NIU), motor vehicle accidents, and business-related calls for hazardous conditions. Fire calls increased somewhat, owing to the greater time spent by families in their homes.

The table below breaks down the annual call volume over the past ten years:



Fire Chief Jeff McMaster will present the 2020 Fire Department Report and address any questions the Council may entertain.

**2. Presentation of a Check in the Amount of \$3,000 to the City of DeKalb from the Fairview Cemetery Association to Partially Fund the Fairview Drive Pathway Extension.**

City Manager's Summary: Bob Higgerson, treasurer of the Fairview Cemetery Association, will be present to pass along a generous check of \$3,000 to offset part of the City's expense in adding a bike pathway on Fairview Drive from S. Seventh Street to Macom Drive. The Council will recall that the DeKalb Kiwanis Club has already donated \$19,500 toward this project.

**3. [Proclamation: Observing General Aviation Month – June 2021.](#)**

City Manager's Summary: On behalf of Renee Riani, our Airport Manager, and the entire staff at the DeKalb Taylor Municipal Airport, the attached proclamation celebrates our community's continuing commitment to the general aviation community of pilots, aviation and training organizations, repair services, and traveler services. The COVID pandemic hit the general aviation community hard, as it did commercial aviation. Our new team of professionals at the DeKalb Airport are dedicated to marketing the benefits of our general aviation services, including fuel, hangars, first class runways and taxiways, instrument approaches, security, training, and maintenance.

To highlight these services, Ms. Riani has consistently invited local residents and businesses to visit our Airport. On Friday, May 14, the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce held its annual showcase of members and “spring fest” at the airport. The east-west taxiway for the original runway 9/27 became a drive-through that allowed visitors to pass by tents of Chamber business sponsors at “safe distances.” The aerial view below, looking east, was taken by amateur drone pilot Marcus Cox:



4. [Proclamation: Older Americans Month – May 2021.](#)

City Manager’s Summary: The attached proclamation, presented by Barbara Nadeau of the Voluntary Action Center, celebrates the historic and continuing contributions of older citizens in our DeKalb community.

**F. APPOINTMENTS**

1. **Reappointment of Pat Fagan to the Police Pension Board for a Two-Year Term Beginning June 1, 2021 and Extending through May 31, 2023.**

**G. CONSENT AGENDA**

1. [Minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting of May 10, 2021.](#)
2. [Accounts Payable and Payroll through May 17, 2021 in the Amount of \\$3,043,204.74.](#)

3. [Investment and Bank Balance Summary through March 2021.](#)
4. [Year-to-Date Revenues and Expenditures through March 2021.](#)
5. [Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) Report – April 2021.](#)

#### H. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

#### I. CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Consideration of a Sump Pump Assistance Program in Cooperation with the Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District's Lateral Assistance Program.**

