REGULAR MEETING OF THE MISHAWAKA COMMON COUNCIL

October 6, 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 October 6, 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 (P), Mr. Carroll (P), Mr. Banicki (P), Mr. Emmons (A), 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 September 22, 2025, were approved as received from the Clerk's Office.

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

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-27

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 5907 AS AMENDED FIXING THE SALARIES OF ALL EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA EXCEPT THE MISHAWAKA PARK DEPARTMENT, ELECTED OFFICALS, AND THE MISHAWAKA UTILITIES FOR THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA FOR THE YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2025
Amending 2025 Salary Ordinance
(Assigned to Budget & Finance Committee)

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-08

AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE SALARIES OF ALL EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA EXCEPT ELECTED OFFICIALS, SWORN PUBLIC SAFETY, MISHAWAKA PARK DEPARTMENT, AND MISHAWAKA UTILITIES FOR THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA FOR THE YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026
Civil City Salary Ordinance for 2026
(Assigned to Budget & Finance Committee)

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-29

AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE SALARIES OF ALL SWORN POLICE EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA FOR THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA FOR THE YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026
All Sworn Police Employee Salary Ordinance for 2026
(Assigned to Budget & Finance Committee)

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-30

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 5910 AS AMENDED FIXING THE SALARIES OF ALL SWORN FIRE EMPLOYEES OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA FOR THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, FOR THE YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026
All Sworn Fire Employee Salary Ordinance for 2026
(Assigned to Budget & Finance Committee)

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-31

AN ORDINANCE FIXING THE SALARIES OF CERTAIN ELECTED OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026
Elected Official Salary Ordinance for 2026
(Assigned to Budget & Finance Committee)

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

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-21

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 detached Single-Family residential use – West Side of Filbert Rd. South of Park Place

Mr. Carroll reported the Land Use Planning Committee recommended that this proposed ordinance be adopted. Upon a second by Mr. Banicki, the motion carried.

Corey Cressy, CCIM for Cressy Land Investments at 200 North Church Street in Mishawaka, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-21**. Mr. Cressy stated he was present that evening as part of the ownership group of the parcel and they had it under contract to sell to a couple that wanted to build a home on the land, and they were asking for an amendment to allow for residential use on the parcel.

Question called for at 6:06PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-21 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**
Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh. The proposed ordinance passed 8-0, thus it became **ORDINANCE NO. 5944**.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-22

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 Shooting Range – 3717 & 3729 Bremen Hwy
Petitioner Requesting Postponement

The chair entertained a motion to postpone second reading and public hearing on **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-22** until their next regularly scheduled council meeting pursuant to the request of the petitioner. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated for the record, it was his understanding that the petitioner requested the postponement in order to conduct a neighborhood meeting with the residents who lived in close proximity to the site. Mr. Banicki moved the motion and with a second from Mr. Violi, a voice vote was held on the motion. The motion passed unanimously; thus, the matter was postponed to their next regularly scheduled council meeting on Monday October 27th at 6PM in the Council Chambers.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-23

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 C-7 to C-10 Filling Station Commercial – 1008 S. Merrifield

Mr. Mammolenti reported the Land Use Planning Committee recommended that this proposed ordinance be adopted. Upon a second by Mr. Banicki, the motion carried.

Chris Godlewski, Abonmarche Consultants at 315 West Jefferson Boulevard, South Bend, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-23**. Mr. Godlewski stated he represented the two petitioners, and they wanted to rezone the parcel to C-10 so they could get the gas station use there. Mr. Godlewski stated what they saw was a preliminary site plan and they would go through the final site plan with details of parking on both sides of the east property line in coordination with five landowners who used the easement for ingress and egress coming from the south and the west. Mr. Godlewski stated the staff report and the Plan Commission meeting was positive, and they would be following any guidance in that document, and he believed it was voted unanimously in favor there. Mr. Godlewski stated he was already in touch with some of the landowners there to discuss the next steps in the development and he was happy to answer any questions the Council had.

Mrs. Voelker asked about the hours of operation and what hours would be in place. Mr. Godlewski stated at the meeting he did not know but when he talked with the client, he was not exactly sure, but it would not be 24 hours. Mr. Godlewski stated it would be regular business hours, and it might be an early morning start and open until mid-to-late evening, but not for 24 hours.

