REGULAR MEETING OF THE MISHAWAKA COMMON COUNCIL

July 28, 2025

Be it remembered that the Common Council of the City of Mishawaka, Indiana met in the Council Chambers of the New Mishawaka City Hall and via telephone on Monday July 28, 2025, at 6:00PM. The meeting was called to order by Council President Gregg Hixenbaugh. All were asked to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members attending virtually do so by WebEx. Public that attends can participate by WebEx or observe meetings by YouTube or Facebook live. The Council meetings are also streamed live on Michiana Access on Comcast/AT&T U-verse Channel 99.

Present: Mrs. Hazen (P), Mrs. Voelker (A), Mr. Carroll (A), Mr. Banicki (P), Mr. Emmons (P), Ms. Hahn (P), Mr. Mammolenti (P), Mr. Violi (P), Mr. Hixenbaugh (P)
P: Present E: Electronically Participating A: Absent

Minutes for the Regular Meeting on July 7, 2025, were approved as received from the Clerk's Office.

Clerk Block read the following appeal and petition by title, as well as a letter from the City Plan Commission regarding their recommendations from their July 8, 2025 meeting.

Appeal No. 2025-25	Use Variance to allow Outside Storage and Developmental Variance for Rear Yard Setback, Paving Fencing and Landscaping – 811 & 815 E. McKinley
Petition No. 2025-10	Vacation of Right-of-Way due to Realignment – Ballard St. south of Vistula Rd.

Clerk Block read the following proposed ordinances by title and assigned committee.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-16

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 137, OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AS FROM TIME TO TIME AMENDED, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE "ZONING ORDINANCE" OF 1966 OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA.
Rezone C-1 General Commercial to R-1 Single Family Residential – 303 W. 6th St.
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-17

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 137, OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AS FROM TIME TO TIME AMENDED, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE "ZONING ORDINANCE" OF 1966 OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA.
Rezone from I-1 Light Industrial to R-1 Single Family Residential – 3418 York St.
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-18

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 137, OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AS FROM TIME TO TIME AMENDED, COMMONLY KNOWN AS THE "ZONING ORDINANCE" OF 1966 OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA.
PUD Amendment to allow for reduction in landscaping, Building and Pavement Setbacks, and Planting Area Widths – NW corner of Cleveland & Capital
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)

Clerk Block read the following proposed ordinance by title and opened the public hearing.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-12

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA AUTHORIZING SPECIAL UTILITY SERVICE CONTRACTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND CUSTOMIZED UTILITY NEEDS
(Petitioner Requesting Amendment)

The chair entertained a motion to amend **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-12** pursuant to a hard copy of the proposed amendment that was distributed to the Council prior to the meeting that evening. Mr. Mammolenti moved the motion and with a second from Mr. Violi, a voice vote was held on the motion. The motion passed unanimously, and the ordinance was amended as proposed.

Mr. Violi reported the Budget & Finance Committee recommended that this proposed ordinance be adopted. Upon a second by Mr. Banicki, the motion carried.

