

MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE GURNEE VILLAGE BOARD GURNEE VILLAGE HALL SEPTEMBER 14, 2026	
Call to Order	Mayor Hood called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
Other Officials in Attendance	Patrick Muetz, Village Administrator; Stacy Michael, Management Analyst; Bryan Winter, Village Attorney; David Ziegler, Community Development Director; Heather Galan, Public Works Director; Brian Gosnell, Finance Director; Christine Palmieri, Director of Human Resources; Ellen Dean, Economic Development Director; Nick Leach, Village Engineer; Ryan Nelson, Information Systems Director; John Kavanagh, Fire Chief; David Douglass, Deputy Fire Chief; Jeremy Gaughan, Police Chief; Jason Kalinowski, Deputy Police Chief; Matt Bandler, Deputy Police Chief.
Roll Call	PRESENT: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware ABSENT: 0-
Pledge of Allegiance	Mayor Hood led the Pledge of Allegiance.
<u>A. PUBLIC COMMENT</u>	None.
<u>B. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA</u>	It was moved by Trustee O'Brien, seconded by Trustee Ross to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. <u>Roll call,</u> AYE: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware NAY: 0- None ABSENT: 0- None Motion Carried.
<u>C. CONSENT AGENDA / OMNIBUS VOTE</u>	The Village Administrator read the consent agenda for an omnibus vote as follows. 1. Approval of minutes from the August 24, 2026 meeting. 2. Approval of Engineering Division's recommendation to award the Gowe Beach Demolition Project to the low bidder, Strategic Demolition & Excavation, at a cost of \$115,007.17. 3. Approval of Economic Development Division's recommendation to approve a Professional Services Agreement with Northern Power Washing LLC DBA Northern Holiday Lighting for 2026 Holiday Lighting Installation/Services at Gurnee Mills and Village entry signs at a cost of \$38,791.00. 4. Approval of Payroll for the period ending August 21, 2026 in the amount of \$1,103,793.56. 5. Approval of Payroll for the period ending September 4, 2026 in the amount of \$1,096,820.31. 6. Approval of Bills for the period ending September 14, 2026 in the amount of \$2,117,707.06. It was moved by Trustee Garner, seconded by Trustee Thorstenson to

approve the Consent Agenda for an omnibus vote as read.

Roll call,
AYE: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware
NAY: 0- None
ABSENT: 0- None
Motion Carried.

D. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

1. Introduction and recognition of the 2026 Gurnee Queens:

- Miss Gurnee - Bella Payton
- Junior Miss Gurnee - Maddie Bugner
- Little Miss Gurnee - Avery Bell
- Tiny Miss Gurnee - Gianna Colunga-Gonzalez

Mayor Hood introduced each queen and presented each with a gift from the Board.

Miss Gurnee Bella Payton briefly spoke about her platform, Mind Matters Most, which focuses on the education, awareness and prevention of concussions in youth sports.

E. REPORTS

None.

F. OLD BUSINESS

None

G. NEW BUSINESS

1. Approval of Ord. 2026 - 65 amending Section 2-143(6) and 2-368 of the Gurnee Municipal Code granting additional hiring authority to the Village Administrator.

Administrator Muetz said with the planned retirement of the Director of Human Resources in June 2027, staff has made ongoing efforts to streamline Human Resources practices and procedures. In conjunction with this effort, and as a result of increased competition from surrounding communities and candidates' expectations, staff have worked to improve the recruitment and onboarding process. He stated the goal of these efforts has been to reduce the administrative burden, improve workflow efficiency, streamline processes and hire qualified candidates reflective of our community more quickly so we don't lose them to other entities. Staff is requesting the Village Board transfer hiring authority for all entry level and lateral Civil Service positions to the Village Administrator or his designee(s). Administrator Muetz stated currently the Civil Service Commission is involved in several different aspects of entry level / lateral hiring of Police Officer, Firefighter / Paramedic, and Maintenance Worker candidates. Commission involvement includes candidate interviews, review of candidate screenings (polygraph / psychological / background) and confirmation of candidates for positions. With the increased frequency of recruitment, staff time spent managing and following up on various portions of the process with Commissioners has increased. Administrator Muetz stated current challenges include Opens Meeting Act requirements, room and Commissioner availability, and process duplication to name a few. By transferring the entry level/lateral candidate interview process to the Village Administrator or his designee(s), the requirement to satisfy the Open Meeting Act is eliminated. In addition, this removes requirements related to agenda creation, a quorum, digital recordings and meeting minutes. Room availability is also much more accessible during daytime hours as they are reserved for staff usage. Human Resources and Department staff

