

**MINUTES  
CITY OF DEKALB  
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING  
JANUARY 27, 2025**

The City Council of DeKalb, Illinois, convened for a Regular meeting on January 27, 2025, in the Yusunas Meeting Room of the DeKalb Public Library, 309 Oak Street, DeKalb, Illinois.

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

Mayor Barnes called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Recording Secretary Ruth Scott called the roll, and the following members of the City Council were present: Alderman Carolyn Zasada, Alderman Barb Larson, Alderman Greg Perkins, Alderman Andre Powell, Alderman Mike Verbic, Alderman John Walker, and Mayor Cohen Barnes.

Others in attendance included City Manager Bill Nicklas, Assistant City Manager Bob Redel, City Attorney Matt Rose, and Transit Manager Mike Neuenkirchen.

**B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Shadow Gentry led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

MOTION: Alderman Zasada moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Alderman Powell.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

**D. PRESENTATIONS**

There were none.

**E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Janette Scheer spoke regarding the lack of stop signs on her street as well as others within the neighborhood she lives in. Referring to a document provided to the Council, Ms. Scheer stated she believes placing stop and yield signs on Larson Lane would alleviate driving safety issues.

Mayor Barnes stated he will follow up with the City's Engineer, Zac Gill and Sixth Ward Alderman Mike Verbic regarding her concerns.

City Manager Nicklas stated that he spoke briefly with Ms. Scheer prior to this meeting and that he and City Engineer Gill will discuss the issue tomorrow.

Referring to documents provided to the City Council, Alicia Iverson spoke regarding her concern that City of DeKalb Police Officers will be patrolling buses on a temporary overtime basis using funds from a \$50,000 grant received from the Federal Transit Authority (FTA). She stated she believes the grant could be used for alternative security measures at bus stops, such as lighting, shelters, cybersecurity, emergency telephones, security cameras, and/or other technology that could be used for reporting a crime. Concluding her comments, Ms. Iverson stated she doesn't believe having patrols on buses will ingratiate the police into the community.

Parker Assellam agreed with Ms. Iverson's comments, stating the grant funding should be used for something other than having police officers sit on buses that not many people ride anyway. He suggested perhaps the officers could provide additional security at bus stops.

Chris Falco also spoke regarding the grant and the City's plan to place police officers on buses, stating he believes the funding could be used for expanding bus routes, de-escalation training for officers or the addition of transit ambassadors. Mr. Falco further stated that some find interacting with police officers intimidating. He concluded his comments by stating he doesn't feel this type of community outreach would be effective.

Cody Cahill noted that Transit Manager Neunkirchen has stated the transit program presently does not see significant reports of crime or disturbances on transit routes, which makes Mr. Cahill wonder why the City is moving forward with the plan to place police officers on buses. Mr. Cahill stated he rides the bus frequently and has been stranded with no shelter from poor weather, poor lighting or emergency telephones due to bus issues. He used the Elburn train station as an example, stating it has none of the amenities mentioned above. Concluding his comments, Mr. Cahill stated he feels the DeKalb transit system has too many glaring flaws and the funding should be used for something other than policing buses.

Mayor Barnes thanked all those that spoke and encouraged them to remain at the meeting as Transit Manager Neunkirchen would be offering more insight regarding their concerns.

## **F. APPOINTMENTS**

There were none.

## **G. CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Barnes read the items listed on the Consent Agenda by title only.

1. Minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting of January 13, 2025.
2. Accounts Payable and Payroll through January 26, 2025, in the Amount of \$3,752,983.40.
3. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Report – December 2024.

MOTION: Alderman Verbic moved to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Alderman Perkins.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

At this point in the meeting, Mayor Barnes noted that Alderman Smith had advised him in advance that he would not be in attendance.

## **H. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

1. Public Hearing Regarding the Community Development Block Grant Five Year Consolidated Plan 2025–2029 and Annual Action Plan (One Year Use of Funds) for Program Year 32 (April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026).

Mayor Barnes opened the Public Hearing at 6:13 p.m. and read the title above for the record.

