
DATE: Monday, February 23, 2026
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: 400 S. Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801

The City Council of the City of Urbana, Illinois, met in regular session Monday, February 23, 2026, at 7:00 p.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PHYSICALLY PRESENT: DeShawn Williams, Mayor; Darcy Sandefur, City Clerk; CM Maryalice Wu, CM Christopher Evans, CM Shirese Hursey, CM Chaundra Bishop*, CM Grace Wilken, CM James Quisenberry

***CM PRESENT REMOTELY**

ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Bourema Ouedraogo, Vince Gustafson, Mike Cervantes, Zachery Mikalik, Matt Roeschley, Larry Boone, Darius White, Tal Prendergast, Steven Doggett

OTHERS PRESENT: Wendy Edwards, Ward 4 Vacancy Candidate; Verdell Jones III, Ward 4 Vacancy Candidate; Karen James, Ward 4 Vacancy Candidate

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

With a quorum present, Mayor Williams called the meeting of the Urbana City Council to order at 7:00p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

a. 02-02-2026 Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve by CM Wu, seconded by CM Wilken.

Voice Vote:

AYE: Wu, Evans, Hursey, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

NAY: None.

3. Additions to the Agenda

Motion to add a Closed Session regarding Appointment to a Vacancy in a Public Office per 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(3) after Reports of Officers by CM Quisenberry, seconded by CM Wu.

Roll Call Vote:

AYE: Wu, Evans, Hursey, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

NAY: None.

4. Presentations and Public Input

a. Public Input

Dennis Roberts announced a student group will be arriving soon from the Urbana Sister City of Thionville, France in March and suggested the City hosts a welcoming event for the group.

Shared the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) of Urbana has held a study session regarding the future of the Urbana Civic Center and the Champaign Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD)'s plans for development. Noted the need for improvements in communication with the HPC through similar development projects. Expressed support for the Civic Center to be utilized in the development through adaptive reuse as the Illinois State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) had deemed it worthy of being preserved. Stated the City should fix the original issue of the Civic Center's roof leakage and have the MTD utilize the building through adaptive reuse in the development of their new bus-transfer station. *Provided written input materials to the City Clerk.* **Warren Montgomery** hoped to continue building a positive relationship with the City as an event coordinator and DJ to continue hosting events to benefit the community. Requested a meeting and information on how to best host events in Urbana while respecting the City's requirements.

b. Ward 4 Vacancy Candidates

Mayor Williams stated Council was asked to prepare questions for the candidates and the candidates will have a minute to respond to each question. Karen James, Verdell Jones III, and Wendy Edwards answered the following questions:

- i. **Question 1:** What are your opinions on the proposed surveillance oversight Ordinance and what recommendations or questions do you have about it?

Wendy Edwards stated technology involving surveillance and personal data tracking have the potential to improve public safety but requires safety measures on the use of data. Voiced support for implementing public input and transparency measures.

Verdell Jones III stated the intent behind the technology must be considered as well as its actual effectiveness when used. Spoke on how the premise of Automated License Plate Readers in stopping criminal activity is flawed and leads toward establishing a surveillance state that residents of Urbana do not want. Raised concern for how the data will be used by the companies behind the technology.

Karen James voiced support for increasing the amount of surveillance within Urbana across all areas to capture anything that people may miss.

- ii. **Question 2:** What do you think about an Alternative Crisis Response Team in Urbana?

Verdell Jones III voiced support for the concept as a first responder himself. Encouraged an approach that finds a way to protect the safety of the responder and the caller through methods that do not create escalation.

Karen James agreed with Verdell Jones III and supported increasing the number of social workers to aid the first responders. Stated first responders should receive more assistance with their mental health to prevent their work from traumatizing them.

Wendy Edwards stated the social workers could serve to augment police officers and should not replace them as first responders. Stated sworn officers are required for responding to active shootings. Stated social workers could respond to calls regarding unhoused or mentally ill people.

- iii. **Question 3:** What actions should the City take to reduce housing instability including renters facing unsafe conditions, rising rents, or displacement?

Karen James stated landlords must be responsible for the people they rent to and meeting the financial requirements alone should not allow for a renter to be granted housing. Stated landlords should evict and not house renters that commit crimes, respect neighbors, and have self-respect. Stated the community should be able to move on from renters that threaten their personal feeling of safety.

Wendy Edwards voiced support for strengthening accountability measures for landlords to provide livable housing conditions to renters. Noted rent control may be unfeasible in Urbana. Stated there is a need for more houses in Urbana with livable conditions.

