

**MINUTES OF THE  
VAN WERT CITY COUNCIL**  
March 9, 2026

Council President Thad Eikenbary called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

President Eikenbary gave the invocation.

On call of the roll: Ringwald, Block, Agler, Roberts, Moore, and Hurless were present.

Agler made a motion to dismiss Johnson. Ringwald seconded; all concurred.

Agler made a motion to approve tonight's Consent Agenda and minutes from the February 23rd meeting. Block seconded; all concurred.

**SCHEDULED PUBLIC SPEAKERS**

NONE.

**ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

**MAYOR:** Mr. Markward turned over his report to Chuck Koch, representative of the Trustees of The Marsh Foundation and The Van Wert East Owners LLC to explain a procedural issue related to a pre-annexation agreement that has been in place since last year.

Koch explained their property was subject to two different annexation petitions brought before council last year. After reviewing the procedural record, the most proven course for the city and the property owners is to simply run the pre-annexations through city procedurals again with NO changes to what Council has previously passed to ensure every step required by the city code is clearly reflected in the record. The property remains subject to the pre-annexation agreement (2 agreements and an amendment). As of today, March 9, 2026, the annexation petition was filed with The Van Wert County Commissioners and the conditional zoning petition was filed with The City of Van Wert today. Council has a copy of the conditional zoning petition. Koch is asking, on behalf of the property owners, council to refer the conditional zoning petition to the city planning commission. After this review, a council hearing will take place around early May.

Hurless made a motion that the Council Minutes reflect that a conditional zoning petition was filed on behalf of the Trustees of the Marsh Foundation and Van Wert East Owner LLC with the City of Van Wert, Ohio today, and that the conditional zoning petition be referred to the City Planning Commission for its review and recommendation pursuant to Section 150.12 of the Van Wert City Code. Block seconded; all concurred.

**SAFETY SERVICE DIRECTOR:** Mr. Fleming stated last year, he had reported a lead-copper violation we were under from Ohio EPA; the city did a notification of this, but there was a post card sized form Mr. Fleming was supposed to sign confirming that the notification letters were

sent out; this step was missed, so the city is required to make this a public notice. This notification will be added to the public annual consumer confidence report.

Fleming needs final legislation ran through on Bonnewitz/Washington/Brooks intersections for lights, access and traffic flow project.

Hurless asks why this project is taking place since ODOT is proposing a round-a-bout in this area. Fleming states that the ODOT project is a 2030 project if it happens. Fleming shares that the current project he is asking for legislation on is funded majorly through grant money that will be lost if the project is not complete.

Hurless asks on behalf of Walnut Street property owners when utility flags can be removed. Fleming stated when owners begin mowing, they can be removed.

**AUDITOR:** Mrs. Blackmore presented one Then & Now tonight for the Fire Department Wallace Plumbing in the amount of \$8,163.00 for plumbing that needed replaced.

Financials will be presented at next meeting after a final bank statement is received.

**LAW DIRECTOR:** Mr. Hatcher expects to have an update for blighted property #17 at the next council meeting prior to their court date of March 31st.

Hatcher is performing research on if there is a statutory overlap with County Commissioners on housing. He will report back with what he finds.

Block requested updates on sidewalk and noise ordinance research from the Law Director. He did not have an update at this time.

#### **COMMENTS, COMMUNICATIONS & PETITIONS:**

NONE.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**FINANCE:** Ringwald made a motion to approved the Then & Now as presented by the City Auditor. Agler seconded; all concurred.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:** Not present. Hurless presented on behalf of Mr. Johnson to let everyone know Brent Stevens, Economic Development Director has received questions around the data center from council and constituents. He provided responses to the best of his ability and submitted these to Mayor, Commissioners, Safety Service Director, AEP, ODOT, Enbridge and Thor. Each party will review the responses for accuracy; once confirmed, Stevens plans to also send these responses to the end user to ensure no NDA has been violated. After these processes have been completed, Stevens will publish these questions, which The Times Bulletin and The Van Wert Independent have both agreed to publish.

Van Wert has been named a top 25 Micropolitan Community in the United States; last year, we were tied for 70th. More details can be found in the Van Wert Independent.

**STREETS AND ALLEYS:** Block asked about an update on the Crawford & Washington Street Light. Fleming submitted a request to AEP to get the light pole closer to the intersection and has not heard back.

Block also asked about an update on sidewalk and gas line replacements that were broken by duke. Fleming stated now that cold season is over the company has intentions of coming back—Fleming reiterated they will replace anything they broke, removed or damaged, but not the entire sidewalk.

Block made a motion for the law director to prepare an ordinance to approve preliminary legislation for the construction of new traffic signal at the intersections of US 127 and Bonnewitz Ave and Brooks Ave in the City of Van Wert and Declared the same as an emergency. Agler seconded; all concurred.