No one from the public spoke to this item.

City Manager Nicklas stated that the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a federally funded program that requires a five-year plan, as well as five individual annual plans. He noted that the Council will be reviewing recommendations from City staff for the objectives of the new five-year plan, and the annual plan later in this meeting

There were no questions or comments from the Council.

Mayor Barnes closed the Public Hearing at 6:14 p.m.

## **I. CONSIDERATIONS**

There were none.

## **J. RESOLUTIONS**

1. Resolution 2025-009 Authorizing Human Services Funding Agreements in the Amount of \$225,000 with Local Social Service Agencies Beginning January 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Perkins moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Larson.

City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

Alderman Verbic asked how the funding could be increased since the need exceeds the amount being allotted.

City Manager Nicklas stated the Council can give the directive of increasing funding. He noted that requests for FY2025 funding totaled over \$400,000, which far exceeds the \$225,000 allocated. City Manager Nicklas also explained that the City provides first priority to those agencies providing essential services such as food, clothing, and housing.

Mayor Barnes suggested that he, Alderman Verbic, and City Manager Nicklas meet to discuss the matter of increasing the funding and perhaps adding conditions agencies would have to meet rather than expanding the number of organizations the City contributes to.

Alderman Larson stated the City receives money from the state and federal governments based on DeKalb's population and encouraged citizens to take part in the next census to ensure DeKalb receives its fair share of taxes collected.

Mayor Barnes stated he believes DeKalb lost approximately 4,000 of its population due to some citizens not being counted in the 2020 census.

Brief discussion ensued.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

2. Resolution 2025-010 Authorizing a Supplemental Human Services Grant to the Voluntary Action Center (VAC) in the Amount of \$40,000 (for the Meals on Wheels Program).

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Perkins moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Larson.

City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

Noting that he's participated in the delivery of meals in the past, Mayor Barnes stated there are residents within the community that depend on the Meals on Wheels program for their daily meals. He also noted that VAC conducts some screening of those that sign up for the program, but generally it's on an honor based system.

There were no questions or comments from the Council.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

3. Resolution 2025-011 Approving the Community Development Block Grant Five Year Consolidated Plan 2025–2029 and Annual Action Plan (One Year Use of Funds) for Program Year 32 (April 1, 2025, through March 31, 2026).

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Zasada moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Powell.

City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

There were no questions or comments from the Council.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

4. Resolution 2025-012 Authorizing an Agreement with Gillig, LLC to Purchase One (1) E-Gen Flex Hybrid and Five (5) Diesel Buses in an Amount Not to Exceed \$4,005,384 from Rebuild Illinois Capital Grant Funds.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Larson moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Powell.

Transit Manager Neunkirchen stated the City is required to use 1% of the FTA grant to address safety and security elements on the transit system. Addressing concerns brought forth during the public participation portion of this meeting, Mr. Neunkirchen noted that the plan to add police patrols on buses is not intended to be punitive. Instead, it's believed that adding patrols to buses will assist with security measures already in place, such as cameras. Mr. Neunkirchen stated the patrols could also assist officers with becoming familiar with how the transit system works and being better prepared when responding to calls for assistance. It could also help bus drivers become familiar with the police officers they're encountering during an emergency situation such as a car accident or a slip and fall incident, and not necessarily crime related incidents.

Continuing, Mr. Neunkirchen stated there was a federal directive in September of 2024 requiring proactive steps to address assaults on transit workers. He also stated that communities throughout the nation have transit police, which is what this plan is modeled from.

Mayor Barnes asked if the funding is restricted to placing police officers on buses, to which Mr. Neunkirchen replied it is not.

Alderman Larson asked how much other safety measures would cost. Transit Manager Neunkirchen replied that new bus enclosures/shelters could cost \$50,000 to \$60,000. He added that DeKalb has 220 bus stops and providing all of them with shelters, etc., could cost approximately \$14 million dollars.

Mr. Neunkirchen then provided a brief history of DeKalb's transit history, which is only about four or five years old. He also noted that ridership is increasing, adding that the transit system provided approximately one million passenger trips within the community in 2024.

