

REGULAR MEETING OF THE MISHAWAKA COMMON COUNCIL

May 18, 2026

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 May 18, 2026, at 6:00PM. The meeting was called to order by Council President Gregg Hixenbaugh. All were asked to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Clerk Debbie Ladyga-Block called roll.

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

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.

Minutes for the Regular Meeting on May 4, 2026, were approved as received from the Clerk's Office.

Clerk Block read a letter from the Board of Zoning Appeals regarding their recommendation from their May 12, 2026, meeting.

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

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-19

**AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ORDINANCE 5926 AS AMENDED AFFIRMING,
AUTHORIZING, AND ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES FOR MISHAWAKA
UTILITIES TO FURNISH WATER AND SEWER SERVICE TO THE PUBLIC OF UP
TO FOUR MILES OUTSIDE OF MISHAWAKA CITY LIMITS
Amending Ord 5926AA Establishing Boundaries for Water and Sewer Service Outside of
City Limits
(Assigned to Land Use Planning Committee)**

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NI. 2026-20

**AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE MISHAWAKA UTILITY RATE ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM
(Petitioner requesting Second Reading)**

The chair entertained a motion to waive their regular council rules and conduct first and second reading on **PROPOSED ORDINANCE 2026-20** that evening under New Business. Mrs. Voelker moved the motion and with a second from Mr. Banicki, a voice vote was held on the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the matter would be heard under New Business.

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

RESOLUTION R2026-18

A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, INTRODUCING AN ORDINANCE FOR ANNEXATION, ADOPTING A WRITTEN FISCAL PLAN, AND A DEFINITE POLICY FOR ANNEXATION FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT: PROPERTY NORTH OF 1622, 1628, 1640 & 1706 E MCKINLEY AVENUE

Fiscal Plan for annexation of 1622, 1628, 1640, and 1706 E. McKinley Avenue

Christa Hill, Senior Planner with the Planning and Redevelopment Department for the City of Mishawaka, spoke in favor of **RESOLUTION R2026-18**. Mrs. Hill stated this was 0.87 acres that were on the north side of East McKinley approximately 220 feet east of Fir and behind or north of the properties that were listed. Mrs. Hill stated 1622 was a home, 1628 was the former ethnic food store that was now being used as a restaurant, 1640 was a motel, and 1706 was another single-family home. Mrs. Hill stated since the 0.87 acres was next to a property that was already in the city, it met the 50% contiguity, which was more than the 12.5% that was required by state law. Mrs. Hill stated the former food store had already been converted into a restaurant and the west half of the property would be zoned C-1 and they would provide their own parking area designated for the restaurant. Mrs. Hill stated the hotel where the remainder of the property was damaged by a fire about a year ago and it would be demolished and thirty-nine new apartment units would be constructed on that side, and the east half of the property would be zoned R-3. Mrs. Hill stated as with all fiscal plans, they sent it out to all city departments to make sure that they could serve it without additional expenditures seeing that half of the property was already in the city and some of the improvements extended into the unincorporated area and they wanted it all to be in the city when they redeveloped it.

Mr. Violi asked for clarification if the motel and two houses would be demolished and if they were voting on that. Mrs. Hill stated that was correct regarding the demolitions, but she did not know if they were voting on it in particular. Mr. Violi stated to him, the annexation was contingent on that and that was what the plan would be, and he just wanted to make sure he understood it correctly. Mrs. Hill stated that was the plan and they had a preliminary site plan that showed three 12-unit apartment buildings that would cover where the hotel was and the house on the east side. Mrs. Hill stated the house on the west side would be demolished for parking for the restaurant. Mrs. Hill stated they would also have to go before the Plan Commission with the site plan process to cross all of the T's and dot all of the I's for building

height, landscaping, parking spaces width, and other things. Mrs. Hill stated there would be another step after the vote from the Council that evening.

Question was called for at 6:08PM for **RESOLUTION R2026-18 Motion passed by majority roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8 No = 0).**

Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh. The resolution passed 8-0.

RESOLUTION R2026-19

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, INTRODUCING AN ORDINANCE FOR ANNEXATION, ADOPTING A WRITTEN FISCAL PLAN, AND A DEFINITE POLICY FOR ANNEXATION FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT: 13511 E. 6TH STREET MISHAWAKA, IN 46544 – NORTHWEST CORNER OF KLINE STREET AND E. 6TH STREET
Fiscal Plan for annexation of 13511 E. 6th Street**

Derek Spier, City Planner for the City of Mishawaka, spoke in favor of **RESOLUTION R2026-19**. Mr. Spier stated this property was $\frac{3}{4}$ of an acre property and the owner desired to annex it into the city and to zone to R-1 Single-Family District. Mr. Spier stated in the future, they were proposing to split the property into two lots to construct two new single-family homes. Mr. Spier stated the property was 45% contiguous to the existing city limits, so it met the one-eighth contiguity requirement. Mr. Spier stated when the fiscal plans were done, they forwarded them to all the departments for review to see if they could service this without any increase in their budget and they said they could service it without any additional expenditures and also the cost of connecting utilities to the two sites would be born on the owner to do so. Mr. Spier stated he was happy to answer any questions the Council had.

Question was called for at 6:10PM for **RESOLUTION R2026-19 Motion passed by majority roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8 No = 0).**

Yes: Mrs. Hazen, Mrs. Voelker, Mr. Carroll, Mr. Banicki, Ms. Hahn, Mr. Mammolenti, Mr. Violi, Mr. Hixenbaugh. The resolution passed 8-0.

RESOLUTION R2026-20

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, APPROVING A PETITION OF THE MISHAWAKA BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT: SOUTH OF 4840 N. MAIN STREET
Use Variance to allow for a 4 Tenant Building with 2 Drive-Thrus – Property South of 4840 N. Main Street**

Mrs. Voelker made a motion to postpone the public hearing on **RESOLUTION R2026-20** until their next regularly scheduled council meeting as the petitioner was not present that evening. Mr.

Banicki seconded the motion, and a voice vote was held on the motion. The motion passed unanimously and the matter was postponed until their meeting on June 1st.

RESOLUTION R2026-21

**A RESOLUTION OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA,
INDIANA, APPROVING A PETITION OF THE MISHAWAKA BOARD OF ZONING
APPEALS FOR THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT: 327 W. COLFAX
Use Variance for Counseling Center – 327 W. Colfax**

Mr. Violi stated based on the Board of Zoning Appeal's unfavorable recommendation and a conversation he had with one of the members, he made a motion that they postpone the public hearing on **RESOLUTION R2026-21** until their next scheduled meeting on June 1st to confirm there had been discussion between the applicant and the neighbors. Banicki seconded the motion and a voice vote was held on the motion. Prior to the voice vote, Mr. Hixenbaugh added that there were some technical corrections that needed to be made with regard to the proposed resolution and his fear from his standpoint was that he would not be able to vote in favor of the matter if he was so inclined based upon those technicalities, so he also supported the postponement for that reason. The motion passed unanimously and the matter was postponed until their meeting on June 1st.

