

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ZION CITY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 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, Stackhouse, and Mayor. A quorum was present. Commissioners Fischer and Frierson were absent.

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

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

Mayor McKinney asked for a moment of silence in honoring multiple parties to which he asked for thoughts and prayers for their friends and families. He asked that they take a moment to reflect on those that have passed away and for those who are upholding the constitution and protecting citizens.

Jesse Jackson who recently passed away and notably fought against injustice.
Nate Williams, a 40-year ESDA member passed away unexpectedly.
One of his former coaches also recently passed away who he noted was an inspirational individual.
His Niece who was tragically killed in a car accident.

AGENDA CHANGES

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

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

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no Citizen Comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- (a) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** a Regular Meeting held on February 3, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.; approval but not release of Closed Session Minutes of a meeting held on February 3, 2026 at 7:36 p.m.

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

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that the Bills be approved as follows:

- (b) **BILLS:** Vouchers 151068 through 151147 drawn on Huntington National Bank N.A., Total: \$339,206.37

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

RESOLUTION/IMRF AUTHORIZED AGENT

A memo (26-DOC-7) was received from Director Wellendorf requesting approval of a resolution to be appointed as the authorized IMRF Agent for the City of Zion. This is necessary to be able to communicate with, make changes to, and fund the City's IMRF accounts.

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that a Resolution (26-R-1) be passed appointing Melissa Wellendorf as the authorized agent with respect to the Illinois Municipal Retirement Fund (IMRF) for the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried. Resolution passed.

RESOLUTION/PROPERTY TAX ABATEMENT/SUPPORT/DCEO GRANT PROGRAM

A memo (26-DOC-8) was received from Administrator Knabel requesting approval of a resolution regarding the CEJA Property Tax Abatement. Administrator Knabel stated that the resolution will be abate \$1,538,876.56, which represents 75% of the funding received under year three of the CEJA grant allocation to the City of Zion. In 2025, the CEJA language was modified to require 75% of the grant funds to be used for property tax abatement, as intended with the original passage of the bill. Once the abatement resolution is passed, they will be able to receive reimbursement of the abated amount from the State. As a result, the City will not see any negative financial impact as they are able to pass that reduction on to the taxpayers. He recommended approval of the abatement resolution which represents a 17% reduction in the City's portion of property taxes. He noted that there is some conditionally language in the resolution that allow them to potentially modify it. The reason for that is the PTELL statute that limits the amount that they can go up in the taxes every year. It also sets that base as the highest of the past three years. If they lower the levy through the abatement process, there is a potential they would lock in that lower amount even if the funding were to go away. The State Representative and State Senator are working diligently to change the conflicting language in the PTELL resolution to make sure they are not penalized long term for reducing the taxes.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that a Resolution (26-R-2) be passed authorizing a property tax abatement in support of the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Grant Program for the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; Mayor McKinney aye. Motion carried. Resolution passed.

ABATING TAX/GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS - SERIES 2017

A memo (26-DOC-9) was received from Administrator Knabel regarding an ordinance abating the General Obligation Bonds Series 2017 principal and interest payments for tax levy year 2025. Administrator Knabel stated that the ordinance will abate the General Obligation Refunding Bonds series 2017 principal and interest payments for tax levy year 2025. He noted that Bond issues secured by the tax levy the same way a house is used as collateral for a mortgage. Should the City not be able to make the payments using an alternate revenue stream, they would be required to levy for the funds to insure payment. Since the City is in a position to make the payments without adding the burden to the homeowners, the bond can be abated and will not appear on the levy for the tax year 2025. By passing the ordinance, the debt service payments for the Series 2017 bonds will not appear on the real estate tax bills.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that an Ordinance (26-0-7) be passed abating the tax heretofore levied for the Year 2025 to pay the Principal of and Interest on \$3,140,000 Taxable General Obligation Refunding Bonds (Alternate Revenue Source), Series 2017, of the City of Zion, Lake County, Illinois. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

