

DRAFT

12-09-2025 Common Council Meeting Minutes

Meeting Information

Date: 2025-12-09 6:09pm

Location: Chalmers Town Hall 205 E Walnut Street, Chalmers, IN 47929

In Attendance for the Town: Pam Brown Council President, Amy LaOrange Council Vice President, Lee Trippett Council Member, Fred Schrader Council Member, Josh Rinehart Council Member, Clerk Treasurer Rene'e Collier, Street and Utility Superintendent Doug Reed. Residents in Attendance: Jim Finnegan, Frank Galvin, Ashley White, Peter Opdenkelder, Pam Hiner and Bruce Hiner.

Meeting Notes

Ordinances, Resolutions, and Approvals

- **Ordinance 2025-19** (Internal Control Standards): An ordinance to revise internal control standards, which serve as an operator manual for town processes, was presented as part of a corrective action plan to the State Board of Accounts audit in 2024's books. Clerk Treasurer Rene'e Collier will ensure all personnel are trained on the new procedures. A motion to accept the ordinance passed 5-0 with the motion to approve being given by Council Vice President Amy LaOrange and the second coming from Council Member Joshua Rinehart.
- **Resolution 2025-04** (Appropriation Transfer): A resolution to transfer funds between various accounts (MVH, Park) was discussed. The transfers are for reallocating funds, partly due to increased insurance costs, and do not represent overspending. A motion to accept the resolution passed 5-0. The motion to approve was made by Council Vice President Amy LaOrange and seconded by Council Member Fred Schrader.
- **Approval of Past Meeting Minutes:** Minutes from the Public Hearing on October 28th, 2025, and Common Council Meetings on November 18th and November 25th, 2025, were reviewed and approved in a 5-0 vote. Motion to approve all minutes presented was given by Council Vice President Amy LaOrange and seconded by Council Member Joshua Rinehart.
- **Approval of Claims:** The 12/9/2025 Bank 1 Claims totaling \$80,267.55 were approved 5-0. Council Vice President Amy LaOrange made the motion to approve, and Council Member Joshua Rinehart came through with the second.

The claims for 12/23/2025 that Council voted to have Council President Pam Brown approve since it was decided to only have one meeting in December will be emailed to the council for review prior to the meeting to sign.

Financial and Administrative Updates

- **Financial Reports:** The council reviewed the monthly miscellaneous receipts, the Appropriation Report, and the Fund Report. All funds are positive, with the wastewater fund showing significant improvement from a previous deficit. The town's CDs at Fountain Trust were rolled over for a nine-month term.
- **Audit Follow-Up:** The recent audit cost approximately \$37,000. The IRS issued a refund check for \$1,750.46 for incorrectly assessed late fees. It was noted the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) might still flag the late payment in the future.
- **EMC Insurance Policy:** The town has had issues with its insurer, EMC, regarding property coverage. The new policy premium is \$30,000. Council Member Fred Schrader reported that he had reached out to an agent from Mitchell Insurance Agency and they do municipality insurance and we may want to consider looking at them as an alternative for next year.
 - **Trash Rates:** The 2026 trash rates will be updated from \$13.25 to \$13.65.
 - **Contact Information:** A contact information sheet is being circulated for corrections as the town's email host switches to GoDaddy.

Projects and Departmental Reports

- **Mower Purchase:** The council is following up on a mower purchase costing \$12,815. Township Trustee Nancy Loy is expected to provide \$6,000, leaving a \$6,815 shortfall. The invoice must be submitted by December 31st. Potential funding sources include utilities and operating funds, and financing through John Deere is an option. S & U Superintendent Doug Reed will follow up on details.
- **Building Repairs (Legion & Wessell Building):**
 - **Electrical:** Electric and More LLC. (Jim Vanlaere) is investigating an electrical panel in the Legion's dining area. If it only powers smoke eaters, the panel and units can be removed, allowing for an upgrade to the main kitchen panel. Other minor electrical issues were also noted. These upgrades will cost around \$6,000.00.
 - **Roof/Gutters:** The project for the Wessell building's roof and gutters by Leep Home Improvement for \$8,450 has been approved. A copy of the contractor's insurance policy is still needed.
- **Community Crossing Matching Grant (CCMG):** The town's 2026 application was not selected for funding by INDOT. The council was encouraged to reapply.

when the next call for projects begins on July 1. Ken has everything prepared to do so.