Mr. Carroll stated he talked to business owners in the area, and they were very much in favor of the project, and they thought it would clean up the area as well as bring more business to them, but the one main concern they had was regarding the dumpster facing their businesses and asked if that was going to the addressed. Mr. Godlewski stated yes, and he did speak with the neighbor about that as well, however he believed it would be moved to the other side and would be shielded with doors so that the outside would look better as well. Mr. Godlewski stated he recently addressed that with the landowners. Mr. Carroll asked as far as access was concerned if there would be access points that would change, especially from the parking lot into the new Kroger parking lot. Mr. Godlewski stated no and the access off of 12th and Merrifield would be the same but what would be different was that since the traveling path, the east-west and the north-south, were not defined, part of their site plan development would be to design the curb area parking spaces so when this was built, they would be very clear where the traveling path was going north and south as well as east and west for all of the users in the area. Mr. Carroll thanked Mr. Godlewski for that and for the record, he had heard no other objections from anybody and there were only positive remarks about the project.

Mr. Mammolenti asked if the entire parking lot would be redone, resurfaced, and graded. Mr. Godlewski stated the lot would be improved with storm water, landscaping buildings, parking, and then about fifty feet to the north and fifty feet to the east would be improved. Mr. Godlewski stated outside of that, nothing further would be improved.

Question called for at 6:13PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-23 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**
Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh. The proposed ordinance passed 8-0, thus it became **ORDINANCE NO. 5945**.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-24

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 C-1 General Commercial to C-7 Automobile Oriented Restaurant – North of 4340 N. Main St.

Mrs. Hazen reported the Land Use Planning Committee recommended that this proposed ordinance be adopted. Upon a second by Mr. Banicki, the motion carried.

Timothy Dwyer, Polise Engineering, remotely spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-24**. Mr. Dwyer stated they were proposing a 1.14-acre lot as part of their larger development that would be further developed in the future that they were planning to tie onto the existing access road and improve the existing access road that reached out into North Main Street. Mr. Dwyer stated they were proposing a Dutch Bros restaurant which would be a coffee shop with some small food items. Mr. Dwyer stated this would be a drive-thru restaurant with a walk-up window and Dutch Bros was a large coffee shop started out west and making their way east. Mr. Dwyer stated this would be a fantastic site and would be the first one in the area.

Mr. Violi asked if there would be any inside seating at all. Mr. Dwyer stated there would be no inside seating.

Mr. Mammolenti stated when looking at the website, the Dutch Bros footprint was comparable to a Scooter's Coffee with it being small and asked if that was what he foresaw being in this location as well as their other locations. Mr. Dwyer stated that was exactly right and it was very comparable to Scooter's.

Question called for at 6:18PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-24 Motion passed by unanimous roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8).**
Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh. The proposed ordinance passed 8-0, thus it became **ORDINANCE NO. 5946**.