Verdell Jones III stated the issue of housing is a national issue and landlords must be held accountable for the inadequate conditions of their rental properties for Urbana's residents. Stated his personal experience as a Firefighter have shown him unacceptable housing conditions being rented. Opposed the ownership of multi-family rentals from non-local companies as they are unable to be held accountable for their actions. Stated the City must ensure renters are being provided livable housing conditions by landlords and businesses.

- iv. **Question 4:** What are your feelings on seeing reparations for African Americans?

Wendy Edwards stated work has already been done toward developing processes for reparations in places such as the City of Evanston. Stated it could be feasible to provide reparations to people in Urbana who have been victim to injustice within Urbana.

Karen James stated no different actions should be taken on the treatment of African Americans as they are equal to white Americans and Mexican Americans as they are all on the same American team.

Verdell Jones III stated reparations cannot come from monetary compensation and the ideal, equitable solution comes from descendants of Africans being provided more opportunities to develop an economy and have a larger ownership of land. Stated the compromise can be found through tax incentives for Black businesses and developing international connections in their work. Noted how African diaspora and African nations are developing their wealth across the world and presents an opportunity for the Black community to materially reconnect with their ancestry.

- v. **Question 5:** Sometimes events nationally and internationally result in public participation and request the Urbana City Council to take action or pass resolution related to those events. How would you balance the need to support the public's need to engage in this circumstance with the need to conduct local business before the Council?

Verdell Jones III stated Council Members are local officials and have a duty to ensure local business continues but have a duty as humans to share a Council perspective on non-local matters.

Wendy Edwards stated national issues such as the ongoing raids from federal agents of Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) should have a Council

response through an Ordinance or Resolution if possible. Stated the community should stand together against what is wrong.

Karen James stated people have the right to free speech and should be protected and supported by the City but Council Members have no obligation to join parades.

- vi. **Question 6:** Serving on City Council means becoming a public figure in Urbana. How do you feel public figures should engage on social media?

Karen James noted the dangers of social media. Stated she applied for the position due to Mayor Williams' positivity and wanting to be in proximity to it.

Verdell Jones III stated public officials have a responsibility in representing their community and hold yourself to a standard where you unify those you represent.

Wendy Edwards stated social media should be engaged with carefully and with intention as any post can be shared across a large group of people.

- vii. **Question 7:** What are some specific actions you think the City should take on Philo Road?

Wendy Edwards stated there are no simple answers for Philo Road, but studying how other cities have approached reviving distressed areas can be a place to start while also keeping in mind the characteristics of Urbana.

Verdell Jones III stated the City should remove corner liquor stores within the neighborhood as it contributes toward the downward mobility of the residents in that community. Stated the City should look to attract businesses that seek to inspire the character of the neighborhood and the residents.

Karen James stated there should be greater concern for the seniors and residents of nursing facilities in that area. Stated the City should better use empty buildings within the area to provide community resources such as a library and create groups that seek to develop community for residents.

- viii. **Question 8:** If you had to list your top three priorities, what would you want to work on and what would those be?

Verdell Jones III stated his top priority is to continue the economic growth of Urbana and bring in revenue for the City without increasing taxes on residents. Stated Urbana has to become more attractive to prospective residents, and it has a unique character in Central Illinois that it can build on. Stated revitalizing the Philo Road area or developing business zones outside of downtown Urbana have the potential to encourage economic growth.

Wendy Edwards stated her focus is on improving quality of life through creating livable conditions for residents in areas such as housing. Stated she would also work on developing fiscal sustainability for City revenue as it poses a challenge with a third of land in Urbana being exempt from property taxes. Stated her third focus would be on addressing aging infrastructure.

Karen James stated her focuses are on police enforcement, maintaining road quality, and improving overall safety felt within your personal home.

- ix. **Question 9:** What do you believe is the City’s mission in regard to the City’s residents?

Karen James stated the City’s mission is in expanding public safety, providing good schools, and home life.

Verdell Jones III stated the City’s mission is in supporting the basic needs people need to be safe, raise a family, attend school, be housed, drink water, and have food. Stated the City also has a responsibility to provide good schools and continuous education. Stated the City also needs to focus on economic growth to ensure everyone is upwardly mobile.

Wendy Edwards stated the City should ensure public safety, livability for residents, justice for residents, and long-term sustainability in both environmental and financial aspects.

Mayor Williams thanked the candidates for their time and stated a decision will be made soon.

