

CITY OF ST. JOHNS
CITY COMMISSION MINUTES

MAY 19, 2025

The regular meeting of the St. Johns City Commission was called to order by Mayor Dzurka at 6:00 p.m. at the Clinton County Courthouse, 100 East State Street, 2nd Floor, Suite #2200, St. Johns, Michigan.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Eric Hufnagel, Scott Dzurka, Chris Hyzer, Chris DeLiso

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Brad Gurski

STAFF PRESENT: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Kristina Kinde, City Treasurer; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Justin Smith, Director of Public Services; Anne Seurnyck, City Attorney

Mayor Dzurka asked if any of the commissioners or persons present wished to discuss any of the items on the consent agenda. He asked to add the Fireworks Permit for the July 4th Event at the City Park.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the consent agenda be approved as amended.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the minutes of the April 28, 2025 regular meeting be approved as presented.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

b. Receipt of Warrants

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that warrants be approved as presented in the amount of \$366,559.91.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

c. Clinton County Central Dispatch Freedom Application User Agreement for Fire Departments

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission approve the Clinton County Central Dispatch User Agreement and authorize the Mayor to sign for the provision of Freedom Software and two (2) iPads to the St. Johns Fire Department.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

d. St. Johns Fire Department - Contract with Locality Media/First Due

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission re-approve the Locality Media/First Due Proposal, with the incorporated City Attorney changes, for the first year cost of \$7,200 and then annually for \$6,000 and authorize the Mayor to endorse the same.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

e. Fireworks Permit for the July 4th Event at the City Park

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission approve the permit for fireworks other than consumer or low impact for Night Magic Displays for the July 4, 2025 Rotary Club Fireworks Display and authorize the mayor to sign.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

AGENDA

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda. He asked to add an item under New Business - #5 – Merit Bonuses.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the agenda as amended.

AGENDA

A. OPENING:

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1. Invocation
 2. Pledge of Allegiance
 3. Consent Agenda

The staff proposes the following items for the Consent Agenda. If any Commissioner wishes to discuss any of these items, it should be placed on the regular agenda. The remaining items and recommendations may be approved en masse:

 - a. Approval of Minutes
 - Regular meeting minutes of April 28, 2025
 - b. Receipt of Warrants
 - In the amount of \$366,559.91
 - c. Clinton County Central Dispatch Freedom Application User Agreement for Fire Departments
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the Clinton County Central Dispatch User Agreement and authorize the Mayor to sign for the provision of Freedom Software and two (2) iPads to the St. Johns Fire Department.
 - d. St. Johns Fire Department - Contract with Locality Media/First Due
 - Staff recommends that the city commission re-approve the Locality Media/First Due Proposal, with the incorporated City Attorney changes, for the first year cost of \$7,200 and then annually for \$6,000, and authorize the Mayor to endorse the same.
 - e. Fireworks Permit for the July 4th Event at the City Park (*Added to consent*)
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the permit for fireworks other than consumer or low impact for Night Magic Displays for the July 4, 2025 Rotary Club Fireworks Display and authorize the mayor to sign.
 4. Approval of Agenda:

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal
2. Proposed 2025/2026 Fiscal Year Budget

C. PRESENTATIONS:

1. Quarterly Budget Report
2. Update to City of St. Johns Fire Code

D. PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY:

1. Public comment - agenda & non-agenda items

E. COMMUNICATIONS:**F. OLD BUSINESS:**

1. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal – Resolution to Confirm the Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Roll - #22-2025

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2. 2025/2026 Fiscal Year Budget Resolution - #23-2025
 3. Resolution To Approve Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Salary Increases - #24-2025
 4. City Manager Contract

G. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Rezoning of the northern 700 and 800 Blocks of W. State St. and 110 Piston Ring Place – Resolution to Introduce Ordinance - #25-2025
2. 2025 Mint Festival – St. Johns Chamber of Commerce Request
3. Safe Routes to School RFP Results‘
4. Resolution Recognizing Pride Month - #26-2025
5. Merit Bonuses (*Added to agenda*)
6. City Manager Comments
7. Commissioner Comments

H. ADJOURNMENT:

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission open the public hearing.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 6:06 p.m.

Treasurer Kinde discussed:

- The special assessment is being renewed for three years.
 - Three-year approval.
 - \$10 per parcel per year increase.
 - Same parcels as before.

Mayor Dzurka asked if there was anyone present wishing to comment.

There were no public comments.

Motion by Commissioner DeLiso seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission close the public hearing.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 6:07 p.m.

2. Proposed 2025/2026 Fiscal Year Budget

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission open the public hearing.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was opened at 6:08 p.m.

City Manager Gamble discussed:

- The budget process.
 - Presentations since November 2024.
 - Personnel and Finance Committee involved.
 - Removal of \$23,000 CIP for city signs.
 - Change in part-time recreational programmer allocation to Wilson Center Fund.
 - Minor global changes to fringe benefits.
 - Placeholder for budget resolution and millage rates in L-4029 document.
- Insurance increases were initially projected at 40-50%.
 - Creative program devised by staff.
- Reduced 80% allocation of wages for firefighters (based on percentage of runs).
- Appreciative of all the senior staff at the city.
 - Brand new budget software.
 - Excited about this process.

Treasurer Kinde discussed:

- The county was having issues with software with the L-4028.
 - It doesn't look like it will affect the city but if it does, we will bring it back to the commission.
- Millage rates are reduced annually due to Headlee.

- Resulting in a small rollback each year.
- The total amount collected remains roughly the same as property values rise.

Mayor Dzurka asked if there was anyone present wishing to comment.

Director Smith discussed:

- The 3% COLA for all employees except grade 12 and above, who receive only 1.5%, is seen as disrespectful given the responsibility and workload of the four affected employees; the lower increase could be misinterpreted as a sign of poor performance or disciplinary action.
 - He respectfully requested the commission to move all employees to a 3% COLA increase.
 - If not, he asked the commission to go on record to negate any rumors or misinformation.

There were no public comments.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission close the public hearing.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The public hearing was closed at 6:18 p.m.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Quarterly Budget Report

Treasurer Kinde discussed the quarterly budget report:

- End of third quarter (March 31st); about 75% range.
- We have not yet received property tax settlement payment from the county.
- The city is on track with the McKenna contract.
 - 67% of contract amount spent by end of March, likely through February's billing.
- Indirect costs for the county increased.
 - Annual increase: \$89,892 to \$97,500
- Capital expense line appears over, but this is due to transfers for equipment replacement.

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- \$535,000 transfer to fire fund
 - \$701,000 transfer to motor pool fund
 - Interest earned through March 31, 2025:
 - Fantasy Forest: \$11,000
 - Wilson Center: \$80,000

There was a discussion of:

- The interest from Fantasy Forest stays in the Fantasy Forest fund.
- The purpose for the county increase.
 - We were not given a reason; it comes from their cost allocation study.
- 2nd payment for LCSA.
 - Don't believe we have received that yet.

2. Update to City of St. Johns Fire Code

Fire Chief Douglas discussed:

- The fire code should be updated from the 1990 version to the 2021 International Fire Code to improve public safety and align with best practices.
 - Current code from 1990 (BOCA).
 - 2021 International Fire Code includes advancements in safety, building construction, radio communication, lithium battery systems, mobile food truck standards, and consistency with Michigan state building code.
- The update will provide guidelines for fire inspections, especially for mobile food preparation vehicles, which currently lack fire service inspection standards.
- Updating the code will bring economic benefits, reduce property damage, lower insurance, and improve firefighter safety.

There was a discussion of:

- If there is any interaction we need to have with the county.
 - Chief Douglas reached out to Joel Haviland with the County Building Department.
- The Planning Commission.
 - No action needed.
- Lower insurance rates.
- ISO rating; we would be able to gain a few more points.
- Mobile food trucks and inspections.
- Any related costs?
 - Nursing homes would have to put sprinkler systems in, but all of them in the city are up to code and there are no issues.

Mayor Dzurka thanked him for the presentation.

PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY

1. Public Comment

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any public comments. He discussed the rules regarding public comment.

Tim Hulliberger, 1005 Sandy Lane, was present. He said he is a member of the St. Johns Call-In Coalition; they sponsor the Pride Festival and are approaching the 5th festival. He asked for your support on the Resolution that is #4 under New Business.

Mandy, owner of a cosmetics store downtown, was present. She discussed: advocating for the Pride Event; having individuals feeling safe in her store; the 2023 Trevor Project survey on self-harm; and she believes everyone in this room has someone they love that is part of that community.

Mayor Dzurka thanked everyone for their comments.

COMMUNICATIONS

OLD BUSINESS

1. Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Renewal – Resolution to Confirm the Principal Shopping District Special Assessment Roll - #22-2025

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission adopt Resolution #22-2025.

YEA: Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

ABSTAIN: Hufnagel

Motion carried.

2. 2025/2026 Fiscal Year Budget Resolution - #23-2025

Commissioner Hyzer asked about Clinton Avenue and the thought process behind it. He said there are probably other streets in town that are worse off than Clinton Avenue that should be paved.

Director Smith discussed our winters with the freezing and thawing; our goal at the end of the millage term is we should have extra funds left to use on the downtown area; the base down there is good and they are doing some surrounding streets.

There was a discussion of:

- Doing surrounding streets at same time and cost efficiencies.
 - Disruption to downtown businesses.
 - Creating efficiencies.
- The budget.
 - Phased approach.
 - It is in the budget using Act 51 funds.
- Falling under larger project gets us better prices.
 - Street project contract with Michigan Paving.
 - Sole source.

Mayor Dzurka thanked everyone for budget process.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission adopt Resolution #23-2025.

Commissioner Hyzer said he agreed with what Justin said tonight on the 1.5% increase for those employees. He said the only factor is the wage study and not what they do here day in and day out. If the wage study comes back as more, he will say to come back with retro rates.

Mayor Dzurka said thank you for the comments. This is not in any way a reflection of that staff level performance, it is a question on comparatively to other communities, and once the wage study is done, he is committed to placing people appropriately and placing them retroactive.

City Manager Gamble discussed the RCA and the order of addressing resolutions. He asked for approval of the CIP plan as amended, then approval of the wage adjustment resolution, and then the actual budget resolution.

The commission removed the previous motion.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission approve the CIP plan as amended in detail in the CIP section of the budget book.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. Resolution To Approve Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Salary Increases - #24-2025

Motion by Commissioner DeLiso seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission adopt Resolution #24-2025.

Commissioner Hyzer asked if there is a reason we are doing this resolution and adopting wages again in the budget resolution.

Mayor Dzurka discussed the charter provisions.

Attorney Seurnyck discussed the resolution and her reasoning for having a separate wage resolution.

City Manager Gamble said he understands the commission's concern and research regarding the salaries and understands we want to be fiscally responsible, but we want to ensure we have the best and brightest. We are blessed to have a very experienced staff and well-seasoned. He respectfully and humbly said they would be warranted for the 3% increase. He understands the will and decision of the commission.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Motion by Commissioner DeLiso seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission adopt budget resolution #23-2025.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

4. City Manager Contract

Mayor Dzurka thanked everyone for submitting feedback. He said Chad met with the personal advisory prior to the last meeting; he thanked Anne and her team for the first draft of the contract; highlights: 1.5% increase in contract, vehicle allowance in lieu of mileage, additional week of vacation; and trying to make it an evergreen contract.

There was a discussion of:

- The contract should be an evergreen contract.
 - Evergreen contract means it continues unless action is taken.

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- Rolling two-year term.
 - There is a need for clarity in contract language, especially regarding vacation, sick leave, and personal time accrual and rollover.
 - City Manager Gamble requested to roll at least 100 hours of time forward.
 - Other employees can carry over two years' worth of vacation.
 - City Manager Gamble felt the percentage salary increase should match the 3% given to other employees, based on a prior salary study.
 - His salary was set two years ago based on a study by a recruiter.
 - There should be a provision for a reimbursement for 60 hours of lost vacation from the previous year.
 - Attorney questioned if this amends the previous contract.
 - The contract should allow for annual review and adjustment of compensation, rather than automatic COLA increases.
 - COLA could be set as a minimum or adjusted year-to-year.
 - Compensation to be determined during April-May budget time.
 - Vehicle allowance terms need clarification, including whether the amount is monthly or yearly, and the appropriate amount.
 - Discussion of \$75 increase per month, of the \$200 per month and what other city managers receive.
 - St. Johns is 4 square miles.
 - Current draft language unclear.
 - Severance and notice provisions should be consistent with other city contracts, with clear notice periods for non-renewal or termination.
 - Current contract provides two months' notice.
 - Three months' notice built into prior contract.
 - Most city manager contracts include some severance.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the city commission table pending negotiations on behalf of personnel advisory committee.

Commissioner Hyzer said we are not far off.

Mayor Dzurka said he doesn't think anyone is saying we don't want to renew the contract.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS1. Rezoning of the northern 700 and 800 Blocks of W. State St. and 110 Piston Ring Place – Resolution to Introduce Ordinance - #25-2025

City Manager Gamble said this was due to an applicant request that would have required property to be rezoned. Mr. Ensey and McKenna looked at this and said the current zoning was odd. If a house in this area burned, they would be unable to rebuild due to the zoning they had.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission adopt Resolution #25-2025 to Introduce an Ordinance to Amend the City's Zoning Ordinance to Rezone Properties.

YAY: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

2. 2025 Mint Festival – St. Johns Chamber of Commerce Request

City Manager Gamble said part of the request of the Chamber is a write-off of the charges for services from Police, Fire and Public Services. He thanked Danielle Schrader for rolling with the changes to our SEPA (Special Event Permit Application) process. Staff has done a tremendous job with the new SEPA. He said one minor change was item #1, staff can't assist with that after the morning. We are very supportive and encouraging of Chamber and the DDA for their joint efforts of putting together this amazing and awesome event.

There was a discussion of:

- Item #6, tripping hazards.
- The parade and a conversation about the parade and needing additional barriers along M-21.
 - Valid concern over the controls required to shut down a state trunk line and follow MDOT protocols.
 - Encourage Chamber to work with our vendor.
 - Price quote through Capital Barricade.

Mayor Dzurka recognized the work of the Chamber for the Mint Festival and the sponsors.

Motion by Commissioner Hufnagel seconded by Commissioner Deliso that the city commission approve the Chamber of Commerce Mint Festival request as referenced in the letter.

YAY: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. Safe Routes to School RFP Results

Director Smith said this is an amazing opportunity for an estimated \$1.1 million in grant funding. We had to send out the RFP for this as the Act 51 Administrator. He discussed the difficulty of bidding this project and said Wolverine Engineers is the recommended bidder. They also worked with Dr. Berthume at New Lothrop and their successful application. The school does not need to approve this.

Mayor Dzurka said this is one of the outcomes of joint meetings with the school district.

Director Smith said the \$7,500 would be the only thing within the 25/26 budget year and would be pro-rated with the school district.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission to award the Safe Routes to School Design & Engineering Proposal to Wolverine Engineers.

YAY: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

4. Resolution Recognizing Pride Month - #26-2025

Mayor Dzurka said the speakers earlier kind of hit the key aspects of this resolution.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission adopt Resolution #26-2025.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: DeLiso

Motion carried.

5. Merit Bonuses

City Manager Gamble said he sent over two merit bonus requests for two staff members (Kinde & Seavey) who went over and above call of duty: new software during busiest

times of years (budget and election); the creativity necessary for delivering an insurance proposal to city saving \$150,000; and additional duties regarding processing of reimbursements.

Mayor Dzurka said thank you for work.

Commissioner Hyzer asked if the personal advisory committee reviewed this.

City Manager Gamble said no, typically these have come to the commission.

Commissioner Hufnagel said these are historically done in conjunction with the salary adjustment discussion and it didn't come up during that process.

Mayor Dzurka said we also have other staff out there and asked managers to pay attention to all levels that go above and beyond.

Motion by Commissioner DeLiso seconded by Commissioner Hufnagel that the city commission approve the merit bonuses.

Commissioner Hyzer said he thinks it should go through the proper channels since we have a policy in place.

YAY: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

City Manager Gamble apologized. He said we had one recently for the loader attachment suggestion and discussed that process. In the future, we will call together the personal advisory to review. He said he appreciates that for our team, and it is a good reminder for all of us to recognize those people.

6. City Manager Comments

City Manager Gamble discussed:

- Update on Status of Urban Cooperative Agreement Between Bingham Township and City of St. Johns.
 - Presentation of updated draft agreement received earlier today.
- Update on City's negotiations with EGLE on our NPDES permit.
 - Draft permit with requested revisions received and should hear something this week.
- Thanked commission for support on Merit Bonuses.

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- No Updates on Feiger lawsuit V. City of St. Johns Lawsuit- Discovery
 - Update on Prevail Solar
 - State indicated that OPRA would not pertain to manufacturing.
 - Switching to other tax incentives (possibly Critical Industry Program, IFT (industrial facilities exemption)
 - Spoke with Leadership and LEAP on May 7, 2025
 - Pivoting to Solar Cell manufacturing then to solar panel
 - Add significant IPP requirements as to their process water involved with solar cell manufacturing perhaps an emission tower that would require variance.
 - 250-300 employees in Phase 1
 - Update on Cool pics for Flag Football league (pass around photos)
 - Fantasy Forest 2.0 update
 - Construction has commenced and is making very good progress.
 - Office Reorganization
 - Present Office draft final layout
 - Wilson Center Update
 - Tax Tribunal Case Settled
 - City to Finalize Construction Plans and specifications this week and hope to have bids back for June Commission meeting (Unit #1 Space and Common Space.)
 - Summary of long grass complaints - 15ish letters mailed (more to come)
 - Compost Site Advertisement confirmation.
 - Cat Feeding Ban Comments and letters
 - Red Wing Plaza Site Plan Approval Issued
 - Master Plan Revisions and Action Plan Proposal
 - Parks and Rec Master Plan for consideration.
 - Consideration of overall plan including P & R at possible special meeting at 4:00 on June 23, 2025.

15. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Hufnagel echoed what Commissioner Hyzer said earlier: there were no performance concerns in respect to executive staff. Hopefully, no one perceived that.

Commissioner DeLiso echoed Commissioner Hufnagel's comments.

Mayor Dzurka recognized the LEAP grant (city and DDA for façade and train cars). He has a chance to meet with the new Bingham Township Supervisor, John Weber, and looks forward to working with him. We ran into an issue at the planning commission, one of our commissioners, Melvin Renfrow, was sent communication since he has been a

no-show at meetings for some time now and we were hoping he would resign. I believe we need to start the process for removal and are looking to Anne for guidance. He asked where we are at with the RFP for the Townsend Road property.

City Manager Gamble commented on the draft received late last week and we should be able to issue that very soon.

Mayor Dzurka said we will have to move city staff temporarily.

City Manager Gamble said the county has been very accommodating and we will be able to move over to conference room c. We will have a couple of times the office will be closed to go through current files and storage; close to move offices over and get all IT necessary. We will inform the city commission and post on social media and our website. We are looking at August and September for our office reconstruction.

Mayor Dzurka asked for update on the Higham Street parking lot.

Director Smith said he sent draft letter to Chad for his review. He said there are 2 options listed in the letter.

Mayor Dzurka said he and Chad met with the Sister City representative. This year the delegation is going to Japan. He wanted to recognize Representative Tsernoglou and Representative Kelly for visiting the fire department and thanked Chief Douglas for organizing this. He said Senator Singh is coming up next. He asked about the \$8,000 shortfall to the DDA.

Treasurer Kinde said it will come out of their fund balance. She said she gave them notice (when we received the tax tribunal) that it could be close to a \$30,000 loss.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner DeLiso that the meeting be adjourned.

YEA: Hufnagel, Dzurka, Hyzer, DeLiso

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 p.m.