Matthew Lentsch, Executive Director of Development and Governmental Affairs for the City of Mishawaka, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-12**. Mr. Lentsch stated he was requesting the Council's consideration of the proposal for the Mishawaka Utility Special Contract ordinance. Mr. Lentsch stated the ordinance had been carefully developed in response to the evolving needs and opportunities within their community, particularly in relation to their continued commitment to economic development, utility service, innovation, and long-term strategic partnerships. Mr. Lentsch stated it was intended to provide the legal framework necessary for the City of Mishawaka through its municipal utilities to negotiate and enter into special utility service contracts under defined and controlled circumstances. Mr. Lentsch stated the need for this ordinance stemmed from the increasing number of unique service requests in infrastructure projects that fell outside the parameters of their existing utility rate structures. Mr. Lentsch stated without flexibility, they risked missing timely opportunities to support major developments and investments that could potentially and significantly benefit their community. Mr. Lentsch stated by enabling the contracts with appropriate oversight within the bounds of existing law, they aimed to remain competitive while safeguarding the public interest. Mr. Lentsch stated importantly, this ordinance also included provisions to maintain transparency and Council involvement. Mr. Lentsch stated they had incorporated language to ensure the Council leadership had been kept informed of any ongoing negotiations and when appropriate under the open-door law. Mr. Lentsch stated the Council throughout the process would be apprised of relevant details in advance fostering clear and consistent line of communication between the Administration and the Council. Mr. Lentsch respectfully asked for the Council's thoughtful consideration and support of the ordinance, and he believed it represented a balanced, forward-looking policy that protected public accountability while allowing their city the flexibility needed to adapt and grow in a changing economic environment. Mr. Lentsch stated with all of that in mind, he would go over a couple of the changes. Mr. Lentsch thanked the Council first of all as it had been a lengthy process and more involved than they would have in writing a normal ordinance. Mr. Lentsch stated part of it was because of the complexity of some of the factors related to APRA and confidentiality and they had at least three attorneys or more weigh in on the ordinance as well as other folks who had researched the ordinance. Mr. Lentsch thanked Council Attorney Mike Trippel, Nikki Shoultz who worked on all things Mishawaka Utilities, and also President Hixenbaugh. Mr. Lentsch stated the ordinance now contained clear statutory citations and procedural guardrails defining what confidential information included and how it must be labeled, stored, and reviewed. Mr. Lentsch stated secondly, the ordinance explicitly referenced accurate compliance and integrated well-defined timelines for disclosures, post negotiation, and available public offers. Mr. Lentsch stated it included language confirming while unit pricing incentives and projections may be confidential, the agreements themselves could not result in rates being subsidized for ratepayers, which directly addressed transparency and fairness. Mr. Lentsch stated lastly, the latest draft of the ordinance provided a clear structure strengthening the credibility of the ordinance from a public governance standpoint. Mr. Lentsch stated the last point related to treatment of confidentiality and provided a bit more legal precision and intent, which established a clear foundation in the cost-of-service study and directly tied to fairness, transparency, and the avoidance of cross subsidization. Mr. Lentsch stated they did not want anybody to think that a contract of this type would be done on the backs of ratepayers. Mr. Lentsch stated the revised draft firmly situated special contracts within a legal framework that protected the integrity of standard ratepayers while allowing flexibility for economic development and used more refined phrases such as 'no agreement shall result in Mishawaka Utilities ratepayers subsidizing or financially underwriting any portion of the agreement', which reflected a professional balance and legal defensible position. Mr. Lentsch stated finally, related to communication of government oversight, the final ordinance formalized the Council's annual budget review and approval authority tied to specific timelines and he thought that was mentioned by not just Councilman Violi, but a few others on the Council to make sure that the Council review in a special contract would really be in concert together, so they would not be out of sync. Mr. Lentsch stated there would be a clearly stated conditions regarding contract effectiveness on prior budget adoptions which would create a strong system of checks and balances and established an annual transparency report requirement that would detail aggregate values and contract types, which would demonstrate accountability without breaching confidentiality. Mr. Lentsch stated the ordinance was more precise in its legislative tone, it was grounded in statutory authority, and it clearly reflected regulatory awareness. Mr. Lentsch stated it was balanced and defensible, which respected both transparency and business confidentiality and well structured, giving the Common Council, Administration, and ratepayers confidence in oversight, fairness, and enforceability. Mr. Lentsch stated he knew that was a lot to process, but this was probably the seventh or eighth draft of the ordinance and he believed there was a lot to be done to make sure that they covered everything he discussed. Mr. Lentsch stated he would answer any questions they had for him or Nikki Shoultz, their attorney who had worked with himself and the Administration on the ordinance as well as all Mishawaka Utilities related matters in the past several months.