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-25

CIVIL CITY BUDGET & TAX LEVY FOR 2026

Rebecca Maguire, City Controller, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-25**. Mrs. Maguire stated she was present to discuss the Civil City Budget for 2026. Mrs. Maguire stated as they knew, Senate Enrolled Act No. 1 was going to cause them some difficulties, and she would be giving a synopsis of that. Mrs. Maguire stated increased supplemental homestead deductions, new property tax caps, thereby increasing their tax rates, resulting in higher circuit breaker losses. Mrs. Maguire stated when they removed the LIT, they were going to be losing their property tax replacement credit. Mrs. Maguire gave an overview of the regular budget process and laid out the steps that they needed to begin the process. Mrs. Maguire stated it began in early July collecting all of their revenue as well as budget requests from the departments, compiling a draft budget, holding individual department meetings with the mayor, and they finalized and worked on personal services and benefits. Mrs. Maguire stated in early September they had their meetings with the Council and all of the department heads, and then they finalized with the mayor. Mrs. Maguire stated the process was an 18-month budget and it began with their numbers and their fund totals as of June 30th and the formulas pertained to their four tax-based funds that received property tax. Mrs. Maguire stated they had the 2025 budget left to spend, they had what they estimated for the 2026 budget, and also, they estimated their circuit breaker loss to get their funds required. Mrs. Maguire stated on the revenue side, they take their cash on June 30th, plus revenue left to receive in 2025, including their tax collection, and then all of the 2026 miscellaneous revenue and those were the funds available. Mrs. Maguire stated if they were looking at funds that did not get property tax, they would leave out the circuit breaker loss and the tax collection and that miscellaneous revenue would have to fund the budget because there would be no additional funds needed. Mrs. Maguire stated they had four funds that received property taxes being the general fund, the motor vehicle highway fund, the park fund, and the cumulative capital development fund and that fund's rate was set at .05. Mrs. Maguire stated for 2026, they were looking at a 30% increase in their circuit breaker loss and to develop their tax calculation, they were going to take their 2025 property tax, multiply it times their growth quotient, and then they would add their cumulative capital fund. Mrs. Maguire stated that the $40 million was their max property tax revenue that they could receive. Mrs. Maguire stated you then would divide that by their net assessed value by one hundred, and that was their tax rate. Mrs. Maguire stated So the net assessed value of the 1.9 billion was this year's value. Mrs. Maguire stated they had not received the new value to use yet from the county so if they stayed with 2025, that would be a 4% increase in their tax rate. Mrs. Maguire stated if their assessed value increased to two billion, it would be a 1.7% increase. Mrs. Maguire stated if they lost tax net assessed value, she was showing $100 million loss, their tax rate would increase 9.6%. Mrs. Maguire states as they saw under SB1, any large increase in the tax rate increased their circuit breaker losses. Mrs. Maguire displayed a tax bill illustrating the assessed value of the property and the tax rate. Mrs. Maguire stated the tax rate was approximately $4, but since they had tax caps of 1%, the bill was only the $2,000, 1% of the total. Mrs. Maguire stated you then added School City of Mishawaka's Referendum there to get a total bill of $23.85. Mrs. Maguire stated the credits were circuit breaker losses because they were telling their residents they were only paying 1% on their home as a homeowner and with SB1, the numbers for the supplemental homestead, were going to increase year over year, which was going to increase the total of what was owed and when you backed it off to the 1%, that would increase the circuit breaker. Mrs. Maguire stated year after year, home after home, which was where they would see the increase. Mrs. Maguire stated they did not know what their tax rate was going to be at that time because they did not have their assessed value from the County. Mrs. Maguire stated they wanted it to be marginally larger, so they would have slow, steady growth but since they did not know what it was, they always liked to advertise a higher tax rate, because if she advertised a tax rate and it came back certified higher, then they would lose their levy. Mrs. Maguire stated they would also lose some of that property tax, so they always advertised and adopted a higher tax rate. Mrs. Maguire stated for adoption at their next council meeting, their advertised tax rate is 4.13. Mrs. Maguire stated as they saw on the other slide, their goal was to have it closer to $2 and that was what she expected it would settle at. Mrs. Maguire stated since they did not know, they wanted to advertise higher. Mrs. Maguire stated they made sure they collected as much of that $40 million as they could. Mrs. Maguire showed their four funds with the tax rates, and their tax rate was going to be adopted at the 4.1. Mrs. Maguire stated also as a result of SB1, it was estimated that in their general fund if things went as predicted, they could be close to negative $15 million in the hole. Mrs. Maguire stated they knew that was not going to happen because this was worst-case scenario. Mrs. Maguire stated when you made a comprehensive financial plan, they had to estimate that they were going to spend all of their budgets completely. Mrs. Maguire stated there would be moderate increases in expenses. Mrs. Maguire stated they had already started to make changes to keep it from happening, but it was a good illustration to find out what could happen if they did not make changes and if SB1 stayed the same. Mrs. Maguire stated, for example, when they looked at the general fund, if they had to cut $15 million, they would have to cut every department except fire and police, and fire and police would have to take an 8.5% reduction. Mrs. Maguire stated it was concerning and serious.

Mrs. Voelker asked for clarification if what she just said was that they would need to cut every department plus 8.5% in both police in fire in order to meet the budget requirements. Mrs. Maguire stated the general fund at that time for 2026 was $49.6 million and if they had to find savings of $15 million, it was a gross illustration of the impact that they would be up against. Mrs. Voelker thanked Mrs. Maguire.

