



CITY OF BENTON, ILLINOIS
OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Monday, August 24, 2026 — 5:00 p.m.

Benton Council Chambers, Basement of the Campbell Building, 901 Public Square, Benton, Illinois 62812

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Messersmith called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The City Clerk called the roll, with the following members answering present:

Present: Commissioner Storey, Commissioner Cockrum, Commissioner Kays, Mayor Messersmith

Absent: Commissioner Garavalia

A quorum being present, the Mayor declared the meeting open for business.

2. READING AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Kays presented minutes for the Council's consideration.

A. Minutes of the Public Hearing

Commissioner Kays reported that the hearing was brief and concise, opening at 4:00 p.m. and closing at 4:02 p.m., and that no corrections were needed.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays moved to approve the minutes of the public hearing as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays. Abstain: Messersmith. Motion carried.

B. Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 10, 2026

Commissioner Kays noted two corrections to be made to the draft minutes: (1) Commissioner Garavalia's name was misspelled in Item 6 on the reverse of the first page; and (2) a reference there to the "Public Affairs" commissioner should instead read "Public Safety." No further corrections were requested.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays moved to approve the minutes of the August 10, 2026 regular meeting as corrected.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays. Abstain: Messersmith. Motion carried.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Messersmith reminded those wishing to address the Council to come to the podium, state their name, and limit remarks to five minutes, noting that public comment is offered to the Council as a whole and does not include back-and-forth discussion.

Mr. John Owens addressed the Council. Mr. Owens stated that he has raised concerns at Council meetings since March 2026 regarding the absence of a written policy governing the City's handling of a personnel matter. Mr. Owens presented

the Council with a draft cash and check donation policy he had prepared, addressing how the City, City departments, and third-party charitable organizations raising funds on the City's behalf should receive, track, and record donations.

No other members of the public addressed the Council.

4. PUBLIC PROPERTY REPORT — Commissioner Storey

A. Purchase Orders

None.

B. Approval of Public Use of City Property

- i. Application for use of city streets and sidewalks for a public dance, exposition, carnival, and public entertainment, and for assembly of ten or more persons, submitted in connection with the Chamber's annual car show.

MOTION: Commissioner Storey moved to approve the application as presented.

SECOND: Not clearly recorded.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

- ii. Application for use of city streets, parks, and public places for assembly of ten or more persons, submitted by Cathy Garavalia for a 9/11 Memorial event beginning at 12:00 p.m.

MOTION: Commissioner Storey moved to approve the application as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Cockrum.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

C. Light Poles Near the Fire Station

Commissioner Storey reported that the decorative light poles near the fire station on West Main Street have been out of service, with the resulting ground openings unrepaired, for several months. Mayor Messersmith noted that the poles themselves had previously been removed and that replacement poles will need to be sourced; the City's electrical contractor, Kyle McCollum, is addressing the wiring, but his scope does not include pole replacement or restoration of the surrounding concrete and sidewalk.

MOTION: Commissioner Storey moved to direct staff to proceed with repairing the light pole sites near the fire station.

SECOND: Commissioner Cockrum.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

Staff was directed to return with a recommendation for the purchase of replacement poles.

D. Other

Commissioner Storey noted an additional matter with considerations overlapping the Council's planned executive session, to be addressed later in the meeting.

5. WATER, SEWER AND STREET REPORT — Commissioner Cockrum

A. Purchase Order — Water Department Tapping Machine

Commissioner Cockrum presented a purchase order for a new drill machine used to make water taps, replacing the department's existing machine, which dates to the 1970s and is worn out. Total of this purchase order to Core and Main is \$2,622.56.

MOTION: Commissioner Cockrum moved to approve the purchase order as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

B. Pool Adjustments and Lake Lot Leases

None.

C. Resolution — Closure of the Public Square

Commissioner Cockrum presented a resolution closing the Public Square for the City's annual car show. The Resolution number is #26-07.

MOTION: Commissioner Cockrum moved to approve the resolution as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

6. PUBLIC SAFETY REPORT — Commissioner Garavalia (absent)

In Commissioner Garavalia's absence, Mayor Messersmith presented one purchase order on her behalf, submitted by Chief Funkhouser: Verizon Wireless data cards, eight units at \$20.00 per unit per month, for a total of \$160.00 per month.

MOTION: Mayor Messersmith moved to approve the purchase order as presented.

SECOND: Not clearly recorded.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

7. FINANCE REPORT — Commissioner Kays

A. Payroll

Commissioner Kays presented payroll dated August 28, 2026, totaling \$108,667.65, consisting of \$83,435.32 from the General Fund and \$25,232.33 from the Revenue Fund.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays moved to approve the payroll as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

B. Bills

None.

C. Ordinance — Office of Budget Officer

Commissioner Kays presented a draft ordinance establishing the Office of Budget Officer. Commissioner Kays noted that, as a municipality under 10,000 population per the most recent census, the City is subject to certain office-incompatibility rules under the Illinois Compiled Statutes: the Mayor may not be compensated to serve as Budget Officer, and the City Treasurer may not serve in that role. The ordinance was drafted consistent with state statute and the City's Revised Code of Ordinances. The ordinance number is #26-05.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays moved to approve the ordinance as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Nays: Storey. Motion carried.

D. Ordinance — Amended Purchase Order Policy (Scope of Work)

Commissioner Kays presented an amendment to the City's purchase order ordinance permitting Council approval of an overall "scope of work" for a bid project — such as the Malkovich Park project — rather than requiring separate Council approval of each individual purchase order under an already-approved and budgeted project. Commissioner Kays noted the amendment includes anti-abuse provisions, requires the same quarterly written reporting already used for grant-funded and budgeted projects, is intended to reduce administrative redundancy and speed project delivery, and preserves Council oversight and controls.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays moved to approve the ordinance as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Cockrum.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

8. CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

City Attorney Malkovich reported no updates.