- **Keystone Cooperative Well Monitoring:** Quarterly reports are available online. Monitoring wells on First Street showed “nothing detected,” while wells near Highway 43 indicated Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) from an old bulk plant, which are expected to dissipate. The next report is due in January.
- **Public Works Update:**
 - Normal operations include ground-freeze locates. Snow removal priority is streets and sidewalks, with alleys last. The department will work on sending snow event alerts.
 - Two loads of salt and sand have been acquired, and a wheel bearing was replaced on the F-150.
 - A proposal was made to spend up to \$6,000 on a tool chest and tools. It was requested to delay large purchases until the new fiscal year when funds are budgeted. Employees are to stop using personal tools once new ones are acquired.
- **Missions Billing:** Missions billed the town ~\$300 for dual alerts during a project transition. Ken has requested the fee be waived. As the bill has already paid, a refund will be sought.

Employee and Committee Items

- **Employee Pay and Policy:**
 - A discrepancy regarding overtime vs. call-out pay was discussed; the 2016 policy includes a two-hour minimum for call-outs. Time cards from a past water main break will be reviewed.
 - The 2026 salary ordinance is being updated to include a code enforcement officer and potentially rename the “street and utility operations superintendent” to “Public Works.” The eligibility of using MVH funds for this position will be verified.
 - The employee handbook will be updated to clarify call-out pay and comp time rules.
- **Committee and Lease Updates:**
 - Council Member Fred Schader has agreed to continue on the White County Area Plan Committee as the town’s appointee for 2026.
 - The appointment of an ADA coordinator will be addressed in January.
 - An update on the Wessel building lease agreement and insurance is expected.
 - The Park Committee will not meet in December. Park Board President David Kurth thanked the committee for their work.

Public Concerns and Community Events

- **Code Enforcement:** A citizen raised concerns about vehicles with expired plates and one parked on a sidewalk. The citizen was advised to contact Town Marshal Jim Bolen directly for updates, as the council does not have access to ongoing police or violation statuses.
- **Community Events:** The Community Harvest Dinner is on Saturday 12/13/2025 from 1-4 PM, with Santa present from 1-3 PM. A toy and food drive will be held, with donations going to the Brookston food pantry.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:21pm by a vote of 5 Ayes to 0 Nays. Motion to adjourn was given by Council Member Fred Schrader and seconded by Council Member Joshua Rinehart.

Next Arrangements

[] S & U Superintendent Doug Reed to follow up on the mower purchase, including financing options with John Deere.

[] S & U Superintendent Doug Reed will follow up with Jim Vanlaere regarding the electrical repairs at the Legion.

[] Clerk Treasurer Rene'e Collier will obtain the certificate of insurance from Scott Lowry owner of Leep Home Improvement for the roof and gutter project.

[] Council will reapply for the Community Crossing Matching Grant on July 1.

[] Council President Pam Brown to send the Keystone Cooperative report and website link.

[] Address the ADA coordinator appointment in January.

[] Council President Pam Brown to call the EMC insurance agent to schedule a meeting for next week.

[] Council President Pam Brown to review timecards for the past water main break to check for pay discrepancies.

[] Verify if the Public Works position qualifies for MVH funding.

[] Get with Rebecca to update the 2026 salary ordinance.

[] Update the employee handbook to include call-out pay and comp time policies.

[] Prepare paperwork (IPEP, conflict of interest, etc.) for the first meeting in January.

[] Council Vice President Amy LaOrange to update the contact information sheet with provided corrections.

[] Send copies of the signed internal controls ordinance to all council members.

[] Send the full Baker Tilly report to the council via email.

[] Email the next set of claims to all council members for review.

[] Work together on a plan for sending out snow event alerts.

☐ Purchase necessary tools for the public works department, with a budget of up to \$6,000.