
DATE: Monday, June 16, 2025
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
PLACE: 400 S. Vine Street, Urbana, IL 61801

The City Council Committee of the Whole of the City of Urbana, Illinois, met in public hearing Monday, June 16, 2025, at 7:38 p.m.

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

***CM PRESENT REMOTELY**

ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT: Darcy Sandefur, City Clerk;

STAFF PRESENT: Bourema Ouedraogo, Seok Hyun Cho, Demond Dade, Elizabeth Hannan, Don Ho, Larry Boone, Matt Roeschley, Dave Smysor, Vince Gustafson

OTHERS PRESENT: None.

Chair: *Maryalice Wu, Ward 1*

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

With a quorum present, Chair Quisenberry, due to CM Wu attending remotely, called the Public Hearing of the Committee of the Whole to order at 7:38p.m. Chair Quisenberry read aloud the Notice of Public Hearing of the Urbana City Council Committee of the Whole.

The proposed annual budget for the City of Urbana in the County of Champaign, State of Illinois, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026, is on file and conveniently available for public inspection on the City's web site (<https://www.urbanail.gov/hr-and-finance-department/page/annual-budget-information>)

Notice is further given that a meeting on said proposed annual budget will be held at 7:00 pm on Monday, June 16, 2025. Estimated revenues for the proposed budget for fiscal year 2026 are \$78.4 million and estimated expenditures are \$93.4 million.

2. Public Input

Danielle Chynoweth stated the residents of Urbana support filling vacancies in the Urbana Police Department (UPD) and receiving a recommendation from the Alternate Response Task Force before proceeding to hire additional staff for the UPD. Voiced appreciation for the continued investment into an Alternate Response system and various aspects of the budget. Stated the \$300,000 budgeted toward Alternate Response seems insufficient when the BerryDunn report showed around 2/3rds of calls for service were nonviolent. Noted the budget for the UPD increased 71% in the past six years, with crime rates being low, and no other department has seen the same increase. Noted the Governor of Illinois recommended discontinuing the 1% Grocery Tax to provide relief to residents. Questioned the estimated cost citations presented in the memo for the 1% Grocery Tax. Stated revenues from the 1% Grocery Tax should be used toward improving the material conditions of residents. Stated policing is not a solution to poverty and more funds should go toward material needs of residents.