9. PUBLIC AFFAIRS REPORT — Mayor Messersmith

Mayor Messersmith reported that fall sports are underway and encouraged residents to support the local Rangers; that the City's annual car show is approaching; and that the Chamber of Commerce's executive director continues to do excellent work. The Mayor reported that City staff met with the Illinois Department of Transportation regarding upcoming projects anticipated over roughly the next six, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four, and thirty-six months, and that the Mayor and the Public Works Director were scheduled to attend a related pre-job meeting the following day.

A. Purchase Order — Sound System

Mayor Messersmith presented a purchase order to replace the City's sound system, used for events such as the car show and Square movie nights, in the amount of \$8,241.78, noting that staff had, at the Council's request, looked into a more local vendor (Midwest MusicSupply) but did not receive adequate service when the vendor was approached in person. Commissioner Storey noted that an alternative option was available for approximately \$6,000, a savings of roughly \$2,000.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays moved to approve the purchase order as presented.

SECOND: No second.

MOTION DIED FOR LACK OF SECOND.

B. Purchase Order — Mural

Mayor Messersmith presented a proposal from artist John Cerney, who previously created the City's Beatles-themed mural at the Benton airport, to create an additional mural honoring George Harrison for placement in Malkovich Park on the Public Square. The total cost of the mural is \$7,250.00; the City anticipates applying a \$4,000.00 community-investment donation from Republic toward the project, for a net cost to the City of \$3,250.00. Commissioner Storey suggested that a future mural honor local figures John Malkovich and Doug Collins. The Mayor noted the City intends to feature a map of George Harrison-related sites on the City's forthcoming website.

MOTION: Commissioner Cockrum moved to approve the purchase order as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Commissioner Storey abstained. Motion carried.

C. Debris Removal — 404 South Commercial

Mayor Messersmith presented five bids received for demolition and debris removal at the property located at 404 South Commercial:

Farmers Construction (Odin, Illinois) — \$9,800.00. Complete removal of house, garage, sheds, and contents; removal of footers, basements, and concrete pads; removal of shrubs, saplings, and dying trees; removal of fences; backfilling and grading, including seeding and strawing.

Scott Inglesby — \$8,150.00. Removal of structure and foundation, dumpster service, and final site leveling; includes seeding and strawing.

Terra Pro Excavating — \$5,000.00. Demolition and removal of building; scope of work as submitted did not specify whether debris removal is included.

Minkowski — \$7,200.00. Cleanup of house and foundation.

Earth Services — \$5,480.00. Labor, equipment, and materials to haul off debris (block, concrete, sidewalk slabs, and piles), bring in clay fill, and grade the site to positive drainage.

Following discussion regarding whether the lowest bid, from Terra Pro Excavating, included debris removal within its scope of work, Mayor Messersmith continued consideration of this item to Friday, August 28, 2026, to allow staff to obtain clarification from the apparent low bidder before the Council takes further action.

D. Halloween Trick-or-Treat Hours

Mayor Messersmith proposed setting trick-or-treat hours of 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Saturday, October 31, 2026, consistent with the City's customary hours.

MOTION: Commissioner Storey moved to set trick-or-treat hours as presented.

SECOND: Commissioner Cockrum.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Commissioner Kays stated for the record that the City's Code of Ordinances, Sections 1270 through 1278, already governs the receipt, deposit, and reporting of all City funds, including donations, and requires that all money and warrants be received by the City Treasurer, with no exception for donated or fundraised funds. Commissioner Kays noted this requirement has long been part of the City's Revised Code of Ordinances and mirrors the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

Mr. Owens, from the audience, responded that this policy had not been provided to him directly despite a written request he had submitted. Commissioner Kays responded that the Code of Ordinances is available on the City's website.

11. NEW BUSINESS

None.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made to enter executive session for items B and C.

B. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE AND/OR PENDING LITIGATIONS

C. DISCUSSION OF POSSIBLE APPOINTMENT, EMPLOYMENT, COMPENSATION, DISCIPLINE, PERFORMANCE, OR DISMISSAL OF SPECIFIC EMPLOYEES OF THE PUBLIC BODY OR LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE PUBLIC BODY, INCLUDING HEARING TESTIMONY ON A COMPLAINT LODGED AGAINST AN EMPLOYEE OF THE PUBLIC BODY OR AGAINST LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE PUBLIC BODY TO DETERMINE ITS VALIDITY.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays made this motion.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

5:20 p.m.

Upon returning to open session, took no formal action on the matter(s) considered in executive session.

13. CONTINUANCE OF MEETING

The Council discussed continuing the meeting to allow staff — identified as “Brian Calcaterra” — time to obtain clarification on the scope of the low bid received for demolition and debris removal at the South Commercial property (see Item 9.C, above) before the Council acts on it. After discussion of scheduling, the Council settled on 9:30 a.m.

MOTION: Commissioner Kays moved to continue the meeting to 9:30 a.m. on Friday, August 28, 2026, for the purpose of accepting a bid to clean up the demolition at the South Commercial property.

SECOND: Commissioner Storey.

VOTE: Ayes: Storey, Cockrum, Kays, Messersmith. Motion carried.

14. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council this evening, the meeting was continued to 9:30 a.m., Friday, August 28, 2026, for the limited purpose stated above.