conduct a thorough review of all candidate screenings (polygraph, psychological evaluation, and background screenings) before candidates proceed forward in the process. He stated there are no proposed changes to the current screening elements or changes for the Civil Service Commission's role and involvement in the current promotional processes for Police Sergeant, Fire Lieutenant, and Fire Captain.

Trustee Garner stated that he supported efforts to improve efficiency; however, he noted that the Village had made significant progress over the years in advancing diversity in its hiring practices. He expressed concern that granting hiring authority to the Village Administrator could affect the Village's ability to preserve that progress. He emphasized that more than 40 percent of the community's population consists of minority residents and that the Village's workforce should reflect the diversity of the community. While acknowledging the Village's growth and the success of those currently involved in hiring decisions, he questioned whether future individuals in those roles would share the same values. He asked what safeguards could be established to protect diversity in future hiring practices.

Trustee Thorstenson stated that she appreciated Trustee Garner raising the issue and suggested that the Village could consider issuing an annual strategy statement or establishing a measurable goal demonstrating its continued commitment to diversity.

Mayor Hood stated that the Police Department would continue to review candidates first, followed by the Civil Service Commission. He noted that if the Board became dissatisfied with the effectiveness of the revised process, a decision could be made for the Civil Service Commission to continue to serve in its current capacity. Mayor Hood acknowledged Trustee Garner's concerns and stated that the Village Board must trust the individuals appointed to these roles, who had performed well, and that he expected that performance to continue. He supported allowing the departments an opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of the proposed process, noting that the Board could revisit the matter if it did not produce the desired results. He stated that a change was necessary for the Village to remain competitive.

Trustee Thorstenson stated that the Village should also consider the quality of its hires and evaluate other important aspects of the recruitment process, including where positions are advertised, how prospective candidates are reached, and how eligibility lists are developed. She noted that Human Resources had done an excellent job expanding the Village's recruitment and advertising efforts. Based on her understanding that the Police Department, Fire Department, and Civil Service Commission had not disagreed on previous hiring decisions, she stated that she was willing to support the proposed change.

Trustee O'Brien confirmed that the proposed change would not affect the annual report provided by Human Resources regarding departmental demographics. Mayor Hood confirmed that the report would continue. Trustee O'Brien also asked whether the proposal would dissolve the Civil Service Commission. Mayor Hood clarified that the Commission would remain involved in promotions and disciplinary matters and would continue to hold meetings but would no longer participate in the entry-level hiring process.

Trustee Ross recalled when Trustee Garner initially raised concerns regarding the issue and stated that the Village owed a debt of gratitude to the Civil Service Commission for its service.

Trustee Ware asked whether the Civil Service Commission had established hiring guidelines that could be shared.

Administrator Muetz explained that departmental leadership would continue to participate in the hiring process. Using the Police Department as an example, he stated that the Police Chief, Deputy Chief, and members of the department's leadership team currently participate in Civil Service interviews, attend meetings, and observe candidates throughout the process. He explained that the proposed change would remove the appointed volunteer board from the entry-level hiring process, which is subject to Open Meetings Act requirements. Administrator Muetz stated interviewing 30 to 40 candidates can require a significant time commitment from volunteers, while Village staff are

available as part of their regular duties. He characterized the proposal primarily as a procedural change.

Trustee Ware stated that the Village and its staff already shared these values. She supported improving efficiency and expressed confidence in Village staff.