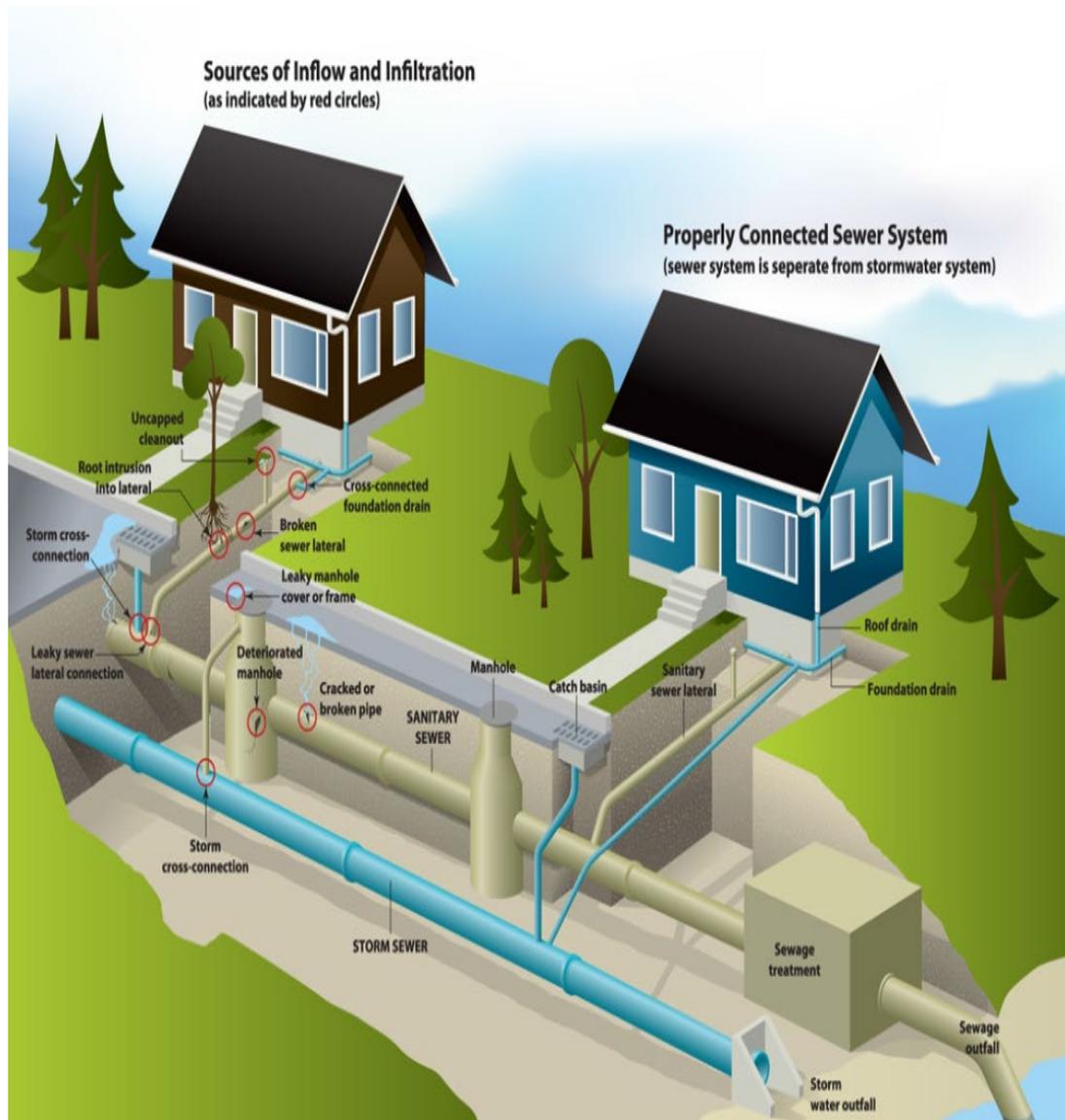
City Manager's Summary: In cooperation with the Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District (KWRD), the City of DeKalb has committed capital funds in 2021 to support homeowner and business efforts to remove illegal sump pump hookups from the sanitary sewerage system. During normal operations, the KWRD water reclamation facility has more than adequate capacity to treat sanitary sewer flow from its customers through its closed collection system. Similarly, the City of DeKalb's separate storm sewer system typically has more than enough capacity to convey groundwater from private property and public street culverts safely and efficiently.