5. Council Input and Communications

CM Wilken thanked the applicants for taking their time to answer the questions. Shared support for the potential for renovating existing buildings, when possible, instead of a complete destruction and new development. Encouraged members of the public who wish to learn more about how to move toward addressing issues where police officers are called on gatherings of Black residents when white residents do not receive the same treatment. *CM Quisenberry* thanked the applicants for their engagement and their thoughtful responses. Thanked the Mayor for the application process and how both the City and Council were able to gain a good understanding of the candidates. *CM Wu* corrected her previous statement shared during Council Input and read information from Bill Brown regarding the changes in water billing. Stated the proposed increase is for sanitary services and the proposed increase for water averages at \$14, but for people in the central district with low water usage, the water bill can actually decrease. Shared Matt Roeschley, City Attorney has researched the proposed changes, spoke with the City of Champaign, and concluded to not challenge the changes.

6. Reports of Standing Committees

None.

7. Committee of the Whole (*Council Member James Quisenberry, Ward 7*)

1. Consent Agenda

None.

2. Regular Agenda

- a. **Resolution No. 2026-02-008R:** A Resolution Rescinding Resolution 2025-10-079R and Revoking City Council Authorization to Accept the FY2024 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant – FD

The Resolution rescinds the approval to previous Council authorization for the acceptance of the FY2024 FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) for \$67,814.54 toward the purchase of eight portable radios.

Motion to approve by CM Quisenberry, seconded by CM Wu.

Roll Call Vote:

AYE: Wu, Evans, Hursey, Bishop, Quisenberry

NAY: None.

8. Reports of Special Committees

None.

9. Reports of Officers

a. Surveillance Ordinance

i. Urbana Police Department Updates

Presented by Zachery Mikalik, Deputy Chief of Police and Michael Cervantes, Interim Deputy Chief of Police with Matt Roeschley, City Attorney available for questions. Michael Cervantes stated the presentation focuses on requests for information on specified tools from Council and proposes new definitions that came from discussions with Council. Stated the original list of surveillance tools presented to Council was an expansive list that contained outliers that are rarely used. Spoke on how the Urbana Police Department (UPD) utilizes the technologies Council requested further information on through initially categorizing them by their use as: Biometrics & DNA, Intelligence Sharing, Open Source/Social Media, and Cybersecurity. Noted additional technologies requested that do not fall under these categories will be discussed as well.

Stated CODIS (Combined DNA Index System) is comprised of two databases operated at the state level by the Illinois State Police and national level by the Federal Bureau of Investigation that is used by law enforcement agencies to compare crime-scene DNA profiles with existing DNA profiles during investigations. Shared IAFIS (Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System) is a national database of fingerprint records used to compare fingerprints to identify individuals during investigations and is used daily for investigative work and conducting background checks. Stated the Biometrics & DNA systems have controls at the state and federal level, are regularly audited, and carry criminal penalties for misuse.

Stated EPIC (El Paso Intelligence Center) and Interpol 24/7 are two Intelligence Sharing systems which serve to share information domestically and internationally. Stated EPIC is operated by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and is used for collaboratively sharing information regarding drug trafficking, human smuggling, and other interstate crimes. Stated Interpol 24/7 is a secure

communications network for sharing information on wanted criminals internationally. Stated both systems have access controls and are regulated under federal law.

Stated the UPD uses Open Source & Social Media data from various publicly accessible websites such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn for their investigative work when necessary and emphasized public information is not systematically monitored.

Stated Shodan is a search engine used for Cybersecurity to identify publicly exposed internet-connected devices and services. Emphasized the search engine does not access private data.

Stated the following technologies are not currently used by the Urbana Police Department and were only included on the original list to provide an exhaustive view of tools: CrowdTangle (Discontinued since 2024); Dataminr, Geofeedia (Not subscribed to); ICJIA Data Portal (Public Resource); IDENT (No independent access to); Platelogix (Not used); Social Media Analysis tool (X1 Social Discover) (Not used).

Zachery Mikalik stated federally managed databases, intelligence sharing networks, and publicly accessible platforms are typically not considered surveillance technology by other municipalities with surveillance technology ordinances. Stated surveillance technologies are defined by other municipalities as technologies designed with the intent of information collection of selected individuals. Noted manually accessing public data for investigations is classified separately from using technology for monitoring social media. Stated the proposed definitions are built from ordinances from other municipalities.

Proposed the definition for “Surveillance” to be changed to require the distinction that the technology is used intentionally, ongoingly, or programmatically. Stated the changes are to capture technologies used for systemic monitoring of individuals instead of searching in a database.

Proposed definition for Surveillance:

“Surveillance means the intentional, ongoing, or programmatic monitoring of individuals or groups through the use of technology to collect, aggregate, or analyze information over time.

