City of Pekin

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE REGULAR MEETING
OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PEKIN, ILLINOIS,
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF CITY HALL
111 S. CAPITOL ST
ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 2024 AT 5:30 PM
MAYOR MARY J. BURRESS PRESIDING**

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Burress.

Call to Order

City Clerk, Ms. Sue McMillan, confirmed all Council Members were physically present and logged in.

Attendee Name	Organization	Title	Status	Arrived
Rick Hilst	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM
Karen Hohimer	City of Pekin	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	5:30 PM
Dave Nutter	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM
Mary Burress	City of Pekin	Mayor	Present	5:30 PM
Lloyd Orrick	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM
John P Abel	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM
Chris Onken	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM

Approve Agenda

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
SECONDER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

Approval of Minutes

4.1. City Council - Regular Meeting - October 28, 2024 5:30 PM

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer

SECONDER:	Council Member Chris Onken
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

Public Input

Peg Phillips, a lifelong Pekin resident and property owner, addressed the Council regarding her concerns with the Code Enforcement Division after being cited for parking and garbage can storage violations. While she resolved the issues during the visit, she explained the impracticality of compliance given her property's design, noting that the current codes often result in citing unsafe streets and unsightly neighborhoods, disproportionately affecting older and less affluent homeowners. She expressed that the City's enforcement approach has shifted from lax oversight to excessive regulation, creating undue burdens for vulnerable residents. Ms. Phillips called for amendments to the code to accommodate existing property conditions and reasonable exceptions, as well as a reevaluation of enforcement procedures to reduce unnecessary hassles. She urged the Council to seek input from City staff and residents to craft solutions that are practical, equitable, and aligned with community needs.

Anna Henry, a resident of 1616 Holiday Drive, addressed the Council regarding ongoing issues with the maintenance of a waterway and ditch bordering her property and Stark School. She explained that neither the city nor the school maintains the area, resulting in four feet of standing water throughout the summer, which causes mosquito infestations, foul odors, and makes her yard unusable. Ms. Henry stated that she has been contacting the City for four years, but no action has been taken despite assurances that the drainage would be fixed under Holiday Drive and the school would build a retaining wall. She noted that the lack of action is damaging her property value and requested immediate intervention to resolve the issue. Ms. Henry also mentioned that Code Enforcement visits her property each summer but the problem persists.

Elaine Ritchie raised concerns about the discontinuation of the City's phone payment option for wastewater bills, which she relied on as a resident on a fixed income. She explained that the change creates challenges for timely payments and suggested implementing an automated phone system similar to those used by utility companies. Ms. Ritchie highlighted the impact on residents who face late fees and stressed the need for a fair and reliable payment method. She also expressed frustration with a proposed 1% food tax, arguing that increasing taxes are driving residents and businesses away from Pekin. Comparing the City unfavorably to East Peoria, she urged the Council to restore the phone payment option and address tax burdens to better support residents and improve the City's appeal.

Consent Agenda

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
SECONDER:	Council Member Lloyd Orrick

AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer read the 7 Consent Agenda Items.

6.1. Accounts Payable Paid Proof List thru November 1, 2024

6.2. Pekin Fire Department Monthly Incidents October 2024

6.3. Pekin Police Department Monthly Statistic October 2024

6.4. Building Department Permit Report October 2024

6.5. Proclamation Small Business Saturday, November 30, 2024

6.6. Receive and File Bids Demolition 907 Catherine Street

6.7. Receive and File Bids Demolition 714 South 8th Street

New Business

7.1. Resolution No. 209-24/25 Approving Funding Agreement with IDOT for Veterans Drive Engineering from Sheridan to I-474

RESULT:	**TABLED TO NOVEMBER 25, 2024 (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
SECONDER:	Council Member Lloyd Orrick
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

A motion was made by Council Member Abel seconded by Council Member Hohimer to approve Resolution No. 209-24/25, approving a funding agreement with the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for $4 million in grant funding toward the engineering of Veterans Drive between Sheridan Road and I-474.

City Manager John Dossey explained that this funding, secured through Congressman Darin LaHood’s efforts, requires the City to commit to the remaining $5 million for the project. Staff recommended approval.

Mayor Burress and Council Member Hohimer expressed gratitude to

Congressman LaHood, emphasizing the project’s importance for Pekin's progress.