Mrs. Hazen asked if the practice being proposed was already being used by any other municipality owned non-for-profit utilities. Mr. Lentsch stated it was used by investor-owned utilities, but he could not say definitively if it was owned by any other municipal utilities. Mrs. Hazen asked where the investor-owned ones were at. Mr. Lentsch stated investor-owned would be AEP, Duke Energy, and others. Mr. Lentsch stated sometimes it was hard to query that information specifically, so he could not say definitively where they were, but it was a practice utilized by investor-owned utilities like the ones he listed. Mr. Lentsch stated he could pinpoint one municipality they believed used the same practice, but he could not identify them at that time. Mrs. Hazen asked if Mishawaka Utilities already gave discounted utility rates or utility infrastructure projects of any kind to businesses, organizations, people, or citizens and if they did that at all currently other than the rate structure they had listed on their website. Mr. Lentsch stated other than that, no. Mrs. Hazen stated she felt the ordinance did not spell out who would qualify for a special contract and asked how the parameters were set for that and who the person would apply to. Mr. Lentsch stated the person would apply to Mishawaka Utilities and based upon whether or not the ordinance passed that evening, they would set up some rules and establish a protocol for that. Mr. Lentsch stated if it was water-related, they would look at volumes, but they would put parameters in place and they would work with Nikki Shoultz to establish those parameters and put the rules in place in the guidelines to make sure folks understood what the things were that they would consider. Mr. Lentsch stated some of the things might be outside of the box that they would come up with at negotiations. Mr. Lentsch stated this was something brand new to them, but not new to the industry and they would model their guidelines or rules on how they worked with a company to work through negotiations. Mr. Lentsch stated a company may have very specific things related to volumes or other matters that they wanted to discuss with them, but currently they did not have the ability to negotiate special contracts. Mr. Lentsch stated this would give them that ability to allow for the discussion and allow them to potentially negotiate but it would be fully confidential while it was being negotiated. Mr. Lentsch stated it would be required that the Council as well as the public know of all of the details before it came before the Council. Mrs. Hazen asked at what point the Council would be notified that Mishawaka Utilities was in negotiations for a special contract. Mr. Lentsch stated they would keep the Council leadership engaged and would let them know that they were entering into those discussions, but all of the information would be public before it came before the Council for approval. Mrs. Hazen asked when talking about the cost-of-service study, if they had any idea what the cost would be of a cost-of-service study or the length of time it would take to do one. Mr. Lentsch stated they were currently doing a cost-of-service study with Baker Tilly and that equated to them, as he stated, not offering a special contract that was subsidized on the backs of ratepayers. Mr. Lentsch stated in order to know that definitively, they needed to know the bottom-line price of what it would cost to provide electric, water, sewer, and wastewater services. Mr. Lentsch stated that meant that they would not negotiate the price that would be below their absolute cost. Mr. Lentsch stated Baker Tilly had been asked to look that across the board and that was fundamental to how they would negotiate and what they would negotiate.

Mr. Mammolenti thanked Mr. Lentsch for his presentation and asked in short, if this was a tool for the City of Mishawaka to have some negotiating power to perhaps attract a large business to locate here in Mishawaka and if that was correct. Mr. Mammolenti asked if it was only for new business or if it was for anybody that was currently established within the city limits and applied for this. Mr. Lentsch stated it would be an economic development tool, so it could be potentially a new business or a business that was majorly expanding but it would definitively be an economic development tool first and foremost. Mr. Mammolenti asked for clarification if a business did come in and negotiated a lower rate, if it did not affect any of the ratepayers and they would not be picking up the tab for the discount. Mr. Lentsch stated that was correct and it would not affect the ratepayers.

Mr. Violi thanked Mr. Lentsch for all of his help, and he appreciated his responses to all of the emails he had sent him and corrections he made. Mr. Violi asked if the study Mrs. Hazen referenced earlier would not be an internal study and if it would be in conjunction with consultants like Baker Tilly. Mr. Lentsch stated it would not be an internal study and in order to be at arm’s length in this instance, he thought it would be important for them to involve a firm that they used and trusted in Baker Tilly who were well informed about their operations and they agreed to be part of the process and do the study for the city. Mr. Violi asked for clarification if it was not just rate discounts and if it was infrastructure help as well whereas in the past, the city may have had to handle the infrastructure costs to entice economic development. Mr. Lentsch stated it could be and that was one of the things Mishawaka Utilities could enter into negotiations. Mr. Violi stated like Mr. Lentsch said earlier, the process was pretty well laid out and it was going to be step-by-step. Mr. Violi stated the Council would know about it and they would have the time to look at the information and would not have to vote on it quickly. Mr. Violi stated it would be going to the Utility Board first for their approval and then it would come to the Council to review it, and it had to be voted on by the Council before anything took effect.

