



**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 23, 2026 AT 5:30 PM
MAYOR MARY J. BURRESS PRESIDING**

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Mary Burress.

Call to Order

City Clerk, Ms. Nicole Stewart, confirmed all Council Members were physically present and logged except for Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer who was absent. Mayor Burress declared a quorum was present to conduct business.

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	Absent	-: --
Dave Nutter	City of Pekin	Council Member	Present	5:30 PM
Mary Burress	City of Pekin	Mayor	Present	5:30 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

Approve Agenda

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Jimmie Fletcher
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 Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer

Approval of Minutes

4.1. City Council - Regular Meeting Minutes - February 9, 2026

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Jimmie Fletcher

SECONDER: Council Member Rick Hilst

AYES: 1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher

ABSENT: Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer

Public Input

John McNish questioned several consent and agenda items, including attorney fee expenditures, the definition and documentation of “due diligence” related to a property agreement, ADA compliance at the Koch Street bus facility and polling place, regulatory compliance for TIF-funded businesses, and public comment procedures at council meetings.

Gary Allan expressed opposition to the proposed data center and stated that, as a long-time local developer, he believes the City should have consulted him, while also arguing that residential subdivision development in the area would be difficult and slow due to infrastructure costs and market conditions.

Kim Bowers opposed the proposed data center, presenting research and materials she believes show potential health impacts such as air pollution, diesel generator emissions, and noise pollution, and urged the City to use its home rule authority to protect public health and halt the project.

Ethan Whelan expressed strong opposition to the proposed data center, citing environmental impacts, concerns about the economic effects of artificial intelligence and job displacement, and the permanent loss of productive farmland due to the project’s land use.

Justin Spencer opposed the proposed data center, arguing that large technology companies and data centers concentrate wealth, harm workers and the environment, and should instead be publicly owned and regulated in the interest of working people.

Shirley Suddeth expressed opposition to the proposed data center, citing reports from another community experiencing construction impacts and raising concerns about potential dust, pollution, noise, blackouts, and health risks for nearby communities.

Zoey Carter opposed the data center, questioning its benefits to the community and stating she would prefer development such as affordable housing or expansion of McNaughton Park instead.

Ryan Shinow spoke in opposition to the data center, expressing concerns about water usage and criticizing large corporations and political leaders for supporting projects he believes harm local communities.

Greg Hansen opposed the data center and cited several examples of communities across the country where proposed data center projects were delayed, paused, or rejected due to concerns such as water use and community opposition.

Lonny Miller opposed the data center, raising concerns about the long-term energy

demands of such facilities and warning that increasing energy consumption could strain limited fossil fuel resources.

Donna Hazelman encouraged the Council to carefully review facts and community input regarding the data center and submitted examples of online community feedback for consideration.

Dave Milum stated he lives near the proposed site and shared a letter from an individual with data center experience describing the constant operations, noise, significant electrical infrastructure, and water demands associated with large data center facilities.

Michael Saunders stated he and his wife have lived in Groveland for over 20 years and urged the Council to listen to community opposition to the proposed data center, noting that people across different political views appear united against the project.

Elaine Ritchie briefly complimented the meeting setup with the changed colors on the voting screen.

Gary Lambert stated he recently moved to Pekin from Bloomington and said he has not met anyone who supports the proposed data center.

Matthew Johnson opposed the data center, stating the community does not want it and expressing concerns about its environmental, economic, and long-term impacts on future generations.

Lynn Biford criticized recent City service changes, including recycling collection frequency, and questioned whether City decisions could negatively affect local jobs.

Roger Smith expressed concern about the long-term viability of the proposed data center, questioning what would happen if technology changes or the developer abandons the project and how the City would repurpose such a large facility.

Kevin Bresnahan, Senior Trustee for Groveland Township, thanked the Council for hearing public input and encouraged officials to ensure that development decisions serve the community and protect the land.

Consent Agenda

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

6.1. Proclamation Recognizing February 2026 as Black History Month

6.2. Financial Reports through January 31, 2026

- 6.3. **Accounts Payable Paid Proof List through February 13, 2026**
- 6.4. **Receive and File FY 2025-26 Budget Transfers through February 18, 2026**
- 6.5. **Receive and File City of Pekin, Illinois Single Audit Report for the Fiscal Year Ended April 30, 2023 prepared by Lauterbach & Amen, LLP**
- 6.6. **Pekin Police Department Monthly Statistics January 2026**
- 6.7. **Receive and File the Resignation of Christine Dunn from the Tourism Committee with Regret and Appreciation for Her Service**
- 6.8. **Ordinance No. 4373-25/26 Approving a Third Amendment to the Agreement for Purchase and Sale of Real Property with JPG Commercial Real Estate, LLC to Extend the Due Diligence Period**

Unfinished Business

- 7.1. **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**

A motion was made by Council Member Phillips seconded by Council Member Abel to approve a lease agreement with Pekin Community High School District #303 for school bus operations at the city-owned property at 1130 Koch Street.

