



City Council Study Session Minutes

July 14, 2025 6:00 PM

Council Chambers - 111 E. Maple Ave.

COUNCIL SPONSORED ITEMS

1. A resolution amending Section 5.1 of the Council Rules of Procedure (*Sponsored by Councilmember Fears*)

This is a resolution that will change the order to hear Proclamations and Presentation Proclamations before Citizen Requests on the regular agenda. There were no citizens that wanted to speak on this item.

2. A resolution calling on Jackson County to create property tax relief for commercial property owners facing significant tax increases. (*Sponsored by Councilmembers John Perkins and Heather Wiley*)

In 2023, Jackson County had the highest increase in assessments in the entire state at 24.35% while the consumer price index was at 6.5%. In 2019 there was another huge spike at 19.5% while inflation was just at 1.9%. There are still 54,000 appeals pending from the last round of residential assessments. Currently, business owners are seeing a 1500% increase for businesses. This will cause people to close their businesses. This resolution calls on Jackson County leadership to work with cities like ours to develop effective relief strategies for commercial property owners.

There were no citizens that spoke on this item.

3. An ordinance amending the Independence City Code Chapter 18, Traffic. (*Sponsored by Councilmember McCandless*)

This item aims to modernize and clarify the ATV ordinance to include vehicles such as golf carts, mules, and others within subdivisions, to be used for maintenance purposes. This would just be for our city streets, not state roads or on city trails. There were several questions regarding which vehicles, the size of those vehicles, and where they would be allowed to go.

This item will be pulled for further consideration to an undetermined date.
No citizens spoke on this item.

CITIZEN REQUESTS

1. Citizen Requests - Per Council Rules, Sec. 6.4 Only "Council Sponsored Items" are eligible

PRESENTATIONS

1. City Facilities Construction Update

Brad Way from Project Advocates gave this presentation.

This is an update on current city projects.

Municipal Commons - Construction in progress
Justice Center (Phase 1 - IUC Renovation) - Preconstruction in process
Justice Center Campus (Phase 2) - Schematic design in process
Fire Station No. 8 & Training - Design in process
Fire Station No. 5 - Conceptual design complete
Fire Station No. 11 - Conceptual design complete

Independence Municipal Commons
Budget \$21.5 Million
Status: Construction in process
Future Milestones:
Level 2 move-in: 10/8/2025
Level 3 move-in: 11/14/2025
Level 4 move-in: 11/26/25
Level 1 Move-in/Project Completion: 12/5/25

Justice Center Phase 1 – IUC Renovation

- Budget: \$5,000,000
- Status: Preconstruction in process
- McCownGordon GMP (Guaranteed Maximum Price) approved by City Council July 7th
- McCownGordon has commenced the review/submittal process necessary to order materials.

Future Milestones:

- Construction Commencement: 8/18/2025
- Substantial Completion: 2/4/2026
- Personnel Move-in: 3/6/2026
- Project Completion: 3/9/2026

Justice Center Phase 2 – Campus Construction

- Budget: TBD

- Status: Schematic Design in process
- Completed final Schematic Design meeting with PD, Hoefer Welker, and McCownGordon on July 8th.
- 100% Schematic Design Documents being finalized by Hoefer Welker

Future Milestones:

- 100% Schematic Design Documents Complete: 7/28/2025
- McCownGordon to commence budget effort: 7/29/2025
- McCownGordon Budget Complete: 9/3/2025
- Funding Source and phasing direction identification: TBD

Justice Center Phase 2 – Phasing Options

McCownGordon's budget will be broken down in the following categories:

- Courts & PD Addition (includes Southeast water detention area)
- Training Facility
- Firing Range
- S.W.A.T & Tech Bays
- Bomb/Crash/Motor Vehicle Building
- K9 Facility
- Carports & NE Parking Lot Additions

This budget breakdown will allow further study into how to effectively phase the project to navigate funding and operational constraints.

Fire Station No. 8 & Training Facility

- Budget: \$21.4M (\$50M total approved funds for all 3 Fire Station Projects)
- Status: Construction Documents in process
- WSKF (architect) in collaboration with IFD and Turner Construction (Construction Manager) and Project Advocates is in the process of finalizing the Construction Document drawings.

Future Milestones:

- 100% Construction Documents: October 2025
- Permitting & Bidding: November 2025 – January 2026
- Construction Start: February 2026
- Project Completion: Spring 2027

Fire Station No. 5

- Budget: \$13.3M (\$50M total approved funds for all 3 Fire Station Projects).
- Status: Conceptual Design Complete
- Design to resume Fall 2025

Future Milestones:

- Design Development Complete: Spring 2026
- 100% Construction Documents: Summer 2026
- Construction Start: Fall 2026
- Project Completion: Fall 2027

Fire Station No. 11

- Budget: \$15.3M (\$50M total approved funds for all 3 Fire Station Projects.
- Status: Conceptual Design Complete
- Design to resume Summer 2026

Future Milestones:

- Design Development Complete: Fall 2026
- 100% Construction Documents: Early 2027
- Construction Start: Spring 2027
- Project Completion: Spring 2028

2. IPL Charter Governance Review

Lisa Reynolds, Deputy City Manager, gave the presentation for this item. This is a recap of where we've been and where we're going.