Council Member Hilst pointed out fiscal requirements outlined in the agreement, noting the City must budget funds over seven years and provide upfront payments before reimbursement. Finance Director Eric Dubrowski confirmed this interpretation.

Council Member Orrick raised concerns about prioritizing this long-term project over immediate street repairs, such as Derby and Court Streets, and questioned whether the plans would still be viable if construction is delayed by years. Mr.

Dossey clarified that the grant must be accepted now to avoid losing the funding and that IDOT plans should remain usable with potential adjustments.

Council Member Nutter requested clarification on whether the funds would cover design engineering or merely a study. Economic Development Director Josh Wray stated the term “study” referred to preliminary engineering for design. However, unresolved questions about project scope, drawings, and terminology led to Councl Member Nutter's motion to table the resolution until November 25 to allow for further clarification. The motion was seconded by Council Member Orrick and approved.

7.2. Ordinance No. 4248-24/25 Approving and Authorizing the Execution of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Redevelopment Agreement between the City of Pekin and Raymond and Kim Whitaker Pursuant to the South Residential TIF Policy

RESULT:	**PASSED (6 TO 1)**
MOVER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst

The Council discussed Ordinance No. 4248-24/25, approving a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Redevelopment Agreement with Raymond and Kim Whitaker for a new home project at 2011 Remington Road. City Manager John Dossey outlined the $650,000 project, which includes $39,065.50 in eligible expenses under the South Residential TIF policy. The TIF incentive will be provided through property tax increment rebates over 10 years, based on eligible expenses incurred and the property’s new assessment after completion.

Council Member Hohimer confirmed that the project is new construction and will generate previously unrealized tax revenue.

Economic Development Director Josh Wray noted the project is under construction but not yet completed and clarified fault for delays in processing the application.

In response to Council Member Orrick's inquiries, Mr. Wray explained that approximately one-third of the new property tax increment will go to the property owner, while the remaining two-thirds will be allocated to the TIF fund. Once the property owner receives their eligible rebate, 100% of the additional value will benefit the TIF, which supports future city projects. Council Member Orrick expressed disappointment that it could not be contributed to the police and fire pension funds.

7.3. Resolution No. 210-24/25 Awarding Bid for Contract to Complete the Demolition of Residential Structures at 907 Catherine Street to Beckman Excavating, Inc.

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Chris Onken
SECONDER:	Council Member Lloyd Orrick
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

The Council discussed Resolution No. 210-24/25, awarding a demolition contract for 907 Catherine Street to Beckman Excavating, Inc.

City Manager John Dossey outlined the scope of work, which includes demolishing the main structure, auxiliary structures, and foundations, as well as replacing curb, gutter, and sidewalks to meet ADA standards.

Council Member Hohimer inquired about property ownership and the lien process. Police Chief Ranney confirmed that the City owns the property and will place a lien on it to recover demolition costs.

Council Member Nutter expressed concerns about the significant price difference between Beckman Excavating’s bid compared to Litweiller and Jimax but was assured by Police Chief Ranney that due diligence confirmed Beckman Excavating’s qualifications and the quality of their work.

Council Member Nutter also raised questions about the lack of a listed subcontractor for concrete work, and Police Chief Ranney clarified that the contractor is required to meet ADA standards, whether performed in-house or by a subcontractor.

Council Member Orrick asked about asbestos in the structure, and Police Chief Ranney confirmed none was present.

7.4. Resolution No. 211-24/25 Awarding Bid for Contract to Complete the Demolition of Residential Structures at 714 South 8th Street to Beckman Excavating, Inc.

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Chris Onken
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

The Council discussed Resolution No. 211-24/25, awarding the demolition contract for 714 South 8th Street to Beckman Excavating, Inc.

City Manager John Dossey noted that this project mirrors the demolition process approved for 907 Catherine Street.

Council Member Hohimer confirmed that the debris from the demolished house would be removed rather than filled in on-site, referencing past issues with similar projects.

7.5. Resolution No. 212-24/25 Approving First Amendment to Equipment Purchasing Agreement with Axon Enterprise, Inc for Police Services Including Body Camera, in-Car Cameras, Interview Room Cameras, Drone Support, and Data Storage

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Chris Onken
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

The Council reviewed and discussed Resolution No. 212-24/25, which approves the First Amendment to the equipment purchasing agreement with Axon Enterprise, Inc. City Manager John Dossey introduced the item, mentioning a significant cost-saving opportunity through the City's relationship with Axon.