“Surveillance does not include investigative activity directed at identified individuals pursuant to a warrant, court order, subpoena, or other lawful judicial process.”

Noted the distinction within the definition is recognized by many municipalities such as the City of Madison in the State of Wisconsin to exclude technologies such as records management systems, digital fingerprint systems, and computer dispatch.

Proposed the definition of “Surveillance Technology” to replace the “**capable of**” wording with “**primarily intended for**” to create adaptability for future technologies designed for surveillance while also replacing the list system with functional categories that would update without amendments.

Proposed definition for Surveillance Technology

“Surveillance Technology means an electronic device, system, or software used, designed, or primarily intended to collect audio, electronic, visual, location, thermal, biometric, or similar information specifically associated with, or capable of being associated with, any individual or group, regardless

of whether the technology is owned, leased, licensed, or accessed through third-party vendors or interagency agreements.

“Examples include cell-site simulators, automatic license plate readers, facial recognition software, gunshot detection systems, social media monitoring software, drones used for monitoring, GPS tracking devices, area surveillance cameras, and predictive policing software.

“Surveillance Technology does not include:

- (a) Federal, state, or regional criminal justice databases operated pursuant to federal or state law (NCIC, LEADS, AFIS, NIBIN, CODIS, etc.) provided use is limited to case-specific queries.
- (b) Case-specific forensic analysis services provided by crime labs pursuant to a warrant or court order, when limited to analysis of specific evidence and the Department does not maintain independent access to the technology.
- “(c) Body-worn cameras operated under state law requirements without real-time facial recognition or biometric analysis.
- (d) Traffic enforcement cameras used solely for traffic violations without facial recognition.
- (e) Routine office equipment, manually operated recording devices, and building security systems protecting City property
- (f) Cybersecurity systems protecting City IT infrastructure; or
- (g) Data analytics tools used to analyze lawfully collected data provided they do not collect new surveillance data or enable real time monitoring.”

Highlighted the “third-party or interagency” language included that would also cover partner agency technologies. Stated the definition further excludes case-specific forensic analysis services such as court authorized digital extraction conducted at the state level. Stated the exclusions are based on tools that already operate on existing legal framework, serve a clear function, and do not introduce new surveillance capability.

Michael Cervantes proposed the definition for “Exigent Circumstances” to be changed to define them from the perspective of a law enforcement agency rather than the current definitions closer resembling the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act. Stated the language is incident specific, time-sensitive, and grounded in federal court standards that law enforcement officers are trained on during basic academy. Shared the views of the Supreme Court on what circumstances qualify as exigent.

Proposed definition for Exigent Circumstances

“(1) Exigent circumstances mean a situation requiring immediate law enforcement action where delay would reasonably be expected to result in loss of life, serious bodily harm, the need to provide emergency aid or locate a missing or endangered person, the imminent escape of a suspect posing a serious threat to public safety, or the imminent loss of critical evidence.

“Exigent circumstances are incident-specific, time-sensitive, and limited in scope and duration to the conditions giving rise to the exigency. Determinations of exigent circumstances as it related to surveillance technology may be made by law enforcement officers or supervisors involved in the incident and based on the information known at the time. Use of technology under exigent circumstances does not authorize routine or ongoing use and does not constitute approval for use beyond the specific incident.”

Emphasized the definition does not allow for routine or ongoing use of technology. Shared an alternative definition used by the City of Madison for “Emergency Situations” to achieve a similar outcome while also adding an approval and reporting procedure after the technology is no longer in use.

Zachery Mikalik spoke on the use reports and use policies referenced by the UPD during the previous presentation that were sent out to Council and requested further feedback to ensure it meets the Council’s requests. Questions and discussion followed.

ii. Public Works Department

Darius White, City Administrator and Vince Gustafson, Public Works Director were available to answer further questions from Council regarding Miovision and the update that was emailed to Council. Discussion followed.

10. Closed Session per 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(3) – Appointment to a Vacancy in a Public Office

Motion to enter Closed Session per 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(3) to discuss the selection of an appointment to a vacancy in a public office by CM Quisenberry, seconded by CM Wu.

Roll Call Vote:

AYE: Wu, Evans, Hursey, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

NAY: None.

Entered closed session at 8:23p.m.

Motion to return to open session by CM Quisenberry, seconded by CM Wu.

Roll Call Vote:

AYE: Wu, Evans, Hursey, Bishop, Wilken, Quisenberry

NAY: None.

Returned to open session at 8:50p.m.