Mr. Lentsch stated that was correct and before it came before the Council and the Utility Board, it would have to be an open door, and all of the information would be public.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Lentsch for the work he had done on this and his patience throughout the process. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated as the concept was introduced to them, this appeared to him to be that when they talked about economic development, in his mind it became an opportunity for new revenue to be identified for the community and for the utility department and asked if that was correct. Mr. Lentsch stated that was correct. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if he was wrong to think that particularly when they had a new user of significant scale, as those new revenue services started to flow into the community and into their utility budgets, did not have a positive impact on their current ratepayers with regard to maintaining stable utility rates for all of the individuals in Mishawaka. Mr. Lentsch stated definitely and as the saying goes, the high tide sailed all ships, and this should help everyone across the board. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated to follow up on the well-taken question Mrs. Hazen posed about the cost-of-service studies, he heard what he said in that Baker Tilly would be conducting the cost-of-service study and was engaged in one currently. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if it was the case that any time that raised their utility rates in any of their departments, there had always been a cost-of-service study so that they were not just picking a number out of the sky, but it had to match up with the actual hard costs of the service they delivered and asked if that was correct. Mr. Lentsch stated yes, that was correct. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated even though the studies were done, going back to the days when they were under the regulation of the state, there would always be an individualized analysis of any of the contracts that were recommended to them by the Administration that tied the general analysis to the specifics of that special contract so that they had certitude that no special contract was going to be funded on the back of their ratepayers and asked if that was correct. Mr. Lentsch stated yes, that was correct. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated as they talked, himself and others, he was confident they expressed to Mr. Lentsch the same things regarding the concept of confidentiality, was somewhat daunting to an elected official as all of the Council consisted of who were used to dealing in a very public setting with full transparency, but going back to the verbiage from the proposed ordinance he read, it was during the negotiation stage which always needed to be handled very delicately. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated it was only during the negotiation stage that confidentiality would be maintained and asked if that was correct. Mr. Lentsch stated that was correct. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated and it was when the negotiation concluded, an agreement was drafted, and it was submitted to the Utility Board for their approval and to the Council for its approval that entire agreement with all of the details would be distilled in the document so that councilmembers, members of the public, whomever chose to read through the information would have all of the details relevant to any special contract. Mr. Lentsch yes and with full disclosure. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated with regard to the ordinance and its overall goal, this set the stage for the negotiations but did not in any way bind the Council's hands to preapprove any particular special contract and asked if that was Mr. Lentsch's understanding as well. Mr. Lentsch stated absolutely and that there could not be any preapproval. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated and at that point in time, none of the members of the Council had seen one of the special contracts since they ever had it presented to them so it was hard for them to project whether they would approve it or not, other than the fact that they had a long track record as a Council of supporting high quality economic development that made sense for the community and benefited their taxpayers and in this conversation, their ratepayers, but they had not even put pen to paper on one of the contracts in question in the past so this remained an evolving story and asked if that was accurate. Mr. Lentsch stated it was and as he mentioned before, they would work with Baker Tilly and with Bose McKinney & Evans LLP on establishing and drafting some guidelines and looking at what investor-owned and other utilities had done. Mr. Lentsch stated they would do their homework on this some more and he felt like they had gotten far into the weeds in terms of what this meant and how to best navigate it with not just the best practices, but from his vantage point they needed further guidelines and some rules going forward on how a company addressed them or formally talked to them besides a phone call and how that contact would be made, what some of the parameters were, and so on. Mr. Lentsch stated he thought that they were going to have to be somewhat open as President Hixenbaugh said and willing to learn and investigate it. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated going back to the discussion he had with Mrs. Hazen about the investor-owned utilities, it seemed to him that they were in an ever more competitive market at times in direct competition for economic development opportunities to become part of the Mishawaka community and to receive their utility service from Mishawaka Municipal Utilities, so he believed that another justification for the ordinance was that it allowed them to stay competitive with regard to those private investor-owned utilities and there were always going to be differences between themselves as a municipal utility and them, but this helped bridged the gap so that they could stay competitive for those economic development projects that would come down the road in the future that were in the best interest of the community and asked if that was accurate. Mr. Lentsch stated that was accurate and actually more than ever, especially since they had two apartment complexes, one senior development and one that is on Beacon Highway and Fir, and they wanted to know that they were competitive. Mr. Lentsch stated it was harder in the current environment because of the state law that passed back in 2015 related to electric utility territories, but as folks came in, they wanted to know what their options were for water, for sewer, and for electric. Mr. Lentsch stated they would not stop pushing the envelope and asking for cooperation from AEP or another investor-owned company or there was some competition related to other utilities, even privately owned, so this tool was going to be more important as the moved forward. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Lentsch for his patience with him as he peppered him with his questions and once again, for the work he had done. Mr. Lentsch stated it was his pleasure.