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

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06

**AN ORDINANCE ADOPTING REVISED RATES AND CHARGES FOR THE WATER
SERVICES FURNISHED BY THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA'S MUNICIPAL WATER
UTILITY
Amending Water Rates & Charges**

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

Mayor Dave Wood spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06**. Mayor Wood stated he would not ask the Council to support a rate increase of their utilities without coming before them and letting them know he supported it. Mayor Wood stated they were all familiar with their small, but mighty, nonprofit water utility and it was a world-class operation. Mayor Wood stated it distributed over two billion gallons of water to their 17,000 customers through 332 miles of water main. Mayor Wood stated these decisions were always tough and they always hated raising rates. Mayor Wood stated they were very judicious when it came to raising rates and they tried to make sure that they were great value and they provided a great service and he was confident that they did. Mayor Wood stated ten to fifteen years ago, he talked about their

strategic advantage being that they were blessed to have unlimited water right there in Mishawaka and since those days, you heard more and more about water insecurity and that would continue to be something they would hear about. Mayor Wood stated there were communities fairly close to them and throughout the country that would struggle with providing a simple, basic necessity of life such as clean portable drinking water. Mayor Wood stated they did not have to worry about that in Mishawaka and they did so at rates that were competitive anywhere you cared to look, but especially locally. Mayor Wood stated they were among the lowest utilities in the state and locally they were among the most competitive for an outstanding product and service. Mayor Wood stated when it came to their water utility, their citizens could completely take it for granted and they would be fine with that because they did the hard work to make sure that they could take it for granted and they did not shirk their responsibility. Mayor Wood stated rate increases were what allowed them to maintain their system and keep it at the highest levels. Mayor Wood stated with regard to this rate case, it would support a \$38 million filtration plant upgrade, a plant where its filters had not been upgraded or touched for 60 years and it was the plant that the Council had the opportunity to tour and hopefully they saw the need and the need was getting imminent. Mayor Wood stated they were thankfully able to get their Juday Creek filtration plant and get that done so that they could completely take a plant offline and renovate it. Mayor Wood stated they were not able to do that before but now they could, thanks to Council support and the outstanding staff that they had. Mayor Wood stated they would take that offline and they would have to bond most of that and then the rates also supported the payment assistance plan that they would hear about later that evening and also pilot payment in lieu of taxes. Mayor Wood stated as they knew, they were running into some fiscal headwinds as a city and the city was the owner of their small and mighty nonprofit utility. Mayor Wood stated when you thought about the service that this provided and outstanding staff that operated this, he would put their water utility up against any others. Mayor Wood stated that also held true with their team of consultants who they would hear from, DLZ had helped them to plan the system, and they knew their system as well as anyone else. Mayor Wood stated Baker Tilly helped them to make sure their finances were in good order and they got audited, so he could assure their ratepayers and 17,500 customers that this was a top-notch operation but it was only top-notch because they did what was necessary and they were responsible with it as this was a basic necessity of life. Mayor Wood thanked the Council for their ongoing partnership to allow this operation to go so that they could deal with their responsibilities, maintain it, make sure that it was state-of-the-art and so that their customers could completely take clean drinking water for granted in the Princess City. Mayor Wood thanked the Council.

Matthew Lentsch, Executive Director of Development and Governmental Affairs for the City of Mishawaka, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06**. Mr. Lentsch asked for the Council's support of the Mishawaka Utilities water capital and rate plan. Mr. Lentsch stated as they knew the process did not happen last week or a month ago, but the entire process of doing an audit on the infrastructure for their water plants happened over a year ago. Mr. Lentsch stated they spent all of that time working through not just the rate plan but going through the capital infrastructure that they needed to serve Mishawaka not just now but for years to come. Mr. Lentsch stated it had been done carefully and transparently with the Council and the

community, and they conducted informational meetings, neighborhood meetings, public discussions, individual meetings with the councilmembers, and tours of the Virgil water treatment plant. Mr. Lentsch stated at the end of the day, this discussion was not really about rates, it was about water security. Mr. Lentsch stated they had aquifers and were close to Lake Michigan and because of those aquifers, they had water security and they did their best to make sure that they were treating that resource very carefully. Mr. Lentsch stated this also had to do with public health as well as fire protection, infrastructure reliability, and regulatory water compliance. Mr. Lentsch stated one of the things he said to the Council before was that they never waited until anything was broken and they did their due diligence with Dave Majewski and his team and DLZ to make sure that they did not wait until things were broken. Mr. Lentsch stated they had a five-year rate plan that was based upon both the audit and looking at the operational costs as well as the infrastructure costs. Mr. Lentsch stated while nobody liked utility rate increases, what they were proposing was a disciplined, measured, stair-stepped approach designed specifically to avoid the kind of massive shock increases many communities had faced when they delayed action too long. Mr. Lentsch stated even with the proposed plan, Mishawaka Utilities remained among the most affordable composite utility provider in the state of Indiana. Mr. Lentsch stated in this region they were the lowest utility provider and they were in the lowest quartile in terms of most affordable. Mr. Lentsch stated just being affordable is not the only thing that matters, but it was about being reliable as well and they tried to balance that all together. Mr. Lentsch stated it mattered, because Mishawaka Utilities was not an investor-owned utility, they were a nonprofit municipal utility and they did not exist to generate profits for shareholders, they existed to provide safe, reliable, and affordable utility service to the community while responsibly reinvesting in the infrastructure residents depended on every day. Mr. Lentsch stated at the same time they were not avoiding affordability concerns and that evening the Council was going to be considering the Mishawaka utility rate assistance plan. Mr. Lentsch stated it was a targeted sustainable program designed to help vulnerable residents who truly needed assistance which reflected balance, compassion, and responsible governance. Mr. Lentsch stated Mishawaka had always succeeded when leadership worked together and they were blessed to be able to work alongside each other in Mishawaka. Mr. Lentsch stated he believed they had worked together throughout the past years to find not just the best rate, but what was going to be affordable yet served the purpose. Mr. Lentsch stated when the mayor, his administration, utilities, and the Common Council collaborated progress was not just possible, it was expected. Mr. Lentsch stated collaboration led to action and action delivered results and that evening was another one of those moments. Mr. Lentsch stated it was not about politics; it was about protecting the long-term future of the community. Mr. Lentsch stated Mishawaka had always prided itself on planning ahead rather than falling behind and that was the Mishawaka way. Mr. Lentsch asked for the Council's support in continuing that tradition.