Sharon Irish voiced appreciation for the \$25,000 budgeted toward supporting a Champaign Urbana Reparations Commission for African Americans. Shared the homeownership rate for White people in Champaign County is 84% while it is 6% for Black people, stemming from historic discrimination across every step toward homeownership. Stated the homeownership disparity points to a greater increase in wealth inequality in the County. Emphasized the importance of housing stability on the development of children and the importance of affordable housing. Voiced support for the Alternate Response Task Force and increasing the funding of that task force rather than continuing to increase the UPD budget. Expressed skepticism for the success of the UPD's Community Engagement Team Pilot Program. **Paul Mewth** echoed the statements of the previous speaker. Stated the Alternate Response organization cannot exist within the UPD. Voiced support for the UPD receiving a staff member for emotional support and counseling to address the stresses of the work. Noted concern for "Warrior Cop Syndrome" as he has seen sometimes in the City of Champaign's Police Department. Highlighted the effectiveness of the crisis intervention team implemented in the City of Memphis in the State of Tennessee. Called for a higher standard of care for crisis interventions from law enforcement agencies in the area. **Adam Nichols** urged City Council to not continue the 1% Grocery Tax as residents are struggling to afford groceries with the national inflation. Stated the current spending on the FY25 budget is \$59,900,000 and the current budget proposes \$93,400,000 in expenditures and asked for clarification on how it will be spent. **Ben Joselyn** stated constituents have been speaking before Council for around a decade regarding the racial disparity in the jail system and the issue still persists without having any analysis toward the UPD's practices on equity in their arrests made. Stated funds should not be provided to the UPD to educate children as officers are not trained to be educators and it would be an inappropriate cost to budget City funds toward. Stated the funds should be invested into more qualified educators in the community. Stated Automated License Plate Reader (ALPR) technology has been reported to be used in prosecuting and tracking women seeking healthcare services across state lines. Thanked Council for listening to the community by not adopting ALPRs. Called for cuts to the UPD budget to be reallocated to programs that improve housing stability, employment, and community resources. **Deborah Hollenberg** stated the 1% Grocery Tax is a burden on low-income households, noting 25% of residents in Urbana live below the poverty line and the median household income is \$45,000. Stated food stamps typically cannot cover a month's worth of groceries and food pantries in the area are overwhelmed. Urged Council to ease the burden on residents rather than continuing the tax as the cost of living continues to rise. Requested the expansion of programs directly addressing community needs. Called for the City to move forward with implementing an Alternate Response model to ease the burden of work on the UPD. Questioned why the UPD requires additional staffing when they currently cannot fill vacancies and retain staff. **Sean Womack** voiced support for the 1% Grocery Tax with the condition that it exempts residents who are on assistance programs such as SNAP. Stated the revenue from the tax should go toward supporting homeless people rather than increasing the police budget. **Sandra Ahten** shared the Philo Road area is not significantly dangerous to her as a White woman but is more dangerous for young Black men due to a lack of services and code enforcement for housing. Stated the area does not require a UPD substation and instead requires social workers, employment opportunities, sidewalks, trashcans, and access to outdoor recreational activities. Opposed the expansion of the UPD budget and the addition of officer positions when the Alternate Response model has still not yet been developed. Called for code enforcement to be conducted in that area and for landlords to step up. Questioned the 71% increase in the UPD budget over the past six years. **Lilah Leopold** stated since most calls for service to the UPD are non-violent and non-criminal, the UPD should have to clarify why they need an expansion to their budget for additional police officers. Stated the staffing increase approved in the previous year's budget has yet to be filled and further increases should require an assessment of the UPD after those positions are filled. Questioned if there are plans in place for the substation proposal that can justify its cost. Voiced appreciation for the direct presentation from the Urbana Fire Department in the previous week for their budget requests. Stated fully developing the Alternate Response model will be able to alleviate work on the UPD and focus on improving policing criminal activities. Shared criticism of the 1% Grocery Tax. Called upon the UPD to follow alongside every other department in Urbana by doing more with less. **Maxwell** expressed shame felt toward Council's

decisions in approving further wasteful spending on the UPD. Thanked those who are wearing masks, protecting immunocompromised members in the audience. Questioned why police officers are required to respond to non-violent calls for service with armed weaponry and why police agencies across the nation have only managed to go one day in the year without killing a civilian. Stated police departments were only able to solve around 10% of violent crimes and increasing police presence does not reduce crime rates, but only increases uses of force. Requested Council address the root causes of crime through any alternative than policing and questioned how increased policing can help people meet their basic needs. **Caite Kruiswyk** voiced opposition to increasing the UPD budget alongside the community that consistently opposes increases to the UPD budget year after year. Stated increases to the UPD budget should go toward funding social services, developing job opportunities, improving housing, and any other improvement of life rather than policing. **Addison Gray** shared how the Party for Socialism and Liberation canvassed the neighborhood where the police substation may be located and stated residents desired improved public safety, but did not believe in the UPD to do so. Shared the residents requested better housing, more youth programs, mental health resources, outdoor recreational activities, trashcans, and to feel as though the City is listening to their needs. Stated the full [statements are available online here](#). Stated the SNAP exemptions in the 1% Grocery Tax are insufficient as the program is being cut at the federal level. Opposed using the revenue from the 1% Grocery Tax to pay for policing. Questioned how there has yet to be a meeting for the Alternate Response Task Force and how additional police officers can be considered. Stated funding should go toward expansions of social services rather than the UPD. Voiced support for Ordinance No. 2024-12-042 regarding police surveillance technologies. **Galen Selligman** voiced opposition to expanding the UPD's budget and stated surveillance systems are already being misused by people from outside of our community to target individuals. Stated mass data collection is already being used by Palantir, Cellebrite, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to surveil, kidnap, and enslave members of our community. Stated the funds budgeted for UPD's expansion can be put toward a real crisis response team, put toward the school system, invest in building repairs, create new homeownership assistance programs, review zoning laws, review housing laws, support unhoused people, cut regressive taxes, purchase medical debt to forgive it for residents, invest the funds into the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District (MTD), expand cycling accessibility in the community, and invest into the Urbana Parks District. **Janice Walker** read a letter on behalf of Tammy Little regarding the Silver and Vawter area. The letter stated the issues Police Chief Boone expressed intent to address in 2023 are still present in the community and shared how tenants in SBRM/Havenstone apartments experienced significant neglect and housing instability due to a lack of building maintenance as well as management. Stated the current code enforcement process with the City takes too long to address housing issues. Shared the difficulties of attempting to reach landlords that cannot be held accountable for their uninhabitable rental units. Called for action to be taken against out of state landlords as their irresponsibility is affecting residents in the community. **James Kilgore** stated the budget must address poverty and racism in the community as residents have requested. Stated the voices of residents have been heard by Police Chief Boone and Council as the requests for expansions in the UPD are much lower than they initially were in 2023, noting progress has been made in that regard. Stated the budget must address the high poverty rate and wealth disparity within the community. Called for the development of the Alternate Response model before more funds are allocated to the UPD, for the City to campaign against poverty, and for the City to campaign against incarceration. Stated the City should fund re-entry programs from prison as FirstFollowers has not had the funding to do so in recent months. **Autumn** shared personal experiences with policing in the City of Houston in the State of Texas and despite being in close contact with law enforcement agencies through work there, they were of no assistance in addressing a stalker. Stated the stalker eventually stole credit cards at gunpoint and police officers were unable to assist in locating the perpetrator. Stated after personal investigation into how the credit cards were being used, the person bought gas, groceries, and toiletries. Stated the root cause of crime is poverty and the 1% Grocery Tax burdens low-income families and should be addressed with an expansion of social services rather than policing. Shared how living across the street from the police department in Urbana did not deter people from attempting to break into their home at night. **Jane McClintock** stated the community hopes for