A motion was made by Council Member Phillips seconded by Council Member Nutter to table the item until the March 9, 2026 Council Meeting.

RESULT:	TABLED TO MARCH 9, 2026 (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Peg Phillips
SECONDER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer

City Manager John Dossey explained that the item should be tabled to allow time to meet with the school district on Thursday and to address Council concerns.

New Business

- 8.1. **Ordinance No. 4374-25/26 Approving a Ninth Amendment to the Fiscal Year 2026 Annual Budget**

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Peg Phillips
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 Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer

Mr. Wray explained the amendment includes several components, noting that delays and lack of cooperation from the Illinois Department of Transportation had forced the City to re-budget more than \$600,000 related to road projects. He stated staff proposes offsetting this by adding \$325,000 in revenue from a cell tower site lease, allocating \$100,000 from the General Fund contingency, and transferring \$144,000 in planned capital spending from the General Fund to Capital Project Funds, which includes reducing planned building repairs at the Fire Department. Mr. Wray also explained auditors advised the City to begin budgeting the full expense of certain grant-funded projects, rather than only the City's share, which requires adding corresponding revenue and expenses for the Veterans Drive project and certain TIF funds. He further noted the Police Department received state forfeiture funds intended for future equipment purchases but that the ordinance does not approve any purchases at this time.

Council Member Nutter asked whether all outstanding invoices from the Illinois Department of Transportation had been accounted for. Mr. Wray stated staff is aware of a backlog of invoices, and Public Works Director Simon Grimm noted there may still be one final pay estimate for the Court Street project.

Council Member Hilst asked whether the additional funds could be added to next fiscal year's street maintenance program. Mr. Wray confirmed that would be possible if the funds are eligible through the Motor Fuel Tax program. Mr. Grimm added that the funds could also assist with purchases such as road salt and potentially allow the City to complete additional street work.

The Mayor asked whether the funds must be used in the current fiscal year, and Mr. Wray clarified they could not be used in the current fiscal year but could be programmed for the next one.

8.2. Ordinance No. 4375-25/26 Approving and Authorizing the Termination of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Redevelopment Agreement with Olivia's Playhouse and Lisa Fuller

A motion was made by Council Member Phillips seconded by Council member Abel to approve Ordinance No. 4375-25/26 Approving and Authorizing the Termination of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Redevelopment Agreement with Olivia's Playhouse and Lisa Fuller.

A motion was made by Council Member Nutter seconded by Council Member Phillips to table the item until the March 9, 2026 Council Meeting. On roll call vote all present voted Aye. Motion carried.

RESULT:	TABLED TO MARCH 9, 2026 (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
SECONDER:	Council Member Peg Phillips
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Hilst, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Karen Hohimer

City Manager John Dossey explained that the owner of Olivia’s Playhouse entered into a TIF agreement in August 2024 for \$49,885 to assist with renovations to a downtown building, which required the business to remain open at that location for five years or repay the grant. The owner has since experienced business growth and purchased a larger building on North 11th Street and is requesting to be released from the agreement so she may relocate.

Council Member Fletcher asked for clarification on whether the financial terms would remain the same, and Mr. Dossey clarified the agreement was a grant tied to the specific downtown location and the request is to be fully released from the agreement rather than modify repayment terms.

Council Member Nutter expressed concern about setting a precedent and suggested to table the item until the March 9 meeting to allow additional time to review the legal implications and ensure consistency with any similar situations that may arise.

8.3. Ordinance No. 4376-25/26 Approving and Authorizing the Execution of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Redevelopment Agreement with Pekin Alignment and Autobody for the Renovation of 716 Court Street

RESULT:	PASSED (5 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 Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer

City Manager John Dossey explained the business is relocating due to growth and has acquired the property at 716 Court Street, seeking TIF assistance for renovations through a 75% net property tax increment rebate through tax year 2034 or until \$125,500 in cumulative rebates is reached, whichever occurs first.

Council Member Fletcher asked whether the purchase of the property had been verified, noting GIS records still showed the previous owner, and Mr. Wray confirmed the closing had been delayed but was scheduled for Wednesday. City Attorney James Vasselli indicated he had no concerns with proceeding prior to the closing, and the applicant was present in the audience.

8.4. Ordinance No. 4377-25/26 Approving and Authorizing the Execution of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District and Business Development District (BDD) Redevelopment Agreement with Twisted Spoke Saloon Corporation for the Renovation of 251 Derby Street

RESULT:	PASSED (5 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 Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer

City Manager John Dossey explained the agreement provides an \$85,000 forgivable loan with a five-year term, secured by a first mortgage on the property, requiring the business to generate \$17,000 in annual sales tax to the City or pay the difference, with repayment and interest required if the owner defaults.