Jeff Rowe, Baker Tilly, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06**. Mr. Rowe stated he wanted to provide additional testimony and context behind the rate plan that was being discussed and considered that evening. Mr. Rowe stated the city went through a very in-depth comprehensive process to develop a rate structure and a rate plan that accomplished three goals in mind. Mr. Rowe stated the first goal was providing a rate structure that was sufficient for the

utility to meet its obligations. Mr. Rowe stated those obligations included operation and maintenance expenses, debt service associated with the funding of capital improvements, both outstanding and proposed bonds, cash funded capital needs of the utility, and funding payment in lieu of property taxes to help support the city as it navigated its way through the effects and impacts of SB1. Mr. Rowe stated the second goal was developing a rate structure that was affordable and the rate plan that was before the Council accomplished that in two ways with the water utility having some of the lowest rates, if not the lowest rates amongst its peers and within the state of Indiana and in addition to that, the rate assistance program that helped those most heavily impacted individuals or households in the community from an affordability standpoint and add an additional 5% credit to the total utility bill. Mr. Rowe stated thirdly, to develop a plan that was sustainable over the long-haul and that was because the city had looked at the next twenty years by doing a very in-depth asset management plan that looked at what those various needs would be and those replacement needs going forward over that twenty-year period. Mr. Rowe stated in terms of the rates, the comprehensive rate plan proposed a five-year rate phase-in with the average increase to the average monthly bill to be about \$2.25. Mr. Rowe stated the current water bill was \$33.95, so that rate would go up if the plan was eventually adopted to between \$2 and \$2.54 on a monthly basis for that five-year period. As Mr. Rowe stated for context, they may recall the sewer rate increase that was implemented was an average of about \$2.45 per month and going back even further, the electric increase was roughly \$4.50 on average increase over a five-year period. Mr. Rowe stated this rate structure was actually lower than some of the other increases that the city had experienced. Mr. Rowe stated looking at the water portion of the bill, right now the City of Mishawaka had of the nine peers that they identified, the fourth lowest water utility rate with the average being about \$33.95 compared to the lowest which was about \$16.95 and then the highest, which was \$58.99. Mr. Rowe stated in terms of the statewide average, the statewide average was \$39.52, so even when looking at the first phase increase that would go into effect if the rates were adopted, it would still be quite a bit below the statewide average. Mr. Rowe stated if they were to look at the utility bill as a whole when adding all of the other utilities to it, the city had the lowest amongst its peers. Mr. Rowe stated at that time the average residential customer would pay a total bill of about \$228 compared to the highest of its peers, which paid about \$290. Mr. Rowe stated this rate structure had affordability at the front of it and even with the increase it would still provide rates that were very affordable across the state of Indiana and amongst the peers of the city.

Mr. Carroll stated they had more of an inside look at the due diligence that went on Baker Tilly's end and Mr. Lentsch spoke about a little more in the cities and asked if he could give them a brief overview of the process that they all had to go through and what they were considering when they were coming up with the proposals for them. Mr. Rowe stated they always started by looking back, so they looked at what the historical trends from a financial perspective had been and what the trends in revenues were, what the trends were in operating expenses, and they were looking at all the cap cost categories. Mr. Rowe stated they were looking at the operation and maintenance costs, debt service requirements, and any other obligations that came along with issuance of debt, and then also the capital improvement needs, which was one of the higher drivers of any kind of rate adjustment. Mr. Rowe stated after looking at the last few years, from

there they used that as their baseline projecting forward and using information that was provided by management and also by looking at pro forma estimates based on what they anticipated and what the city anticipated changing going forward. Mr. Rowe stated they looked at all of that and developed what the annual revenue requirements were for the utility and then they went back into the rate increases that would be needed to meet the annual revenue requirements going forward. Mr. Rowe stated after that, they started looking at whether the rates were affordable and comparisons to other communities and then finally arrived at the rate structure that was being proposed. Mr. Carroll asked how long the process was from start to finish to cover all of that. Mr. Rowe stated it had been close to a year since they started, and it had been a good long in-depth process. Mr. Carroll asked for all who were listening or watching if they did look at all of the alternatives and the requirements for this and recommended what in his opinion was the best option. Mr. Rowe stated they did and they looked at various scenarios and a lot of the scenarios revolved around how they funded capital needs going forward, so they looked at how much the utility could afford to pay out of cash on hand or a pay go basis versus bonding. Mr. Rowe stated they also looked at various bond structures, as well as accelerated principal payments or delayed principal payments in trying to come back to a rate structure that minimized the overall increase but also provided frequent consistent increases over time. Mr. Rowe stated they looked at different scenarios around how they would fund the capital needs to eventually arrive at a point where they felt good about the amount of debt that was being proposed to be issued and funded through debt versus on a pay go basis. Mr. Carroll thanked Mr. Rowe.

Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated the thoughts and information Mr. Rowe shared that evening as well as the work he and Baker Tilly had done throughout the year-long process to continue to support their utilities. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he talked for comparison purposes about the flat dollar increase and how that compared to their previous sewer rate increases and he believed Mr. Rowe mentioned the electric increase that the Council approved some time ago. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated the flat dollar amount of what was being proposed that evening was much less than either the sewer rate increase or the electric rate increase that had already been approved and asked if that was correct. Mr. Rowe stated that was correct. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated with regard to percentages, different people processed information in different ways. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if they were going to assign a percentage to the increase, what would that be over the course of the five-year proposal. Mr. Rowe stated it would come out to about 5.8% per year over that five-year period. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked Mr. Rowe if he would agree with him that with regard to both the sewer rate increase that was previously approved as well as the electric rate increase that was approved, those were approved at a 3.75% increase and asked if that was accurate. Mr. Rowe stated yes and even though he did not have that exact percentage in front of him, that was pretty close to what the percentage was. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated one of the logical questions someone would ask was if they did 3.75% for sewer and they did 3.75% for electric, why is this percentage so much higher. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he believed that was a logical question and he sensed that Mr. Rowe agreed with him and asked if it was in fact the case that the starting point for the water rate increase was so much lower that even a lesser dollar impact generated a higher percentage increase. Mr. Rowe stated that was correct and the dollar amount that the percentage was being applied to was much less than the dollar amount that was being

