

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ZION CITY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 2026 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL, 2828 SHERIDAN ROAD, ZION, ILLINOIS

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Mayor McKinney called the meeting to order.

On call of the roll the following answered present: Commissioners McDowell, Fischer, Stackhouse, Frierson, and Mayor. A quorum was present.

Also present: Fire Chief Justin Stried, Building & Zoning Director Rich Ianson, Public Works Director Vic Ransom, Police Lieutenant Paul Kehrl, Economic Development Director Sonolito Bronson, Finance Director Melissa Wellendorf, City Administrator David Knabel and City Attorney James Vasselli. Police Chief Eric Barden was absent.

William Bremner led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

AGENDA CHANGES

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse to accept the City Council meeting agenda as presented.

The vote on roll call was: Commissioner McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye, Stackhouse, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor aye. Motion carried.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Clyde McLemore, Zion, stated that he came to address the high-water charges in his bill last month. He noted that Zion buys water from JAWA. They have a plant that is 30 years old that serves over 14 communities. The plant has not had any regular updates and he feels that the costs for the updates are being passed on to the consumers there. He feels the City should coordinate with Waukegan for water which would cost a lot less. The Lake County Public Water District serves areas like Zion and draws water directly from Lake Michigan. The water is treated at their facility and in contrast, many inland and Lake County Public Works system purchase water from Central Lake County Joint Action Water Agency (JAWA). He wonders if JAWA is putting money in someone's pocket and the residents of Zion are suffering. He asked the Council to do some research.

Tahir Soofi, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community Zion, invited the Council to attend the Annual Community Iftar on February 28, 2026 to Break the Fast and promote Solidarity and Peace. He also extended the invitation to City Staff.

CONSENT AGENDA

It was moved by Commissioner Fischer, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that the Minutes be approved as follows:

- (a) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** a Regular Meeting held on January 20, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner Frierson that the Proclamation be approved as follows:

- (b) **PROCLAMATION:** Special Recognition of 211 Day

Gale Graves, United Way Lake County, thanked the City Council for the recognition of 211 Day in Zion. She stated that they are grateful for the partnership and for helping raise awareness around 211. It is a free confidential service available 24/7 to anyone in the community, in particular in Zion. Mayor McKinney thanked the United Way for 211 and for all they have done in the community. He has been on board with them since 2019. Additionally, he noted that the police officers and first responders hand out the information with it also being available at City Hall.

The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried

ORDINANCE/PROPOSAL/DEIGAN & ASSOCIATES/CLOSED LANDFILL MONITORING

A memo (26-DOC-5) was received from Director Ransom requesting approval of a proposal for the Environmental Engineering Services for the City's closed landfills. Director Ransom stated that the services will include groundwater monitoring and reporting, landfill inspections and reporting that is required by the IEPA closed landfill permit. Staff requests and recommends approval of the proposal for the environmental services from Deigan & Associates of Libertyville, Illinois in the amount of \$36,000.00. The proposed contract is for the FY27 and will be a budgeted item within the Waste Fund. Commissioner Frierson noted that the landfill has been shut down for a while and questioned when the monitoring will be completed. Director Ransom stated they do not have an end date but do have reports available. He noted that the EPA standards get stiffer which will extend the monitoring.

It was moved by Commissioner Fischer, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that an Ordinance (26-O-5) be passed authorizing and approving a proposal and work agreement with Deigan & Associates, LLC and the City of Zion for groundwater monitoring, reporting and landfill inspections. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

RESCINDING VOTE/KHAYAT ENTERPRISES/GREENFIG SOLAR LAND USE APPLICATION

Attorney Vasselli stated that on August 19, 2025, the City Council denied a land use application submitted by Khayat Enterprises Greenfig Solar on a property that has been sitting vacant for an extended period of time. The denial triggered a 12-month waiting period for the property stopping any development. After speaking with Staff, they believe further development would decrease the tax burden on residential taxpayers in the City by increasing the value of development. He recommends rescinding the denial and refer it back to the Planning & Zoning Commission for review. This would be with the conditions that in lieu of just a solar development that it may get real property or residential there and that the solar comes in after a certain number of residential building permits are done and certificate occupancies comes through in accordance with Director Ianson. Director Ianson asked if there would be a certain number of permits that would be in mind. Attorney Vasselli stated that they would be discussing that at the Zoning Board meeting and noted that there will be direction and guidance requiring a minimum number of building permits before the solar can get started on that property.

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner Fischer to rescind the motion from the August 19, 2025 meeting and send it back to the Planning & Zoning Commission with Staff recommendations. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye; Frierson, aye; Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried.

DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTARY

Director Ianson noted that he has received phone calls asking how to prevent pipes from freezing. He recommended the following:

- Turn your faucet on a cold-water trickle
- Open up cabinet doors allowing heat to get into the cabinets
- Insulate pipes
- Disconnect garden hose

Director Ransom shared the following:

He gave an update on the meter reading server issue. Everything is fixed and working to plan. On February 1st they did start reading Section 1 effectively. They are entering into that phase of the shorter billing cycle. Bills will trend down due to the shorter time which will be closer to 7 days. Once they come back around in May, (which will be the next time that section will get billed) everything should be back to normal with the 90-day billing schedule.

He addressed Mr. McLemore's comment noting that the City of Zion does not purchase water from JAWA. They purchase water from the Lake County Public Water District. They do business with JAWA for monthly water samples and emergency boil order samples, but other than that, they do not do any specific business with JAWA. He noted that he will answer any specific water billing questions after the meeting.

Chief Stried noted that they have received a fair amount of calls regarding CPR training. He urged residents to check the City website for classes they offer and pricing.

Director Bronson encouraged residents to shop local. Mayor McKinney asked about the closing of KFC in Zion. Director Bronson stated that the Franchisee ran into some difficulties with his business. He owns 54 KFCs between Lake County, Illinois and Indiana as well as the Chicago area. By choice, he is closing those stores. Zion was a very profitable store and it is not closing because of bad business or property taxes. It closed because the Franchisee has made the decision close. She has reached out to him and counterparts at Retail Strategies and they will be working on a plan to attract another business to take over that space. She hopes she will be able to give a little more information within the next 90 days.

Lt. Kehrli stated that they are hiring at the PD and are taking applications for patrol officers for candidates between the ages of 21-35. More information can be obtained on Facebook, the website, or applicants can apply at ApplyToServe.com.

Finance Director Melissa Wellendorf noted that they are interviewing for a utility billing position in the Accounts & Finance Department. The fiscal year 2021 audit will be sent to the comptroller next week and the reconciliations and budgets are getting caught up.

Administrator Knabel gave an update on the CEJA grant. They are in the 3rd year of funding on the grant. Legislation has been passed with language for the property tax abatement provision. At the next meeting, they will be introducing the abatement resolution. They will be abating roughly \$5 million collectively with the other taxing bodies. They are hoping it will have a significant impact on the property tax bills that will be coming out this year. He noted that this is kind of the finish line for their side of things by getting the result that they worked for years for. They will continue to work on ideas for alternate revenue streams but while the work is fruitful, it is not done. Mayor McKinney stated that they spent several hours on the phone today with State Representative Joyce Mason and State Senator Mary Edly Allen to discuss the importance of the additions and changes with the legislation.

Commissioner Fischer stated that he served on the Lake County Public Water District Board from 2013 to 2017. The Water District serves Zion, Winthrop Harbor and the State Park. Zion has had a contract with Lake County Public Water District for 45-50 years. They have never purchased water through JAWA. He got paid \$120 a month to serve on the Board and he does not recall anyone making money off of that. The issue with the high bill is due to a meter issue so there was an extended metering period which made bills higher than normal due to the longer period. It is not gouging anyone, it's water they use and is at the same rate that it has always been. It's just for a longer period and then there will be a shorter period and the bill will actually be less for that period and it will balance out. He takes offense that that the accusation of theft automatically gets thrown just because of a technical issue.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

February 17	6:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Zion Township Board Meeting Zion City Council Meeting
March 3		Zion City Council Meeting Cancelled due to Early Voting
March 17	6:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Zion Township Board Meeting Zion City Council Meeting

Upcoming food pantry dates at ZB East:

- February 28th
- March 28th
- April 25th
- May 30th
- June 27th

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that the Council recess to Closed Session at 7:32 p.m., pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2 "Open Meetings", for the discussion of filed, pending, possible and/or probable or imminent litigation, personnel, purchase or sale of real estate, collective bargaining, legal counsel and personnel. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson seconded by Commissioner McDowell to reconvene the Regular Council meeting at 8:07 p.m. with all members present. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye; Frierson, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

ADDING SECTION 50-15/ZION MUNICIPAL CODE/RETIREMENT AGE FOR POLICE OFFICERS

A memo (26-DOC-6) was received by Chief Barden recommending approval of an amendment to the City Code establishing a maximum age of sixty-five (65) years for sworn police officers employed by the City of Zion. He noted that sworn police officers perform essential public safety functions that require sustained physical and cognitive ability. While the City maintains standards for hiring and performance, the City Code does not currently specify a maximum age for sworn service. Illinois law, specially 40 ILCS 5/3-107(b) of the Illinois Pension Code, provides that no person shall serve as a police officer beyond the age of 65. Amending the City Code would align local ordinances with State Statute and existing public safety standards.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner that an Ordinance (26-O-6) be passed adding Section 50-15 to the Zion Municipal Code regarding the Retirement Age for Police Officers. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, abstain; Frierson, aye; Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, it was moved by Commissioner Frierson, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse and unanimously approved the meeting be adjourned at 8:10 p.m. Motion carried.

City Clerk