Council Member Nutter asked about the status of the liquor license, and staff indicated the license appeared to be active.

Council Member Hilst questioned the proposed renovations. The owner, Mr. Dan Steinbach, described improvements including exterior painting, a new HVAC system, parking lot repairs, interior wall replacement, plumbing and electrical updates, ADA compliance work, and other building upgrades.

Council Member Hilst asked how the incentive amount was determined, and Mr. Wray explained the amount is based on projected sales tax revenue the business believes it can reasonably generate over the five-year period so the City can recoup the incentive.

8.5. Ordinance No. 4378-25/26 Approving and Authorizing the Execution of a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District Redevelopment Agreement with Calvin and Martha Willard under the New Residential TIF Policy for 23 Osprey Court

RESULT:	PASSED (5 TO 1)
MOVER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
SECONDER:	Council Member Dave Nutter
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer

City Manager Mr. John Dossey presented the request as outlined in the Request for Council Action.

Mayor Burress asked whether additional vacant lots remained on Osprey Court,

and Mr. Wray indicated he was uncertain but believed there may be two remaining lots, noting staff had attempted to contact the potential owners.

Council Member Nutter stated some lots were under construction while others remained vacant.

Council Member Hilst referenced the purpose of the residential TIF policy and noted the council had previously denied another request when an application was submitted after the project was completed. Mr. Wray clarified that while the policy states applications should not be brought forward after the deadline, council is not legally obligated and staff chose to bring forward the remaining cases due to policy changes that occurred while several projects were already underway.

Council Member Nutter asked City Attorney Mr. Vasselli whether approving the request would affect the council's previous denial, and Mr. Vasselli stated it would not because the circumstances were distinguishable.

Council Member Abel stated he supported adding another completed home to the tax rolls.

Council Member Hilst reiterated his concern that the home had already been built and occupied without incentives. Mr. Wray noted there had been confusion among the builder, developer, and homeowner regarding the application timing, explaining that residential applicants can apply up until occupancy, unlike non-residential projects which must apply before expenses are incurred.

Council Member Abel asked whether additional outreach to real estate professionals might be helpful, and Mr. Wray agreed.

Council Member Phillips stated she supported the request, noting the policy change occurred while applicants may have believed they still had time to apply.

8.6. Ordinance No. 4379-25/26 Approving a Real Estate Agreement with Jeff Lynn for the City-Owned Property at Coolidge Avenue and 13th Street

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

City Manager John Dossey explained the parcel is adjacent to Mr. Lynn's property and that Mr. Lynn requested to acquire it in order to expand his lot and build a garage. He noted the City has no planned use for the parcel and that a Request for Proposals was published in 2025 with notice provided to neighboring property owners, but no other proposals were received. Mr. Dossey further stated that the City identified necessary public improvements including sidewalk, curb, and gutter

work, which Mr. Lynn has agreed to complete in exchange for purchasing the lot for \$1. He explained that while a comparable residential lot might sell for approximately \$5,000 to \$8,000, the required improvements are estimated to exceed \$10,000, making the exchange equitable while also adding the property to the tax rolls and relieving the City of maintenance responsibilities. Mr. Dossey noted Mr. Lynn will have one year to complete the improvements or the City may reclaim the property.

8.7. Ordinance No. 4380-25/26 Amending Pekin City Code, Chapter 5 Regulations, Article II Alcoholic Liquor, Section 6 Restrictions on Issuance of License

RESULT:	PASSED (5 TO 1)
MOVER:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem John Abel
SECONDER:	Council Member Peg Phillips
AYES:	1st Alternate Mayor Pro Tem Abel, Mayor Burress, Council Member Nutter, Council Member Phillips, Council Member Fletcher
NAYS:	Council Member Hilst
ABSENT:	Mayor Pro Tem Hohimer

City Manager Mr. John Dossey read the request for council action and Mr. Wray explained the potential financial impact.

Council Member Hilst asked if the primary reason for the amendment was related to development opportunities, and Mr. Wray responded that a serious developer from the Peoria area had expressed interest in bringing a gas station to Pekin but would not proceed without the ability to sell alcohol.

Council Member Hilst noted that the argument could be viewed both ways, adding that Pekin already has several establishments selling alcohol and that similar requests have been brought before council in the past.

Mr. Dossey clarified that the discussion was specifically related to gas stations and explained that retail analysis has identified a gap in the market, with Pekin currently losing potential business to surrounding communities.