applied under the lower percentage for electric and sewer. Mr. Rowe stated for example, the sewer bill original rate was \$60.73, and the electric bill was \$112.35, so when you applied the smaller percentage, it actually came out to have a higher monthly dollar rate impact. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if someone else would be talking about the significantly large capital investments that would be generated by the rate increase and in particular the investment that they would make in the Virgil Street plant. Mr. Rowe stated in terms of the capital needs that the utility was facing, President Hixenbaugh mentioned the Virgil project which was estimated to be about \$30 million which was a significant component of the capital plan. Mr. Rowe stated overall over the next five years, the city anticipated spending about \$43 million on total capital needs and a large portion of that, about \$38 million, was anticipated to be bond funded so those costs would be spread over the next twenty years or more. Mr. Rowe stated \$5.3 million would be funded on a pay go basis or through cash on hand. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated if he understood the proposal correctly, the proposed rate increase would also allow utilities to generate a capital reserve that would be available for future expenses and asked if that was accurate. Mr. Rowe stated that was correct and as part of the capital plan, what they also looked at was projecting out what the individual funds would be or the cash reserve setting in each fund and so with the improvement fund that was established and being used, those dollars that were in the improvement fund were specifically to be used for future capital needs. Mr. Rowe stated when they were establishing the comprehensive rate plan, they looked at based on the rate increases and the spending plan, how much would the utility be able to maintain best practice which was to keep at least one year's worth of capital improvement needs in reserve, so that the city had that money there when they started the year and this plan did that. Mr. Rowe stated the plan maintained the capital reserve within improvement fund that was sufficient to cover the annual average capital needs of the utility. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked in Mr. Rowe's professional experience, what happened to a municipal utility that did not have a cash reserve fund available to deal with not just the day-to-day expenses of the utility, but those unexpected expenses that everybody in the world was subject to, particularly a multi-million municipal utility. Mr. Rowe stated generally what happened if reserves were insufficient was that the utility had to look at the civil side, for example, what other funds the city had that the utility could tap into in an emergency event because they knew that that could cause issues with other departments within the city. Mr. Rowe stated it could also trigger an emergency rate increase and a need for a rate increase that might be unexpected and larger than you would like to see, especially if it was a one-off. Mr. Rowe stated a city could also be in a position where it had to access capital through the bond market fairly quickly to take on the emergency needs. Mr. Rowe stated at the end of the day, it ended up being more expensive generally whenever you ran into an emergency situation like that and you did not have sufficient cash within the utility to absorb those emergency needs. Mr. Hixenbaugh asked if one of the reasons why it would be more expensive was that it would cost the municipal utility more to go to the open market to borrow money at a higher rate rather than gradually creating a cash reserve that at the end of the day allowed them to save money in those emergency circumstances. Mr. Rowe stated that was correct and the cost of borrowing and the interest costs associated with it and the rate shock that customers experienced if you had to do a significant bond issuance, you had rates in place to support that bond so you had to have a

rate adoption prior to the bonding. Mr. Rowe stated he thought there certainly was a financial cost but there was also a customer trust cost as well. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked Mr. Rowe.

Mr. Carroll stated in the meetings that they had with Mr. Rowe's group, he spoke specifically on why this particular rate would save them on bonds and have those ratios. Mr. Carroll asked if Mr. Rowe could give a brief summary and why they would not go more one way or the other. Mr. Rowe stated maintaining a strong fiscal policy and strong financial metrics helped keep costs down going forward whenever you were going out to the bond market to fund capital projects and the reason for that was if you were going to the open market to issue bonds, just like any other stock or bond you had a prospectus and those potential buyers looked at the strength of issuer and as part of that process, they also went through the process of getting a bond rating. Mr. Rowe stated it was important that the utility maintained strong financial metrics that supported a strong bond rating as a strong bond rating resulted in a lower interest rate and lower overall interest cost over time. Mr. Rowe stated things like bond coverage played a role in that and whenever the city issued debt or bonds, a potential buyer always looked at the revenue stream coming in and always wanted to see that say for every dollar of debt, the utility would be generating at least \$1.25 for example so that you had some cushion there. Mr. Rowe stated debt coverage was one of the metrics that were looked at and the financial plan proposed that evening provided for strong debt service coverage in the event that the city needed to go out and issue utility revenue bonds. Mr. Rowe stated the strength of cash position was also important, so demonstrating that the city had policies and good cash reserve policies in place to maintain not only those minimum reserves, but also best industry practices like a capital improvement fund. Mr. Rowe stated there were lots of different metrics, but at the end of the day it came down to what your rate structure was and if it were providing revenues to support those metrics that would also bring it a strong bond rating. Mr. Carroll asked in Mr. Rowe's opinion if they did not act on this or if they asked for a smaller rate increase, that that could cost the city more through not being as competitive in the bond market. Mr. Rowe stated it could.

Dave Majewski, Division Manager of the Mishawaka Utilities Water Department, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06**. Mr. Majewski stated Jeff spoke very eloquently about the project and the plan and he wanted to express his sincere gratitude for the due diligence of the Council as they had gone through the process. Mr. Majewski stated he understood rate adjustments were never an easy topic, albeit necessary, and as their partner oversaw the improvements, they had done them a lot in the last ten years together. Mr. Majewski stated he was grateful for their support and dedication in keeping Mishawaka Utilities strong. Mr. Majewski stated the one large piece of the puzzle that remained was the very heart of their water system which would keep their water system robust and healthy for generations to come was the Virgil Water Treatment Plant which was their largest plan and could serve any location in the city, benefiting all of their citizens. Mr. Majewski stated it ran 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. Mr. Majewski stated as they knew, the filtration system was at end of life after 60 years and they had a meeting with the engineer that day from WesTech Filters who was intimately knowledgeable with this particular filter system and he did not understand how the filter system was still working and he was glad it was still working but was curious what would

happen to it in the future and that was why they were there that evening. Mr. Majewski stated there was a serious need and after running for 60 years, it was time for a makeover. Mr. Majewski stated he would be happy to answer any questions and representatives from DLZ were also present if any technical questions came up and they could speak more about that. Mr. Majewski stated the improvements they had made over the last few years by expanding the tank one site to five million gallons, adding the Juday Creek Plant now gave them the ability to do this much needed renovation. Mr. Majewski stated please know their thoughtful and important questions were much appreciated and he was proud of the Princess City and the work they had accomplished with their support, and he asked again for their support in this rate plan that was vital for the citizens of Mishawaka and the health of the water utility moving forward.

Mr. Carroll asked Mr. Majewski if the Council were to say they were not going to use the Virgil plant anymore as it was at end of life, if he could talk about the risk posed to the community if they were not to follow through on this. Mr. Majewski stated they could run into situations where if there was a main break or a hot summer day, they would have their two other plants, but they could get into a situation if that lasted indefinitely. Mr. Majewski stated they would do their best to get it back online, but it would have negative impact on their customers not having that treatment plant. Mr. Carroll thanked Mr. Majewski.