Trustee Woodside stated that he understood the need to streamline the process and reduce the redundancy of involving a volunteer commission at every stage. However, he also recognized the historical significance of civil service commissions and boards of fire and police commissioners, as well as the reasons they were established. He noted that Gurnee's Civil Service Commission included individuals with significant human resources experience who had added value to the hiring process. While his experience indicated that the departments and Commission had not disagreed on hiring decisions, the number of required meetings could create delays at a time when the Village needed to remain responsive and competitive in recruiting. He agreed that the process needed improvement but expressed concern about removing the Commission entirely from entry-level hiring. He asked whether the Commission could retain a limited role that would provide oversight and maintain civilian involvement in the process.

Attorney Winter stated that the Civil Service Commission would remain in place and would continue to have opportunities for engagement. He noted that Commission members had developed relationships with department heads and that contact between them would continue, although on a more limited basis. He stated that the proposed change would streamline the hiring process and acknowledged the positive working relationships between the Commission and department leadership.

Trustee Garner asked what oversight measures would be implemented to protect the integrity of the process and ensure that all candidates had an equal opportunity. He stated that approximately 97 percent of those hired 16 years ago were White and expressed concern that gaining employment had historically been easier for some groups than for others. He noted that diversity often did not receive attention until a problem arose and asked how the Village would ensure that everyone remained included. He emphasized that the Village had an obligation to uphold that commitment when presenting itself as a Community of Opportunity. He stated that the current Board served as the guardrails for maintaining these values but questioned how the Village could ensure that future Boards would uphold the same commitment.

Mayor Hood stated the current Board does not have control over future Boards elected by the residents. He stated the current Board has the authority to make a change but also acts as the guardrails Trustee Garner referenced and if the modified process is not producing the results the Board desires, it is up to the Board to take action. Mayor Hood stated ultimately the current elected officials are responsible, therefore if the process is not performing as intended, he and the Trustees have the power to make a change.

Trustee Garner stated he is concerned about future Boards.

Mayor Hood reiterated the current Village Board cannot control future Village Boards.

Trustee Garner questioned whether this change is diminishing oversight related to diversity and inclusion.

Mayor Hood stated the Board has the authority to revert back to past practices if this change does not work.

Trustee Garner stated he supports improving efficiency but is also concerned about the impact and does not want to lose the progress that has been made. He questioned oversight going forward should issues arise.

Mayor Hood again stated if the results are undesirable, this Board is responsible for taking action.

Trustee Garner acknowledge the progress made related to diversity, but

is concerned about future Boards.

Trustee O'Brien asked where the Civil Service Commission currently participates in the hiring process.

Mayor Hood stated currently the Police Department interviews candidates before the Civil Service Commission, while Civil Service interviews first for Fire and Public Works candidates.

Trustee Woodside stated he would prefer to see the Civil Service involved in process oversight for entry-level positions. He stated his understanding is the overall process/requirements for entry-level candidates is not changing.

Mayor Hood and Administrator Muetz clarified Trustee Woodside's request. Administrator Muetz stated language could be included that states any proposed changes to the entry-level hiring process/requirements would be presented to the Civil Service Commission for consideration and approval before being implemented.

Trustee Ross suggested the item be tabled so additional language could be added to the ordinance to address the concerns presented this evening related to Civil Service Commission approval for any changes to the entry-level process/requirements.

It was moved by Trustee Ross, seconded by Trustee O'Brien to table Ord. 2026 - 65 amending Section 2-143(6) and 2-368 of the Gurnee Municipal Code granting additional hiring authority to the Village Administrator.

Roll call,

AYE: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware

NAY: 0- None

ABSENT: 0- None

Motion Carried.

2. Approval of Ord. 2026 – 65 authorizing execution of a water tower lease agreement with Chicago SMSA Limited Partnership D/B/A Verizon Wireless (2010 Northwestern Avenue, Gurnee, Illinois).

Administrator Muetz said the Village of Gurnee has historically entered into lease agreements with cellular service providers to allow the installation and operation of cellular communications equipment on Village-owned water towers. He stated the Northwestern water tower currently has two cellular tenants with room for one more in the Village-owned equipment shelter. Verizon recently approached the Village about leasing this space, as well as space at approximately 90 feet high on the tower for three antenna arrays. Following negotiations, the Village was able to secure a lease agreement that includes an initial five-year term with a base rent of \$36,000 annually along with a 2.75% annual increase throughout the five-year term. The lease also includes four additional five-year terms. If the lease remains in place for the full 25 years, the revenue to the Village will be \$1.27 million. Administrator Muetz stated Attorney Winter has reviewed the lease and found the terms to be acceptable (it is very similar to previous leases the Village has approved).