Alderman Zasada asked how many police hours on buses the grant will cover. Mr. Neunkirchen replied approximately 500 hours throughout the course of the year, which is a rough estimate.

Alderman Zasada then noted her concern that those utilizing the transit system have no place to sit at some of the bus stops, let alone shelter from poor weather. She further stated that thought should be given to reviewing the City's agreement with the shelter company, who she believes is creating a barrier to adding seating at bus stops. She also believes that community service organizations within the community would be eager to take on projects such as funding the needed benches.

Continuing, Alderman Zasada wondered if the grant should be distributed differently in order to provide more lighting at bus stops.

Discussion ensued regarding the need for benches and/or shelters at bus stops, community service agency involvement, and the funding needed. It was also noted that engineering would be needed to address ADA requirements prior to making improvements to bus stops.

Alderman Walker noted his support for the placement of police patrols on buses.

Mayor Barnes stated he doesn't want the public speakers to think their voices haven't been heard and encouraged them to think of additional ways to create safer environments at bus stops.

Brief discussion ensued.

Alderman Walker stated he believes the plan will encourage positive relationships between police officers and the public.

City Manager Nicklas then gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

Alderman Perkins asked how many buses there are within the City's current transit system, to which Mr. Neunkirchen replied approximately 45, 21 of which are fixed route buses.

Alderman Perkins then asked how maintenance for the buses will be impacted by shifting some of the fleet from diesel to hybrid. Mr. Neunkirchen explained that a hybrid bus has the same kind of internal combustion engine as a diesel bus, but it also has an electric battery that would need to be changed halfway through its life cycle. He also stated that a replacement battery would cost approximately \$100,000.

Discussion ensued regarding the maintenance cost involved with hybrid buses compared to diesel buses.

Alderman Zasada noted the substantial health risks involved with breathing diesel fuel, as well as the harm being caused to the environment. She also noted that electric buses are quieter, meaning less sound pollution.

Alderman Larson noted it seems more regulations about emissions from diesel trucks and tractors on her farm become more involved each year and asked if the new diesel buses would have the same. Mr. Neunkirchen replied that ultra-low sulfur diesel fuel is currently being used in the buses that doesn't emit black smoke.

Discussion ensued regarding the cost of diesel fuel now and in the future, as well as how much less noise is emitted from electric buses.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

Mayor Barnes encouraged those in attendance regarding the matter of police patrols on buses to reach out to the Council and/or Mr. Neunkirchen if they wish to discuss the topic further. He also thanked them for their respectful and professional comments.

5. Resolution 2025-013 Authorizing the Waiver of Competitive Bidding and Approving the Purchase of Water Meters and Radio Transmitters from Badger Meter, Inc. in an Amount Not to Exceed \$80,000.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Larson moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Zasada.

City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

There were no questions or comments from the Council.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

6. Resolution 2025-014 Authorizing the Purchase of Two Vehicles for the DeKalb Police Department from Galena Dodge and Various Vendors for Necessary Upfitting Equipment in an Amount Not to Exceed \$87,407.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Larson moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Verbic.

City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

There were no questions or comments from the Council.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

7. Resolution 2025-015 Authorizing the Purchase of Four Vehicles for the DeKalb Police Department from Kunes Dodge in an Amount Not to Exceed \$178,162.80.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Perkins moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Zasada.

City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

Alderman Larson thanked the Police and Public Works Departments for maintaining their respective vehicles longer than most.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

8. Resolution 2025-016 Authorizing a Metronet Franchise Agreement Termination and Settlement Agreement.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Verbic moved to approve the resolution; seconded by Alderman Larson.  
City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

Alderman Perkins commented on feedback he's received about cable companies not maintaining cables at boxes and asked if something could be done about that.

City Manager Nicklas stated that City Engineer Gill has spoken with the cable companies in the past regarding issues with work being done in the community. He encouraged residents to reach out to the cable companies (Frontier, Metronet, Comcast) to address issues, and then to the Public Works Department or City Engineer Gill if it's not resolved.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

## **K. ORDINANCES – SECOND READING**

There were none.