Mrs. Voelker stated one of the things she wanted to talk about was the process and she was very impressed with the financial analysis that went into this and she knew Jeff answered a lot of questions from her and she really appreciated that, but she was also really happy about the 20-year capital improvement plan that went into this. Mrs. Voelker stated she wanted to understand how that came about and asked, going forward with a 20-year capital improvement plan if they would be able to continue to roll that plan so that you always had a 20-year plan in place. Mrs. Voelker stated when you were working with a water treatment filter system that was 60 years old, one of the things she thought about was why they waited for 60 years to fix it at end of life. Mrs. Voelker stated she was really interested in moving forward if they continued this capital improvement plan and updating it so that they did not get their equipment to the point where it was at end of life and in a dire situation. Mr. Majewski stated they were always looking ahead and the capital improvement plan was updated every five years and they looked at the needs and rolled that in there. Mr. Majewski stated 23 years ago, Virgil had a cursory and a lot of improvements were made at that time. Mr. Majewski stated the filters were looked at, some improvements were made, and they were able to get 23 more years out of the filters, so they were looking at that back then. Mr. Majewski stated, for instance, going back to Juday Creek, which was on the planning table for 10 to 15 years. Mr. Majewski stated Virgil was on their radar, but they could never do it because they never had that ability to take the treatment plant down and now, they had that ability to do that with Juday Creek. Mr. Majewski stated there were times when they would go to bed at night and wonder if they were going to have enough water in the morning. Mr. Majewski stated they had surpassed that over the last 20 years with all of the improvements they made with their system, so they did monitor that in their assessment and that was constantly looked at. Mr. Majewski stated when they said 60 years, they squeezed a lot of life out of the filters, but improvements had been made over the years to those. Mrs. Voelker

stated her understanding when they were doing the tour was that with the new tank, they would be able to shut down half of Virgil at a time to make improvements and asked if she remembered that correctly. Mr. Majewski stated yes, that would be the plan and there would be some shutdowns, but the plan would be to try to keep half of the plant online through improvement. Mr. Majewski stated there were eight filter cells and they would take four filter cells down, work on those, and then they would approach the other four filter cells. Mrs. Voelker thanked Mr. Majewski.

Mrs. Hazen asked if they did vote to pass the plan tonight when the billing cycle would be and if it would be in June or July when it took effect. Mr. Majewski stated it would take effect July 1st.

Nancy Duncan, 2216 Ridge Place Mishawaka, IN 46544, spoke in opposition to **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06**. Mrs. Duncan stated as candidate for Penn Township Trustee, she was focused on the residents of Penn and Mishawaka and especially those who were struggling. Mrs. Duncan stated the information had come out recently that across United States, seniors were at an alarming rate slipping below the poverty line and in their area, they had families sending kids to school where 40% to 45% of the kids qualified for reduced rate lunches or free lunches and there were not just a few of their residents who were going to be surprised to learn that this was not really about the rates. Mrs. Duncan stated she assured them, when they got that white envelope with Mishawaka Utilities on it and they opened it, it was about the rates, and they were going to think 25% rate increase was too much. Mrs. Duncan stated as they knew, they were in a time of inflation and prices of everything were going up as well as other utilities and people were worrying about it. Mrs. Duncan stated food was going up, gas was shooting up, and there was no reason to believe that this trend was going to turn around anytime soon and 25% was too much. Mrs. Duncan stated the argument that families who were truly needy may be able to get assistance, that whole idea of truly needy put additional burden on some of their most burdened residents already. Mrs. Duncan stated she lived in Blair Hills which was considered by a lot of people to be a pretty comfortable neighborhood and yet she listened to the young families around her talking about affordability and impossible choices. Mrs. Duncan stated she did not have a crystal ball, but she did think that by November of the following year, if they passed this rate increase, their opponents would not fail to think it was worth mentioning that the Council voted for it. Mrs. Duncan asked the Council not to pass the ordinance and 25% for many of their residents was too much.

Mr. Mammolenti thanked those that put several hours into the proposed rate plan, and he knew Mr. Lentsch had been kind enough to host a neighborhood meeting and inform their residents and take questions from them as well. Mr. Mammolenti stated the Mayor and Mr. Majewski and all of those involved knew as they mentioned that this was not easy but he thought that it was his responsibility as well as his colleagues and it would be easy to just kick this down the road but they were looking to the future of the residents and their children and the people to come. Mr. Mammolenti stated it was their responsibility to make sure that they took the proper steps to ensure safe, clean drinking water for their residents for years to come. Mr. Mammolenti thanked

everyone for their efforts and thanked his colleagues for attending all of the meetings and tours and making a wise decision.

Mr. Carroll echoed Mr. Mammolenti's thanks to everybody involved and stated he knew it was a lengthy process of due diligence and a lot of considerations went into that. Mr. Carroll stated any time they looked at anything like this, he always asked himself two questions. Mr. Carroll stated first off, he asked what the consequences were if they did nothing and taking one of their three plants offline and exposing Mishawaka residents to that risk seemed quite unacceptable to him. Mr. Carroll stated the second thing was asking who would pay for it. Mr. Carroll stated if they were going to say no, then they were saying somebody else was going to pay for it because they did not want to. Mr. Carroll stated he did not think that was a responsible position that he could in good conscience put towards his kids, grandkids, and others to say that was not his job and it was the future generation's job to fix it later. Mr. Carroll stated he thought this was a good investment in the community and when he went door to door, he talked about investing in their community. Mr. Carroll stated he could not think of a better investment in their community than making sure that they had clean drinking water at an affordable price that many people had spent many hours making sure they had the least impact on their community as possible. Mr. Carroll thanked everyone for their effort in doing that and fulfilling all of those goals. Mr. Carroll stated he would be voting in favor of this.

Mr. Hixenbaugh echoed his colleagues and stated he appreciated the interactive process that they had over the course of the past year with the administration, but he also wanted to acknowledge the significant time that the Council put into the process as well. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated it was not just showing up at a couple of meetings, including an informational meeting, and voting on it, there had been a number of meetings, small and large in scope, that they had including a tour of the Virgil Street plant. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he really wished everybody, particularly those who had a concern about the proposed rate, had an opportunity to do that because it continued to get the job done today but it was almost despite itself because of what they had in place and as Mr. Majewski had alluded to, they had been fortunate to be able to far surpass the usable life of those filters that were a critical component to their largest water treatment plant, so some reinvestment in that plant was certainly warranted. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated with regard to the rate increases that had been proposed across the utilities, not too long when he first joined the Council and his friend and colleague Mayor Wood joined the Council, Mishawaka's practice was to defer necessary investments in their municipal utilities for convenience and personal comfort and other reasons until they just could not defer it any longer and it got to be not a 3.75% increase, not a 4% or 5% but they had some double digit increases that they were looking at and the Council and Councils before them had consistently encouraged the administration to look at more modest, regular increases rather than to defer until they got to a 10%, 15%, 20% expensive bill that came due and that was what happened when you deferred doing the right thing. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated it was easy enough to pander to the public, whether you were an elected official or a candidate, and talk about doing nothing. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated that was an extremely easy thing to do and he also found that to be very selfish to put your own personal interests against what you believed was best for the community was the textbook definition of