However, stormwater inflow from illegal hookups and groundwater infiltration from leaky pipe joints have created harsh demands on the sanitary treatment system during major rain events. Over recent decades, the KWRD (formerly the DeKalb Sanitary District) has annually devoted substantial staff hours and capital resources to remove stormwater from the sanitary system. Such inflow and infiltration have also caused backups in floor drains and basement plumbing fixtures when the volume of groundwater in the sanitary system exceeds its temporary pipe storage capacity.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, the DeKalb City Council created a program to offset part of the cost of re-piping or otherwise legally connecting sump pumps to the City's storm water system. In some cases, the installation of "French drains" was sufficient to retain the pumped water during rain events where yard areas were large and the alternative of connecting to a nearby storm sewer was not feasible. Despite the best efforts of KWRD and the City of DeKalb to enforce sound new construction practices, the flow monitoring by the KWRD in recent years has revealed that private sources of inflow and infiltration continue to tax the treatment system during rain events. The main sources of this inflow and infiltration are the following:

- The private connection of roof drains to sanitary house laterals;
- The private connection of foundation drains to sanitary house laterals;
- Root intrusion that opens sanitary lateral joints to infiltration;
- Private sump pump connections to sanitary laterals and mains.

The following graphic illustrates the most common sources of inflow and infiltration:



In 2021, the City of DeKalb will reimburse eligible homeowners for a portion of the cost incurred by a licensed contractor for the proper connection of sump pump lines to the City's storm sewer system in the adjacent street. In the event that a City storm main is not adjacent to the residential owner's lot, the City will consider assistance to partially offset the cost of the installation of a French drain, provided it is not likely to create standing water in yard areas that could damage adjacent property. A do-it-yourself and a prefab French drain design are illustrated below:



**The City's sump pump assistance program will reimburse homeowners up to \$3,000 or 50% of the cost, whichever is less, for the remedy of illegal sump pump installations. In some instances, the removal of illegal sump pump piping from the sanitary sewerage system may be part of a larger project to repair or replace private house sanitary laterals. In such instances, the homeowner may be eligible for both the KWRD and City programs, which would reduce the overall cost significantly. Monies for the City program are already budgeted in Fund 400 (Capital Projects Fund, Line Item 400-00-00-83200).**

In order to be eligible for the City's sump pump assistance program, the requirements are as follows:

- The applicant must be a homeowner within the City's corporate limits.
- The applicant must be in good standing with respect to any bills owed to the City of DeKalb.
- The applicant must complete a brief application form (see attached).
- Reimbursement through the City program is limited to once per address.
- All plumbing and excavation work must be completed by a contractor registered with the City. Plumbers must be licensed with the State of Illinois.
- Where required by City ordinance, the repair work needs a permit.
- The City of DeKalb will exercise the sole authority to determine eligibility for its program.
- The City of DeKalb shall not be party to any contract between the homeowner or any contractor working on the repair.

The following costs are ineligible:

- Incidental costs such as drywall repair, carpeting, finishes and flooring.
- Exterior planting or landscaping.
- New electrical panels or circuitry upgrades.
- Use of any materials not in compliance with the City's adopted codes and ordinances.

Mark Eddington, the executive director of the Kishwaukee Water Reclamation District, will be on hand to answer any questions concerning KWRD's compatible "Lateral

Assistance Program” and to further explain how the two programs can work to the benefit of DeKalb property owners. By way of reference, KWRD has also set aside \$100,000 for its private sewer rehabilitation program and will reimburse eligible homeowners for qualifying costs incurred by a licensed contractor for the installation of either overhead sewers, external check valves, or other backflow prevention systems designed to prevent basement flooding. The KWRD reimbursement may reach a maximum of \$5,000 per applicant, or up to 50% of the eligible cost, whichever is less, for an approved backflow prevention system.

With the Council’s support, the City Manager will open the City program to the public and invite applications so long as City funding lasts. Chief Building Official Dawn Harper and Andy Raih, Director of Streets and Facilities, will coordinate the City program. ([click here for additional information](#))

**2. Consideration of a Downtown Bikeway to Compliment the Lincoln Highway Reconfiguration between First and Fourth Streets.**

City Manager’s Summary: The City Council’s interest in reconfiguring Lincoln Highway (IL 38) from Fourth Street to First Street has been a matter of public discussion for several years. After vetting by the Downtown Merchants and the DeKalb TIF JRB in early 2020, preliminary conversations were held with IDOT District 3 engineers, based on conceptual plans developed by City Engineer Zachary Gill. Encouraged by IDOT’s initial response, the City budget discussions in the summer and fall of 2020 led to a TIF #3 allocation of \$1,150,000 in the approved FY2021 City Budget (262-00-00-83000).

