

**MINUTES
CITY OF DEKALB
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
JUNE 9, 2025**

The City Council of DeKalb, Illinois, convened for a Regular meeting on June 9, 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.

City Clerk Brad Hoey called the roll, and the following members of the City Council were present: Alderman Carolyn Zasada, Alderman Barb Larson, Alderman Justin Carlson, Alderman Mike Verbic, Alderman John Walker, and Mayor Cohen Barnes. Alderman Tracy Smith and Alderman Andre Powell were absent.

Mayor Barnes stated that Alderman Smith and Alderman Powell had advised him of their absences.

Others in attendance included City Manager Bill Nicklas, Assistant City Manager Bob Redel, City Attorney Matt Rose, Police Chief David Byrd, and Recording Secretary Ruth Scott.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Shadow Gentry led the Pledge of Allegiance.

C. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Barnes asked for a motion to amend the agenda to add the appointment of Aimee Levine to the Citizen Police Review Board.

MOTION: Alderman Carlson moved to amend the agenda as noted above; seconded by Alderman Verbic.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 5-1-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Barnes. Nay: Walker. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

D. PRESENTATIONS

1. Presentation of the Final Draft of the FY2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR).

Mayor Barnes read the item above by title only.

City Manager Nicklas introduced Brian LeFevre of Sikich.

Prior to giving his report on the City's FY2024 audit, Mr. LeFevre explained that the ACFR was in draft form because they were still waiting for the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund's (IMRF) ACFR. Upon receipt, the City will be presented with the representation letter, which will state Sikich has provided everything needed for the City's audit, and then they will provide their opinion.

Mr. LeFevre also stated that the City of DeKalb received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for its 2023 ACFR for a 30th consecutive year.

Mr. LeFevre then provided highlights from the ACFR, which included standards the City has had to implement. The City had a little over \$7.6 million in expenditures of federal awards, which included COVID-19 dollars in the form of transportation grants, and the SAFER grant from Homeland Security, used for the Fire Department to expand staff. There were no material weaknesses with internal control over financial reporting, no issues with compliance with laws

and regulations, no findings or questions of costs on major programs, and there's compliance with the laws and regulations for Tax Increment Financing (TIF).

Continuing, Mr. LeFevre stated the General Fund showed an increase in fund balance, adding that the City continues to perform in compliance with its fund balance policy and reserves are over and above what's required. He also stated that 2024 was a good market year for IMRF and police and fire pension funding as both outperformed their actuarial return.

Concluding his report, Mr. LeFevre complimented the City's Finance staff for their professionalism, noting everyone was easy to work with.

City Manager Nicklas thanked Mr. LeFevre for his comments regarding the Finance staff and recognized Susan Hauman, the City's Director of Financial Services.

Mayor Barnes noted his appreciation to Sikich for ensuring the City is following its policies and procedures.

Mayor Barnes also commended City Manager Nicklas and the Finance staff for ensuring the City maintains its credit ratings. He added taxpayers appreciate the due diligence to ensure every penny of the City's finances are accounted for.

E. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Sid Kincaid noted his dissatisfaction with Alderman Zasada, noting her absences from City Council meetings over the past months, as well as her lack of representation for the First Ward. He feels the citizens of the First Ward deserve a leader who is going to be committed to service and be present at times of emergency. Mr. Kincaid called for Alderman Zasada's resignation so that Mayor Barnes can appoint a more serious candidate.

F. APPOINTMENTS

Mayor Barnes asked for a motion to approve the appointment of Aimee Levine to the Citizen Police Review Board, as noted in Section C above.

MOTION: Alderman Carlson moved to accept the appointment; seconded by Alderman Verbic.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 5-1-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Barnes. Nay: Walker. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

G. CONSENT AGENDA

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

1. Minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting of May 27, 2025.
2. Accounts Payable and Payroll through June 9, 2025, in the Amount of \$4,123,220.88.
3. Investment and Bank Balance Summary through April 2025.
4. Year-to-Date Revenues and Expenditures through April 2025.
5. Crime Free Housing Bureau Report – May 2025.

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

VOTE: Motion carried by a 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

H. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were none.

I. CONSIDERATIONS

1. Consideration of the State Legislature's Elimination of the 1% Statewide Tax on Grocery Sales, Effective January 1, 2026.

Mayor Barnes read the consideration by title only.

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

Alderman Verbic referenced Bensonville's referendum regarding this matter, noting that 91% of its voters voted against the replacement of the grocery tax. He further stated that conversations with residents of Ward 6 and others throughout DeKalb have revealed their aversion to it as well.

Continuing, Alderman Verbic noted that the City has known about the elimination of the grocery sales tax for some time and asked for options on how it can find cost savings if the local level grocery sales tax wasn't implemented. He also asked when the City would get started on finding out what it means to live within its means.

Alderman Larson stated residents have been contacting her regarding this matter and she's been asking which services they'd give up if the City didn't implement the grocery sales tax, such as road repair, social services, police and fire services, etc.; most of them commented not wanting to give up any.

Alderman Carlson stated this topic wouldn't be up for discussion if the grocery tax hadn't been eliminated at the state level. By implementing the grocery sales tax on a local level, services residents are accustomed to will continue.