being selfish. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he absolutely rejected the suggestion that himself or any of the other council members sitting up on the dais would cast a vote based upon what it would do to their future electoral prospects. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated that was not really insulting to them, but it was insulting to the residents of Mishawaka to think they were so easily swayed by that inauthentic pandering on an issue that was of such importance. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated the bill always came due and as they heard that evening and on prior occasions leading up to the vote that evening, that bill was not going to be the same bill that it was that day. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated history told them that it was going to be a much more expensive bill if they did not do the right thing that evening. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he, like everybody else who resided in the community, was not overly enthused about raising rates on anyone who lived in Mishawaka, but it was the right thing to do and they took an obligation each time they were elected to do what was in the best interest of the community, not what was in the best interest of themselves and in his opinion, voting in favor of the proposed ordinance in front of them that evening was what was best for Mishawaka and he was proud to support it as well.

Question was called for at 7:07PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-06 Motion passed by majority roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8 No = 0).**

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. 5984.**

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-15

AN ORDINANCE ANNEXING CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY TO THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AND PROVIDING ZONING CLASSIFICATION THEREFORE

Annex and Rezone to R-1 Single-Family Residential – 13511 E. 6th Street Vote Only

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

Question was called for at 7:09PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-15 Motion passed by majority roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8 No = 0).**

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. 5985.**

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-16

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.

PUD Amendment to allow Portable Storage Shed and Metal Garage/Carport Sales – 801 W. Douglas Road

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

Bo Kirby, representing Sheds Direct, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-16**. Mr. Kirby thanked the Council for voting on this and hearing it. Mr. Kirby stated each of the council members were provided with a site plan and he was sure they got to review it and their goal when they came into any city was to selfishly be the nicest shed dealership or corporate dealership in the city they were coming into. Mr. Kirby stated they were not a company who dropped off sheds or carports just randomly in any given field you could find and did not have an employee there. Mr. Kirby stated they had heard all about these places, having signs that just asked people to call them and that was not Sheds Direct. Mr. Kirby stated they set their properties up for success whether it be the inventory being set exactly how the site plan showed or something else similar to that. Mr. Kirby stated they had an employee here six days a week, so it would be managed like a true business, and it would be set up to not be an eyesore to the community. Mr. Kirby stated it would be a pleasure to be there, and it would be a proud spot for the community they felt.

Mrs. Voelker asked if he could tell her where Sheds Direct corporate headquarters was located. Mr. Kirby stated they were found in 2011 and his older brother actually started Sheds Direct in 2011 and they were based in Granite Falls, North Carolina and their sheds for this location would be built in Ligonier, Indiana. Mrs. Voelker stated when she was looking at the area, it made her think that they would choose to locate their business in that location because of the mobile home park and that was a good market for them, because they would need additional storage. Mrs. Voelker asked how they chose the location. Mr. Kirby stated there were multiple factors, with the first being the traffic count on the road there at West Douglas being super high and they just never found anything in South Bend that interested them and they randomly found this location one day. Mr. Kirby stated they had some representatives up there looking for actual dealerships, not the corporate lot model that this one would be, and they came across the location in question, and it matched everything they were looking for. Mr. Kirby stated they looked for a fully paved lot with an existing office so that their customers were not walking in grass or gravel or anything like that. Mr. Kirby stated initially when they looked for new locations, they either looked for a previous new car dealership or used car dealership, old mobile home sales lots, and things like that that matched the same used that they would need. Mrs. Voelker welcomed them to

Mishawaka and stated they were glad to have them. Mrs. Voelker asked from a timing standpoint if there were improvements that they would need to make in order to set their business up and if this was approved that evening, what their timing was. Mr. Kirby stated they would look to act immediately as they had to have contractors lined up to do the work for them that was needed and on the site plan, the main work that they needed to do to match the zoning specifications would be the tree and shrub to the left and the bottom of the site plan at the west and south ends of the properties had bushes as well as arborvitaes and red maples. Mr. Kirby stated up front there were some existing trees that gave them a little bit of freedom up there, but they still had a few more bushes and trees up there as well. Mr. Kirby stated there was not much work that had to be done at the office if anything at all. Mrs. Voelker thanked Mr. Kirby.

Mr. Mammolenti thanked Mr. Kirby for his presentation and asked how many sheds they planned to have on site. Mr. Kirby stated in the beginning it would be between 25 and 30 and then what they would do from there, depending on the property, they could have more on site much like the property in question. Mr. Kirby stated they liked to stick to the site plan though and usually 25 to 30 was a good mixture, but if the sales did warrant an increase in inventory, they could very well increase that as long as they could fit those in the current site plan model.

Question was called for at 7:15PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-16 Motion passed by majority roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8 No = 0).**

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. 5986.**

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-17

AN ORDINANCE ANNEXING CONTIGUOUS TERRITORY TO THE CITY OF MISHAWAKA, INDIANA, AND PROVIDING ZONING CLASSIFICATION THEREFORE AND 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.

**Annex and Rezone to R-3 Multi-Family Residential Housing and Restaurant – Former Grocery Store – 1622, 1628, 1640, and 1706 E. McKinley Avenue
Vote Only**

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

Question was called for at 7:17PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-17 Motion passed by majority roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8 No = 0).**

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. 5987.**

NEW BUSINESS

PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-20

AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE MISHAWAKA UTILITY RATE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Matthew Lentsch, Executive Director of Development and Governmental Affairs for the City of Mishawaka, spoke in favor of **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-20**. Mr. Lentsch thanked the Council for doing the work as councilmen and councilwomen and that meant to him that they were willing to put in the time, the energy, and the effort to understand what the facts were and what the reality was related to utilities. Mr. Lentsch stated he knew some of what they did and all of the goof work that they did on behalf of Mishawaka. Mr. Lentsch stated they had gone through an exhaustive process over about three and a half years for electric rates, wastewater rates, and now sewer rates. Mr. Lentsch stated he did a little work with candidates and one of the questions he always asked them was why they were getting into running for office and if their answer was ever wanting to be popular or wanting power, he would probe a little bit but if their answer was ever they wanted to always do what was convenient, he would never ever back a candidate like that. Mr. Lentsch stated that was not who their Council was and that was not who they were as the City of Mishawaka. Mr. Lentsch asked for their support of the proposed Mishawaka Utilities Rate Assistance Program. Mr. Lentsch stated as they discussed the rate increase for water, they also discussed how they could provide some assistance and do it in a way that would not hurt them going forward and what they came up with was what he believed to be a very sensible plan that really looked at how they could round off the curve for those folks who were most in need. Mr. Lentsch stated that was a challenge they took on, but he did not think that they could have made the water rate increase unless they had this. Mr. Lentsch stated they knew that infrastructure investment was necessary, and they also knew some residents struggled financially. Mr. Lentsch stated the rate payer assistance fund was designed to responsibly address both. Mr. Lentsch stated the program was not excessive and it was not unsustainable or open-ended. Mr. Lentsch stated it was intentionally structured to be targeted, verified, modest, and financially responsible. Mr. Lentsch stated the proposal of 5% assistance would only apply to qualified residents who were already verified through Indiana's energy assistance program administered by Rural Services. Mr. Lentsch stated they would verify to make sure that all of their ratepayers who were income qualified and independently renewed. Mr. Lentsch stated this was not a giveaway program and was not an unlimited subsidy. Mr. Lentsch stated this was not an attempt to avoid the realities of infrastructure investment, it was a measured assistance program designed to help vulnerable residents while still protecting the long-term financial viability and integrity of Mishawaka Utilities. Mr. Lentsch stated Mishawaka Utilities was a nonprofit municipal utility and they were a \$90 million nonprofit municipal