Mrs. Maguire stated as far as plan of action was concerned, they were reviewing all fees, licenses, and charges to see where increases could be made. Mrs. Maguire stated they had already looked at some licenses and fees, and some had not been updated since the eighties. Mrs. Maguire stated they were going to cut expenses where possible and they needed to be creative and review every account line. Mrs. Maguire stated they needed to conserve their cash now. Mrs. Maguire stated for example, the police department had budgeted two new motorcycles, and they were only going to buy one. Mrs. Maguire stated they were meeting with their legislators, which Mayor Wood would be discussing later. Mrs. Maguire stated they wanted them to know the impact that Mishawaka would be suffering. Mrs. Maguire stated they would educate their employees as well as their citizens. Mrs. Maguire stated everything was on the table and being considered. Mrs. Maguire stated they wanted to prevent any reduction or elimination of services to their citizens, and they wanted to prevent layoffs of their employees. Mrs. Maguire stated in the budget for 2026, they had no raises for non-bargaining employees, stipends only for their full-time hourly employees, and they were reducing the city's deferred compensation match from 2% to 1%. Mrs. Maguire stated in the general fund, they were eliminating unfilled positions, three in central services, a law position, a planning position, and the civilian trainer in the police department was going to be absorbed by one of the sworn staff. Mrs. Maguire stated in the controller budget they were reducing the capital outlays line, and they were shifting the public safety vehicle expenses, buying parts and repairs, and they were shifting that to public safety LIT. Mrs. Maguire stated in redevelopment, they were reducing the professional services line as well. Mrs. Maguire stated in the motor vehicle highway fund and motor vehicle highway restricted fund, they were eliminating two unfilled teamster positions and were reducing their funding for the community crossing matching grant, which aligned with the revenue that they received. Mrs. Maguire stated in the park fund, they were shifting expenses to their gift fund and also to their non-reverting fund. Mrs. Maguire stated in the public safety income tax fund, they were reducing the fire equipment line as Chief Woodward had during his tenure, he had replaced a lot of equipment, upgraded equipment, and now they were basically in the maintenance stage, so they were able to do that. Mrs. Maguire stated in CEDIT, the county economic development income tax, that they were reducing the park improvement line as they had done on many major renovations in the parks, as those were slowing down. Mrs. Maguire stated every eleven years, their pay dates increased by one to twenty-seven, so while the bi-weekly pay was not increasing for salary employees, they would receive an extra pay. Mrs. Maguire stated there were twenty-seven pays in 2026, which equated to a 3.85% increase for next year. Mrs. Maguire stated hourly employees were going to receive a stipend of $2,000. Mrs. Maguire stated the sworn firefighters contract included a 4.5% increase for 2026, and the sworn police officers were currently negotiating for 2026. Mrs. Maguire stated they were adding a new fire safety tax fund, and the sworn police officers were currently negotiating for 2026. Mrs. Maguire stated they were adding one new position in the building department which was going to be called a combination inspector and that person would have both electrical and HVAC experience, so they could back up the other inspectors. Mrs. Maguire stated they were going to be able to back up Code and Weights and Measures and if a rental inspection ordinance were passed, they would be the lead employee on that. Mrs. Maguire stated a significant increase they would be experiencing in 2026 was a 3% pension contribution, so they would be paying a total of 20.3% towards public safety salaries, in addition to the 3% employee portion that the city paid. Mrs. Maguire stated they were purchasing 10 AEDs and were refurbishing two ambulances and for law enforcement, SWAT vests were due to be updated so that was going to happen in 2026. Mrs. Maguire stated in the cumulative capital improvement line, they were going to pay off the loan to their own bond bank, so they were paying themselves back early for the 2019 aerial fire truck. Mrs. Maguire stated in public safety, they were shifting their supplies and vehicle repair from central services, which would give some relief to the general fund and they were going to pay off loans in the public safety line fund to their own bond bank and the reason behind that was they were going to re-up the Mishawaka local improvement bond bank. Mrs. Maguire stated if they had any needs in the future, they would have a safety net of funds, and that it should be close to between 7 and 8 million would be restored in that fund. Mrs. Maguire stated they were going to finish the payoff of fire station 4, 2021 police cars, the 2018 records management system, and the 2023 fire truck purchases. Mrs. Maguire stated in CEDIT, they added some funds to their clinic services line, and they had a one-time increase in the IT service contract line for updated hardware that was at end-of-life Mrs. Maguire stated they were also budgeting for a new standalone salt barn, which included preparing the land for the barn. Mrs. Maguire stated they were looking at a 4.22% increase in the general fund. Mrs. Maguire stated overall that they had a modest increase of 1.22% overall for the city and this was still pending the results of the police negotiations. Mrs. Maguire stated she was happy to answer any questions before the mayor spoke.