Alderman Zasada stated she was a hard "no" from the start, however, City Manager Nicklas has made compelling arguments for implementing the grocery tax. She added that perhaps by not implementing the tax, more people would come to DeKalb to shop. She also stated that she recently reviewed the City's budget and there are shortfalls in lots of directions regarding the pension crisis. Alderman Zasada stated she's not sure what the right answer is, adding she'll bring the topic to her constituents to hear what they have to say about it.

City Manager Nicklas stated that 80% of the City's General Fund, over \$50 million a year, goes to personnel to cover services DeKalb's residents demand, such as police, fire, and public works. He stated the City could wait to see what the draft 2026 budget will reveal, but he doesn't think any other cuts will be found. He also noted that the City has been living within its means.

Discussion ensued.

Mayor Barnes stated that while the governor has done a lot of great things for Illinois, cutting \$800,000 of the City's budget has no impact on the state's budget, which makes him look like a hero, and then he told all 1,294 Illinois municipalities they could discuss whether or not to implement the grocery tax on a local level with their local councils. Mayor Barnes stated he feels this was done in poor form and is just another example of the state continuously trying to remove local control.

Mayor Barnes continued, stating the City has hired additional police officers to tackle crime in DeKalb, especially in the Annie Glidden North area, which makes up over 60% of calls for police services. Human services funding was raised from \$235,000 to \$300,000 annually, which will assist Safe Passage, Hope Haven, Meals on Wheels, etc. The City is also having all lead pipes removed from the water system, in addition to repairing roads.

Mayor Barnes then stated these projects can be completed because the City allocates dollars raised through taxation according to what we believe is going to make the biggest impact on those who need it the most. He added if anyone questions this Council's commitment to making it more affordable to live in DeKalb, they should look at their tax bill and note that property taxes have been reduced repeatedly. He noted he's not on board with a politician arbitrarily, for their own political benefit, impacting us to the tune of \$800,000.

Alderman Walker stated he's heard that the SNAP benefits may be cut federally. If that were the case, implementing the grocery tax at the local level would doubly impact those utilizing SNAP benefits.

Discussion ensued.

There was consensus to bring this topic back before the Council for further discussion, either by resolution or ordinance.

2. Consideration of Whether or Not to Include "Vape Vending" in Locally Licensed Bars.

Mayor Barnes read the consideration by title only.

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.

Based on past discussions regarding the elimination of some tobacco products, there was consensus to bring this topic back before the Council via ordinance for further discussion.

3. Consideration of Whether or Not to Permit the Sale of Unregulated Hemp-Derived THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) Products in the City of DeKalb.

Mayor Barnes read the consideration by title only.

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

Alderman Zasada stated she would lean more towards suspending sales of hemp products until more is known.

Alderman Verbic stated he would be in favor of banning the sale of hemp products and asked what enforcement would look like.

City Manager Nicklas stated public information would be provided so that business owners selling the product can come before the Council to speak their piece.

Alderman Walker agreed with Alderman Verbic.

Mayor Barnes stated he is also in favor of banning the sale of hemp products, adding there are two dispensaries in DeKalb people can go to where products are regulated and controlled.

City Manager Nicklas stated with Council consensus, he would bring this topic back as an ordinance on first reading. In the meantime, those business owners selling hemp products will be notified of the potential action to ban the sale of hemp products.

Mayor Barnes stated business owners selling hemp products will need to come prepared to discuss the matter with the Council.

It was noted that hemp products are in and around the Northern Illinois University (NIU) campus, fast food centers, and other businesses where underage people are purchasing them.

Alderman Carlson stated stores used to sell products such as bubble gum and candied cigarettes, and Camel cigarettes used advertising (Joe Camel) aimed at children, however, those are a thing of the past and for good reason.

There was consensus to bring this item back before the Council as an action item.

J. RESOLUTIONS

1. Resolution 2025-063 Receiving and Filing the FY2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), Single Audit Report, Report on Compliance with Public Act 85-1142 (TIF Report), Downstate Operating Assistance Certification and Independent Auditor's Reports, Illinois Grant Accountability and Transparency Act – Consolidated Year-End Financial Report (CYEFR), and Management Letter.

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 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

2. Resolution 2025-064 Approving a Restaurant-Full Liquor License for Florentino's Charhouse LLC at 106 E. Lincoln Highway.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Carlson 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.

There were no questions or comments from the Council.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

3. Resolution 2025-065 Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Civil Engineering Services, Inc.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

MOTION: Alderman Verbic 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 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

4. Resolution 2025-066 Authorizing Supplemental FY2025 Human Services Funding.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

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

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 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

5. Resolution 2025-067 Authorizing the Award of a Contract to Tri-R Systems Inc. to Upgrade the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) System in an Amount Not to Exceed \$606,000, with Staff Authority to Approve Change Orders up to \$666,600.

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 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

6. Resolution 2025-068 Authorizing the Award of a Contract to West Side Tractor Sales Company for the Purchase of Snow Removal Equipment and Authorizing a Professional Services Agreement with Crawford, Murphy and Tilly, Inc. for Design Engineering Services in an Amount Not to Exceed \$602,254.48, with a Local Share Not to Exceed \$60,225.48.

