
DATE: Monday, May 5, 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 regular session Monday, May 5, 2025, at 7:03p.m.

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

ELECTED OFFICIALS ABSENT: CM Maryalice Wu

STAFF PRESENT: Bourema Ouedraogo, Bridget Broihahn, Matt Roeschley, Elizabeth Hannan, Seok Hyun Cho, Demond Dade, Andrea Ruedi, Will Kolschowsky, Kevin Garcia, Marcus Ricci

OTHERS PRESENT: John Gutzmer, Chief Information Officer at Urbana School District #116; Kathleen Groark, Representative on behalf of DRA Properties, LLC, and Verizon Wireless

Chair: *Chaundra Bishop, Ward 5*

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

With a quorum present, Chair Bishop called the meeting of the Urbana City Council to order at 7:03p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting

a. 04-28-2025 City Council Meeting Minutes

Motion to approve by CM Hursey, seconded by CM Kolisetty.

Voice Vote:

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

NAY: None.

3. Additions to the Agenda

None.

4. Presentations and Public Input

a. Here to Serve “U” Month Proclamation

Mayor Williams proclaimed May 2025 as “Here 2 Serve U” Month in honor of the dedicated City of Urbana employees encompassing essential services, first responders, safety inspectors, administrative professions, the City Clerk’s office, grant administrators, planners, and others. Encouraged the community to engage with critical issues surrounding municipal services and recognize the contributions of the City’s professionals.

b. Building Safety Month Proclamation

Mayor Williams proclaimed May 2025 as Building Safety Month in honor of the City of Urbana's Building Safety Division who ensures the safety and livability of homes, buildings, and infrastructure throughout the City. Encouraged residents to get involved and raise awareness about building safety on a personal, local, and global scale.

c. Public Input

Anonymous urged Council to keep Imagine Urbana in Committee of the Whole until a housing study has been conducted. Stated further meetings within each Ward are necessary to gather further input from residents and provide more explicit statistics as well as clarifications on the questions asked. Disagreed with City Staff citing Moves from the unapproved Imagine Urbana to justify an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance despite finding the content of the amendment to be agreeable.

Written Public Input expressing concern regarding Ordinance No. 2025-05-015 was received from the following individual and read by CM Wilken: Tom Schroeder. Written Public Input calling for the Champaign County State's Attorney to drop the charges against six pro-Palestinian Activists was received from the following individual and read by CM Kolisetty: Rohn Koester. Written Public Input in opposition to rezoning plans allowing little homes to be built in proximity to expensive homes was received from the following individual but was not read: Vicki Trimble. Written Public Input calling for the City of Urbana to uphold its status as a Sanctuary City was received from the following individual but was not read: Adam Nichols.

4. Staff Report

None.

5. New Business

- a. Ordinance No. 2025-05-014:** An Ordinance Amending the Urbana Zoning Ordinance (Amend Section VI-5.B for Clarity and to Update Regulations Allowing Stairs to Encroach into Required Yards / Plan Case No. 2500-T-25) – CD

Presented by Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner & Zoning Administrator. The Ordinance approves an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to allow stairs that are used to access buildings and outdoor living areas to encroach into required yards up to six inches from property lines. The amendment would also clarify some language in the Zoning Ordinance without changing its intent. Kevin Garcia stated the purpose of the amendment is to allow for stairs to access buildings and outdoor living areas, such as porches and decks, to encroach into required yards up to six inches from property lines. Shared Plan Commission reviewed the proposed amendment on their April 17 meeting and unanimously recommended approval to City Council. Stated this amendment originates from the denial of Ordinance No. 2025-02-004 where the request was acceptable, but there were no special circumstances to support the variance request. Stated as part of the denial, Council directed City staff to draft an Ordinance amending the Zoning Ordinance regarding porch stairs. Questions and discussion followed.

Motion to approve to the consent agenda by CM Quisenberry, seconded by CM Hursey.

Voice Vote:

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

NAY: None.

- b. Ordinance No. 2025-05-015:** An Ordinance Approving a Special Use Permit (102 East Michigan Avenue / Plan Case No. 2501-SU-25 – DRA Properties, LLC) – CD