Chief Ranney and Deputy Chief Willmert provided a detailed presentation on the updated agreement, emphasizing its enhancements and benefits. Chief Ranney explained that the amendment would lock in rates for 10 years, saving taxpayers approximately $2.4 million. The rewritten agreement includes upgrades for tasers, interview room cameras, in-car cameras, body-worn cameras, drone support, and an improved records management system that integrates seamlessly with other systems. He noted the superior quality of Axon's products and its extensive use by other agencies in the region, including East Peoria, Morton, and Washington.

Deputy Chief Willmert elaborated on the drone program, explaining its role in SWAT operations and scene management. Council Members expressed strong support for the cost savings and advanced technology, with Mayor Burress commending the department's efforts in securing the savings and ensuring public safety.

Council Member Nutter sought clarification on the budget implications, and Chief Ranney confirmed that the current year's costs are already budgeted, with future adjustments to be incorporated into subsequent budgets.

7.6. Ordinance No. 4249-24/25 Amending Chapter 5, Article II of the Pekin City Code, Alcoholic Liquor, to Impose Fees for Re-Issuing Liquor Licenses after Changes to Ownership or Business Name and for Replacement or Duplication of License

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

The Council discussed Ordinance No. 4249-24/25, which proposes amendments to Chapter 5, Article II of the Pekin City Code concerning alcoholic liquor. The ordinance aims to impose fees for re-issuing liquor licenses after changes in ownership or business name and for issuing replacement or duplicate licenses. City Manager John Dossey outlined the ordinance, explaining that it provides the authority to charge $50 for replacement or duplicate licenses and $100 for new licenses necessitated by changes to business information. He noted that the City Clerk conducted a review of comparable municipalities and identified a gap in Pekin's provisions for handling these requests. The proposed fees are intended to compensate for staff time spent processing these applications.

Mayor Burress acknowledged City Clerk Sue McMillan's efforts in completing the ordinance, expressing appreciation for her work.

Council Member Orrick inquired about the rationale behind the $100 fee. Ms. McMillan explained that it aligns with fees in other municipalities and reflects the effort required to process changes in business information, which is akin to starting a new application.

Council Member Onken asked about the need for replacement licenses. Ms.

McMillan clarified that while infrequent, requests for replacements arise when licensees lose their original documents, which are required to be displayed on premises. Processing such requests, though not costly, does consume staff time.

7.7. Ordinance No. 4250-24/25 Amending Chapter 5 Regulations and Chapter 7 Taxation of the Pekin City Code Regarding Licenses, Regulations, and Fees and to Create a Combined Fee Schedule

RESULT:	**PASSED (6 TO 1)**
MOVER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
SECONDER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst

The City Council discussed Ordinance No. 4250-24/25, amending Chapters 5 and 7 of the Pekin City Code to consolidate business license fees into a single, council-adopted fee schedule for improved transparency and efficiency. City Manager Dossey explained that many fees have not been updated in decades, and the proposed changes would eliminate outdated license categories such as amusements, arborists, auctioneers, bed and breakfast establishments, house movers, sound amplifiers, and taxicabs, resulting in an estimated revenue loss of $6,200 annually. However, increases to liquor license fees are projected to generate $10,400, creating a net positive impact of $4,200 annually for the general fund. The ordinance also allows for future fee adjustments without requiring code amendments.

Council Member Nutter asked about potential refunds during the transition, and City Clerk McMillan clarified that no refunds are anticipated as licenses are issued for a full year.

Council Member Hilst inquired about the removal of language specifying $0 fees for business licenses, and Economic Development Director Josh Wray explained that the new fee schedule retains the $0 fee while allowing for future adjustments if necessary.

Council Member Orrick sought clarification on liquor license fees and additional charges, and Ms. McMillan confirmed the $400 application fee and $60 fingerprinting fee are included in the new schedule.

