

**CITY OF LAWRENCE
Common Council
September 16, 2026
Regular Meeting**

MEMBERS' PRESENT: Councilors Sherron Freeman, Zach Cramer, Carlos Jennings, Tyrrell Giles, Kristie Krone, Betty Robison, Tracy Boyd, Liz Masur and Rick Wells

MEMBERS BY MICROSOFT TEAMS: None

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

ALSO, BY MICROSOFT TEAMS: None

ALSO PRESENT: Clerk Adkisson, Zach Myers and Kaylin Cook of McCarter & English, LLP, Mayor Whitfield, Chief Kline, Chief Wallace and Chief Bigsbee

STAFF PRESENT: Jami Weirich, Terri Falker, Janette Jackson, Amber Finley, Eric Martin, Lisa Harvey, Renea Rafala, Daniel, Jared Hooten and Jim Perron.

STAFF BY MICROSOFT TEAMS: Shawn Fugate and Ayonna Lenoir

President Zach Cramer called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Council members and attendees stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Council President announced that **Nine (9) council members were present**, establishing a quorum.

The meeting was declared properly noticed in accordance with the **Indiana Open Door Law**. Copies of the agenda and citizen comment sign-in sheets were made available at

COMMENTS OF COUNCIL MEMBERS & SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS OR RESOLUTIONS:

Safety Concerns in District 5 — Councilor Cramer

Councilor Cramer addressed a traffic safety concern in **District 5** involving residents of the **Indian Lake Homeowners Association**.

The councilor reported having recently met with several residents and conducted a site visit to better understand their concerns. The issue involves a neighborhood driveway located behind a curve and on a downhill grade, resulting in limited visibility for vehicles exiting the neighborhood.

Residents have inquired about the possibility of installing a traffic mirror, potentially on a tree located on private property. They expressed concern about whether such an installation would exceed the City's authority or potentially result in the mirror being removed or the residents being cited.

Councilor Cramer stated that they had contacted the City's Department of Public Works and that discussions were underway regarding a potential solution. Possible measures discussed included allowing installation of the traffic mirror, clearing vegetation along the street, or installing a hidden-driveway sign.

The councilor also stated that they had taken steps to assist residents in addressing the safety concern.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF FIRST-OF-MONTH MEETING OF 09-08-2026

A motion was made by **Councilor Freeman** and seconded by **Councilor Jennings** to approve the minutes of the regular first-of-month meeting, September 8, 2026.

Vote: Unanimously.

Vote: Approved 9-0.

- **Result:** Motion carried.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEE: None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Proposal No. 1

The clerk read the title of **Proposal No. 1, 2026**

An ordinance of the Common Council of the City of Lawrence, Indiana, amending Title 1, Article 1, Chapter 2, Section 12 of the Municipal Code regarding Common Council approval of expenditures of professional service contracts.

The proposal remains in the Committee of the Whole for consideration.

Proposal No. 3

The clerk read the title of **Proposal No. 3, 2026**

An ordinance of the Common Council of the City of Lawrence, Indiana, adopting Title 1, Article 3 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Lawrence, Indiana.

The proposal remains before the Committee of the Whole for consideration and recommendation to the Council. It remains tabled in committee.

NEW BUSINESS:

The Council President announced one item of new business: a presentation by **Mayor Whitfield and the City's Controller regarding the proposed 2027 budget.**

The administration was invited to the podium.

Mayor's Presentation

Mayor Whitfield addressed the Council, citizens, and City of Lawrence employees regarding the proposed 2027 budget.

The mayor stated that the City, like other Indiana municipalities, continues to operate under fiscal constraints associated with state property tax limitations. The Mayor emphasized that public safety remains the largest portion of the proposed budget and stated that it remains well funded under the proposal.

The mayor stated that since 2019, the City's police and fire budgets have nearly doubled and emphasized that public safety remains a priority of the administration.

The mayor recognized the Council's participation in the early stages of the budget process, including budget workshops held from **September 2 through September 4**, and thanked Council members for their input.

The mayor reviewed the anticipated budget schedule:

- **September 30:** Publication of the notice to taxpayers regarding the proposed 2027 budget, tax rate, and tax levy.
- **October 5:** Finance Committee meeting to discuss the budget proposal.
- **October 15:** Public hearing on the proposed budget.
- **October 21:** Anticipated adoption of the 2027 budget and salary ordinance.

The mayor presented highlights of the proposed 2027 budget, including:

- An overall balanced proposed budget.
- A projected surplus of approximately **\$1.3 million** for 2027.
- A proposed **3% salary increase for all civilian positions**.
- Improved financial conditions in most funds, including the General Fund.
- A projected increase in reserves compared with previous projections.
- Savings resulting from a hiring freeze implemented the previous year and the elimination of long-vacant positions.