Recapping Activities to Date

Review of Current Charter Provisions

Review of Proposed Amendments

Next Steps

Discussion

Recapping the Conversation

- February 20th, 2023: 2023-24 City of Independence Action Plan Adopted
- April 5th, 2023: Council directed and authorized evaluation of future ownership and governance model for IPL
- November 20th, 2023: Council awarded contract to DKMT Consulting
- August 26th, 2024: Council received recommendations from DKMT
- “Board governance could be public power utility’s greatest strength or weakest link.”
- 70% of municipally-owned utilities the size of IPL use an independent board oversight model
- Gave credence to creation of an independent management board comprised of individuals with strong professional backgrounds and skills

Recapping the Conversation

A Look Back:

September 16th, 2024: Council adopted resolution directing City Manager to review the current governance model for IPL along with alternative models presented by DKMT and present recommendations

- June 16th, 2025: Council roundtable held to discuss IPL governance model and possible City Charter amendment
- July 14th, 2025: Council Study Session to seek direction on final proposed Charter amendment and next steps

Review of Current City Charter

Section 3.12 through Section 3.18 IPL Governance

Section Focus Area Key Points

- 3.12 - Electric Utility Department - Establishes department
- 3.13 - Operations - City runs its electric utility
- 3.14 - Other Utilities - Provides for future utility operations
- 3.15 - Public Utilities Advisory Board - Establishes PUAB
- 3.16 - PUAB Powers & Duties - Sets oversight board with investigative, advisory, and reporting powers
- 3.17 - Electric Operations Standards - Businesslike management, no general revenue, profits to rate relief
- 3.18 - Council Coordination - Mandatory cooperation with PUAB

Review of Proposed Amendments

How the Charter Would Change

- Current Sections 3.12 through 3.18 deleted

New Section 3.12: Definitions

- Defines "public utilities" to include electric, water, and sewer systems, and any other service or facility considered a public utility by law
- New Section 3.13: Use of Public Utilities for Economic Development
- Authorizes the City to use public utilities to promote economic development
- Includes offering utility-related incentives, supporting infrastructure investments, participating in partnerships, engaging in pilot programs, and acquiring real property for development
- Requires compliance with laws, financial stability, and alignment with the City's budget and plans
- City Council to adopt policies for transparency and accountability

New Section 3.14: Governance of Public Utilities

- Electric utility controlled by the Public Utilities Board
- Water and sewer utilities controlled by City unless transferred to the Board
- Establishes public utility advisory board for utilities not operated by the Board
- New Section 3.15: Composition of the Public Utilities Board
- Board consists of nine members with specific residency and experience requirements
- Terms are staggered to ensure continuity

New Section 3.16: Appointment of the Board

- Members nominated and appointed by the City Council
- Vacancies filled in the same manner

New Section 3.17: Organization of the Board

- Board elects a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary
- Meetings and records are public
- Quorum and compensation details provided

New Section 3.18: Restrictions on the Board

- Board must be nonpartisan
- Members cannot hold other public offices or be involved in political organizations

- One-year prohibition on employment with the Board after leaving

New Section 3.19: Duties

- Board controls and operates the electric utility
- Manages contracts, property, and assets
- Cannot sell utility properties without voter approval

New Section 3.20: Powers

- Board has broad powers to manage the electric utility, including hiring, purchasing, and contracting

New Section 3.21: Budget Provision

- Board prepares and submits an annual budget to the City Council
- Council holds a public hearing and can amend the budget
- Budget becomes effective upon Council approval

New Section 3.22: Disbursements

- Budget approval is deemed an appropriation
- Payments made by the electric utility's comptroller
- New Section 3.23: Funds
- All utility revenues deposited in the City depository
- Comptroller appointed by the Board and bonded

New Section 3.24: Accounting

- Board follows accounting procedures for private utilities
- Provides regular financial reports to the City
- Annual audit required

New Section 3.25: Purchase and Contracts

- Competitive bidding required for purchases and contracts over \$50,000
- Combined purchasing with other City departments encouraged

New Section 3.26: Rate Making Provisions

- Board sets rates subject to City Council approval
- Public hearing required before rate changes

New Section 3.27: Employees of the Electric Utility

- Board appoints and evaluates the general manager
- Employees subject to City personnel policies

New Section 3.28: Payment into City Treasury and Services Furnished

- Board pays an amount in lieu of taxes to the City
- Provides free electricity for City-owned buildings and street lighting

New Section 3.29: Disposition of Net Income

- Joint control over utility reserves and funds by the Board and Council

- Funds used for emergencies, improvements, debt reduction, or rate reduction

New Section 3.30: Sale of Electric Utility

- Voter approval required for the sale or abandonment of the electric utility

New Section 3.31: Condemnation

- Board has the right of eminent domain

New Section 3.32: Area of Service

Board operates the electric utility within the City limits

- Can acquire property outside the City for utility operations

Next Steps

Staff Seeks Direction on the Following:

Proposed Amendment

- Does the Council wish to make any further additions, deletions, or modifications to the proposed language?

Election Date

- When does the City Council wish to seek voter approval?
- Upcoming election dates

The goal would be to get this on the ballot for November 4, 2025, or February 3, 2026.

Councilmember McCandless suggested putting this on the November ballot.

Councilmember Fears would like to have town hall meetings about this before it goes on the ballot.

The final certification date for the November election is August 26, 2025.

Councilmember Wiley agreed with the town hall meetings and another round-table discussion.

Councilmember Stewart believes the Council should focus on the governance portion of this for now.

Councilmember Perkins said this should go at the top of the list of items to discuss at the roundtable discussion they have scheduled on July 28th.

INFORMATION ONLY

1. Boards and Commissions Report
2. **Please Note:** In accordance with RSMo. 610.021, the City Council may convene in a Closed Executive Session during or after the meeting, on matters of litigation, legal action, and/or attorney client communications, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(1), on

matters of personnel, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(3) and personnel records, as permitted by 610.021(13), on matters of contracts, as permitted by 610.021(12), on matters of real estate, as permitted by 610.021(2) and/or matters of labor negotiations, as permitted by 610.021(9).