7.8. Ordinance No. ~~4051-24/25~~ 4251-24/25 Amending Chapter 7, Article I of the Pekin City Code by Adding a New Section 14 Imposing a Municipal Grocery Retailers' Occupation Tax

RESULT:	**PASSED (4 TO 3)**
MOVER:	Council Member Lloyd Orrick

SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken
NAYS:	Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick

The City Council considered Ordinance No. 4051-24/25, which proposes adding a municipal grocery retailers' occupation tax of 1% to the Pekin City Code, effective January 1, 2026. City Manager John Dossey explained that the ordinance addresses recent state legislation repealing the state's 1% grocery sales tax, which previously generated $1.5–1.7 million annually for the City. While the state will no longer collect and remit this revenue to municipalities, local governments are authorized to replace it with their own tax to avoid budget deficits. Mr. Dossey emphasized that failing to implement the tax would necessitate either raising other taxes or reducing public services. The proposed tax mirrors the repealed state tax, making it budget-neutral but with a nominal handling fee retained by the state.

Council Member Orrick expressed concerns about the financial burden on residents, citing rising grocery costs, and suggested delaying the decision to see how the repeal impacts the community. Finance Consultant Bob Grogan clarified that without the tax, the City would lose $1.7 million annually, which could necessitate a property tax increase or other revenue measures.

Council Member Nutter raised questions about how the tax revenue is tracked and suggested alternative approaches, but Mr. Grogan explained that the City's budget planning requires the tax to be enacted by October 1, 2025, for a seamless transition.

City Attorney Jim Vasselli clarified procedural limitations regarding Council Member Hilst's inquiry about placing the ordinance on a binding referendum. He explained that such actions require compliance with the Illinois Municipal Code, the Illinois Election Code, and the Open Meetings Act, which were not satisfied in the current agenda. He assured that he would follow up on the process and provide guidance post-meeting.

Council Member Hohimer and the Mayor supported the ordinance, highlighting that the tax would distribute the financial burden more equitably among residents and visitors purchasing groceries in Pekin. The Mayor emphasized that the tax could offset potential property tax increases and maintain essential public services without adversely impacting homeowners alone.
Council Member Orrick suggested holding town hall meetings to improve communication between the Council and residents, allowing citizens to better understand and provide input on City matters. He emphasized the importance of public engagement beyond formal Council meetings.

Council Member Onken sought clarification on whether the ordinance, regardless of the vote's outcome, could be revisited. City Attorney Vasselli confirmed that ordinances could be reintroduced or amended, provided proper procedures were followed. However, he noted that he would review specific statutes to confirm there were no additional restrictions.
Council Member Nutter asked whether any time restrictions applied to reintroducing the ordinance. City Attorney Vasselli stated no such limits existed, apart from the need to include the item on a future agenda with at least 48 hours' notice under the Open Meetings Act.

Council Member Abel expressed surprise at the limited public response to the ordinance, noting he received only two emails and a public comment, which he viewed as indicative of either public indifference or acceptance.

Citizen Elaine voiced frustration, stating that residents often felt ignored or dismissed when presenting their concerns to the council, discouraging broader engagement. Mayor Burress acknowledged the sentiment but emphasized that Council Members were committed to making decisions they believed were in the City’s best interest.

7.9. Resolution No. 213-24/25 Approving Illinois Municipal League Risk Management Association for Year 2025 Renewal Invoice

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Lloyd Orrick
SECONDER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

The Council discussed Resolution No. 213-24/25, approving the Illinois Municipal League Risk Management Association (IMLRMA) renewal invoice for 2025, totaling $1.3 million. Finance Director Eric Dubrowski outlined three payment options: a 1% discount for early payment by November 15, 2024, reducing the total to $1,280,208.80; full payment in December with no discount; and two installments with a 1% fee. He recommended the early payment option, emphasizing the $12,901.20 savings, and noted that the City's annual dues of $2,000 are included. Mr. Dubrowski pointed out a budgetary shortfall of $11,580 in workers’ compensation coverage, which would be partially offset by reallocating $8,371 from the liability premium budget, leaving a net overage of $3,210. A budget amendment to adjust revenues and expenses would follow the resolution. He also noted that the internal service fund managing this expense has a healthy $2.6 million cash balance, making the early payment option feasible. Mr. Dubrowski suggested rebidding the insurance package in 2025, as it has not been competitively bid since 2019, to ensure competitive rates.

Council Member Nutter supported rebidding in 2025 but emphasized the importance of starting the process six to eight months in advance to allow adequate time for competitive quotes. He recalled a previous instance where insufficient lead time resulted in a lack of bids and stressed the need for better strategic planning through collaboration with HR and risk management.

