

CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF HILLSBORO, ILLINOIS
HILLSBORO CITY HALL
Minutes of the Regular Meeting – Tuesday, March 24, 2026

1. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Don Downs at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call was taken:

Present: Mayor Don Downs
Commissioners Tommy Justison and Kendra Wright

Absent: Commissioners Fred Butler and Patrick Ward

Also Present: City Clerk David Jenkins
City Attorney Chris Sherer
Econ. Dev. & Community Planner Melissa Smith
Police Chief Randy Leetham

3. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. **Public Comment:** Rusty Kirby, secretary of the Hillsboro Volunteer Fire Department, addressed the council on behalf of the volunteers. He read a letter that was written and mailed to each of the council members. The letter referenced unanimous support for Fire Chief Joe Lyerla, as well as support for the dispatchers/engineers. He stated he had the support from the volunteers and dispatchers to speak on their behalf, but also stated on a personal note that he was proud of the department and remarked they are the best fire department in the County.

Geoff Trost spoke on his own behalf regarding the dispatchers and volunteer firefighters. He said the department is very fortunate not to have to call mutual aid often. He also praised Chief Lyerla's knowledge and leadership of the department.

5. Minutes of the March 3rd, 2026 regular meeting were approved as presented.

6. **Mayor and Commissioners' Departmental Reports:**

Written reports for the Streets and Public Properties Departments were submitted.

Commissioner Justison reported the police department will be replacing a police squad later in the meeting. He commented on the death of former fire chaplain Ralph Ward, who passed prior to the March 3rd meeting. He also thanked members of the community who spoke during the last meeting in support of the fire department. He stated he has chosen to step back from his role on the volunteer fire department.

Commissioner Wright reported the lake is back up to full pool, and the coal mine is back to pumping water again. He also reported the water plant has a new Class A operator that

is supposed to begin on Thursday. She stated the sewer plant was out of compliance during the month of February, which is why the City is building a new plant.

Mayor Downs stated Craig Traylor and Mike Finn are retiring from the water treatment plant. He also thanked Ron Deabenderfer for his article in the newspaper regarding the fire department.

7. Economic Development & Community Planner Report:

A written report from the Economic Development and Community Planner was submitted. Smith reported there is nothing new to report on the Energy Grants. She stated there are a couple of façade grant applications on the agenda. She also said she has received a lot of interest about the City's America 250 celebration to be held this year.

8. City Engineer Report:

No report was given.

9. Discussion / Action – Approve Paying Bills for the Month of March 2026: Bills for the month totaled \$642,533.95. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve paying bills for the month of March 2026 for a total of \$642,533.95. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

10. Discussion / Action – Permitting the Installation of Fence on City Property (109 Lakewood Dr.): Bob and Julie Pachesa submitted a building permit to install a fence on their property at 109 Lakewood Drive. The structure is a 158-foot long dog fence around a portion of their back yard. According to the request, part of the fence would be installed on the property line. The Zoning Board of Appeals will only grant such requests if they have permission from the adjacent property owners, of which the City is one. Tammy Baumann is the other adjacent property owner and she has approved the request. Downs stated he would like the City to do this differently, such as sell some of the property to the Pachesas. He stated the former council sold adjacent land to a property owner in the same neighborhood. He said he would like to meet and talk about this more and bring it before the whole council. Justison said he would be in favor of approving as is, while also looking at selling the property. **No action was taken on this item.**

11. Discussion / Action – United to Revive Free Community Gathering at Lincoln Plaza on Saturday, June 13, 2026: United to Revive is planning a community gathering on Saturday, June 13th at the Lincoln Plaza, which will include free food provided by a local restaurant, live music, and encouraging speakers focused on community, hope, and personal growth. The event organizers do not anticipate needing to close any roads or parking spaces for the event. Jeremiah Goltz addressed the council on behalf of the organization. He stated they have done this in other neighboring communities. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve United to Revive's free community gathering at the Lincoln Plaza on Saturday, June 13, 2026. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