Presented by Marcus Ricci, Planner II with John Gutzmer, Chief Information Officer at Urbana School District #116 and Kathleen Groark, Representative on behalf of DRA Properties, LLC, and Verizon Wireless available for questions. The Ordinance approves a special use permit for a wireless cellular tower with antennas on the Urbana School District #116 (USD116) campus in the Conservation-Recreation-Education (CRE) Zoning District. Marcus Ricci reviewed the special use permit. Shared the Plan Commission reviewed the special use permit on their April 17 meeting, and they voted to recommend it for Council approval. Stated the recommendation also includes the waiving of requirements for security fencing and landscaping, with the condition that construction is in general conformance with the submitted site plan. Stated the cellular tower is to improve cellular coverage for USD116 staff and students on the High School and Middle School campus as well as nearby residents. Further added the improved service will better emergency response times. Mentioned the cellular tower aligns with Objectives 33.1 and 33.4 of the 2005 Comprehensive Plan to improve utility services for residents. Stated the Plan Commission received two objections to the special use permit, and they also received a letter of support from the Urbana Police Department. Stated the Telecommunications Act of 1996 reserves the right of regulating the placement of a cellular tower based solely on health concerns to the Federal Communications Commission. Further stated the special use permit is subject to review by Council at 5-year intervals to determine if technology has advanced far enough to make the cellular tower outdated and if the permit should be terminated or modified to adjust to the changes. Provided background on the additional waivers, noting the cellular tower is replacing an existing light pole on campus athletic grounds that is already fenced in with similar light poles that do not have any vegetative buffers. Added the cellular tower will not be able to be scaled without specialized equipment and training. Questions and discussion ensued.

Motion to approve to the regular agenda by CM Kolisetty, seconded by CM Wilken.

Voice Vote:

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

NAY: None.

6. Old Business

- a. Ordinance No. 2025-04-013:** An Ordinance Approving a Comprehensive Plan (Imagine Urbana / Plan Case No. 2502-CP-25) – CD

Presented by Andrea Ruedi, Senior Advisor for Integrated Strategy Development and Kevin Garcia, Principal Planner & Zoning Administrator with an afterword from Mayor Williams. The Ordinance approves the Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan. Andrea Ruedi provided an overview of the presentation stating it will contain responses to feedback received from its prior appearance at Committee of the Whole, provide options on how to proceed, and will end with comments from Mayor Williams. Shared Imagine Urbana will be updated to include a joint letter and photo from Mayors Williams and Marlin, responses to public

feedback from the website were shared online as well as being made available outside of Council Chambers as physical copies, and broken weblinks to City plans were fixed throughout the document. Spoke on an update to Big Move 1 that changes the focus to people and inclusiveness rather than being on buildings, as suggested by CM Wu. Kevin Garcia displayed the differences between the 2005 Land Use Map and 2025 Place Types Map through hatched lines illustrating where changes were made from 2005 to the present. Spoke on the general areas of conflict between the Urbana Zoning Ordinance and Imagine Urbana as well as where it does align in specific areas. Spoke on a lost condition in the Zoning Ordinance where if a new business was utilizing an already existing building in a neighborhood, current parking requirements would not have to be met and provided an example of how the current parking requirements prohibited a prospective business owner from establishing a small café in an existing building. Shared the example of Buena Vista Court and how it could not be developed in its current state without 45 Major Variances. Illustrated how the lot adjacent to Buena Vista Court could potentially be developed to current regulations in various hypothetical configurations. Stated a single-family home built in a similar design to the houses at Buena Vista Court would go on the market for an estimated amount of \$260,000 for an 1,100 square foot building while the highest amount a house in Buena Vista Court has sold for is \$125,000 in 2020. Andrea Ruedi presented three recommendations on how to move Imagine Urbana forward through approval, approval with amendments made, or continuing to keep the item in Committee of the Whole for further discussion. Mayor Williams shared appreciation for the work that gone into forming the Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan. Voiced preference for the item to stay in Committee of the Whole to continue developing an understanding of Imagine Urbana and continuing to incorporate further public input into the plan. Questions and discussion followed.

Motion to keep in Committee of the Whole by CM Quisenberry, seconded by CM Kolisetty.

Voice Vote:

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

NAY: None.

7. Council Input and Communications

CM Wilken shared congratulations to Mayor Williams for completing a full meeting as Mayor. *Mayor Williams* congratulated all elected officials for completing their first meeting. *Chair Bishop* echoed congratulations to Council and Mayor Williams for their successful elections and cherished the recent excitement felt within the community.

8. Adjournment

With no further business before the committee of the whole Chair Bishop adjourned the meeting at 9:06 p.m.

Seok Hyun Cho

Deputy City Clerk

This meeting was video recorded and is viewable [on-demand HERE](#). **Minutes approved: 5/12/25**



PUBLIC INPUT - MAY 5, 2025

From Trimble, Vicki L <[REDACTED]>
Date Thu 4/24/2025 8:07 AM
To City Council <CityCouncil@UrbanalL.gov>

*** Email From An External Source ***

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Dear City Council:

I write in opposition to the re-zoning plans of allowing little homes, and other non-appropriate things being built among much larger, more expensive homes throughout the Urbana community.