11. Adjournment

With no further business before the Urbana City Council, Mayor Williams adjourned the meeting at 8:50p.m.

Seok Hyun Cho

Deputy City Clerk

This meeting was video recorded and is viewable [on-demand HERE](#).

Minutes approved: 3/16/26

Lycée Charlemagne, Thionville Student Visit—2026

Students from the Lycée Charlemagne High School Euro Physics DNL senior class of Thionville, France will be traveling to the USA to meet with the students of Uni High School in Urbana, in March of this year.

This will be the second student exchange with Thionville, through our French Sister Cities partnership. While the former visit was an award-winning cultural exchange between advanced French language classes at Uni High with English language students from Thionville, **this visit** is going to focus on touring the Advanced Physics Laboratories, the Quantum Information Science and Technology Center, the National Center of Supercomputing Applications, and the Grainger College of Engineering on the University of Illinois campus.

Our French visitors will arrive in Chicago Tuesday, March 24, 2026, spend a day touring Chicago, then depart by train for Urbana. While in Urbana, they will stay with host families and interact with classes at Uni High School and explore the University of Illinois. They depart on Wednesday, April 1st, to Chicago and their flight home.

The Urbana Sister Cities Committee would like to offer to co-host some event with the City of Urbana during their visit. As there is not a regularly scheduled meeting of the Urbana City Council to attend during their time in Urbana, we would like to work with the Mayor's office to welcome the students during their visit by co-hosting some appropriate event.

Our Committee has offered to sponsor a short reception during the Saturday, March 28 Winter's Market in Lincoln Square Mall as a possible opportunity for the Community to meet these student ambassadors, or to sponsor their attendance at the University of Illinois Symphony concert on the evening of March 31 at the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts' Foellinger Hall.

These exchanges revitalize our partnership with our French Sister City while providing life-changing experiences to the youth who participate.

I would like to speak of our appreciation to French language instructor Lynda Lopez at Uni High, and English language instructor, Marie-Ange Andrieux, at Lycée Charlemagne for their continuing commitment to these city-to-city exchanges.

—Dennis Roberts, Chairman, Urbana Sister Cities Committee



Reconsideration of the Proposed Demolition of the Urbana Civic Center

At the February 18 Study Session of the Urbana Historic Preservation Commission, the Commissioners discussed options related to the redevelopment of the Site of the now closed Urbana Civic Center at 108 East Water Street in downtown Urbana. I encourage every member of the City Council to take the effort to listen to that discussion.

Following public comment, the Commissioners heard the staff report provided by Olivia Jovine, which outlined how the City's earlier decision to demolish the Civic Center structure had been reached, with the objective of clearing the site available for future development.

Commissioners also were also shown a Memorandum of Agreement that was drafted between the Federal Transit Administration and the Illinois State Historic Preservation Officer regarding the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District's inquiry in the property to create a Downtown Urbana Transit Center on the site.

A presentation by Joseph Altschuler, Assistant Professor in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, of the design project he conducted with undergraduate students during the Fall semester, 2025, displayed creative concepts with an emphasis on adaptive reuse of the existing building.

The Study Session was then opened for discussion.

Many Commission members expressed their deep frustration upon learning that the HPC was an designated signee to the MOA agreement. Commissioners were seeing the Memorandum for the first time in the evening's packet. Commissioners discussed how to avoid a similar oversight in the future, suggested a review of the Commission's oversight procedures.

The strong consensus was that the HPC Commission supported the creation of a new bus terminal downtown, but felt that the MTD, being told that the Civic Center structure was to be demolished, had not considered Adaptive Reuse. Indeed, creative approaches that included the structure, might allow an enhanced approach while supporting Adaptive Reuse of the Mid-Century Modern building—which had been deemed worthy of listing with the National Registry of Historic Places by the State Preservation Officer under Criterion A: as a locus for community recreation, community events and culture, and Criterion C: as an strong expression of modernist design in the community.

My personal feeling is that ADAPTIVE REUSE of the building, as part of a vital and creative design, becomes a WIN-WIN solution of a yet-to-be drafted proposal by the MT. It can both provide a larger concept to the site design, while allowing the development of a functional, downtown Transportation Hub.

I urge the Mayor and the City Council to reverse the Council's past decision to condemn the building. With Adaptive Reuse as part of any future design, the repair of the roof correction of other structural issues AS PART OF the new Mass Transit concept, it is likely that this will ENHANCE any grant sought by the MTD to develop their project.

— Dennis Roberts / [REDACTED], Urbana, IL 61802