



**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 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2026 AT 5:30 PM
MAYOR MARY J. BURRESS PRESIDING**

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer.

Call to Order

City Clerk, Ms. Nicole Stewart, confirmed all Council Members were physically present and logged in except for Mayor Burress who was absent but arrived at 7:37 PM.

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	Absent	7:37 PM
Jimmie Fletcher, Jr.	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM
John P Abel	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM
Peg Phillips	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM

Presentation Lauterbach & Amen, LLP 2023 Audit

Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer announced that the presentation by Lauterbach & Amen would take place with no objections from the Council.

Ms. Jen Martinson of Lauterbach & Amen presented the City’s audit for the fiscal year ended April 30, 2023, thanking the finance team for their cooperation and noting continued improvements in processes. She reported that the City received an unmodified (clean) audit opinion, the highest level of assurance, indicating the financial statements fairly represent the City’s financial position. She noted key sections of the report, including the Management’s Discussion and Analysis, detailed footnotes, and the budget comparison schedule, and stated there were no audit difficulties or disagreements with management. The accompanying management letter included one new recommendation regarding general IT security awareness, along with prior recommendations that are being addressed.

Council Member Phillips expressed appreciation for the finance team’s work and sought clarification on the IT comment, which Ms. Martinson confirmed was a general industry-wide

recommendation rather than a specific concern with the City.

Approve Agenda

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Rick Hilst
SECONDER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Mary Burress

Approval of Minutes

4.1. City Council - Regular Meeting Minutes - January 26, 2026

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
SECONDER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Mary Burress

Public Input

Prior to public input, the Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohoimer addressed the Council and audience regarding the proposed data center project, stating that all parties share the common goal of protecting the community and making the right decision. The Mayor Pro Tem explained that the Council's contingencies were intended to identify and address potential risks, including infrastructure, environmental impacts, quality of life, and long-term obligations, and noted that the developer is still preparing responses to those standards. The Mayor Pro Tem emphasized that it would be premature to draw conclusions before receiving that information, expressed appreciation for public participation, and encouraged respectful and focused comments as the evaluation process continues.

John McNish stated that, based on the City's transition plan and current funding levels, it would take over 240 years to address identified ADA sidewalk deficiencies, criticized the City for prioritizing other expenditures while failing to comply with ADA and consent decree requirements, questioned the adequacy of due diligence and progress on previously identified accessibility issues, and urged immediate action to avoid further legal and financial consequences.

Greg Hansen expressed appreciation for the opportunity to speak but reiterated strong, unified opposition to the proposed data center, stating that residents do not want the project, believe sufficient research has already been conducted to reject it, and urged the Council to prioritize the will of the community while considering alternative revenue-generating uses for the property.

Council Member Phillips subsequently requested that speakers avoid using terms such as “armed,” noting that such language can be disturbing in the current climate.

Dave Milum, owner of Creative Landscaping in Pekin, questioned the City’s decision to pursue significant property investments without finalized budgets, urged greater fiscal diligence and transparency with taxpayer funds, expressed opposition to the proposed data center due to concerns about noise, light pollution, and potential impacts on property values, and encouraged Council members to conduct thorough independent research before making a decision.

Finance Director Eric Dubrowski clarified that the City is not behind on its budgets, noting that the 2025–2026 budget is available online and the 2026–2027 budget is in preparation and will be filed on time, while acknowledging a backlog in audits and stating that a plan is in place to bring them current within the next year to year and a half.

Mark Stevens presented research from Pennsylvania and other sources arguing that data centers can increase grid costs, provide limited local employment benefits, and shift financial burdens to residents, while questioning projected tax revenue estimates and urging the City to consider alternative economic development options such as sports tourism, residential growth, and mixed-use development.

Adam Rogers questioned why the proposed data center site near McNaughton Park and residential areas was selected instead of an existing industrial park, expressing concern about compatibility with nearby wildlife and homes.

Terri Johnson stated that as a nearby resident she fears the project will harm property values, water supply, wildlife, and the rural character of the area, urging the Council to reconsider any commitments.

Renee Thomas shared her background in environmental consulting and warned that sophisticated developers may be targeting the City, encouraging officials to adhere to their original development vision and conduct independent research before proceeding.

Sherry Faulk expressed concern about property value loss, environmental impacts, health risks, and quality-of-life changes, asking the Council to consider how they would feel in residents’ position.