12. **Discussion / Action – Glenn Shoals Lake Club Events: Beginning of the Season Celebration May 15th, Aqua Run July 25th, Kayak Races September 4th-6th:** The Glenn Shoals Lake Club requested approval from the City Council to host three separate events. The first will be a beginning of the season celebration on Friday, May 15th from 7 to 10 p.m. The second is their annual aqua run to be held Saturday, July 25th from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. The final is a kayak racing event to be held one day during the weekend of September 4th, with the official date to be determined. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve the request from the Glenn Shoals Lake Club to host the beginning of the season celebration on May 15th, the annual aqua run on July 25th, and the kayak races to be held one day during the weekend of September 4th through 6th. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

13. **Discussion / Action – Ordinance No. 1858 an Ordinance Annexing Certain Land to the City of Hillsboro, Illinois (P.I.N. 12-19-400-022):** This item was pulled from the agenda. No action was taken.

14. **Discussion / Action – Ordinance No. 1859 an Ordinance Approving Certain Amendments to the City of Hillsboro Zoning Map:** At the February 3rd meeting, the council adopted a resolution petitioning the Zoning Board to make recommendations for zoning classifications for the parcels that were annexed into the City recently. The recommendation is for two parcels to be reclassified from R-1 to R-2, and a third to be reclassified from R-1 to I-1. This ordinance approves those reclassifications. This item was pulled from the agenda. No action was taken.

15. **Discussion / Action – Resolution No. 2026-10 a Resolution Approving a Sponsorship Agreement and Recognition:** This item was pulled from the agenda. No action was taken.

16. **Discussion / Action – Resolution No. 2026-11 a Resolution Authorizing the Mayor or Designee to Seek Bids to Enter into a Wholesale Electricity Supply Contract:** The proposed resolution authorizes the mayor or designated commissioner to seek bids for the City's municipal aggregation program. The current agreement expires in July. **Motion by Justison and second by Wright to adopt Resolution No. 2026-11 a Resolution Authorizing the Mayor or Designee to Seek Bids to Enter into a Wholesale Electricity Supply Contract. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

17. **Discussion / Action – Resolution No. 2026-12 a Resolution Approving a Façade Improvement Grant Application from Hillsboro Journal, Inc. for Work to be Completed at 425 S. Main St.:** Hillsboro Journal submitted a façade grant application for the repair and renovation to the garage doors and surrounding area at 425 South Main Street. Estimated total project cost is \$4,250. The City's maximum amount will be \$2,125. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to adopt Resolution No. 2026-12 a Resolution Approving a Façade Improvement Grant Application from Hillsboro Journal, Inc. for Work to be Completed at 425 S. Main St. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

- 18. Discussion / Action – Resolution No. 2026-13 a Resolution Approving a Façade Improvement Grant Application from Journal Printing Co., Inc. for Work to be Completed at 419 S. Main St.:** Journal Printing Co. submitted a façade grant application for the repair and renovation of their back deck, wall and doors at 419 South Main Street. Estimated total project cost is \$14,657.79. **Motion by Justison and second by Wright to adopt Resolution No. 2026-13 a Resolution Approving a Façade Improvement Grant Application from Journal Printing Co., Inc. for Work to be Completed at 419 S. Main St. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**
- 19. Discussion / Action – Purchase Hillsboro Tourism Books:** The City is running low on tourism books, and Economic Development and Community Planner Smith has made arrangements to send some to various tourism and visitor centers throughout the state. The cost to have 1,400 more books printed is \$4,810. This can be paid for utilizing funds from the second round of the Energy Grant. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve purchasing more Hillsboro Tourism books at a cost of \$4,810. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**
- 20. Discussion / Action – Reimbursement to Jardogs.AI, Inc. in Accordance with the Business District Redevelopment Agreement:** In September, the council approved awarding a business district grant to Jardogs in the amount of \$200,000, which would be paid out in phases. This is the first reimbursement request from the company and is for a total of \$116,410 for windows, exterior painting and patio work. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve the Business District Redevelopment Grant reimbursement to Jardogs.AI, Inc. in the amount of \$116,410. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**
- 21. Discussion / Action – Pay Application #8 to Plocher Construction for Work Completed on the Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade Project:** The amount due this pay period is \$853,827.84. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve pay application #8 to Plocher Construction in the amount of \$853,827.84 for work completed on the Wastewater Treatment Facility Upgrade Project. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**
- 22. Discussion / Action – Natural Gas Supplier Agreement for the City of Hillsboro:** The City received bids for a new natural gas supply agreement for the City’s utility usage. Marni Henert from Rock River Energy is recommending the City stay on the NGI Index program, which we currently do, and approve either a two-year or three-year agreement with Santanna Energy Services. In an email, Henert stated the reason she recommends approving a multi-year agreement is because Santanna’s additional costs are similar to what the City has now, and all other supplier offers are much higher. Santanna’s fixed price for 24 months is \$0.5711 with NGI of plus \$0.0759, and for 36 months the fixed price is \$0.5692 with an NGI of plus \$0.0761. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve a 36-month agreement with Santanna Energy Services for the City’s natural gas supply for a fixed price of \$0.5692 with an NGI of plus \$0.0761. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