7.10. Ordinance No. 4252-24/25 Approving Fifth Amendment to the FY2025 Annual Budget

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Lloyd Orrick
SECONDER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

The Council discussed Ordinance No. 4252-24/25, approving the Fifth Amendment to the FY2025 Annual Budget. Finance Director Eric Dubrowski outlined two components of the amendment. The first addresses a housekeeping adjustment related to the public properties department vehicle purchase approved on October 28, 2024. Funds for the purchase of a 3/4-ton pickup truck with a plow, originally unfunded in the FY2025 budget, will be reallocated from the department’s contingency and snow removal salt accounts. Since this transfer involves moving funds across budget categories, Council approval is required. Mr. Dubrowski emphasized that this adjustment has no net impact on the FY2025 budget and is purely administrative.

The second component pertains to an adjustment for the insurance fund to cover a workers’ compensation shortfall of $11,580.20. The shortfall will be offset by reallocating $8,371.47 from a surplus in the liability insurance budget, leaving a remaining overage of $3,210. To address this, the amendment increases both the workers’ compensation premiums and the revenues for the fund by $3,210, ensuring the shortfall is covered through departmental reimbursements. Mr. Dubrowski stated that the amendment aligns financial records with the appropriate budget categories and ensures fiscal accuracy. He recommended council approval of the ordinance, noting that it requires a supermajority for adoption.

7.11. Ordinance No. 4253-24/25 Making, Levying and Assessing Municipal Taxes in the City of Pekin, Tazewell and Peoria Counties, Illinois, for the Fiscal Year from May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2025 and Known as the Annual Levy Ordinance

RESULT:	**PASSED (5 TO 2)**
MOVER:	Council Member Rick Hilst
SECONDER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel

AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick

Vote Result on Amendment to reduce the levy increase to 2.5% from 4.99%

RESULT:	**PASSED (6 TO 1)**
MOVER:	Council Member Karen Hohimer
SECONDER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Orrick, Council Member Onken
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst

The council considered Ordinance No. 4253-24/25, establishing the annual tax levy for the City of Pekin for FY2024-2025. Finance Director Eric Dubrowski detailed the proposal, which initially included a 4.99% increase in the corporate levy to $5,180,555, generating an additional $246,223 in revenue. The library levy was proposed at $1,739,084, including $1,335,235 for operations (a 4.97% increase) and $403,849 for debt service (a 0.79% decrease). Mr. Dubrowski stressed the levy's role in addressing rising expenses, pension liabilities, and inflationary impacts. He stated that the proposed increase would add approximately $22.68 annually for a $150,000 home, with new construction expected to expand the tax base.

Council Member Hohimer proposed an amendment to reduce the levy increase to 2.5%, citing concerns about the impact on taxpayers. Council Member Abel seconded the motion.
Mr. Dubrowski clarified that a 2.5% increase would reduce the additional revenue generated by the levy, resulting in a corporate fund levy of $5,057,690 and maintaining the library levy as proposed.

Council Member Orrick raised concerns about unfunded pension liabilities and questioned the reliance on optimistic investment returns, while Mr. Dubrowski and Finance Consultant Bob Grogan provided clarifications on actuarial assumptions and pension funding dynamics.

Council Member Nutter asked whether the amended levy would still meet statutory minimums for pension contributions. Mr. Dubrowski indicated that even at 4.99%, additional funds would be needed from other sources to meet these obligations. At 2.5%, the City would require approximately $700,000-$800,000 in supplemental funding.

Council Member Hilst expressed opposition to any levy increase, mentioning the intent of the previously implemented utility taxes to address ADA and pension funding needs.

The amendment to reduce the levy increase to 2.5% passed by a 6-1 vote, with Council Member Hilst opposing. The council then approved the amended ordinance with a total levy of $6,796,774 by a vote of 5-2.

7.12. Ordinance No. 4254-24/25 Abatement of Taxes On Waste Water Treatment Plant Bonding of $4,385,000 (Ordinance No. 2870-19/20)

RESULT:	**PASSED (UNANIMOUS)**
MOVER:	Council Member Rick Hilst
SECONDER:	Council Member Lloyd Orrick
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Orrick, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Onken

The Council considered Ordinance No. 4254-24/25, which pertains to the abatement of taxes on the wastewater treatment plant bond (Ordinance No. 2870-19/20) for $4,385,000. Finance Director Eric Dubrowski explained that the sewerage fund, supported by user fees, has sufficient capacity to cover the bond’s principal and interest payments, eliminating the need for a property tax levy. Mr. Dubrowski recommended the abatement of the tax levy for this bond, as has been done in previous years.

