

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE ZION CITY COUNCIL HELD ON TUESDAY, APRIL 7, 2026 AT 7:02 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, Frierson, Fischer, Stackhouse and Mayor McKinney. A quorum was present.

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

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

AGENDA CHANGES

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse, seconded by Commissioner McDowell to accept the City Council meeting agenda as presented. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

SWALCO PRESENTATION

Representatives from SWALCO, led by Peter Adrian and Frank Pettis, presented on the RIO recycling and education outreach grant, a three-year, \$2 million US EPA-funded program running through June 2027. They described a recycling cart tagging program in Zion neighborhoods (Shepherds Crossing and Sunset Ridge), where teams inspected recycling carts, tagged contaminated ones, and educated residents using bilingual, picture-based tags.

Over eight weeks of bi-weekly visits, contamination rates dropped from about 60% to 20%, demonstrating the effectiveness of a “soft,” community-based approach that employs local residents. They outlined plans to expand cart tagging into central Zion, increase presence at community events and schools (using mascot Luke the recycling cart), and invited further ideas and engagement from city staff and council members.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no citizens comments.

CONSENT AGENDA

- (a) **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** a Regular meeting held on March 20, 2026 at 3:00pm. It was motioned by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse to approve as presented. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

Approved but not release of Closed Session Minutes held on March 20, 2026 at 3:40pm. It was motioned by Commissioner McDowell, seconded by Commissioner Fischer to approve as presented. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

- (b) **BILLS:** Vouchers 151522 through 151604 drawn on Huntington National Bank, N.A. Total: \$569,208.17. It was moved by Commissioner Fischer seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse to approve as presented. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

ORDINANCE/INSURANCE BROKERAGE SERVICES

A Memo (26-DOC-20) was received from Administrator Knabel requesting approval to renew all insurance policies for the year ending April 30, 2026. Health insurance premiums, initially proposed to increase by 25%, were negotiated down to a 17% increase, resulting in an estimated \$379,000 annual cost increase based on current enrollment, while dental premiums will decrease by 1.3% and life and voluntary benefits remain rate-guaranteed through May 1, 2028.

It was motioned by Commissioner Stackhouse and seconded by Commissioner McDowell that an Ordinance (26-O-16) be passed approving and authorizing Marsh & McLennan Agency LLC to provide Insurance Brokerage Services and renew certain insurance policies (medical, dental, life and voluntary options). The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

ORDINANCE/AGREEMENT W/LAKE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

A Memo (26-DOC-21) was received from Police Chief Barden requesting approval of a service agreement between the Lake County Health Department regarding the Animal Care and Control within in the City of Zion.

It was motioned by Commissioner McDowell and seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that an Ordinance (26-O-17) be passed approving and authorizing an agreement between the Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center and the City of Zion for Animal Control Services. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

ORDINANCE/AMENDING MUNICIPAL CODE/CONSTRUCTION ON SUNDAYS

A Memo (26-DOC-22) was received from Director Ianson requesting approval to amend Section 10-43 of the Zion Municipal Code to authorize permitted limited construction activity to occur on Sunday in connection with necessary work determined to be in the interest of public health, safety, and welfare of the community.

It was motioned by Commissioner Frierson and seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse that an Ordinance (26-O-18) be passed approving and authorizing the amendment of Section 10-43 of the Zion Municipal Code to permit limited construction activity to occur on Sundays in connection with necessary work determined to be in the interest of public health, safety, and welfare of the community. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

APPROVAL/ROGER WHITMORE AUTOMOTIVE

A Memo (26-DOC-23) was received from Director Bronson seeking council's direction for a TIF grant for Roger Whitmore Automotive. The council revisited the TIF grant request for Roger Whitmore Automotive Inc., which had been tabled at the prior meeting due to concerns about the TIF district's financial health. Administrator Knabel outlined options, including splitting the incentive over two years to ease cash flow, but recommended denial, noting the fund's existing deficit and that the requested improvements would not increase the property's assessed value. Director Bronson supported approval of the TIF Board's recommendation and Mr. Whitmore's revised request up to \$79,000, emphasizing the business's 50+ year presence and the TIF's remaining time to grow. Commissioner Frierson reiterated that his opposition to the TIF grant stemmed from viewing TIF holistically for the entire area, emphasizing that TIF investments should drive economic development, traffic, people, and visibility. He stated that this particular request did not meet those criteria and requested a clearer framework going forward on how both the TIF Board and the council evaluate and approve TIF expenditures.

It was motioned by Commissioner Frierson to deny the TIF recommendation. Motioned died for lack of a second.