Nikki Shoultz, Bose McKinney & Evans LLP in Indianapolis, participated remotely to answer questions from the Council. Mr. Violi thanked Mrs. Shoultz for joining them and stated they had discussed the investor-owned utilities having the types of powers or contract ability to negotiate these things. Mr. Violi asked, to her knowledge, if there were any other municipalities in the state of Indiana that already had the type of ordinance being discussed and voted on that evening to help them with economic development. Mrs. Shoultz stated they did not do research on that, and it would be fairly difficult without going through every single one of the ninety-two counties and then all of the municipalities within those, so she did not know exactly but like Mr. Lentsch, she suspected there were some municipalities doing it, but she did not have any to point him to.

Mr. Violi asked if she had ever prepared anything like the ordinance before. Mrs. Shoultz stated she did not.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mrs. Shoultz for her work on it as well and her assistance with all things utilities as Mr. Lentsch had mentioned and asked if she had the chance to hear the questions, he and his other colleagues posed to Mr. Lentsch earlier in the public hearing that evening. Mrs. Shoultz stated she did. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if there were any clarifications or modifications to the information that was shared with them that she would like to make. Mrs. Shoultz stated she would just say that there were no corrections or modifications to any of the answers, but she emphasized everything Mr. Lentsch said and she thought particularly the very last question in the exchange regarding competing with investor-owned utilities and other provides, what they were seeing was that competition was the heightened state of competition and so she agreed with Mr. Lentsch that this would be a good and valuable tool for the City of Mishawaka to seize economic development opportunities and remain competitive. Mrs. Shoultz stated aside from that, there was nothing he stated that was wrong or needed to be clarified in her mind. Mr. Hixenbaugh appreciated Mrs. Shoultz's answer and thanked her for the work she had done on the matter and all of the work she was doing on behalf of Mishawaka over and above. Mrs. Shoultz stated it was her pleasure.

Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated the work of all involved, including their Council Attorney to take a look at this and he was absolutely comfortable with the legal authority for the Council to pass this and he believed that the two big benefits in his mind were that it kept Mishawaka competitive for those attractive economic development opportunities that were out there and it benefited the community when they had those projects come in to generate revenue, not only for the civil city but for their municipal utility. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated the other thing that was the big selling point with regard to his vote that evening for the ordinance, was that this did not tie their hands and they were not bound to approve any specific agreement. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated as they talked about earlier, how could they since they had never been presented with one, but this allowed the opportunity to be presented to the Administration for them to move forward when the time was right, under the parameters established in the ordinance to enter into negotiations with developers and other entities who wished to locate themselves in Mishawaka and tap into their utility services, so allowing that opportunity for negotiation to play out made great sense to him, but much as they had done with regard to tax abatement requests and other economic development related matters, he was confident the Council would be very judicious and thoughtful with regard to reviewing the special contracts just like they had been with tax abatement requests where they made sense legally and in the best interest of the community, he thought they would be open to approving them. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated where they did not make sense legally or were not in the best interest of the community, they would articulate that position as well. Mr. Hixenbaugh once again thanked everyone for the work that had gone into this process and stated he would be in favor of it that evening.