ORDINANCE/VARIANCE/ZION MUNICIPAL CODE/SECTION 26-5

A memo (26-DOC-10) was received from Director Ianson requesting approval of a Variance from Section 26-5 of the Zion Municipal Code. Director Ianson stated that Brad Stenzel, the General Manager of GFL Landfill, is requesting a Variance to extend the construction operating hours. He is requesting to operate 24-hour shifts, Monday through Friday, with the option for 24 hours on Saturday. This would be for the construction of the new cell in the north expansion, not the operation of the landfill itself. Due to the surrounding residential properties, Staff is recommending to deny the request. Commissioner McDowell asked if they could modify it to just extend the hours in lieu of operating 24 hours. Director Ianson stated that the hours are already from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse to deny the request from Brad Stenzel and GFL Landfill for a Variance from Section 26-5 of the Zion Municipal Code to extend the construction operating hours. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

ORDINANCE/SOLAR ENERGY PIN AGREEMENT

A memo (26-DOC-11) was received from Administrator Knabel requesting approval of a Solar Energy PIN Agreement. Administrator Knabel stated as the solar project at 2700 17th Street continues to move forward, it is necessary to separate out the solar field from the remainder of the parcel as it is now becomes subject to property taxes under the Illinois Property Tax Code. The agreement gives permission to the County for the creation of a new PIN and recognize it for solar energy production.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that an Ordinance (26-O-8) be passed authorizing and approving an agreement regarding a separate parcel identification number for a solar energy system located in the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

ORDINANCE/NEW BANK ACCOUNTS/OLD NATIONAL BANK

A memo (26-DOC-12) was received from Director Wallendorf requesting approval to open new bank accounts with Old Second National Bank. Director Wallendorf stated that after an inspection of City banking accounts with Old National PNC and Huntington, it was determined that some non-operating accounts do not have acceptable interest rates. She would like to open four (4) NEW accounts with Old Second National Bank and transfer the current TIF account fund balances to Old Second National Bank. She noted that Ted Koch, the VP of Commercial Banking is present to answer any questions. She has worked with Mr. Koch and Old Second Bank personally & commercially for 40 years and her previous employers have used Old Second Bank for their municipal banking needs for decades with great outcomes.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that an Ordinance (26-O-9) be passed authorizing and approving opening new bank accounts at Old Second National Bank on behalf of the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

ORDINANCE/NEW SOFTWARE PURCHASE/PAYLOCITY

A memo (26-DOC-13) was received from Director Wallendorf requesting approval to purchase new software with Paylocity. Director Wallendorf stated that Redundancy as well as Legacy software have been identified as two hurdles that the Finance Department is facing. They currently use Paylocity software for Human Resources, and is requesting to also purchase and deploy two additional Paylocity modules to streamline payroll as well as time keeping. The modules will drastically reduce bi-weekly input time, tax reporting, and remittance as well as increase cross-department shared communications. The additional monthly cost is negligible compared to the time savings these two additional modules will save in redundant data entry across multiple departments.

Existing Paylocity Software Fees:

Number of Employees: 150

PEPM: \$9.15

Monthly Fee: \$1,372.50

Upgraded Software Fees for 150 employees:

Number of Employees: 150

PEPM: \$16.85

Monthly Fee: \$2,627.50

They are looking to make the software live for the first payroll in the FY27, May, 8, 2026. Commissioner McDowell asked if they were familiar with the software. Director Wallendorf stated that the HR Manager uses it and that the Senior Accountant has also dabbled in it.

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that an Ordinance (26-O-10) be passed authorizing and approving the purchase of software from Paylocity Corporation for the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

CONSULTING AGREEMENT/DEARBORN LASALLE ADVISORS/ACCOUNTING SERVICES

A memo (26-DOC-14) was received from Director Wallendorf requesting approval of a contract for consulting/accounting services. Director Wallendorf stated that one of the Account Technologists, specifically the Utility Billing Specialist, recently resigned. The proposed contract with Dearborn LaSalle Advisors, Inc. will help them get caught up while they interview, hire, and train additional staffing. The City has used this company in the past for prior accounting needs as well.