Obviously, this will depreciate the larger homes value, brings in an entirely different type of property owner to that neighborhood, and will result in lots of other problems down the road.

However, the City doesn't seem to care about those kinds of problems so I can understand why you may be in favor of re-zoning.

We have had issues here in Beringer Commons, things that are out of the HOA control, and when we turn to the City or local authorities, we receive no help with any of this. It's incredibly frustrating.

You're all for supporting the HOA and saying it's their problem when you don't want to deal with the issue. But then when you want to put something into a subdivision that is in opposition to HOA bylaws, you're all about changing the zoning ordinances and allowing such crazy things to happen.

I'm currently paying \$15,000 in property taxes, and should the small homes pop up around me that will definitely depreciate my home's value.

My neighbors and I are all in agreement that we will fight the property tax situation by getting appraisals of our homes and fighting for lower property taxes. I'm guessing we are not the only subdivision who feels this way.

I'm happy to pay my share, and property taxes do keep going up pretty much annually, but if the City isn't going to support me and my subdivision, then my position would change.

It's my understanding you have not given the community an opportunity to speak at any of the meetings. If that is true, then that needs to change. You say you have done outreach, but only to those places you have chosen to reach out to who I assume are in agreement with you. How is that fair representation of the city?

You need input from everyone! Even if they disagree with you. I have lived in Urbana for over 30 years, and I expect better from the City Council. Please don't disappoint me.

Sincerely, yours,
Vicki Trimble
Beringer Commons
Urbana
Sent from my iPhone



Urbana being targeted for being a sanctuary city

From Adam <[REDACTED]>
Date Tue 4/29/2025 12:15 PM
To City Council <CityCouncil@UrbanaiL.gov>

*** Email From An External Source ***

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Note: I was unable to send an email via https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.urbanail.gov%2femail-contact%2fnode%2f2006%2ffield_email&c=E,1,PtLlfpbnia4bHJXfCi1niymnygMtqtU62eRDMBhtXWeRhAkA6l2c35-yoc5kLZPpeEdNcMwn2nvwtsSzVXGz8doeD4MW96VkcS-fukaURx_kSXHPAgg,&typo=1 (it just keeps telling me "Antibot verification failed." no matter how many captchas I do).

Because and council members' email addresses are no longer published, I'm sending this message to the entire city council instead of emailing my councilperson (Quisenberry) directly.

...and now on to the substance of my message...

I saw the news that the president has signed an executive order targeting sanctuary cities last night, directing immigration and law enforcement to take legal action against those who do not comply with the administrations anti-immigrant agenda.

This puts both the city and our officers in a tricky situation.

Urbana PD officers are now being required to (by the federal government) and forbidden from (by local ordinances) helping deport people. Depending on your perspective, this either makes them infallible or puts them in a situation where they can't win. Either is unacceptable.

I'm asking that this concern is brought before the city council for discussion. I'd like at least my council member (Quisenberry) to advocate for the city to provide our officers with clarity, and I hope that clarity will be this:

1. Urbana will remain a sanctuary city
2. Officers will be held accountable if they violate city ordinances
3. The city will accept any consequences of these decisions, not the officers

I would also like to hear a discussion about setting some money aside so we are prepared for any legal challenges that may come from the federal government.

I was very happy to hear that this type of planning was done years ago related to the dispute with Carle and we were finally able to put that legal dispute to rest without affecting city operations. I think we should take that same approach here. If it turns out we don't need this money, we can always return it to the general fund.

I know we're already at our spending limit for recurring expenses, but I hope that there will be some one-time money to address this concern. Please stand with the people of Urbana and defend our desire to remain a sanctuary city.

Thank you,
Adam Nichols
Ward 7



PUBLIC INPUT - May 5, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting - Regarding Ordinance No. 2025-05-015

From Tom Schroeder <[REDACTED]>
Date Sat 5/3/2025 8:57 AM
To City Council <CityCouncil@Urbanail.gov>

***** Email From An External Source *****

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Dear Council Members and Mayor Williams,

I am writing to express serious concerns regarding the special use permit application for the proposed communications tower included in Ordinance No. 2025-05-015 (Plan Case No. 2501-SU-25) on the Committee of the Whole agenda for May 5, 2025. My concerns center on three main areas: the accuracy and completeness of the application, the adequacy of its review, and its compliance with the City's Zoning Ordinance.

In the application for a Telecommunications Zoning Review of Attachment B (Page 37), the applicant describes the project as "swapping an existing 100' light pole with a 120' monopole and installing lights and telecommunications equipment." By also referring to the existing light pole as "existing tower facilities," the applicant portrays the project as a straightforward tower replacement rather than the construction of a new tower. This characterization appears to have shaped the City's review, enabling the proposal to bypass a full zoning analysis, particularly regarding lighting.