Question was called for at 6:39PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-12 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 5 No = 1).**

Yes: Mr. Banicki, Mr. Emmons, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh. No: Mrs. Hazen The proposed ordinance passed 6-1, thus it became **ORDINANCE NO. 5938**.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Matthew Lentsch, Executive Director of Development and Governmental Affairs for the City of Mishawaka, spoke under **PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR**. Mr. Lentsch stated he wanted to discuss the recent power outage they had Saturday evening going into Sunday morning. Mr. Lentsch stated he wanted to answer questions to clear up some misconceptions and to talk about some of the things they had in the works to make sure that they were not just communicating but also so people had a better understanding about outages, when they happened, and where to go for information and also to let them know that there were some things in the works that would help them to identify when those outages occurred and the things they had in the works that maybe were a couple of years down the road that would help them. Mr. Lentsch stated he wanted to refer specifically to both website and app development and their IT department was in the process on working on potential development of the City of Mishawaka mobile app that would offer residents push notifications, outage information, and service request functionality. Mr. Lentsch stated the app was not nearly close to operational, but it was something they were working at and something that he believed they could potentially use but once operational, if they decided to go forward with it, it would be a critical platform for future outage communication. Mr. Lentsch stated they were also working on building a dedicated communication support team to ensure a deeper vent bench was available during future service disruptions. Mr. Lentsch stated the team could include other trained folks like Phil Stokes who worked for Mishawaka Utilities and worked on their social media. Mr. Lentsch stated they wanted to look at it and slice it as many ways as possible to make sure that their citizens and ratepayers were informed. Mr. Lentsch noted something more specific that was happening that was a couple years out was outage management and future outlook and he had a conversation with Kevin Wasmer, Manager of Mishawaka Utilities Electric, and he said shortly after taking over as Electric Division Manager in May 2021, it was clear to Mr. Wasmer that their current analog outage management format was beyond the times in a world that expected instant information at a click of a button or phone tap. Mr. Lentsch stated in February 2024, he and Mr. Wasmer received Utility Board approval to move forward with a $1.2 million automated metering infrastructure project and due to the large cost of the project, they had to split the project into several phases over a three to four year span. Mr. Lentsch stated the first phase of the project was installed in 2024 and turned out better than expected. Mr. Lentsch stated overall once the project was completed in the year 2027 or 2028, they would have the ability to identify the size of the outage areas and the total numbers of customers affected within minutes if not seconds. Mr. Lentsch stated they would also be able to share the outage information data visually to their ratepayers who wanted to know if they were affected. Mr. Lentsch stated this was something that had been in the works that they had talked about in the past, but it was just about the timing and the cost of spreading it over a period of time. Mr. Lentsch stated this was really the evolution of smart metering and if they looked at where they were at currently, Mishawaka was at the very beginning of smart metering and smart metering had evolved to where investor-owned utilities had smart metering that they could adjust or have consumers adjust when they used their dishwasher or other things and they could actually plug in and aid those with their utilities digitally. Mr. Lentsch stated they thought it was feasible and affordable to look at a couple of steps up but not completely up to the top of the ladder as far as smart metering was concerned, because you could spend up to $5 to $10 million on the best of smart metering equipment, but they did not feel like there would be the great benefit that they had by doing things like making sure they did not have outages by preventive maintenance and upgrading their grid. Mr. Lentsch stated he thought that they could get a whole lot more out of their money by focusing on improving their grid and upgrading as they were now from 4KV to 12KV and making sure they replaced some transformers that were at the end of their usefulness or coming upon that. Mr. Lentsch stated he thought they needed to be balanced in what they did and instead of focusing on having all of the bells and whistles, they needed to take very conservative approach, understand that they were the City of Mishawaka and they were a $90 million utility, but he would rather focus on making sure they did not have outages and the frequency of that was not very high. Mr. Lentsch stated they had a storm in March 2025 that was the biggest storm probably in seventy-five years or more. Mr. Lentsch stated in all of 2024, they had a total cumulative outage of fifteen hours and 2025 had been obviously outside of those bounds, but they wanted to make sure that they were continuing to do what they could to prevent the outages first and foremost and then communicating them when they did happen in the most effective way. Mr. Lentsch stated he received a call at 4:15 in the morning on Sunday and they had some failures in trying to get the information up and on the city's website, they were able to get information on their Mishawaka Utilities Facebook page, there was an article on WSBT, and they tried their best to make sure the citizens were informed and he thought that was an important thing to do. Mr. Lentsch stated there would not be early morning calls or late-night calls to Mishawaka Utilities' customers, but they would receive text messages and ask them to share the information to others. Mr. Lentsch stated people look at information and digest it in many different ways and there was a news story on WSBT Sunday morning and there were three different posts on the Mishawaka Utilities Facebook page as well. Mr. Lentsch stated they wanted to make sure they informed the community and their ratepayers in every way possible but they just did not currently have the ability to say a specific neighborhood had been affected by outages. Mr. Lentsch stated investor-owned utilities and others may have that capability and Mishawaka Utilities was getting to that point but they did not have that at that point. Mr. Lentsch stated they had invested mightily in upgrading their infrastructure to make sure there were not outages and he believed in the past years, the proof was in fifteen hours or less of total outages they had. Mr. Lentsch stated he bragged on the Mishawaka Utilities and all of their utilities did a fantastic job, but the reports he got out to citizens and ratepayers after every outage were usually less than an hour and in most cases, the outages lasted less than fifteen minutes. Mr. Lentsch stated in this case, because of the complexity of the outage and in the fact that it involved a new piece of equipment that they installed less than six months ago that had a major failure and because of that, it took many steps on their part to find what the problem was, correcting it, and then they had to involve AEP to re-energize the line. Mr. Lentsch stated it took over five hours, which was unusual, but they would do everything they could to make sure their grid was strong and their infrastructure was as strong as it could be to first and foremost ensure that they had very few outages and those that they had, they wanted to minimize the time but at the same time, they wanted to educate and inform their ratepayers as well.