It was motioned by Commissioner McDowell and seconded by Commissioner Fischer to approve the TIF Board's recommendation and Mr. Whitmore's revised request in an amount not to exceed \$79,000. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, nay; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

HOTEL/MOTEL TAX GRANT/ZION TOWNSHIP

A memo (26-DOC-24) was received from Director Bronson requesting approval of a Hotel/Motel Tax Grant for Zion Township to assist with marketing costs associated with the 2026 Zinnia & Monarch Festival...and Bees Too! which is planned for August 15 – 17, 2026 along Shiloh Boulevard in Zion. Zion Township has applied for and complied with grants in prior years and staff requests and recommends approval of the grant request not to exceed \$10,000.

It was motioned by Commissioner McDowell and seconded by Commissioner Fischer that a Resolution (26-R-5) be passed authorizing and approving a Hotel/Motel Tax Grant for Zion Township in an amount not to exceed \$10,000. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

HOTEL/MOTEL TAX GRANT/ZION TOWNSHIP

A memo (26-DOC-25) was received from Director Bronson requesting approval of a Hotel/Motel Tax Grant for the Elite Striders Drill to assist with marketing costs associated with the 2026 Drill or Die Drill Competition which is planned for May 22 – 24, 2026 at Zion Benton Township High School. The Elite Striders Drill Team has applied for and complied with grants in prior years and staff requests and recommends approval of the grant request not to exceed \$6,000.

It was motioned by Commissioner McDowell and seconded by Commissioner Fischer that a Resolution (26-R-6) be passed authorizing and approving a Hotel/Motel Tax Grant for Elite Striders Drill Team in an amount not to exceed \$6,000. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

DEPARTMENTAL COMMENTARY

Director Ianson reminded residents that sump pumps must discharge on private property rather than into public rights-of-way to avoid water issues on streets and sidewalks.

Director Ransom announced a temporary daytime road closure on Gabriel Avenue between 26th and 27th Streets from April 13–15 for the Start Early program’s storm sewer connection, explaining that the road will reopen each night and a detour will maintain access to Shiloh Park School; he also recapped coordinated tree-removal work with ComEd after storm damage.

Fire Chief Streid reported that the city’s emergency siren system has been upgraded to an automated activation and testing setup tied to National Weather Service warnings, resolving prior reliability problems.

Director Wellington noted that the finance office is now fully staffed, staff handled a stressful water shutoff day effectively, the Velocity payroll/HR implementation has been pushed to the second payroll in May to avoid mid-transition contract changes, and bank reconciliations are about 75% caught up through March, which will support more accurate financial reporting.

Police Chief Barden announced that Officers Haley Pacholsky, Dan Jeffrey, and Ty Coggins were selected to receive the Illinois Law Enforcement Medal of Honor for their exemplary response to a mental health crisis at McDonald’s, noting that only 19 officers statewide were honored. He stated that this recognition reflects the department’s strong emphasis on mental health training, de-escalation, and modern policing practices that seek to avoid use of force whenever possible.

Administrator David Knabel reported that the city received state approval and a Notice of Award for the third round of CEJA funding, confirming reimbursement of the 75% property tax abatement, preservation of the city’s PTELL tax cap, and participation in the abatement by the six major taxing bodies.

Director Bronson welcomed several new and upcoming businesses to Zion—Honey Bee Café, Mission Myopia Control, Lakefront Smokehouse, a new ice cream shop (La Michoacana). She also noted that Chipotle has signed a 15-year lease with a planned groundbreaking in June and encouraged residents to support the growing local business community.

Commissioner Frierson commented that it's good to see new business activity and also thanked the public Works Department for addressing the lights that were out on 33d Street.

Commissioner Stackhouse expressed her appreciation for all city staff, thanking them for their hard work in making Zion a safe, welcoming place to live, work, and play.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

April 21	6:00 p.m. 7:00 p.m.	Zion Township Board Meeting Zion City Council Meeting
May 5	7:00 p.m.	Zion City Council Meeting

CLOSED SESSION

It was moved by Commissioner Stackhouse and seconded by Commissioner Frierson that the Council recess to Closed Session at 7:53 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 and legal counsel. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, aye; Stackhouse, aye and Mayor McKinney, aye. Motion carried.

It was moved by Commissioner Frierson seconded by Commissioner Fischer to reconvene the Regular Council meeting at 9:37 p.m. with all members present. The vote on roll call was: Commissioners McDowell, aye; Frierson, aye; Fischer, 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 Frierson, seconded by Commissioner Stackhouse and unanimously approved the meeting be adjourned at 9:38 p.m. Motion carried.

Recording Secretary