Mr. Banicki stated they had spoken about the number they were waiting for from the county and asked when she thought they would get that valuation from the county. Mrs. Maguire stated they should get it before the end of the year. Mr. Banicki asked if there was a mandated date they had to give them or if the county could hold out to the last second. Mrs. Maguire stated there likely was a mandated date, but she was not familiar with it. Mr. Banicki thanked Mrs. Maguire.

Mrs. Voelker asked about the impact of the reduction in community crossing matching grant and what that would be. Mrs. Maguire stated for 2025, they received $2 million in funding, and 50% of that had to go to street repair, so they always budgeted $1 million for that, and that year they budgeted $500,000 from the actual operating funds, so the impact would be a reduction in the match, but they needed the operating money in the MVH fund. The state reduced their match to $1 million, so they were still in line with what they could match. Mrs. Voelker asked if that would reduce the amount of money that they had going into street repairs in 2026. Mrs. Maguire stated it would, but they would not be losing on the match. Mrs. Voelker thanked Mrs. Maguire.

Mr. Violi thanked Mrs. Maguire for all of her work on this and stated it was interesting to sit through all the budget meetings, and he appreciated all of her knowledge and guidance. Mr. Violi asked if they would not hire the new building department employee until they had the ordinances in place or if there was a plan of how this would look before they actually hired the individual. Mrs. Maguire stated she was not sure of the plan for the hiring itself. Mr. Violi stated they needed a plan before the hiring. Mrs. Maguire stated the mayor would discuss that further. Mr. Violi thanked Mrs. Maguire.

Ms. Hahn echoed what Mr. Violi said and thanked Mrs. Maguire for laying the budget out to the Council. Ms. Hahn stated her presentation made it easy to understand for someone who was somewhat new to the Council, like herself. Ms. Hahn asked if the information she presented would be available online for citizens to look at. Mrs. Maguire stated she could put it on the website. Ms. Hahn stated she thought that would be helpful just because it was pretty easy to understand. Ms. Hahn thanked Mrs. Maguire.

Mr. Mammolenti thanked Mrs. Maguire for her efforts and stated he learned something new every year. Mr. Mammolenti stated he knew they had been fighting SB1, and Mayor Wood had been very diligent in going down to Indianapolis to try and fight it and asked how long they would be stuck with the bill as it was written and also when they could expect it to be amended or repealed. Mrs. Maguire stated she was sure the mayor would add to it, but she did not there would be going into session a little bit earlier and SB1 could be a topic. Mr. Mammolenti thanked Mrs. Maguire.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mrs. Maguire and her staff for the work that they did leading up to the meeting that evening and the vote at our next council meeting. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated the meetings she participated in with the Council and the department heads were always really valuable and they appreciated her assistance in making that happen. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated one of his takeaways was that this was one of the more challenging, if not most challenging, budgets that they had to consider in all of their combined years of service to the city and asked if that was accurate. Mrs. Maguire stated that was absolutely right and they had comprehensive financial plans show negative five million in the future years and she was saying to the mayor that they could fix that with their eyes closed and their hands behind our back. Mrs. Maguire stated this was definitely more serious and was not manageable at that current time and they had to act and talk to their legislators. Mr. Maguire stated with that being said, she appreciated all of the meetings and the collaboration. Mrs. Maguire stated Kayla Yoder, and her staff made it all work too. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he wanted to underscore the discussion that she and Mrs. Volker had earlier and when they as a municipality were looking at as much as 15 million dollars that they would have to try to reduce their budget by, that was as staggering to him as it was to them that if they did nothing other than provide police and fire service, they wouldn't be able to make up that deficit and they would have to still cut their police and fire services to meet the target. Mr.