However, under Section XIII-1 of the City's Zoning Ordinance, the current light pole does not meet the definition of a "tower." As such, the proposed 120' monopole must be reviewed as a new tower, not as a replacement, and is therefore subject to all applicable zoning requirements. This includes Section XIII-1.I, which prohibits artificial lighting on towers unless required by the FAA. **Since the proposed ordinance does not specify a waiver for the prohibited lighting, the proposed tower does not comply with Section XIII-1.I of the Zoning Ordinance.**

Source: Article XIII – Special Development Provisions
(<https://www.urbanail.gov/media/851>)

In addition, the applicant failed to provide a meaningful analysis of alternatives. Attachment B (Page 144) simply lists and dismisses four existing towers without offering the comprehensive evaluation required by Section XIII-1.R.3.a.10. This section calls for a detailed review of "existing towers, other structures or alternative technology."

Moreover, Section XIII-1.R.5 emphasizes that:

"No new tower shall be permitted unless the applicant demonstrates to the reasonable satisfaction of the Plan Commission and City Council that no existing tower, structure, or alternative technology exists

that does not require the use of towers"

This requirement is essential to ensuring that new towers are approved only when truly necessary. Without information regarding alternatives, the Council cannot determine whether the proposed tower is essential or simply a more convenient or profitable option for the applicant.

It is also important to clarify that the Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 does not inherently protect the right to construct new towers. Rather, it safeguards the provision of wireless service, which may, under limited circumstances, necessitate the construction of new towers. In this case, the applicant has not sufficiently demonstrated that a new tower is genuinely necessary under the criteria set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.

Given these issues, the Council appears to have the following options:

- 1 - Approve the permit** despite the missing variance and incomplete justification;
- 2 - Deny the permit** and request a corrected, complete, and compliant application;
- 3 - Amend the ordinance** to include the required variance, accepting the provided justification as adequate;
- 4 - Take no action.**

Please note that **Option 4** is limited by the Federal Telecommunications Act's requirement that local governments act on applications within a "reasonable" timeframe.

I respectfully urge members to consider **Option 2**. Denying the permit under these circumstances would reinforce the City's commitment to fair and consistent enforcement of zoning regulations while remaining compliant with the Federal Telecommunications Act, as upheld in *Voicestream Minneapolis, Inc. v. St. Croix County*, 342 F.3d 818 (2003).

Finally, it is worth highlighting that this permit involves a lease commitment of 50 to 70 years. A long-term project of this kind deserves careful scrutiny by City staff, the Plan Commission, and the Council. Yet, the Plan Commission introduced, reviewed, accepted public input, and approved the proposal in a single meeting. This stands in contrast to the Commission's other recommendation on this agenda, concerning porches and porch stairs, which appeared on at least four Commission meeting agendas.

Thank you for considering these concerns. Regardless of the outcome at the meeting, I believe it is important that these issues are included in the public record.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Tom Schroeder
Resident (Ward 4)



PUBLIC INPUT: May 5, 2025 Committee of the Whole

From Rohn Koester <[REDACTED]>

Date Mon 5/5/2025 6:17 PM

To City Council <CityCouncil@Urbanall.gov>

*** Email From An External Source ***

Use caution when clicking on links or opening attachments.

Please read this into the record:

Dear Mayor and City Council:

Today, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel dismissed charges against seven pro-Palestinian demonstrators right before a judge was going to rule on a motion to disqualify Nessel's office over alleged bias. Said defense attorney, Amir Makled: "This was a case of selective prosecution and rooted in bias, not in public safety issues. We're hoping this sends a message to other institutions locally and nationally that protest is not a crime, and dissent is not disorder."

Here in Champaign County, the Sixth Circuit is still prosecuting six activists who, a year ago, engaged in a peaceful, message-driven campus protest against the collective punishment of almost 2 million internally displaced Palestinians. They used tents to symbolize the displacement, and thus their only real threat to the community was camping without a permit.

Instead, the police were ordered by UIUC administrators to clear a path through the protestors – that is, the police were ordered to lay hands on the students -- in order to make way for the F&S crew to remove the tents. This disgraceful decision-making led to peaceful student activists being charged for Mob Action, a fictional crime to justify a brutal and stupid police response.

With Israel preparing to further decimate the Gaza Strip and massacre civilians, how many of those cheering on our own selective prosecution are still claiming Israel is defending itself? With Trump sharing his own vision of ethnic cleansing in Gaza, how many of us are still scorning the courage and moral integrity of those activists by supporting prosecution?

Enough. Tell the state's attorney to drop the charges.

Respectfully,

Rohn Koester



Urbana