23. Discussion / Action – Bids for Energy Contract for City of Hillsboro Street Lighting:

The City's agreement with Constellation for Street Lighting expired in December 2025. The current Ameren rate is \$0.08682 per kilowatt-hour. AEP is offering the lowest rate at each term limit, which includes 12-months, 24-months, 36-months, 48-months, and 58-months. The rate, respectively, is \$0.07075/kWh, \$0.07158/kWh, \$0.07306/kWh, \$0.07459/kWh, and \$0.07575/kWh. Wright recommended going with either a 48-month or 58-month agreement. **Motion by Wright and second by Justison to approve an agreement with AEP for the City's Street Lighting energy bills for a term of 48 months for a cost of \$0.07459 per kilowatt-hour. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

24. Discussion / Action – Purchasing Squad and Vehicle Equipment for City of Hillsboro Police Department:

The City received a quote from Victory Lane for a 2023 Dodge Durango for a cost of \$33,192. There will also be an additional \$10,000 for the vehicle equipment. **Motion by Justison and second by Wright to approve purchasing a squad and vehicle equipment for the City of Hillsboro Police Department from Victory Lane for a cost of \$33,192 and an additional \$10,000 for equipment. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

25. Discussion / Action – Appointing/Reappointing Members to the Natural Resources

Committee: The Natural Resources Committee has a vacancy on their board that needs filled, and would also like to reappoint their current members to terms they've recommended. The code limits two members to one-year terms, two to two-year terms, and two to three-year terms. The Natural Resources Committee is recommending appointing Doug Donaldson to fill the vacancy left by Thomas Reynolds. Downs stated he believes there is a conflict with Donaldson serving as the County Board Chairman, and would like to appoint Isaac Law, who was the other candidate considered. Donaldson asked what the conflict would be. Downs stated there have been issues with County officials serving on City boards before, referencing former Commissioner Daniel Robbins having to resign from his seat on the council after being appointed as the County's Circuit Clerk. Sherer stated the council could get an opinion from the State's Attorney if they are unsure. Justison said he would prefer to do that first before voting on an appointment this evening. **Motion by Justison and second by Wright to table this item. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor.**

26. Discussion – Live-Streaming Future Meetings:

Justison stated he has had discussions with many people about live-streaming meetings. He said moving into the 21st Century, this remains a good way to be transparent with members of the community. Downs stated he is not in agreement, as he believes people should attend the meetings in person. Justison said he believes it is another way to make the meetings available to the public. Wright stated she falls in between, adding if the City moves forward with live-streaming the meetings, we should be in control of it. Justison stated he just wanted to gather more information to gauge the council's thoughts before proceeding further.

27. Discussion / Action – Adjourn: Motion by Justison and second by Wright to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried with a 3-0 vote in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
David Jenkins, City Clerk