During discussion, Council Member Orrick sought clarification on the sewer fund's balance after covering the bond payment.

Finance Consultant Bob Grogan clarified that the bond payment, approximately $430,000 annually, would be paid from the sewer fund, which currently holds $6-$7 million in cash. However, Mr. Grogan noted that the sewer fund is also earmarked for a significant $20 million CSO project, partially to be funded by loans. Both Mr. Dubrowski and Mr. Grogran emphasized that abating the tax levy ensures the payment is funded through user fees rather than property taxes.

7.13. Discussion on Business Registration Licensing

The Council discussed the relevance and future of the Business Registration License, which currently has no associated fee and was initially implemented to improve communication with businesses, enforce zoning and permit requirements, and maintain an up-to-date contact database. Economic Development Director Josh Wray emphasized that the program has become less effective over time, noting that many noncompliant businesses also fail to register, rendering enforcement challenging. He explained that the $10,000 annual cost of software to track approximately 1,600 licenses does not justify its limited impact. Mr. Wray proposed either eliminating the license altogether or revising it to include a fee and stronger enforcement mechanisms.

Council Member Orrick inquired about regional practices and whether other municipalities utilize business licenses. Mr. Wray explained that in Central and Southern Illinois, such licenses are rare, with only Pekin and East Peoria currently requiring them, though similar licenses are more common north of I-80. Council Member Orrick also noted prior instances where the license was perceived as a tool for addressing code violations but acknowledged its limitations.

City Manager John Dossey and City Attorney Jim Vasselli both emphasized that while the license could be used to support code enforcement, it does not directly expedite actions such as shutting down noncompliant businesses. They noted that fines and adjudication remain the primary enforcement mechanisms.

Council Member Abel expressed support for eliminating the license, citing its limited regional adoption and lack of efficiency. Similarly, Council Member Nutter questioned how effectively unregistered businesses are identified and supported Mr. Wray's recommendation to streamline processes.

The Council also addressed concerns raised by Council Member Orrick, in which Fire Chief Trent Reeise clarified that fire safety inspections are adequately handled through existing department-specific software, reducing the need for the business registration system.

The consensus was to proceed with eliminating the Business Registration License, with the Mayor and several Council Members agreeing that the program no longer provides significant value. Mr. Wray was directed to draft the necessary legislation for review at a future meeting.

Any Other Business To Come Before The Council

City Manager John Dossey introduced Jim Vasselli as the new City Attorney. Mr. Dossey also praised staff, specifically mentioning City Engineer Josie Esker's dedication to overseeing paving work on Court Street, noting that progress is being made and asking for public patience as temporary road closures occur during paving.

City Clerk Sue McMillan reminded the Council that petitions for the upcoming election are due by Monday, the 18th, at 5:00 PM.

CDBG Program Manager Tina Hauk announced the signing of a $440,000 HUD grant, outlining its allocation: $110,000 for demolitions, $88,000 for administration, $98,000 for economic development, $70,000 for the police department's social worker and homeless initiative, and $20,000 for fire department equipment.

Council Member Abel mentioned a recently installed sidewalk at Veterans Drive and Griffin due to its new designation as a city bus stop, expressing concern over poor lighting in the area and suggesting a streetlight installation to prevent potential safety hazards.

Economic Development Director Josh Wray corrected his earlier comment, clarifying that Normal—not East Peoria—has a free business license, ensuring his statement was accurate for the record.

Council Member Hohimer brought up recent vandalism along Velde Drive, where utility boxes were damaged. Police Chief Seth Ranney confirmed that juveniles had been identified as responsible, and efforts are underway to resolve the issue, including restitution.

Council Members Nutter and Orrick expressed gratitude to veterans, acknowledging their service and sacrifice. The Mayor echoed their sentiments, noting her own family's military connections, including her youngest brother currently deployed in Kuwait, and requested prayers for his safety.

Executive Session 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)

Adjourn

There being no further business to come to the Council a motion was made by Council Member Orrick seconded by Council Member Nutter to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried viva voice vote. Mayor Burress adjourned the meeting at 7:51 PM.