In January and early February 2021, detailed engineering plans were developed in concert with the engineering consulting firm of Engineering Enterprises of Sugar Grove and submitted to IDOT in early March 2021. The plans depicted the reduction of the four-lane downtown section to three lanes, with a center turn lane. The purpose is to soften the truck raceway through our downtown, while widening the adjacent sidewalks by about 5-6 feet to afford more room for sidewalk sales, outdoor seating, and more leisurely enjoyment of the downtown businesses and streetscape. State Representative Jeff Keicher shares the City’s interest in these objectives and has made his support known to the District 3 staff.

During the last week of April, the City Manager was informed by IDOT’s regional engineer, Masood Ahmad, that the Lincoln Highway reconfiguration would be subject to the Illinois “Complete Streets” requirement for an integral 10-foot-wide bike path, even though there is no connecting bikeway on either the east or west end of the proposed downtown street reconfiguration. Additionally, there will never be a connecting bikeway on the east end, because of the confluence of two major railway lines and two state highways, resulting in a dangerous crossing for bicyclists to navigate at Fourth Street and Lincoln Highway.

As an alternative to a Lincoln Highway bikeway, District Engineer Ahmad has indicated that a bike path on a parallel roadway may meet the Complete Streets requirements. With this guidance, the dedication of a bikeway on either the parallel Locust Street or the parallel Grove Street sections between First and Fourth Streets have been reviewed.

### **A. Locust Street Option**

According to the Complete Streets protocols, on streets where the driving surface width is 30 feet or greater between curbs, two 5-foot bikeways can be designed along the opposing curb lines, providing a bike path in either direction. On streets where the driving surface is 30 feet or less between the curb lines, a single, 10-foot-wide bikeway is required that would allow bicyclists to pass in opposite directions.

As a result of the reconfiguration of Locust Street years ago to provide more parking spaces and to provide safer “eyebrow” standing areas for pedestrians at intersections, the consistent distance between curb lines is less than 30 feet. Accordingly, Locust Street would need to lose one driving lane – that is, it would have to become a one-way street with one 10-foot bikeway. No parking spaces would be lost, but the conversion of this much-travelled roadway to one-way eastbound (the Oak Street roadway immediately to the north is one-way westbound) would have an adverse impact on the businesses along the frontage.

### **B. Grove Street Option**

Happily, the parallel Grove Street driving surface is 30 feet from curb line to curb line between Fourth and Second Streets. This means that a 5-foot bikeway can be installed along each curb line (heading east or west), while maintaining two, 10-foot driving lanes. In the public parking lot between Second and First Streets, a wider path can be striped to make the connection to First Street. Some of the perpendicular parking stalls facing the railroad right of way could be converted to parallel spaces to afford the 10-foot bikeway width. **The City Manager recommends the Grove Street bikeway option.**

Pending IDOT approval, the City staff request Council direction. If the Council concurs with the staff recommendation, a public hearing can be held at an upcoming meeting on an ordinance making the appropriate roadway and signage adjustments.

## **3. Consideration of the Addition of a Suspended Bike Path Crossing as Part of the N. First Street Bridge Reconstruction.**