## **L. ORDINANCES – FIRST READING**

1. Ordinance 2025-004 Approving a Special Use Permit at 2050 E. Lincoln Highway for Automobile Sales (Cirilo Mendez).

Mayor Barnes read the ordinance by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Zasada moved to approve First Reading of the ordinance; seconded by Alderman Larson.

City Manager Nicklas gave an overview of this item based on the information provided in the agenda packet.

There were no questions or comments from the Council.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

MOTION: Alderman Perkins moved to waive Second Reading of the ordinance; seconded by Alderman Zasada.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

Mayor Barnes thanked the petitioner for investing in DeKalb.

## **M. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS.**

1. Council Member Reports.

Alderman Zasada reported she's planning a Ward 1 meeting in the near future at the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church.

Alderman Walker reported on his attendance at the graduation of the first class of the Breakthrough Academy.

Alderman Walker then addressed City Manager Nicklas stating it's come to his attention that the Corn Fest event makes a substantial amount of money and yet don't reimburse the City for services provided by the Police, Fire, and Public Works departments and asked for more information regarding the cost of those services.

Alderman Walker then referenced Chapter 10 "Landlord-Tenant Regulations" of the City's Municipal Code and asked if there was a way the City can make it mandatory for property managers and/or landlords to inform their tenants about renters' insurance and why they should get it or if the City can require mandatory renters' insurance.

City Manager Nicklas stated he will pull together estimated costs for City services at previous Corn Fests and advise at an upcoming Council meeting. He then stated that the topic of renters' insurance has been discussed at staff level and during the Mayor's monthly advisory committee meeting. City Manager Nicklas further stated that DARA (DeKalb Area Rental Association) is also aware of the topic. He then provided a brief overview of renters' insurance and its cost, and the possible financial hardship it could cause for some tenants.

Alderman Larson reported on a rewarding week, starting with her attendance at a Police Sergeant promotion and the swearing in ceremony of a new Firefighter. She also reported that she provided a soup buffet to the Police Department, noting it was nice to be able to visit and talk to the staff, Police Detectives, and Police Officers.

Mayor Barnes reported on recent meetings and events he's attended, including a check presentation at the Unitarian Church to help fund their new furnace, the opening of the Beyond

One Barb Transition Center that provides programming aid to students with disabilities up to the age of 23, and the women's rally sponsored by Safe Passage at the DeKalb County Courthouse.

## 2. City Manager Report.

City Manager Nicklas stated as he was listening to the public speakers voice their concerns about having police patrols on buses, he found it disturbing that some students and residents have had a negative experience with police in other communities.

Continuing, City Manager Nicklas stated that each officer working for the DeKalb Police Department has had to adjust to and embrace new principles of interaction with the public, including de-escalation training. He then encouraged the Council, and citizens, to request a ride along with police officers so they can see firsthand how they police.

City Manager Nicklas then spoke of a serious fight that took place on a bus on one of the first days the plan was initiated. He also recalled the assault of a bus driver and an occasion when a bus driver had to stop a bus because of activity preventing them from driving the bus safely.

Concluding his comments, City Manager Nicklas stated he's proud of the DeKalb Police Department, adding it's come a long way since 2020. He further stated that policing on buses is a pilot program to see if it will make a difference and asked the public to give benefit of the doubt. The City is ready to embrace public concerns, not about the police department alone, but about life in DeKalb and asked that everyone be more accepting of those who look a little different, act a little different, and speak a little different.

## N. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was none.

## O. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Alderman Verbic moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Alderman Powell.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 7-0-1 voice vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Perkins, Powell, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed and adjourned the meeting at 7:34 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Ruth A. Scott, Recording Secretary

Minutes approved by the City Council February 10, 2025.

Click [here](#) to view the agenda packet for the January 27, 2025, Regular City Council meeting.

Click [here](#) to view the video recording of the January 27, 2025, Regular City Council meeting.