utility, but nonprofit did not mean that they operated without margins. Mr. Lentsch stated they still must maintain infrastructure, have the dollars to replace aging systems, comply with regulations, provide reliable service, and protect long-term financial sustainability. Mr. Lentsch stated if they failed to do that, they would fail everyone, including the very residents, that they were trying to help. Mr. Lentsch stated the ratepayer assistance program reflected balance and it said to the community that they would continue investing responsibly in critical infrastructure but also recognize that affordability mattered. Mr. Lentsch stated he believed it also sent a message about who they were as Mishawaka and as a community. Mr. Lentsch stated the ratepayer assistance fund did not solve every challenge but was a meaningful and responsible step that reflected the values of Mishawaka and the mission of their municipal utility system. Mr. Lentsch stated most importantly, while Mishawaka was making these investments and offering assistance, Mishawaka Utilities continued to provide some of the best overall utility value and affordability in the state of Indiana. Mr. Lentsch stated this was the result of decades of disciplined planning, municipal ownership, responsible governance, and local leadership. Mr. Lentsch respectfully asked for the Council's support of the ratepayer assistance program as part of a balanced approach that protected their residents, their infrastructure, and the long-term future of Mishawaka Utilities.

Mr. Violi thanked Mr. Lentsch for all of the work he had done, and he knew he put a lot of time into this and appreciated it. Mr. Violi asked for clarification that the 5% was on the water, electric, and wastewater fees that they charged per month for the entire year and if that was correct. Mr. Lentsch stated it was not on the fees charged or the taxes and it was only on the base rate and usage of water, wastewater, and electric. Mr. Violi stated unlike the current program that he noted with Real Services, which was only a five-month plan and asked if that was correct. Mr. Lentsch stated it was during the winter months, and it was for electric only. Mr. Violi stated he believed Mr. Lentsch had said that there were approximately 1,800 residents that had applied for the plan that was already in place and asked if they would have anybody automatically added onto the plan July 1st. Mr. Lentsch stated yes, they would and all the residents that applied for energy assistance through Real Services, all of those folks whose income was verified and they meet the criteria for energy assistance, they would be automatically qualified to receive the 5% discount as of July 1st. Mr. Violi asked when new customers would be able to apply. Mr. Lentsch stated they started in August and it went through November and Real Services had that expertise. Mr. Lentsch stated they were not going to be reinventing the wheel, nor should they and he had talked with Real Services, and they had the bandwidth to manage this, so it would require folks to go directly to Real Services and apply for assistance. Mr. Lentsch stated 100% of the people that were ratepayers in Mishawaka would allow them to be qualified with their qualification for the EAP.

Ms. Hahn asked when Mr. Lentsch said go to Real Services if that meant a physical visit or a phone call or a website visit for people who did not know how to enroll. Mr. Lentsch stated a lot of it could be done online, he did not know if that were the case for their entire process, but people could go to Real Services. Mr. Lentsch stated he knew the majority of the information was online and he was not sure if the application could be done 100% online, but a majority of it

could be. Ms. Hahn asked if Real Services had a physical office. Mr. Lentsch stated yes, they did.

Mrs. Voelker stated she had a supposition that if and when the old city hall building came to life that Real Services was supposed to be housed in city hall, so there was potential for it to become easier. Mrs. Voelker stated she had experience with a family member with Real Services and there was information for the application online, but it was certainly verified by a human. Mrs. Voelker asked if she were to suddenly qualify in April for the energy assistance program if she would have the ability to apply in April for the program. Mr. Lentsch stated he did not know but their application did start in August and he did not know when it ended but they would push people to Real Services starting in August until they were done with the EAP application. Mr. Lentsch stated they were hoping they could qualify people so they could take advantage of it come the 1st of the year but if there was a situation where folks were in need of a discount and something happened, that was one of the things that they were discussing to figure out how to navigate that outside of the time period and one of the things was working with Real Services and not trying to bring that in-house. Mr. Lentsch stated they were going to kick this off even though they would not be able to answer 100% of the questions so that 1,800 people who qualified for the EAP could get qualified as of July 1st to receive the discount and then as they looked at this and worked with Real Services, they wanted to stay within the timeframes they had for the most part but they would look beyond that so they had an ability to qualify those who needed it. Mrs. Voelker asked if this was approved for him and Real Services to follow up with her and the rest of the Council, because she thought it was really important if they had a 12-month program to be able to get into the program within that window. Mr. Lentsch stated they would continuously inform their ratepayers not just about increases in the rates but also about the ability to get discounts and there were discounts afforded to them for trash and recycling and this was a first of its type for Mishawaka and he thought it was a great and important thing for them to do. Mr. Lentsch stated he would make sure he got back to Mrs. Voelker with the answers. Mrs. Voelker stated she understood this was a discount and they did not have pot of money that they were going to be paying into it and asked if they had the ability as a city to generate funding through grants either public or private to help fund the program or if they were looking into that. Mr. Lentsch stated they would look into that and they would have an opportunity like they did with other nonprofits to round up. Mr. Lentsch stated initially, the answer was that the program would be supported within the overall financial structure of Mishawaka Utilities and the cost they were estimating at that point based upon people who qualified that were ratepayers and lived within the city limits was about \$105,000 a year and Mishawaka Utilities would take that on. Mr. Lentsch stated because the Ratepayer Assistance Program was limited and capped at 5% assistance level, the overall financial impact was manageable within Utilities' broader operational framework. Mr. Leach stated they would look into other grants and take contributions to help with it, but they had talked to Baker Tilly and looked at not just the structure of the program, but they looked at what was affordable and this was definitely affordable. Mr. Lentsch stated they would look at other ways to raise money and he had done this for 30 years for nonprofits and they would look at the dollars that were available to help their residents. Mrs. Voelker thanked Mr. Lentsch.