The mayor stated that planned revenues were projected to increase in 2027 while expenses were projected to decrease, with the projected 2026 deficit expected to turn into a surplus.

The mayor emphasized sound fiscal management as a primary priority.

The mayor discussed challenges associated with **SEA 1** and property tax constraints affecting Indiana municipalities.

The administration projected that operating fund reserves would remain at approximately **46% through the end of fiscal year 2027**.

The mayor stated that the administration would continue monitoring the City's financial position and focusing on protecting the City's financial health.

The mayor discussed reductions in insurance costs, attributed to a proactive approach to fleet safety. City departments, particularly the Police Department, were credited with efforts to reduce vehicle accidents and associated costs.

The mayor also referenced the City's adoption of the **wheel tax** the previous year and stated that the measure was generating significant fiscal benefits for the city.

The mayor stated that the proposed budget reflects the administration's approach of investing in priority areas, responsibly managing taxpayer dollars, and planning.

The mayor acknowledged continuing fiscal challenges but stated that the City was in a stronger financial position because of previous financial decisions.

The mayor concluded by stating that the budget is intended to maintain services residents depend upon, support City employees, and position Lawrence for continued progress.

The mayor introduced **City Controller Terry Falker** to provide additional details regarding the proposed 2027 civil city budget, including the assumptions and financial figures underlying the proposal.

The mayor thanked the Controller for her work and leadership in maintaining fiscal discipline and stated that the administration looked forward to continuing the discussion and answering questions during the Finance Committee meeting.

CITY CONTROLLER'S 2027 BUDGET PRESENTATION

City Controller Terry Faulner addressed the Council regarding the proposed 2027 budget.

The Controller stated that the administration was pleased to present a proposed budget reflecting an overall surplus, while emphasizing that the city continues to face fiscal challenges.

The Controller discussed continuing challenges associated with **Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1)**, particularly as they affect the City's operating funds, including:

- General Fund;
- EMS Fund; and
- Public Safety Local Income Tax funds.

The Controller stated that the City would continue monitoring these issues and anticipated additional challenges during the upcoming legislative session.

The Controller stated that the city could not continue reducing expenses at the same rate experienced between 2026 and 2027.

She stated that, over the long term, expenses could outpace revenues and that the City would need to focus on identifying new revenue sources to adequately fund critical public safety and personnel needs.

The Controller characterized the 2026 projections as a worst-case scenario while noting that the proposed budget would increase reserves through 2027.

The Controller stated that the proposed budget provides for a **3% salary increase for City employees**.

She attributed the ability to provide the increase, in part, to the decision not to fill vacant positions and to improved management of insurance costs through increased risk controls.

The Controller stated that the administration had evaluated expenditures to develop a budget that operates within the City's means while maintaining adequate reserves.

She further noted that revenues exceeding projections would improve the City's financial position.

The Controller discussed quarterly budget meetings that had been implemented with department heads as part of the budget process.

She thanked the department heads for their participation and stated that each department contributed to the budget reductions.

She stated that the reductions helped accommodate increases in the salary line item.

The Controller stated that the Mayor, department heads, and Controller looked forward to answering Council members' questions at the upcoming Finance Committee meeting.

Council members were encouraged to submit questions for review and response.

The Controller thanked the Council for its attention.

The Council President thanked the Controller and noted the upcoming **October 5 Finance Committee meeting**.

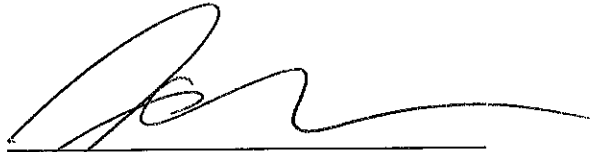
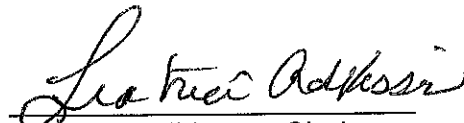
ADMINISTRATION COMMENTS:

No additional administration comments were presented.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Citizens were invited to approach the podium to provide comments. No citizens came forward to speak.

ADJOURNMENT: President Cramer called for adjournment. Motioned by Councilor Jennings and seconded by Councilor Boyd. There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 6:48 p.m., by President Cramer.


Zach Cramer, President
Leatrice Adkisson, Clerk

These minutes are not intended to be verbatim. They are a summary of discussions held, except for the motions.