Mr. Violi stated aside from the actual outage of course, that was always the biggest stress and raised everybody's stress level. Mr. Violi asked if there was something in the short term that he could tell them that maybe got the reports out a little quicker in the future. Mr. Violi stated people in the city just wanted to know that the outages were being addressed, they wanted a straight answer, and everyone who was involved was a little caught off by the outages maybe because it was so early in the morning. Mr. Violi asked in the short term if they had plans to get to the outreach portion of the process earlier to contact the public on the situation and if there was anything they could do better. Mr. Lentsch stated the time of the outages caused some issues, but within three hours there was information on their social media page and there was an article with information out on WSBT. Mr. Lentsch stated they could not definitively say when things were going to be back up, because they were still evaluating but, in every case, where they found out about outages at any time of the day, he had his computer with him and they communicated information as it was available to them. Mr. Lentsch stated in this instance, it was about the timing of the storm that made it more difficult and more challenging. Mr. Lentsch stated the other part of it was that they had a 24-hour 7-day a week call in that called after hours and they took the calls and he thought they could do better working with them, but it seemed like they were flooded with calls and they were not able to field them all right away and they were all seeking information that did not lead their customers astray. Mr. Lentsch stated they would never overpromise and underdeliver. Mr. Violi stated he thought the call center would be a great start as he mentioned to make sure they were updated a little quicker so they could relay the information to the public quicker. Mr. Lentsch stated part of it was that it took them two to three hours to figure out the issue in this instance, and again they did not have the smart meters to be able to tell them where things were out and it was dictated on the calls that were coming in and their people getting out into the community and finding out where things were as workers went to the substations to pinpoint where exactly the problem was and then how to fully access it and figure out what the fix would be. Mr. Lentsch stated part of the issue was that it involved re-energizing a line and it took them a couple of hours to get AEP to come do that for them.