Diana Lee stated that the project threatens her elderly mother’s property value and sense of security, emphasizing strong opposition from nearby homeowners.

Julianne McLaughlin (Golan) cited environmental, energy, economic, and security concerns related to AI data centers, cautioning that long-term viability and environmental impacts should be reconsidered.

Elaine Ritchie suggested placing the issue on a public ballot to allow residents to vote and also raised unrelated concerns about school bus logistics and electronic vote display visibility.

Dawn Milum opposed the project due to proximity to her property, arguing that property values will decline and that such a decision should not rest solely with seven officials.

Michael Saunders stated that although he resides in Groveland and lacks a city vote, the decision will directly impact his family and community's rural landscape, wildlife, and quality of life.

Scott H., Creve Coeur Property Manager, questioned whether prior comments about speakers being "armed" or "yelling" were accurate, asking for clarification for the record.

Roger Grier emphasized the importance of First and Second Amendment rights, asserting that citizens must retain the ability to petition government and safeguard freedoms if those rights are ignored.

Sherry Faulk asked whether the local fire department is properly equipped to respond to potential data center fires.

Rex Poggioli urged the Council to reject the proposal, arguing that neighboring communities without representation will be impacted and that the developer may be leveraging the City.

Nisha Shablo stated that developers are aggressively pursuing multiple communities nationwide and encouraged the City to be strong enough to reject the proposal if necessary.

Consent Agenda

Council Member Nutter read the 9 items listed on the Consent Agenda.

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
SECONDER:	Council Member Peg Phillips
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Mary Burress

7.1. Accounts Payable Paid Proof List through February 2, 2026

7.2. Receive and File FY 2025-26 Budget Transfers through February 2, 2026

7.3. Receive and File Building Department Permit Report for January 2026

7.4. Receive and File Proposals for the Sale or Lease and Development of City-Owned Property at Broadway Street and 3rd Street

7.5. Receive and File Bid Results for 2025 Pekin Airport Fuel Tank Removal Project

- 7.6. **Resolution No. 380-25/26 Approving and Placing on File the Annual Financial Report (AFR) for Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 2023**
- 7.7. **Resolution No. 381-25/26 Rejecting all Proposals for the Purchase or Lease of City-Owned Property at Broadway Street and 3rd Street**
- 7.8. **Receive and File Resignation of Earl Riley from the Economic Development Advisory Committee with Regret and Appreciation for His Service**
- 7.9. **Resolution No. 382-25/26 Appointment of Ron Harlan to the Economic Development Advisory Committee to Fill the Unexpired Term of Earl Riley expiring May 4, 2026**

New Business

- 8.1. **Resolution No. 383-25/26 Awarding Bid for City of Pekin Municipal Airport Fuel Tank Removal to RCRA, Inc dba Earth Services**

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
SECONDER:	Council Member Peg Phillips
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Mary Burress

City Manager John Dossey explained that the City issued a separate bid for the removal of two underground aviation fuel tanks at Pekin Municipal Airport to allow for competitive pricing for the new above-ground fuel tank installation, with the bid award to RCRA, Inc. dba Earth Services coming in below the engineer's \$45,000 estimate.

Council Member Hilst questioned the soil contamination insurance and LUST fund process, and Airport Manager Mike Cruce clarified that if contaminated soil is found, the city only pays a \$5,000 deductible while the contractor handles remediation and paperwork with the EPA, with no additional costs to the city beyond the deductible.

Council Member Nutter noted that the bid being under the engineer's estimate was a positive outcome.

- 8.2. **Ordinance No. 4372-25/26 Approving a Lease Agreement with Pekin Community High School District #303 for School Bus Operations at the City-Owned Property at 1130 Koch Street**

RESULT:	TABLED TO FEBRUARY 23, 2026 (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Peg Phillips

SECONDER:	Council Member Jimmie Fletcher
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Mary Burress

A motion was made by Council Member Fletcher seconded by Council Member Abel to approve Ordinance No. 4372-25/26 approving a lease agreement with Pekin Community High School District #303 for school bus operations at 1130 Koch Street.