Council Member Fletcher stated that based on his experience he supports the change, adding that it is not the City's role to determine whether individuals drink and drive and that allowing alcohol sales at gas stations could increase tax revenue and reduce residents traveling to North Pekin to make such purchases.

8.8. Resolution No. 384-25/26 Authorizing Additional Spending Authority for FY26 Sewer Lining Project With Hoerr Construction

RESULT:	PASSED (UNANIMOUS)
MOVER:	Council Member Rick Hilst
SECONDER:	Council Member Dave Nutter

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

City Manager Mr. John Dossey explained that the project was originally awarded in the amount of \$97,250 to complete lining work on Herman Street, West Shaw Drive, and Summer Street, with additional alternative bid pricing included for potential extra work. He stated that Council previously approved an additional \$30,000 in November to address a problem area at Rose Court and Main Street, and staff is now requesting an additional \$18,000 to address further problem areas identified by the Street Department. Mr. Dossey noted the total project amount would increase to \$145,250 and that the additional work would include sewer lining and potential point repairs where lining alone is not feasible. He added that the project was paused in December due to weather but that the contractor is ready to complete the work and address additional areas during the same mobilization, and staff recommends approval.

8.9. Discussion: School Bus Transition Update

It was determined to move the discussion to the next Council Meeting of March 9, 2026.

No Council discussion took place.

Any Other Business To Come Before The Council

City Manager Mr. John Dossey announced a town hall meeting at the library the following day to discuss the development process, noting the meeting is not intended to focus specifically on the proposed data center but to answer general questions about the process. He also reminded the public of a special meeting scheduled for Friday regarding the budget and noted that the City’s recycling program transitioned to an every-other-week schedule beginning March 2.

Police Chief Seth Ranney thanked community members who participated in the Polar Plunge fundraiser for the Special Olympics, noting that approximately \$8,000 was raised, the second-highest total in the State of Illinois.

Council Member Fletcher stated he has received numerous negative emails regarding the proposed data center and expressed concerns about the recycling change, indicating he had also received complaints about reducing pickup frequency. He made a motion to place the recycling issue on the agenda for a future meeting to discuss maintaining the current service level, which was seconded by Council Member Nutter. Council Member Fletcher also referenced prior communications with staff regarding the recycling change and questioned whether the City’s finance consultant had been working in the building prior to contract approval. Mr. Dossey responded that discussions had occurred regarding the recycling program and explained that the service is provided at no additional cost and that the change was intended to right-size operations consistent with other communities, particularly while the department is currently short a driver. Mr. Dubrowski confirmed the consultant was present for fieldwork related to the upcoming audit and that the contract is

scheduled for council consideration at the March 9 meeting, with the work being beneficial to complete while staff is available.

Council Member Abel commented that during the last two weeks of December the City recycled approximately 52 tons of material that would otherwise have gone to the landfill. He added that when the City has sought bids for recycling services in prior years, the City's costs were consistently lower than private providers.

Council Member Hilst inquired whether the town hall meeting would be televised or broadcast live, and Mr. Dossey responded that the City does not currently have the capability to do so. Mayor Burress asked about the cost associated with hosting the meeting at the high school, and Mr. Dossey indicated he was unsure if the school district would charge a facility fee but noted personnel costs would be approximately \$50 per hour for operating equipment.

Council Member Nutter asked whether the City intended to proceed with the recycling change prior to the council discussion scheduled for the March 9 meeting, and Mr. Dossey confirmed the operational change would move forward as planned. Council Member Nutter also addressed allegations circulating publicly regarding the proposed data center, stating he had not received any financial incentives or contributions from the developer or any other entity and noted he does not support the project and would not vote in favor of it.

Council Member Phillips stated she was looking forward to the town hall presentation and reflected on the broader impacts of data centers and technology use, noting it has prompted her to reconsider how often such technology is used.

Mayor Burress reminded residents that construction cones are currently in place as work continues along Court Street and stated the project is expected to be completed by the end of the year. She also mentioned a recently opened restaurant, Katana, and reiterated that the data center proposal was brought forward for consideration and that allegations of council members receiving kickbacks are untrue.

Elaine Ritchey asked about the status of the Motel 6 property on Court Street. Mayor Burress stated the City is hopeful to announce new ownership and renovations by the end of the summer. Mr. Dossey added that the former McCritters sign associated with the property will not be returned as the owner intends to keep it.

Executive Session 5 ILCS 120/2 (c)

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

A motion was made by Council Member Hilst seconded by Council Member Phillips 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 at 7:59 PM. On roll call vote all present voted Aye. Motion carried.

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

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

Council returned to open session at 9:01 PM.

Adjourn

There being no further business to come to the Council a motion was made by Council Member Nutter seconded by Council Member Phillips to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried viva voce vote. Mayor Burress adjourned the meeting at 9:01 PM.