Mayor Barnes read the resolution by title only.

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

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 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

K. ORDINANCES – SECOND READING

There were none.

L. ORDINANCES – FIRST READING

1. Ordinance 2025-026 Authorizing an Amendment to the Special Use Permit Approved by Ordinance 2023-021 in Order to Extend the Timeframe for a Modular Classroom to Remain on the Site at 1133 N. Thirteenth Street (Littlejohn Elementary School).

Mayor Barnes read the ordinance by title only.

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

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

Noting the opening of the new elementary school (Mitchell Elementary) Alderman Larson asked if the school district had plans to start eliminating mobile classrooms.

Tammy Carson, Director of Facility and Safety Operations for the DeKalb school district, stated the Brooks Elementary mobile classroom is being removed this summer. Jefferson Elementary has a mobile classroom that is owned by the district, which will no longer be used for students, but instead for storage and/or office space. That leaves three modular classrooms still in use for students at Cortland Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, and this unit at Little John Elementary.

Continuing, Ms. Carson stated the mobile classroom at Little John Elementary is being swapped from the current unit to a brand new unit with bathrooms and an entryway. As for eliminating mobile classrooms all together, the district has been discussing plans over the years that include additions at some properties.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

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

VOTE: Motion carried by a 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

2. Ordinance 2025-027 Amending Chapter 51 "Traffic", Schedule C "Parking Prohibited", to Establish a No Parking Zone in the 200 and 300 Block of Ridge Drive.

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.

Alderman Zasada stated residents of the First Ward have been pushing to find something to resolve the issues on Ridge Drive for a long time, so she's very excited to see this coming to fruition.

Alderman Larson asked if there will be any kind of enforcement, specifically when parents are attempting to drop off and pick up their children.

Police Chief Byrd stated School Resource Officers (SROs) will be in the area when the school opens to handle any issues that arise. A crossing guard will also be in place.

Brief discussion ensued.

Alderman Walker stated Ridge Drive is a hectic street, but there's always an officer present who maintains order in the area when children are arriving and leaving school.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

MOTION: Alderman Verbic moved to waive Second Reading of the ordinance; seconded by Alderman Carlson.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 6-0-2 roll call vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed.

M. REPORTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. Council Member Reports.

Alderman Verbic reported he was honored to be a guest at Opportunity DeKalb's Business Academy Breakthrough graduation ceremony and congratulated the graduates and the outstanding work by Opportunity DeKalb. Mayor Barnes agreed.

Alderman Carlson reminded residents to cut their grass. Noting that the Fourth of July is coming up, he also asked residents to be careful with fireworks and be mindful of the effect they can have on some pets and veterans.

Continuing, Alderman Carlson reported that he attended the graduation ceremony for a third generation DeKalb/Northern Illinois University student, which was great to witness.

Alderman Zasada addressed her recent absences. She stated she has a new full-time job and had only anticipated three of those absences, but then a couple of other things cropped up that couldn't be avoided. Noting her frustration, Alderman Zasada stated she discussed attending virtually because it's allowed by statute, however, it would have been an extra expense to the taxpayers.

Continuing, Alderman Zasada stated she's been keeping herself up to date with what's going on by reading agendas, watching the meetings, and reading minutes. While she doesn't anticipate this being a consistent issue, she is aware of one more meeting she will miss for work purposes, and she's going to do her best moving forward to work with her employer to ensure travel isn't planned on the same day as a Council meeting.

Concluding her comments, Alderman Zasada stated she's done her best and has been consistent about not missing meetings in the past, including when she had hip surgery and when her father passed away.

Alderman Walker noted his support of Alderman Zasada.

Alderman Walker then reported there are only five lots left in a new subdivision near his home, which is great. He noted that his neighbors say a lot of great things about DeKalb and the area he lives in.

Mayor Barnes reported on recent meetings and events he's attended, including a TD Ryan podcast, the Experimental Aircraft Association's breakfast at the DeKalb Taylor Municipal Airport, and a meeting with Police Chief Byrd, City Manager Nicklas, and new State's Attorney Riley Onken to discuss what more can be done to continue to reduce crime in DeKalb. He also reminded residents that PRIDE Fest will be held on June 21 in downtown DeKalb, and a Juneteenth celebration will be held on June 22 at Hopkins Park.

2. City Manager Report.

City Manager Nicklas had no report.

N. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was none.

O. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: Alderman Larson moved to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Alderman Zasada.

VOTE: Motion carried by a 6-0-2 voice vote. Aye: Zasada, Larson, Carlson, Verbic, Walker, Barnes. Nay: None. Absent: Smith, Powell. Mayor Barnes declared the motion passed and adjourned the meeting at 7:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ruth A. Scott, Recording Secretary

Minutes approved by the City Council on June 23, 2025.

Click [here](#) to view the agenda packet for the June 9, 2025, Regular City Council meeting.

Click [here](#) to view the video recording of the June 9, 2025, Regular City Council meeting.