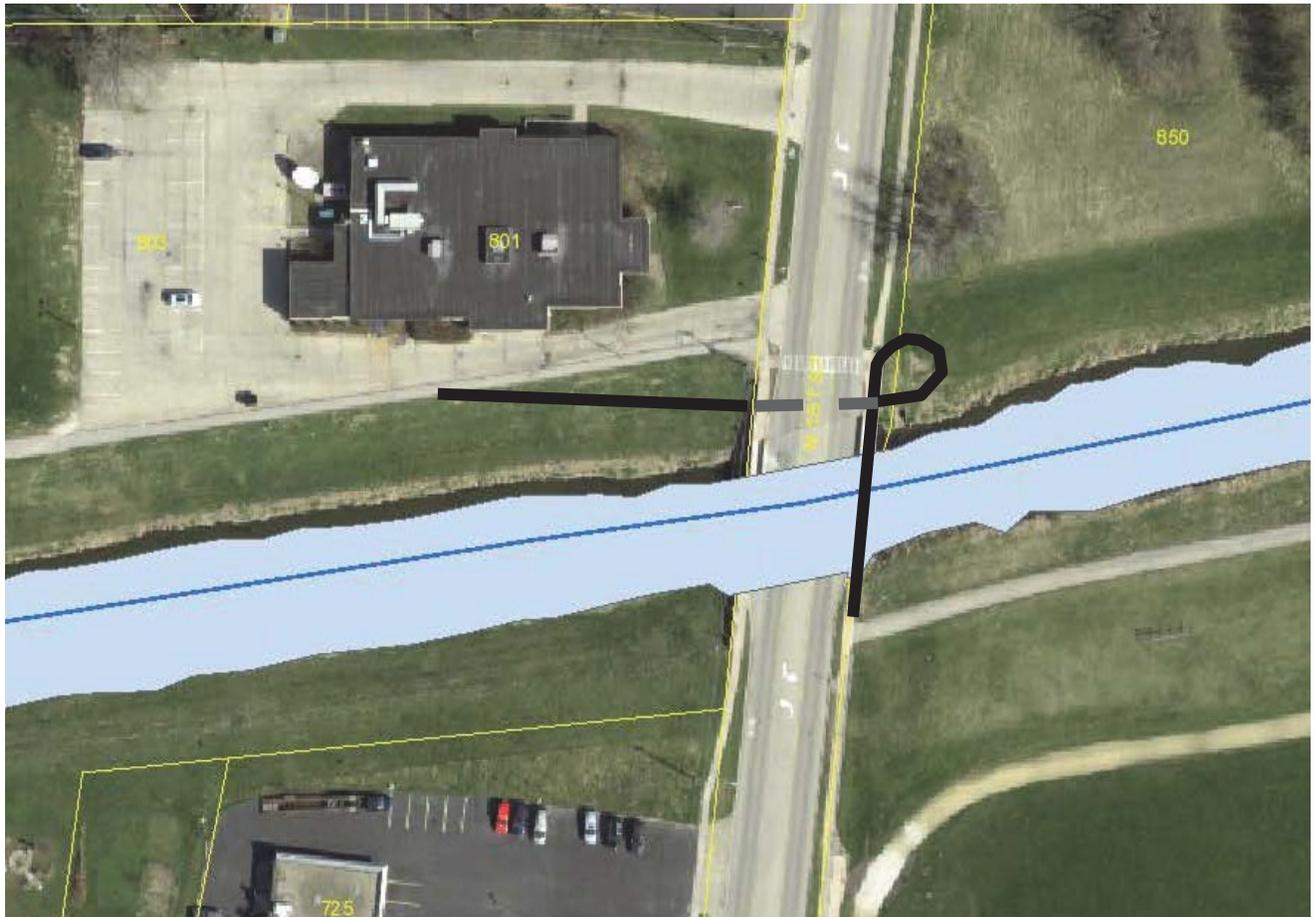
City Manager’s Summary: This bike path option has been raised in discussions with IDOT engineers involved in reviewing plans for the reconstruction of the North First Street bridge next year. The option would connect two existing pathways that have heretofore been separated by the North First Street roadway.

The motoring and walking public are aware that as the bike path leading from Anderson Hall at NIU reaches the North First Street bridge, the user has to wait for passing traffic to cross before heading east to the Clinton Rosette Middle School practice field and beyond. A pedestrian friendly sign and striped cross walk have been added over the years but passing traffic typically pays no notice and does not yield.