the UPD to fill their current vacancies and develop the Alternate Response system. Questioned if the UPD will be able to fill the vacancies alongside the proposed positions within the next fiscal year. Stated every officer should operate as a Community Engagement Officer as witnessed in a ride-along where the officer had spare balls in the back of the car for children to have. Disapproved of the 1% Grocery Tax as it will be burdensome on low-income households especially given the current precarity of SNAP funding. **Carmen Blubaugh** thanked the UPD for listening to the public and commented on how the members of the UPD currently present have spent more than half of the time on their phones. Urged the UPD to take the opportunity to repair the relationship with the community through the Alternate Response Task Force. Urged Council to reconsider the 1% Grocery Tax. **Nicole Massey** stated the 1% Grocery Tax is not a good idea and an alternate revenue source could be found from out of state landlords. Stated landlords in Urbana often pocket security deposits and it is often a difficult process to be refunded security deposits from out of state landlords. Stated tenants in Urbana often cannot sue landlords for damages caused by uninhabitability due to a lack of access to legal representation. Expressed how the UPD and Alternate Response model can be complementary to one another and voiced support for the proposed substation. Requested additional resources to support housing and financial stability in the community. Stated if the UPD budget is set to increase, funding toward social services should increase as well. **Bryan Maxwell** stated the budget should allocate funds toward expanding social services rather than the UPD. Voiced support for the 1% Grocery Tax if it were to go toward social services or the Alternate Response model. Stated Council could also not adopt the 1% Grocery Tax to alleviate burden on low-income residents. Expressed opposition to making basic needs more unaffordable while increasing the militarization of law enforcement agencies and expanding surveillance. **Gweneth Crepsio** stated greater consideration must be put toward people with disabilities in the community and emphasized that a third of the people killed by law enforcement agencies are disabled. Stated people who are mentally or physically ill fear existing in public due to the threat of having police called on them and potentially being incarcerated, institutionalized, or brutalized. Stated people are more likely to become disabled than they are to be harmed by a disabled person. Called for greater care to be provided for people who are disabled to allow for them to exist comfortably both at home and in public. Urged for services to be more accessible and approachable to people who are disabled.

3. Adjournment

With no further business before the Committee of the Whole, Chair Quisenberry adjourned the meeting at 8:54 p.m.

Seok Hyun Cho

Deputy City Clerk

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

Minutes approved: 7/14/25