Hixenbaugh stated they were clearly never going to do that and he had a lot of confidence in the creativity of Mrs. Maguire, the mayor, the administration, and the Council to work together to try to address it but his fear was that as creative and as proactive as they had been in this budget, as he understood it, 2027 would be even more challenging than the most challenging budget that they were looking at. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated what they just agreed was the most challenging budget that they had ever encountered for 2026 and yet 2028 would be even worse again and asked if that was all accurate. Mrs. Maguire stated that was very accurate. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated the work that she and the mayor and the department heads and the Council had put into this to try to come up with a balanced budget and this was just that, a balanced budget and they were living within their means. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated his fear was that no matter how creative they got in 2027 and 2028, without some assistance from their friends in Indianapolis, they were going to be looking at cataclysmic cuts in their budget that they were going to have to consider that would dramatically decrease the services that the residents of Mishawaka, number one, were entitled to, and number two, had come to rely on. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated her creativity and he wanted to go on the record as being frustrated by the fact that what had been trumpeted as being property tax relief for homeowners across the state, and they were all in favor of that, as he understood it, the maximum that a homeowner could expect to receive was $300, and the vast majority of homeowners were not going to receive even $300 in property tax relief and what they would receive would be offset by cuts in services, additional taxes, and additional fees that levels of government throughout St. Joe County and beyond were going to have to consider in order to try to replace that revenue. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if anything in that statement was incorrect from her perspective. Mrs. Maguire stated no, it was a lose-lose for their citizens. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mrs. Maguire again for the work she had done and stated it was astounding to him that they were able to do the things that they were able to do in the budget as proposed, despite the challenges and he in particular wanted to compliment her and the mayor with regard to what was embedded in the budget for the 27th pay cycle. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated it sounded like it was a really technical, idiosyncratic thing, and to a certain extent it was but there were a lot of employers who would go to their employees and say, they were going to have to now have your same amount of pay deducted over 27 pays so that each check would be lower, or other employers would have no choice but to extend the payroll cycle so that people would have to go longer in between paychecks and he applauded her and the mayor and the work of the Council to come up with a plan that shielded their employees from that and make the best of a bad situation, particularly in light of their financial circumstances. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked them once more for their efforts.