City Manager John Dossey presented the request reminding the Council that pursuant to Resolution No. 310-25/26 the City will cease providing bus transportation services after June 30, 2026, outlining key lease terms including a three-year initial term with extension options, \$95,000 annual rent with CPI and 5% increases as applicable, city-provided maintenance and fuel services at set rates, shared utility arrangements, a 60-day termination clause, and an exclusivity provision primarily covering bus parking and office space, while noting that six affirmative votes were required for approval per the City Code.

Council Member Nutter questioned the exclusivity provision, CPI versus fixed percentage increases, mechanic rates, radio transfers, maintenance priorities, polling place use, and the three-year term, while Council Member Hilst raised concerns about triple net structure, utilities, fuel markups, security provisions, radio costs and negotiation terms.

Discussion included possible adjustments such as removing exclusivity language, modifying escalation terms, and considering a shorter base term with option years.

A motion was made by Council Member Phillips seconded by Council Member Fletcher to table the agenda item to the next council meeting on February 23, 2026.

Any Other Business To Come Before The Council

Council Member Phillips expressed appreciation for the high level of civic engagement and respectful participation from residents, encouraged thoughtful and responsible social media discourse amid accusations of corruption, reminded attendees that Council members are local neighbors who share in the community's consequences, and acknowledged concerns about environmental impacts, while affirming the Council's commitment to continuing its review of the facts.

Public Works Director Simon Grimm announced that beginning in March the City will transition to every-other-week residential recycling collection due to staffing changes, estimating approximately 3% cost savings in solid waste operations from reduced personnel expenses, with potential additional savings from tipping fees, and noted updated maps will be posted online and 96-gallon recycling totes will be offered to accommodate the change.

City Manager John Dossey stated that while the City has received little new information regarding the proposed data center, staff will hold a public informational meeting on February 24 at the Pekin Public Library to explain the development process and the City's current early-stage position and announced a second public meeting focused solely on the data center topic on March 24 at 7:00 p.m. in the theatre of Pekin Community High School.

Council discussion continued regarding the transition to every-other-week recycling collection, with Council Members questioning who authorized the change, compliance with existing City Code provisions requiring weekly pickup and 64-gallon container limits, impacts to the current solid waste RFP, union considerations, and options for residents to obtain 96-gallon totes. Staff confirmed the administrative decision, indicated a forthcoming code amendment, clarified that RFP respondents were formally notified and asked to provide pricing for both weekly and biweekly service, and explained staffing adjustments would not reduce positions to part-time.

Council Member Nutter inquired about allowing residents to exchange smaller containers for larger ones at no charge.

Council Member Abel referenced information distributed by the Tazewell County Health Department regarding electronics recycling and relayed constituent suggestions about potential alternative industrial sites for the proposed data center, to which staff responded that the City has not discussed secondary sites with the developer and outlined logistical and environmental constraints associated with other locations.

Council Member Hohimer thanked attendees for their public input and shared information from a local daycare provider organizing a fundraiser to support families of children undergoing cancer treatment.

Corporation Counsel Vasselli clarified for the record that sharing the fundraiser information did not constitute an official endorsement by the City Council and noted the Mayor's presence at the meeting.

Mayor Burress arrived at 7:37 PM. City Clerk, Nicole Stewart, called the roll and confirmed all Council Members were present.

Attendee Name	Organization	Title	Status	Arrived
Rick Hilst	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	7:37 PM
Karen Hohimer	City of Pekin	Mayor Pro Tem	Present	7:37 PM
Dave Nutter	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	7:37 PM
Mary Burress	City of Pekin	Mayor	Present	7:37 PM
Jimmie Fletcher, Jr.	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	7:37 PM
John P Abel	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	7:37 PM
Peg Phillips	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	7:37 PM

Executive Session 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer seconded by Council Member Nutter to move into Executive Session to discuss 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (2) Collective negotiating matters

between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees, (5)The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired, and (11) Litigation, when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent at 7:49 p.m.

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

Mayor Burress announced that no action would be taken after Executive Session.

Council returned to open session at 8:30 p.m.

10.1. 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (2) Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees

10.2. 5 ILCS 120/2 (c) (5)The purchase or lease of real property for the use of the public body, including meetings held for the purpose of discussing whether a particular parcel should be acquired

10.3. 5 ILCS 120/2(c) (11) Litigation, when the public body finds that an action is probable or imminent

Adjourn

There being no further business to come to the Council a motion was made by Council Member Phillips seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried viva voce vote. Mayor Burress adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Peg Phillips
SECONDER:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher