

CITY OF ST. JOHNS
CITY COMMISSION MINUTES

JULY 28, 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: Brad Gurski, Scott Dzurka, Chris Hyzer

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Eric Hufnagel, Chris DeLiso

STAFF PRESENT: Chad Gamble, City Manager; Mindy J. Seavey, City Clerk; Anne Seurnynck, City Attorney; Justin Smith, Director of Public Services; Jake VanBoxel, McKenna

Mayor Dzurka asked if any of the commissioners or persons present wished to discuss any of the items on the consent agenda.

Mayor Dzurka took item f. North Clinton Avenue Sanitary Sewer Separation off of the Consent Agenda and moved it to New Business.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the consent agenda be approved as amended.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

a. Approval of Minutes

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the minutes of the June 23, 2025 special and regular meetings be approved as presented.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

b. Receipt of Warrants

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that warrants be approved as presented in the amount of \$858,389.82.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

c. Renewal of Liability & Property Insurance

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission designate the MML as a Sole Source Vendor as the MML can supply the City with a superior product and service regarding the provisioning of the required insurance, including coverage requirements for liability and property by the most cost-effective means.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

d. Michigan Municipal League Workers' Compensation Fund – Board of Trustees

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission authorize voting for the 4 trustees for the four-year terms.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

e. IPP Local Limit Establishment for PFAS

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission approve the agreement with Fishbeck in the amount of \$8,500 to establish local limits for PFAS and authorize the mayor to sign. The City Attorney has reviewed the updated agreement and has determined it to be legally sufficient.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

g. Michigan Municipal League Annual Meeting – Designation of Voting Delegate

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission appoint Commissioner Eric Hufnagel as the Voting Delegate at the Michigan Municipal League Annual Meeting on September 16, 2025.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

AGENDA

Mayor Dzurka asked if there were any additions or deletions to the agenda.

Mayor Dzurka added Update - Bingham Water/Sewer Discussions as number #4 under New Business. He said the North Clinton Avenue Sanitary Sewer Separation would be item #5.

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

AGENDA

A. OPENING:

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
 - Special meeting minutes of June 23, 2025
 - Regular meeting minutes of June 23, 2025
- b. Receipt of Warrants
 - In the amount of \$858,389.82
- c. Renewal of Liability & Property Insurance
 - In accordance with the City's Purchasing Policy, the City Manager recommends to the City Commission that MML be designated as a Sole Source Vendor as the MML can supply the City with a superior product and service regarding the provisioning of the required insurance, including coverage requirements for liability and property by the most cost-effective means.
- d. Michigan Municipal League Workers' Compensation Fund – Board of Trustees
 - Staff recommends that the city commission authorize voting for the 4 trustees for the four-year terms.
- e. IPP Local Limit Establishment for PFAS
 - Staff recommends that the city commission approve the agreement with Fishbeck in the amount of \$8,500 to establish local limits for PFAS and authorize the mayor to sign. The City Attorney has reviewed the updated agreement and has determined it to be legally sufficient.
- ~~f. North Clinton Avenue Sanitary Sewer Separation~~
 - ~~-Staff recommends that the city commission approve the bid from Miller Brothers Excavating in the amount of \$139,550 to complete the sanitary sewer separation project allowing the City to eliminate illicit connections, restore proper sewer separation, protect local waterways, and improve quality of life in the downtown district.~~

- g. Michigan Municipal League Annual Meeting – Designation of Voting Delegate

-Staff recommends that the city commission appoint Commissioner Eric Hufnagel as the Voting Delegate at the Michigan Municipal League Annual Meeting on September 16, 2025.

- 4. Approval of Agenda:

B. PUBLIC HEARINGS:

C. PRESENTATIONS:

D. PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY:

- 1. Introduction of New Police Department Employees – Officer Justin Barber and Stephanie Goetzinger
- 2. Clinton County Chairperson Bruce DeLong – Scott Road/M-21 Update
- 3. Public comment - agenda & non-agenda items

E. COMMUNICATIONS:

F. OLD BUSINESS:

- 1. Updated Ladder 350 Replacement Plan and Disposal of Ladder 350
- 2. Resolution #31-2025 – Resolution to Introduce Golf Cart Ordinance

G. NEW BUSINESS:

- 1. Townsend Road Development RFP
- 2. Resolution #32-2025 – Resolution to Introduce Fire Code Ordinance Amendment
- 3. Resolution #33-2025 – Resolution to Introduce Ordinance for Readoption of the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code
- 4. Update - Bingham Water/Sewer Discussions (*ADDED*)
- 5. North Clinton Avenue Sanitary Sewer Separation (*MOVED FROM CONSENT*)
- 6. City Manager Comments
- 7. Commissioner Comments

H. ADJOURNMENT

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

PRESENTATIONS

PERSONS WISHING TO PRESENT TESTIMONY

1. Introduction of New Police Department Employees – Officer Justin Barber and Stephanie Goetzinger

Chief Kirk said the department has two new team members and both bring experience and prior job success. He introduced Stephanie Goetzinger and Officer Justin Barber.

Stephanie Goetzinger was present and said she was born and raised in Owosso. She said she is happy to be here.

City Manager Gamble said she is the new April, and we are happy to have her.

Officer Barber said he has 20 years in law enforcement, was born and raised in St. Johns and raises his family in St. Johns. He said he came here from Eaton County and was a sergeant there.

City Manager Gamble said we are happy to him here and proud for our department to bring him aboard. He discussed his experience as a police officer and special ops.

Chief Kirk said both come with a lot of experience and will be very good assets for our agency.

Mayor Dzurka welcomed them.

2. Clinton County Chairperson Bruce DeLong – Scott Road/M-21 Update

Clinton County Chairperson DeLong was present to communicate on the M-21/Scott Road intersection. He discussed:

- Support for Traffic Study and Safety Improvements
 - The State is asking for a resolution from the City of St. Johns and Bingham Township to support a traffic study.
 - Concerns about speed limits and physical conditions at intersections.
 - Discussion of four-way stop vs. traffic light; his preference against four-way stops.
 - Discussion of a roundabout.
 - Reference to previous studies and need for study during peak hours (5 to 7 or 5 to 8).
- Need for City Input and Coordination
 - Discussion with township and upcoming development.
 - Safety is a big concern for businesses and residents.

Mayor Dzurka thanked him.

3. Public Comment

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

Ken Harris, 4417 Sailfish Lane, Palmetto, Florida, was present. He discussed recurring flooding and inadequate drainage in the alley behind Swany's.

There was a discussion of:

- Request to prioritize drainage improvements.
- Flooding occurs in the back alleyway after heavy rainstorms.
- Hydraulic pressure and matter being pushed up through the storm drain.
- Only one catch basin for the whole block; Gill-Roy's lot lacks a catch basin.
- Flooding has occurred twice in the last three weeks.
- Rolled curb and higher elevation on Higham Street contribute to the problem.
- Toilet paper being blown up through the storm drain indicates cross-contamination.

Ed Thelen, 110 W. Cass, was present regarding a golf cart ordinance. He said he spent a lot of time talking to the ambulance director and assistant director. There is no interest in a golf cart ordinance. He said by reading the RCA he sees the police chief is against it also. He said if there is a mobility issue, maybe it could be a special use. He said the ordinance doesn't specifically say anything about parking lots but would like to see you add to prohibit golf carts on the business route south of Sturgis Street. He said with schools, you have the high school in the ordinance, but not other schools.

Mayor Dzurka thanked them for public comments.

COMMUNICATIONS

OLD BUSINESS

1. Updated Ladder 350 Replacement Plan and Disposal of Ladder 350

City Manager Gamble said at our last meeting Commissioner Gurski asked us to take a deeper dive at this and this is the result.

Fire Chief Douglas was present to discuss a replacement truck.

There was a discussion of:

- The 2004 Pierce mid-mount ladder truck has 27,000 miles and 32 hours on the aerial.
- It has a 95-foot ladder with a bucket, compared to the current 75-foot truck.
- Having a bucket is a huge advantage for rescues at The Castle and other high buildings.
- Last mutual aid call for a ladder truck took 23 minutes.
- Funds available: \$272,500 in the motor vehicle pool reserve.
- Eventual replacement could cost upwards of \$2,000,000.
- Expectation of longevity.
- Outfitting cost.

There was a discussion of the motion at a previous meeting regarding Delta Township.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission direct the City Manager to negotiate the purchase of the 2004 Pierce Dash 95-foot Mid-mount Ladder truck from the Chester Fire Protection District for a price not to exceed \$240,000.00 to include acquisition of the ladder truck and any modifications and equipment needed to finish outfitting the truck.

There was a discussion of the asking price for the truck.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

There was a discussion of the process of disposal of the old truck.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission direct the city manager to facilitate the disposal of the previous ladder 350 truck and direct proceeds to the motor vehicle fund.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

2. Resolution #31-2025 – Resolution to Introduce Golf Cart Ordinance

Mayor Dzurka said the planning commission took action on a previous concept that came to this body last year, but there was a lack of interest at that time. Two issues remaining are the school district areas and how we address and require insurance.

City Manager Gamble said we did see a couple of municipalities that require liability insurance for street use: Manistee and Manchester. He said he wasn't able to reach school staff to discuss concerns and he can do that prior to the second reading.

Jake VanBoxel, McKenna, discussed the background and discussion at the last planning commission meeting.

There was a discussion of:

- Concerns and suggestions regarding safety, operational hours, equipment requirements, and legal limitations.
 - Discussion of requiring liability insurance for street use; a couple of municipalities (Manistee and Winchester) require it.
 - Concerns about golf carts near schools and during operational times.
 - Reference to master plan and transportation goals.
 - Discussion of safety measures, including visibility at night, helmet use, and equipment like horns and windshields.
 - State statutes impose certain prohibitions and requirements.
 - Operational limitations include not operating on roads over 30 miles an hour and restrictions on crossing certain roads.
 - Operational timeframe currently set as April to November; suggestion to eliminate the sunset date.
 - Discussion of enforcement challenges for law enforcement.
 - Reference to MCL (Michigan Compiled Laws) for certain requirements.
- Support for reducing limitations and eliminating the sunset date to encourage investment and use.
 - Preference for less limitation.
 - Support for eliminating the restriction on operation from April to November.
- Support for keeping the 30 mile an hour road restriction and aligning with state law (MCL).
 - Crossing roads is allowed, but not traveling along them if over 30 mph.
- Concerns about enforcement and practical challenges for residents in certain subdivisions.
 - Residents may be unable to legally access other streets without violating the ordinance.
 - Examples given of subdivisions where legal travel is not possible without using restricted roads or sidewalks.
- Support for aligning equipment requirements with state statute and common practices in other states.

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- Most golf carts already have required equipment.
 - Requirements are largely taken word-for-word from state statute.
 - The ordinance should be revised and brought back for a clean first reading, rather than voting on changes immediately.
 - Legal review is needed to ensure compliance with state law.
 - Consideration should be given to restricting operation to those 18 and older, but state law may not allow this.
 - 16- and 17-year-olds may have restricted or graduated licenses.
 - Insurance requirements should be clarified to allow for various types of policies, not just homeowners insurance.
 - Current language references liability insurance and homeowners' insurance.
 - City of Manchester requires proof of insurance: riders to homeowners/renters policy or stand-alone policy covering personal injury and property.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission have staff rewrite the ordinance: eliminate sunset, months of operation and review if we can move age requirement to 18 with driver's license, and clarify insurance.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Townsend Road Development RFP

City Manager Gamble said the city issued an RFP (Request for Proposals) for proposals of development for R-1 property the city owns on Townsend Road. The city did not receive any response to the RFP. He asked if the commission had any interest on modifying that or listing it more officially with a residential property company.

There was a discussion of:

- How it was advertised.
 - Website, McKenna staff and City Manager Gamble reached out to developers.
- Putting a for sale sign up on property.
- Inexpensive websites to advertise on.

2. Resolution #32-2025 – Resolution to Introduce Fire Code Ordinance Amendment

Fire Chief Douglas discussed the fire code:

- Current code is from 1990.
- Update includes new commercial structures, fire suppression, and rental program for carbon monoxide in multifamily dwellings. At the June meeting we discussed having an updated ordinance to move us into the 2021 code.

Motion by Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission adopt Resolution #32-2025 to introduce the proposed ordinance to amend and update the fire code.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

3. Resolution #33-2025 – Resolution to Introduce Ordinance for Readoption of the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code

Police Chief Kirk discussed adoption of the motor vehicle code and that it would keep us contemporary.

Motion by Commissioner Hyzer seconded by Commissioner Gurski that the city commission adopt Resolution #33-2025 to introduce the ordinance to adopt the Michigan Motor Vehicle Code.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Chief Kirk said you can request a traffic study excluding speed (frequency of cross traffic opposed to the speed).

4. Update - Bingham Water/Sewer Discussions

Mayor Dzurka said he and Commissioner Gurski met with John Weber and Eric Harger from Bingham Township. They are interested in moving forward with an agreement and there have been changes in the interest of development.

Commissioner Gurski discussed the agreement that was sent over to them. They expressed interest and said they would be open to conversation, but wanted it tied to an authority discussion not an agreement.

There was a discussion of:

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- Township remains interested in water/sewer agreement, but there is confusion about the agreement's scope and next steps.
 - Servicing the M-21 corridor was tied to expectations of a water agreement.
 - The township open to further conversation but wants clarity on authority and commitments.
 - Timeframe.
 - Proposed development in the township.
 - Moving toward an authority structure is complex and may present issues with employees, contracting, and other unknowns.
 - Concerns about employee handling and contracting under an authority.
 - Commission needs to clarify parameters and language for moving forward.
 - Bringing this back to the August city commission meeting.

5. North Clinton Avenue Sanitary Sewer Separation

Mayor Dzurka said he wanted to make sure the solution we are recommending is going to solve the problem. He said he was also curious regarding the reserve funds and where they came from.

Director Smith said these are two separate projects and discussed:

- There is a legal, moral, and ethical obligation to stop sanitary sewer discharge into the storm system.
 - Issue discovered behind the 200-block facing Walker Street.
 - Problem caused organic waste smell at Waypoint Coffee and Swany's restaurant.
 - Plumbers performed televised inspection that pinpointed the issue.
- The project will install a sanitary manhole and reroute the sanitary line to Higham Street, resolving both the legal issue and basement backups.
 - Project area: behind buildings facing Walker Street, including apartments and businesses.
 - Will eliminate backups for residents and stop illegal discharge.
- Funding for the project was complicated by a missed CIP entry, but savings from other projects (AMR installation, SCADA upgrades, Morton Street water main) provided the necessary reserves.
 - \$35,000 or \$38,000 was saved by not installing a fourth AMR radio read meter.

Commissioner Gurski said he agreed, it has to be done.

Motion Commissioner Gurski seconded by Commissioner Hyzer that the city commission approve the bid from Miller Brothers Excavating in the amount of \$139,550 to complete the sanitary sewer separation project.

Commissioner Hyzer proposed an amendment to the motion that we have to make a corresponding budget adjustment when we approve these funds.

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

Director Smith said he was made aware of Mr. Harris' situation when he took over as Public Services Director. He discussed the storm sewer issues.

There was a discussion of:

- During construction of Railroad and Spring corners, they bulkheaded a storm sewer and that has now been fixed.
- Storm sewer issues are significant due to excessive water load on a single catch basin, causing basement flooding and improper connections.
 - 17 or 18 roof drains are connected to one catch basin.
 - A four-inch hole was previously used for water discharge, which was inadequate.
- A permanent solution requires engineering analysis and additional catch basins to divert water and prevent hydraulic pressure issues in basements.
- Backflow preventers should be considered for old floor drains to protect against storm surges.
- Reconstruction of the Gill-Roy's lot.

City Manager Gamble said anytime you are working with a storm sewer system, there will be an event that will overwhelm that system.

4. City Manager Comments

City Manager Gamble discussed:

- Met with LEAP last week recently and they informed me that all investors have pulled out of the Prevail Solar Project. Property will be placed up for sale soon, if not already.
 - Impacts to this from Master Planning perspective.
- Update on City's negotiations with EGLE on our NPDES permit.

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- See Jordan's email.
 - No Updates on Feiger V. City of St. Johns Lawsuit – Depositions happening soon – indications that this will hopefully not make it to trial.
 - King Media Communication was sent earlier today. Direct your attention to that and ask if there are any additional questions to call me.
 - Fantasy Forest 2.0 update
 - All playscape equipment has been delivered.
 - Nearing the end of the sponsorship plaques coordination.
 - Contractor for underground conduit on site today.
 - Flatwork is 60% complete and playscape is targeted to be completely installed by the end of the week!!
 - We received a call from a family member related to Lizzy's glider and they were overjoyed at how it looks!!!
 - Depot is now nearly complete with period lighting installed with a few fixtures remaining. Looks transformative. Working to obtain a curio display cabinet for historic items used in Depot. Only remaining items is the wood flooring in east room and center of main room.
 - 3 winners were drawn from the 1138 people who signed up for auto pay. All chose a utility credit of \$150 to their account.
 - Wilson Center and Office Reorganization Update
 - Roof Replacement Update: July 31, 2025, 2:00 bids due.
 - Approximately 10 vendors looking at the bid.
 - Working to begin the formal advertisement for naming rights for the facility and various areas within it.
 - We received bids and we are in need of a special meeting: tentative meeting date of 8:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m., August 6.
 - Wage Study – Received
 - 7 Proposals received – ranging from \$16,000 to over \$45,000.
 - Commission expressed interest in receiving more updates and briefings regarding this RFP.
 - Wanted to meet with presumably Personnel Committee (Dzurka/Hufnagel) to discuss how this looks and set up related briefings and meetings accordingly.
 - Upcoming Visits with legislators/Tour of Fire Department
 - Senator Singh – 7/30/25 2:30 p.m.

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- Congressman Tom Barrett 8/14 10:30 a.m.
 - June Parks and Recreation Programming - report
 - Labrinth installation is scheduled for late August/early September pending confirmation after meeting on August 20th.
 - Thank you for your funding to attend conferences! Attended the MME Conference in Mt. Pleasant. Topics that included parks funding, timely topic of mitigating market price and volatility in contracts, understanding the differences in County and City governments and how to work better and stronger together, and legislative updates (carnage) - 8 PA passed, lowest since 1940.

5. Commissioner Comments

Commissioner Hyzer said he is looking forward to the 4-H Fair this week and also the Mint Festival is coming up.

Commissioner Gurski said he was informed by Ed Thelen that we are looking to move forward on bringing billing in-house at the ambulance authority. He said overall runs are down and that is consistent across the region, even in hospital admittance.

Mayor Dzurka wished everyone a safe time at the fair. He said he received the minutes from the parks and recreation meeting via email and said you can get all updates from the city via text or email. He thanked the golf cart people for coming out. He said government takes a while and we want to make sure we are doing this right. He said the police department, you and the team are probably talking about how to address golf carts during the Mint Festival.

ADJOURNMENT

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

YEA: Gurski, Dzurka, Hyzer

NAY: None

Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:14 p.m.