When the North First Street bridge is repaired with state Motor Fuel Tax funds next year, it is an opportune time to construct an underpass that would afford unimpeded and safe transit from the NIU campus through the Clinton Rosette Middle School campus to destinations further east and south. Although less elaborate than the underpass that was constructed at the Kishwaukee River bridge near the NIU lagoon in 2005, the proposed underpass would almost certainly be appreciated by those who frequently cycle or walk the interrupted pathway.

IDOT has estimated the cost of the underpass at \$600,000 and is willing to pay 80% of that cost, leaving about \$120,000 for the local (City) share. The City's share of the proposed bikeway is MFT-eligible and could be drawn from the residual MFT monies associated with the Rebuild Illinois Bond program.

A conceptual sketch of the path of the underpass is shown below:



**The City Manager recommends Council support for this community-oriented enhancement. ([click here for additional information](#))**

**4. Consideration of the Aggregate 2020 DeKalb County Real Estate Tax Bill on DeKalb Taxpayers.**

As the DeKalb City Council met in their regular session of May 10, 2021, many DeKalb residents and businesses were opening their mailboxes to find their 2020 tax bills, payable in 2021. On the whole, taxpayers in DeKalb Township saw a 2.01% drop in the overall or aggregate rate that includes all participating taxing bodies (from \$11.73467 per \$100 EAV to \$11.49927 per \$100 EAV). The City of DeKalb's rate including the combined general levy and pension levies dropped 7.47% from 2019 to 2020 (from \$1.15493 per \$100 EAV to \$1.06868 per \$100 EAV).

The City Council took some extraordinary actions in December 2020 to assure that local taxpayers would see a reduction in at least the City portion of their tax bill. These actions were prompted by (1) the reduction in incomes and jobs owing to COVID-related economic impacts in 2020 and (2) the projected impact of the DeKalb Township multiplier of 4.09% on the EAVs of DeKalb Township properties. The Council made several remarkable decisions:

- The \$490,625 Library debt service payment was fully abated rather than passed along to local taxpayers as in previous years.
- A total of \$1,374,655 in Fire and Police pension fund obligations were paid from general operating revenues rather than local property taxes. If the entirety of the Police and Fire pension obligations for 2020 had been passed along to local taxpayers, the overall City pension levy would have been \$7,897,111 rather than \$6,522,456.
- No City levy was imposed for IMRF pension costs, Social Security obligations, or general operations in 2020.

Going forward, the Council is betting on economic growth and sound fiscal planning that carefully weighs the rising EAV impacts of new industrial investments such as those made by Ferrara and Facebook, the revitalization of the Downtown, the revitalization of the Annie Glidden North area, and the attraction of new housing and commercial starts in the years ahead. With a rising community EAV, the City should be able to modestly raise its levy annually while lowering the City tax rate and its impact on individual taxpayers.

The following table shows the 2020 rates by taxing body:

Taxing Body	% Share-2020	2019 Rate	2020 Rate	Difference	% Difference
County	9.24%	1.07428	1.06205	-0.01223	-1.14%
County Pension Funds	0.01%	0.00092	0.00088	-0.00004	-4.35%
Forest Preserve	0.62%	0.07339	0.07162	-0.00177	-2.41%
Forest Preserve Pension Fund	0.02%	0.00142	0.00234	0.00092	64.79%
DeKalb Township	1.39%	0.16318	0.16002	-0.00316	-1.94%
DeKalb Road & Bridge	1.61%	0.18671	0.18485	-0.00186	-1.00%
City of DeKalb	0.00%	0.08451	0	-0.08451	-100.00%
DeKalb Pension Funds	9.29%	1.07042	1.06868	-0.00174	-0.16%
DeKalb Library	3.37%	0.38683	0.38772	0.00089	0.23%
DeKalb Park District	5.39%	0.63957	0.61941	-0.02016	-3.15%
DeKalb Park Pension Funds	0.79%	0.08088	0.09034	0.00946	11.70%
School District 428	58.94%	6.95061	6.77809	-0.17252	-2.48%
DeKalb Schools Pension Funds	2.49%	0.23322	0.28682	0.0536	22.98%
Kishwaukee College	5.58%	0.64101	0.64147	0.00046	0.07%
Kishwaukee College Soc. Sec.	0.10%	0.01176	0.01131	-0.00045	-3.83%
KWRD	1.01%	0.11811	0.11596	-0.00215	-1.82%
KWRD Pension Funds	0.15%	0.01785	0.01771	-0.00014	-0.78%
	100.00%	11.73467	11.49927	-0.2354	-2.01%