Block made a motion to introduce Ordinance Number: 26-03-013. Moore seconded; all concurred.

Block made a motion to suspend statutory rules. Moore seconded; all concurred.

Block made a motion to pass, on it's First & Final reading, Ordinance Number: 26-03-013; AN ORDINANCE ENACTED BY THE CITY OF VAN WERT, OHIO, HEREINAFTER TO APPROVE PRELIMINARY LEGISLATION FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW TRAFFIC SIGNAL AT THE INTERSECTIONS OF US 127 AND BONNEWITZ AVENUE AND BROOKS AVENUE IN THE CITY OF VAN WERT SHARED AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. Moore seconded; all concurred. Ordinance passed.

**PROPERTIES AND EQUIPMENT:** Agler addressed a property at the corner of S. Chestnut and Central. Council deliberated on how the junk and rubbish/nuisance ordinances can be updated in order to continue cleaning up this property. The tenant has been to court several times, been charged fines in which he just pays and continues to keep his property the same, for the most part. Council is considering adding a limit to the number of bikes allowed in a city yard. Council also mentioned cleaning the property themselves to remove junk and adding the expense to the owner's property taxes.

Another property at the end of N. Race St., shares a property line with a church who has complained about a pile of trash bags that, before were stacked on a trailer, and now are on the ground at the back of the property (which is viewable from the church parking lot). Hatcher advised that this issue should go away soon, as the property has been sold to a new owner. This does pose a question to council though on if the ordinance needs tweaked to allow the city to access junk/rubbish items that go beyond what is visible from the road.

**PARKS AND RECREATION:** Roberts made a motion to introduce Ordinance Number: 26-03-014. Agler seconded; all concurred.

Softball and Baseball plans are underway for a March 16th start.

**HEALTH, SERVICE AND SAFETY:** No report.

**JUDICIARY AND ANNEXATION:** Hurless (and Johnson) have further reviewed the 50 year lease agreement proposed to council to pass. Hurless has prepared suggestions/changes to the lease agreement he believes may be in the city's best interest. Suggestions include: reducing to a 20 year lease with midterm (10 year) review, abandonment language, annual report to council on usage, outages, time restoration, trimming schedules, proof of insurance, and future plans, franchise fee of 3%, and undergrounding requirements when possible.

Fleming stated AEP would be willing to come to a council meeting to answer questions.

Hurless made a motion to table Ordinance Number: 26-02-010. Block seconded; this motion was abandoned for an amended motion.

Hurless made an amended motion to table Ordinance Number: 26-02-010 until a vote is taken to take it off the table. Block seconded; all concurred.

Hurless made a motion to prepare, as an emergency, an ordinance approving the First Federal Savings & Loan Association Plat located in the City of Van Wert. Roberts seconded; all concurred.

Hurless made a motion to introduce Ordinance Number: 26-03-015. Roberts seconded; all concurred.

Hurless made a motion to suspend statutory rules. Roberts seconded; all concurred.

Hurless made a motion to pass, on it's First & Final reading, Ordinance Number: 26-03-015; AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE FIRST FEDERAL SAVINGS AND LOAN ASSOCIATION PLAT LOCATED IN THE CITY OF VAN WERT, OHIO, AND DECLARING AN EMERGENCY. Roberts seconded; all concurred. Ordinance passed.

**QUESTIONS/COMMENTS FROM COUNCIL and PUBLIC:** Kirby Kelly, 221 N. Wall St., asks why in the instance of the Central/Chestnut property, why the property owner is being prosecuted over the tenant. It is in the ordinance the city can prosecute either.

Kelly also compares the AEP lease to the current railroad contract where the city is obligated to fix whatever the railroad breaks (like water lines). Fleming shares that these are very old contracts and not really comparable due to how desperate communities were to have railroads in their communities.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:** NONE.

**NEW BUSINESS:** Legislative Notice on a new liquor permit for Creative Cabin LLC. Council has 30 days to let the Department of Commerce know if there is an objection or extension. Council has until April 4th.

**RESOLUTIONS & ORDINANCES:**

First Reading Advisory for Ordinance Number: 26-03-014. All concurred.

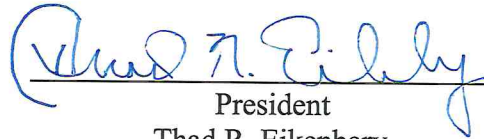
Hurless made a motion to move into an executive session for the purpose of a personnel matter with no action to be taken after the session. Moore seconded; all concurred.

Council came out of executive session at 7:56 p.m.

Agler made a motion to adjourn at 7:56 p.m. Block seconded; all concurred.



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Clerk of Council  
Stephanie R. Phillips



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President  
Thad R. Eikenbary

March 23, 2026  
DATE