Mr. Mammolenti stated he mentioned the disruption was caused by a piece of equipment that had recently been installed and asked if that was correct. Mr. Lentsch stated yes, that was correct. Mr. Mammolenti asked if they had been in contact with the manufacturer in terms of how that may have happened or if it was on the install side of things that caused the disruption. Mr. Lentsch stated they were trying to figure that out, but they did not believe it was an install problem and they believed it was an internal failure with a new 34.5KV breaker at the 12th Street substation. Mr. Lentsch stated that particular breaker was replaced earlier in 2025 as part of the upgrade from 4KV to 12KV and unfortunately, even new equipment could fail and they did not know at that moment the cause of the failure and just that the equipment had a massive internal failure causing all of the south of the city's transmission lines to de-energize. Mr. Lentsch stated they would get to the bottom of it and the company would be responsible for getting them a replacement part, but as they knew in terms of lead times, it would take them a little bit. Mr. Mammolenti stated he had no doubt that they would get to the bottom of it and asked if they had installed any other breakers at any other substations with the same breaker that had the issue. Mr. Lentsch stated he did not know, and he did not know if it was that part from that company, but he believed they had. Mr. Lentsch stated they were just in the beginning of upgrading their infrastructure from 4KV to 12KV and it was almost done for one out of seven of their substations. Mr. Mammolenti stated once again that he had no doubt that once they identified the problem or the cause, they would look at if that breaker was installed in others and would fix that problem as well. Mr. Lentsch thanked Mr. Mammolenti.

Mr. Emmons asked when Mr. Lentsch mentioned a breaker, how much that breaker cost the City of Mishawaka. Mr. Lentsch stated he wished he had Mr. Wasmer there with him that evening as he did not know the answer to that question, but it would be several thousand, if not hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mr. Lentsch stated that particular breaker was part of their conversion, and he believed it was very expensive. Mr. Emmons asked when they bought it from the same manufacturer, if that guaranteed the part or the breaker through any certain length of time. Mr. Lentsch stated yes, and they would find that out and the manufacturer would likely be involved in doing some work to find that out. Mr. Lentsch stated this was a significant piece of their new infrastructure and it should never have failed within the timeframe, so they would be working with them to find out what happened and obviously would be getting it replaced as soon as possible at their cost.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Lentsch and asked him to pass on their thanks to Mr. Wasmer and to their employees for the work they did to get them back online as quickly as they were able to. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he agreed with what Mr. Lentsch said and he thought that the stability of their grid as well as their ability to repair those issues that arose from time to time beyond their control more often than not was second to none. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated Mr. Lentsch's commitment to take a look at the communication piece because he thought it put them in about the 100th percentile of all entities and organizations that communication was the easiest thing to do yet most difficult at times and he appreciated the information Mr. Lentsch provided to them with regard to how it was communicated out, but he thought that looking at those other means of communicating with their ratepayers and the public so that they could round out the ability of people to have real time information sometimes just the peace of mind that they experienced from knowing that somebody was looking at it even if they could not tell them how long the outage would be out, he thought was as critical as what the ultimate explanation was. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated at the risk of stating the obvious, they were in a 24/7 business to provide utilities and he thought that plus or minus people ought to be able to receive the same type of communication at 3:50AM as they received at 3:50PM, so if he could please keep them updated with regard to what he was able to identify as additional means for them to be able to enhance their communication resources and please let them know if there was anything the Council could do to help. Mr. Lentsch thanked Mr. Hixenbaugh and the Council.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Banicki thanked his fellow council members, Clerk Block, the City Clerk's Office, and the Administration, for their prayers and condolences following his brother's passing 11 days ago.

Mr. Banicki thanked them all once again. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Banicki and stated may he rest in peace.

ADJOURNMENT 7:00PM

Deborah S. Block /s/	Gregg A. Hixenbaugh /s/
Deborah S. Block, IAMC, MMC, City Clerk	Gregg A. Hixenbaugh, President

These minutes are a summary of actions taken at the Mishawaka Common Council meeting. The full video archive of the meeting is available for viewing at www.youtube.com/@cityofmishawaka635 for as long as this media is supported.