With respect to the City’s rate-setting EAV and corporate levies in recent years, the following table is offered for reference:

Tax Levy Year	Rate-Setting EAV: City	City Levy	City Rate
2011	582,504,715	4,196,890	0.7205
2012	533,805,903	4,244,718	0.7952
2013	485,923,623	4,270,457	0.9809
2014	464,966,381	4,270,540	1.0245
2015	468,077,742	5,094,730	1.1942
2016	503,861,829	5,565,384	1.2021
2017	529,629,464	6,004,594	1.2268
2018	547,947,687	6,017,140	1.1883
2019	585,726,839	6,269,649	1.1541
2020	610,333,062	6,522,507	1.06868

**J. RESOLUTIONS**

**1. Resolution 2021-041 Resolution 2021-041 Authorizing the Purchase of a F-550 One-Ton Aerial Truck in an Amount Not to Exceed \$106,768.**

City Manager’s Summary: The approved FY2021 Capital Equipment Replacement Fund budget includes an allocation for the lease of a new aerial truck for the Public Works department (420-00-00-40002). The estimated lease contract would be approximately \$51,344 in FY2021. The outright purchase cost of this vehicle on the state purchase list is \$106,768 including all after-market additions necessary for the range of overhead tasks performed by the department.

The aerial truck is a Ford F-550 one-ton vehicle and the low bidder is Sutton Ford, Inc. of Matteson, IL. The vehicle will replace a 1998 GMC one-ton aerial truck used by the Street division for overhead operations. With the current shortage of vehicles nationwide, the delivery may extend into the first quarter of 2022. Upon Council approval, the City staff will work out the lease terms with one of the two vendors currently under contract with the City.

**City Council approval is recommended.** ([click here for additional information](#))

**2. Resolution 2021-042 Authorizing Payment in the Amount of \$21,558.60 to Macon County Law Enforcement Training Center for Three Police Officers to Attend the Basic Law Enforcement Academy.**

City Manager’s Summary: The cost of a new police officer’s basic academy training has traditionally been paid directly by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training & Standards Board (ILETSB) using State-sourced funds. In recent weeks, the ILETSB notified participating police departments that the State has reverted to an annual reimbursement process in which police departments will have to pay for the basic academy training up front and be reimbursed after the State’s fiscal year ends on June 30 of each year. Three DeKalb Police Department replacement officers graduated from the Macon County Law Enforcement Training Center on April 16, 2021, and the cost of their training, lodging and meals is \$21,558.60.

The upfront City costs will be borne by the department in the short run and reimbursed as state funds become available. **City Council approval is recommended.** ([click here for additional information](#))

**3. Resolution 2021-043 Authorizing the Purchase and Equipping of a 2021 Ford Explorer Police Interceptor Vehicle Based on the Illinois Central Management Services Contract Pricing in an Amount Not to Exceed \$36,485.**

City Manager's Summary: Police squad car #337, a 2019 Ford Explorer, was involved in a crash on Ridge Drive on March 11, 2021 in which a careless driver pulled out of a parking area and drove directly in front of a passing patrol officer. The resulting crash caused significant front-end damage to car #337.