Mrs. Hazen thanked Mr. Lentsch for putting up with all of her questions because she had a lot and asked as of July 1st, they already had the list of people that qualified with Real Services and

how they got that list. Mr. Lentsch stated Real Services notified them and as they would fill out applications and around November 1st, they received a list of who qualified and now they would send some people that they trained and there would be a website they would go on and see the residents who qualified and got dollars pledged to their account. Mrs. Hazen asked if, as of July 1st, there would be people who took advantage of the winter account and automatically those names they currently had would get the 5% discount. Mr. Lentsch stated that was correct. Mrs. Hazen asked how they would tell them they were getting the discount. Mr. Lentsch stated it would be in the communicator that they were going to give the discount and it would be online. Mrs. Hazen asked if they would be telling the specific person as of July 1st if they were receiving the discount whether that be on their bill or otherwise. Mr. Lentsch stated they would figure out a way to put it on their statement that they were receiving it and there would be a percentage that did not get a written statement who would receive an email, and he would do his best to make sure they were notified. Mrs. Hazen stated her biggest concern was the same as Mrs. Voelker's as it was not always during the winter months however she put that to rest after she spoke with Mr. Lentsch and she talked to Ingrid at Real Services and she mentioned the fact that even though they were not helping people in the summer months, people could turn to the Penn Township Trustee office, so that was where that gap was filled in her mind. Mrs. Hazen stated that gave her peace of mind and she knew it was so new and they were still adjusting it since it was a trial. Mr. Lentsch thanked them all for their questions and stated it was a partnership to put this together and it did not happen overnight and many of the council members talked to them about the importance of it and how it was going to be structured and they worked with Baker Tilly, and this was a place to start. Mr. Lentsch stated they did not have all of the answers related to their questions, but he believed this was the most conservative way and best, most modest, target, income qualified, and financially sustainable way for now way to help their residents.

Mr. Violi asked if at the end of the year, he could give the Council a report on the status of how it was going and feedback on the program to where they had a synopsis to read. Mr. Lentsch stated this was the first time that he knew of that Mishawaka Utilities did anything like this, but he thought it behooved them with the rates going up and with inflation that they at least softened the curve and rounded off the curve of the increases to make this happen. Mr. Lentsch stated he would be glad to come up with a report. Mr. Lentsch stated they could give a report at a council meeting and he would gladly send them emails and information to keep them informed, but there would be bumps, they would adjust, and they were going to do this work.

Mr. Hixenbaugh gave Mr. Lentsch his words of appreciation for the time and effort he had put into this including answering the questions all of the Council and he had been very responsive and provided them with a wealth of information. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated as ready as he would be to approve the plan that evening, Mr. Lentsch hit the nail on the head in saying this was a new venture for them and he they wanted to make sure that not only did they have the answer to their questions, but the community had their questions answered as well because they wanted to make sure they really thought through everything that they needed to. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he was not convinced that they had not done that, but because it was a new venture, he personally would find no shame or shortcoming on any of their parts if they took another beat and tried to work through some of those issues like how they were going to align a 12-month cycle they had with the less than 12-month cycle that Real Services operated under. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he believed there was an answer to that question and he was not sure that he knew that answer that

evening as he sat and would vote on this. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated it very well may be that there were other items like that that a little bit more time would help them with. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he understood that Mr. Lentsch and all of the other parties involved in putting this together had been working on this matter forever and they had ample opportunities to ask questions and that was true, but sometimes the best questions came in that setting and at that time when they were getting ready to cast the vote. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he could vote to support the matter that evening but if there was an interest on the part of his colleagues to take another beat and to wait until their June 1st meeting, he asked if Mr. Lentsch would find that short-term delay in time to be detrimental to the July 1st implementation date. Mr. Lentsch stated as it related to the July 1st implementation, one of the things they wanted to do was kick it off so that it would not coincide with the rate increase for water, so he thought they could what he and other council members had been discussing without delaying it and get the answers that they needed. Mr. Lentsch stated he did not think they were far away from that and they would find the mechanism to make sure that people would be able to apply year-round. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated as long as that was the intent, he felt more comfortable with it and he did not necessarily need to know what the details were, but he appreciated that clarification. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated just to restate the point, during their 12-month cycle, whenever someone became inclined or eligible to apply, they would have the opportunity to apply notwithstanding the fact that Real Services operated under a different program year. Mr. Lentsch stated yes. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he could live with that. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he also would say that some ongoing communication between the Council and the Administration regularly would be important on this matter and because this was so new, some more robust communication would be preferred and taking a look at this at the same time that they received the Mishawaka Municipal Utilities budget was a good point for there to be some information shared with the Council on what type of appetite there had been on the part of the ratepayers to participate in this. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated beyond the 1,800 people cited, he would be interested to know how many more who were not eligible for assistance at that time would become eligible as a result of the approval of the plan. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated aligning that ongoing communication at least during the budget submission cycle would be a good time for the Council to receive an update on the initiative. Mr. Lentsch stated he agreed with that. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated he appreciated the work Mr. Lentsch, Baker Tilly, legal counsel, and everyone else had put into this because it was high time. Mr. Hixenbaugh stated even if they had not taken the steps they had taken to adjust their utility rates, it was high time for them to look at other ways they could support those in their community who needed support. Mr. Hixenbaugh thanked everyone for their efforts.

Question was called for at 7:48PM for **PROPOSED ORDINANCE NO. 2026-20 Motion passed by majority roll call vote (summary: Yes = 8 No = 0).**

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. 5988.**

Ms. Hahn stated with Mr. Emmons' absence, she wanted to invite everybody the 1st District monthly meeting on Thursday May 21st at 7PM at St. Bavo's. Ms. Hahn stated Mayor Dave Wood would be the guest speaker giving his State of the City Address. Ms. Hahn stated West End donuts and refreshments would be provided.

Mr. Mammolenti stated the monthly Twin Branch Neighborhood Watch meeting would be on May 20th at 7PM at Fire Station #4 where Mayor Dave Wood would be giving his State of the City Address for the residents there as he did every year for Mr. Mammolenti's group. Mr. Mammolenti stated if you happened to miss it a couple of weeks ago to come join them and listen to a condensed version or if you were like him, to enjoy hearing it for the second time. Mr. Mammolenti stated he always picked up something new every single time. Mr. Mammolenti stated all were welcome.

ADJOURNMENT 7:49PM

Deborah S. Block /s/
Deborah S. Block, IAMC, MMC, City Clerk

Gregg A. Hixenbaugh /s/
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.