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that an Ordinance (26-O-11) be passed authorizing and approving a consulting agreement with Dearborn LaSalle Advisors Inc. to provide accounting services to the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

ENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT/KATHLEEN TAYLOR/CONSULTING SERVICES

A memo (26-DOC-15) was received from Director Wallendorf requesting approval of an engagement agreement for consulting services. Director Wallendorf stated that the Finance Department has been short staffed for quite some time. In order to continue continuity of operations to the public while they fill for recent unexpected vacancies they are requesting to retain retired City of Zion employee Kathleen Taylor on a part-time temporary consulting basis. This will help to not fall further behind on water billing and shut-offs. Due to Ms. Taylor's extensive experience and tenure in the Finance Department, they would also like her to assist in training the prospective Account Technologist hire that is currently working through the onboarding process.

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that an Ordinance (26-O-12) be passed authorizing and approving an engagement agreement with Kathleen Taylor to provide consulting services to the City of Zion. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried. Ordinance passed.

DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTARY

Director Ianson stated they are currently accepting applications for the seasonal lawn crew and Supervisor. The Supervisor must be 18 years old and have a current driver's license. Applicants can go to the City website to fill out an application.

Director Ransom noted the following:

The construction of the 20th Street Storm Project will not happen this year. Federal funds have been frozen causing the project to be suspended.

There will be a public hearing at the March 17th Council meeting regarding the Public Water Supply Loan Program. This is the last step to potentially qualify for the loan. This is in regards to replacing the lead and galvanized pipes in the City. He noted that the loan comes with a 0% interest rate with the possibility of forgiveness. This will be determined at the time of signing. Mayor McKinney noted that the Great Lakes area has the most lead lines than anyone. It is a Bi-National commission that works through Canada and the United States and about 370 cities. They went to DC when the Biden Administration employed the program "Get the Lead Out" which was to reduce the lead pipes in the Great Lakes area.

Fire Chief Stried recognized ESDA employee Nathan Williams and his service to the City who started as a volunteer for ESDA in 1983. Mr. Williams passed away unexpectedly from a medical emergency. He thanked the family for his service. The service will be at Mr. Sinai Church in North Chicago on Saturday (February 21, 2026). Visitation will be at 10:00 a.m. with services at 11:00 a.m.

Director Bronson noted that the City has 187 brick and mortar businesses and 67 home-based businesses. She welcomed a few new businesses coming to the City; Vintage Village at 2754 Sheridan Road, TYLG Auto (formerly Dreyer's Auto Service) at 3001 Sheridan Road and The Honey Bee Café (formerly It's All Good) at 2780 Sheridan Road.

Police Chief Barden stated that he was recently informed by the Superintendent of ZBTHS that there was a walk out with several students at the High School for a protest. He cautioned the community during protests and noted that they will be present the best they can. They do have SROs at the middle schools and an SRO in the high school as well. They are just one individual and it is a lot for them to manage and control.

He asked that the public give people space during these types of events so they don't have any injuries. He cautioned of the possibility of accidentally being involved in a crash or striking someone in the roadway. They were trying to work with the school officials to make sure it was safe as possible. Mayor McKinney noted that the community has been blessed to be buffered from what has been going on outside the community.

Administrator Knabel followed up on the abatement resolution passed earlier. He noted that State Representative Mason and Senator Edly Allen are working on legislation regarding the PTELL cap. House Bill 4465 has been called to committee and will be introduced as a Senate Bill as well. He stated there have been a lot of comments and input on how the Bill is being interpreted. Citizens can file a witness slip either for or against to protect future service. This will prevent the City from being harmed financially in the future. Mayor McKinney stated that they have worked hard to get money to reduce taxes and have been working tirelessly with the other taxing bodies to make sure 75% of the money went to reducing taxes. Administrator Knabel stated he has received confirmation from the schools that they have approved their abatements.

Commissioner Stackhouse thanked Chief Stried for including her youth leadership team in his schedule. Additionally, she noted that there was a walk-out at the high school and Riley's gave out free tacos to those who walked out to protest their First Amendment rights. Mayor McKinney stated that change happens when people speak up. They try to educate those who come to meetings with concerns. He encouraged residents to come to meetings to ask questions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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
April 3		City Offices Closed for the Holiday

Upcoming food pantry dates at ZB East:

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

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell that the Council recess to Closed Session at 7:45 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; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

It was moved by Commissioner McDowell seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse to reconvene the Regular Council meeting at 8:15 p.m. with all members present. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Stackhouse, aye; and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, it was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell and unanimously approved the meeting be adjourned at 8:16 p.m. Motion carried.