This squad car is a front-line, fully-equipped vehicle which is essential to Patrol operations. Other than the four new Ford Explorers received earlier this year as part of the Enterprise lease package, this was the newest vehicle in the Patrol fleet. Both the City's insurance carrier and the offender's insurance company inspected the vehicle and agreed it was a total loss. The Police Department seeks to replace the vehicle using funds from the City's insurance reimbursement, along with support in the amount of \$11,342.75 from Fund 420 (Capital Equipment Replacement Fund) to cover unreimbursed costs.

**City Council approval is recommended.** ([click here for additional information](#))

**K. ORDINANCES – SECOND READING**

None.

**L. ORDINANCES – FIRST READING**

**1. Ordinance 2021-018 Approving a Special Use Permit for Dwelling Units Above the Ground Floor at 400 E. Hillcrest Drive and 444 E. Hillcrest Drive (Four Forty Four, LLC) as it Pertains to the Addition of 17 Apartment Units.**

City Manager's Summary: Master builder and longtime DeKalb business owner Chuck Shepard is a principal of Four Forty Four, LLC and has requested a special use permit to convert the second floors of both buildings from commercial office uses to apartment units. A special use permit is required by the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) for dwelling units above the ground floor in that particular zoning district. A total of 17 apartment units are proposed with 14 one-bedroom units and three two-bedroom units.

In the smaller building at 400 E. Hillcrest, there will be seven 1-bedroom apartment units and one 2-bedroom unit, with 800 square foot and 900 square foot floor sizes, respectively. The building at 444 E. Hillcrest would feature seven 1-bedroom units and two 2-bedroom units, with floor sizes of 675 square feet and 975 square feet, respectively. The petitioner has indicated that rents will vary from approximately \$950 to \$1,150 per month. Floor plans for both buildings are provided in the Agenda background. The tall buildings offer unique views of the DeKalb landscape to the south and west.

The two buildings were constructed in the 1980's. The current owner purchased the property in 2011 and has performed significant improvements including new roofs, the resurfacing of the parking lot areas, new siding and painting, and a variety of interior upgrades. The petitioner reports he has not been able to sustain a commercial occupancy rate greater than 55%-61%, which cannot support the high standard of ongoing maintenance that Mr. Shepard has always provided. There are currently two office tenants on the upper floors that the owner will help re-locate to the first-floor areas.

The applicant has reached out to a residential real estate specialist in the area who indicates there is a need and demand for the type of dwelling units proposed. In addition, Denise Weinmann of RVG Commercial in DeKalb notes that office absorption in DeKalb has been very slow to recover. The 2020 COVID guidelines forced many employees to begin working from home and this trend is expected to continue. Despite landlords offering lower lease rates and attractive incentives, the inventory of available office units remains high.

The surrounding area contains a mix of single-family, two-family, multi-family, commercial and open space. Duplexes exist to the north along E. Hillcrest Drive from the Kishwaukee River to Sycamore Road. To the east are single-family homes across Sycamore Road and to the south and west are St. Mary's Cemetery, the Kishwaukee River and Hillcrest Place Apartments. Various commercial uses also exist to the west along E. Hillcrest Drive.

The existing parking lot contains 133 spaces including seven handicap spaces. The number of required parking spaces is 89 according to the UDO. Five of the seven handicap parking spaces need new signage to comply with the state accessibility code, but otherwise meet the City's specifications. The petitioner has agreed to update the signage prior to any occupancy of the remodeled units.

A significant investment is needed to make the conversion described above, and this investment will add to the EAV of the buildings. The City's Planning and Zoning Commission considered the special use application on Monday, May 17, and recommended approval by a vote of 5 to 0.

**City Council approval of the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation is requested. ([click here for additional information](#))**

**M. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

**1. Council Member Reports.**

**N. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

**None.**

**O. ADJOURNMENT**

**[FULL AGENDA PACKET](#)**