Mayor Wood spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-25**. Mayor Wood stated these were very challenging times and some of the discussion that they had with the Controller and among the Council, they were exactly right. This was a man-made storm that they could not prepare for over time. Mayor Wood stated in government, they moved very methodically, and they would have multiple public hearings just on the budget through the process and they made decisions very deliberately between bodies, between Council, between administration, with input from citizens, and so that was by design. Mayor Wood stated it worked that way and it typically worked well that way. Mayor Wood stated this came up suddenly and changes like this, of this magnitude, which occurred downstate, get studied over multiple years, multiple sessions, study committees, and this one did not. Mayor Wood stated it came up relatively quickly, and they had little time to react, and this impacted their budget in very, very drastic ways Mayor Wood stated he had been around here for 25 years now on Council and as Mayor and he had not seen anything like it. Mayor Wood stated local government provided the essential services that were most closely felt by their citizens, and they were, in many cases, the things that their citizens could not live without. Mayor Wood stated the services included police and fire protection, water, and utilities that they provided at City Hall. Mayor Wood stated the quality of life, the safety in neighborhoods where their residents lived, their services were what went a long way to make that happen. Mayor Wood stated this cut, as they discussed, fifteen million dollars was just hopefully the worst-case scenario they would never get to, but they had been preparing for the circuit breaker losses that impacted them delayed from every other county except for Lake in the state of Indiana. Mayor Wood stated they prepared for that over a 10-year period of time. Mayor Wood stated they had a lengthy period of time to prepare, and their staff did an outstanding job working with their fiscal body, the Mishawaka Common Council. Mayor Wood stated they built themselves into cash reserves, so if they were to get to a point where they were fifteen million in the hole, which was a loss not of fifteen million, that was a loss of thirty-five million starting in 2026. Mayor Wood stated they were eating into their reserves, getting to a point where that negative fifteen million dollars would be thirty-five million dollars over the course of a two to three-year period. Mayor Wood stated he did not know how they, with a budget of seventy-five million, planned for that while providing essential services. Mayor Wood stated they could cut every single department out of the city and still have to cut public safety drastically. Mayor Wood stated they knew they could not cut every single department out and they had to do things the state required them to do, like code enforcement, like building inspections, like engineering their roads and maintaining them and they could not do that. Mayor Wood stated this happened quickly and he happened to be president of AIM that year and they were not taking it sitting down. Mayor Wood stated they were trying to get their message out and trying to raise awareness among local governments all over the state of Indiana. Mayor Wood stated he had been addressing clerk treasurer's conferences and mayor's roundtables and anywhere they needed to go to raise awareness as to the impact because this was coming. Mayor Wood stated at his direction, they had formed two committees in AIM with one having to do with the impact, to study the impact and these were people, experts in local government, mayors, clerk treasurers, and he also had Ken Prince put on there because he could not think of anybody more skilled in local government than Ken to give his input and so that committee formed, and then they had a second committee, because they just did not want to be the folks that showed up to complain all the time. Mayor Wood stated they wanted to be a part of the solution. Mayor Wood stated they started another committee, which was looking at government efficiency. Mayor Wood stated he thought they ran local government as well as anywhere else you would ever care to look, right there in Mishawaka and that had been the case for a long, long time as they did not have waste, did not have debt, and they did not have a lot of things that caused this to occur, that raised the red flags, that caused the change to happen. Mayor Wood stated they had come up with kind of a white paper study that they had recently completed and Mrs. Maguire was actually om that committee and so, their voices were being heard all over the state and they had the drafts ready to go and they had approved them and named them in the legislative committee, and they were going to hit the road all over the state in all the media markets to really share the impact of this, because it was an educational process that they needed to go through with their residents. Mayor Wood stated with what came into one pocket would be going out of the other with the local option income taxes and so, then, who would benefit from that. Mayor Wood stated they got to look at the average house in Mishawaka, the average person, citizen, average income, and they thought that they were going to be paying more, their citizens. Mayor Wood stated from what they had been able to look at, this was more of a shift. Mayor Wood stated 2% of properties would benefit by having their property taxes reduced. Mayor Wood stated the businesses would be the ones to benefit from this and the business personal property tax just got cut significantly, and this would be a shift over to single-family residential in their communities. Mayor Wood stated if this happened and did not get fixed, their services would get cut substantially. Mayor Wood stated they were still trying to figure out who would win with this. Mayor Wood stated they had already begun extensive outreach to the General Assembly members, starting with their local delegation there, Senators and House members. Mayor Wood stated, they understood after they had given them data, information, talk, and had good conversations with them, they understood their plight and knew that it needed to be fixed. Mayor Wood stated they got the message that it would be fixed and in one way or another, there were things in the bill that just did not make sense, so he thought there was at least some willingness, at least in their local contingent, to come together and try to work some things out to make it much more workable. Mayor Wood stated he had a meeting this week, one-on-one, with also a member of AIM, with the architect, the state rep that drafted this for tax and fiscal, so they hoped to make some headway individually with state reps and senators so that coming into next year, whether there was a special session in 2025 or coming in next year which was a short session, they really had their work cut out for them, because the impact you saw on their budget, they were making cuts. Mayor Wood stated they had cut a substantial number of positions out of the budget, and they were shipping things around. Mayor Wood stated they were adding one position only, and they hoped to pay for that out of fees that it would generate. Mayor Wood stated that position was a placeholder in the budget just in case they did the program that they all discussed. Mayor Wood stated if that happened, they would hire it, but they could not hire it without having a placeholder in the budget, so that was the answer to that question. Mayor Wood stated if they got into 27 weeks, they knew as it was now, it was going to get worse. Mayor Wood stated they hoped to go down, and they had put together some very good suggestions to fix this at the state level. Mayor Wood stated he would be happy to circulate that around if they would all like to see that. Mayor Wood stated it still had to get the formal approval of the board, but it was pretty well along the way, so he could distribute that to them as well. Mayor Wood stated it was going to take all of their leadership, all of them, and it was not going to be fun. Mayor Wood stated they did not sit on big reserves, and they did not go borrowing, but all things were on the table on this, and it could get very difficult, and they hoped it did not get to that point in time. Mayor Wood stated he was confident that they had the team right there in Mishawaka to lead and to get through it because they would be there forever and they could not fail. Mayor Wood stated they would continue to provide their services and they may look a little different, but they would make sure that they were providing essential services to the extent that they had the resources to do so and he had that confidence because their fiscal body, the Council, had demonstrated that they did what is in the best interest of this city and they had staff there at the department level that not only were the best in the business at what they did, they were very passionate about what they did, and it did not just start with the budget process, which was almost a year-long process. Mayor Wood stated it was what happened after the budget process as it was all of the record-keeping and the spending and making sure that they were doing what they were supposed to do and they, again, had the best there doing that. Mayor Wood stated they just had an audit required by the State Board of Accounts, and his expectation always was pristine audits, exceptional audits, and this was a flawless audit that they just had. And that credit went to their Controller staff. As they did just an outstanding job of making sure that they were doing all the things they were doing in a transparent environment according to state law. Mayor Wood stated with that he wanted to thank them all for participating and being a very active participant in this budget process. Mayor Wood stated they had met and talked about a lot of things. Mayor Wood also thanked their Controller staff and all of their department managers because this would require their creative thinking to get through it as well and everybody is up to the challenge. Mayor Wood stated they would make sure of that. Mayor Wood also thanked their public because this was going to require them to get involved and to understand as well, and it was their duty to help inform them. Mayor Wood stated when they started the state tour of trying to get their awareness, they would make one stop right there at City Hall, which they would publicize. Mayor Wood concluded by thanking the Council once more for their leadership.

Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mayor Wood for his comments, as well as his leadership throughout the process. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he thought he was on solid ground to assure him that the Council stood ready to continue to partner with him and the Controller and their department heads and whomever they needed to partner with in order to advocate for Mishawaka. Mr. Hixenbaugh appreciated the fact that he was advocating not only for them but for the other cities across the state as well going through this and that was a credit to him. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked Mayor Wood to please let them know and to continue to let them know if there was something that they could do to be part of a solution to this unprecedented issue as well. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mayor Wood once again for his leadership.

Mr. Violi stated he was glad Mayor Wood was the President of AIM, at least for the year and asked if he was going to continue to be the President of AIM next year as well. Mayor Wood stated his time as President of AIM was coming to a close. Mr. Violi stated to echo what President Hixenbaugh said, they were lucky as a city that he was in the position that year, because he felt with him as the President of AIM, they were going to get answers, and he felt a lot more comfortable knowing that Mayor Wood was in that seat. Mayor Wood thanked Mr. Violi for his comments and stated they had good leaders all over the state of Indiana willing to step up and do what was right for all of them. Mayor Wood stated the association was 125 years old, which spoke volumes about the value that they brought. Mayor Wood stated while he would be stepping down at the end of the year in the position, there was leadership in place to carry the ball forward, and he would not be walking away from AIM entirely. Mayor Wood stated he will still be present there and be there for their meetings and helping out. Mr. Violi stated they just felt they had a voice, and right now that was the best they could do. Mr. Violi stated they appreciated Mayor Wood’s efforts and thanked him once again.

The public hearing for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2025-25** closed at 7:07PM. The matter would be on the agenda for the next regular scheduled council meeting on October 27th at 6PM in the Council Chambers and at that time, the Council would take a vote.

NEW BUSINESS

The chair entertained a motion to change the regular meeting date of October 20th to October 27th due to scheduling conflicts on multiple council members as well as the Clerk. Mr. Banicki moved the motion and with a second from Mr. Violi, a voice vote was held. The motion passed unanimously, and the meeting date was changed.

Mr. Carroll announced the 2nd District neighborhood meeting would take place Thursday October 9th at 7PM at the Blair Hills Common Room. Mr. Carroll stated the guest speaker would be Mishawaka Common Council President Gregg Hixenbaugh and he would be discussing sewer rates as well as budget items. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he looked forward to it.

Mr. Mammolenti made a reminder that the monthly Twin Branch Neighborhood Watch meeting would take place October 15th, and the speakers would be leadership from Mishawaka Troop Town. Mr. Mammolenti stated they were working on details of time and location and were waiting for confirmation, and he would keep everyone up to date on that. Mr. Mammolenti stated all were welcome.

ADJOURNMENT 7:10PM

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.