It was moved by Trustee O'Brien, seconded by Trustee Garner to approve of Ord. 2026 – 65 authorizing execution of a water tower lease agreement with Chicago SMSA Limited Partnership D/B/A Verizon Wireless (2010 Northwestern Avenue, Gurnee, Illinois).

Roll call,

AYE: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware

NAY: 0- None

ABSENT: 0- None

Motion Carried.

3. Approval of Ord. 2026 - 66 authorizing the execution of a Scheduled Service Agreement with Trane U.S. Inc.

Administrator Muetz said in late 2024 the original HVAC system from 1992 at Gurnee Village Hall was replaced with a Trane system. He stated the total cost of the new system was approximately \$1.2 million.

Since becoming operational the system has performed very well, however, the Village does not have a formal preventative maintenance contract in place for the system. At the request of staff, in July a Trane representative visited Village Hall to view the equipment and discuss service options. Administrator Muetz stated the resulting contract covers an array of equipment including the condensing unit, air handler, computer room air conditioner, and BAS equipment (which includes 26 devices). The service includes comprehensive annual maintenance, routine parts, one annual condenser cleaning, operating inspections, field reports, priority emergency response and customer training. In addition, the service agreement covers BAS support, back-ups, remote inspection/support, software maintenance, software updates, monthly reports, priority emergency response and customer training. Administrator Muetz stated the total cost of the agreement over five years is \$86,848.00. The year one cost is \$16,359 with an annual escalator of 3%. The FY 26/27 Approved Budget includes funding to cover the first-year expense.

It was moved by Trustee Ross, seconded by Trustee Thorstenson to approve of Ord. 2026 - 66 authorizing the execution of a Scheduled Service Agreement with Trane U.S. Inc.

Roll call,

AYE: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware

NAY: 0- None

ABSENT: 0- None

Motion Carried.

4. Approval of Ord. 2026 - 67 appointing an Alternate Director for the Central Lake County Joint Action Water Agency (CLCJAWA).

Administrator Muetz said former Trustee Jeanne Balmes served as the Village's Alternate Director to CLCJAWA. With her resignation, the Village must appoint a new Alternate. Mayor Hood is recommending Trustee Ware to fill this position. As Alternate, Trustee Ware will attend CLCJAWA Full Board meetings when Mayor Hood is not available. Administrator Muetz reminded the Board he serves on the CLCJAWA Executive Committee, which reviews and makes recommendations on all items before they are presented to the Full Board.

It was moved by Trustee Woodside, seconded by Trustee Garner to approve of Ord. 2026 - 67 appointing an Alternate Director for the Central Lake County Joint Action Water Agency (CLCJAWA).

Roll call,

AYE: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware

NAY: 0- None

ABSENT: 0- None

Motion Carried.

5. Approval of Ord. 2026 – 68 appointing an Alternate Director for the Solid Wate Agency of Lake County (SWALCO).

Administrator Muetz said former Assistant to the Administrator Austin Pollack served as the Village's Alternate to SWALCO. With his resignation, the Village must appoint a new Alternate. The Village Administrator is recommending Management Analyst Stacy Michael to fill this position. As Alternate, Management Analyst Michael will attend SWALCO Full Board meetings when the Administrator is not available. Administrator Muetz reminded the Board he serves on the SWALCO Executive Committee, which reviews and makes recommendations on all items before they are presented to the Full Board.

It was moved by Trustee O'Brien, seconded by Trustee Thorstenson to approve of Ord. 2026 - 68 appointing an Alternate Director for the Solid Wate Agency of Lake County (SWALCO).

Roll call,

AYE: 6- Garner, Ross, O'Brien, Thorstenson, Woodside, Ware

NAY: 0- None

ABSENT: 0- None

Motion Carried.

<u>H. PUBLIC COMMENT</u>	
Mark Taylor 4937 Carriage Dr. Gurnee, IL	Mr. Taylor expressed concerns similar to those raised by Trustee Garner regarding the Village’s policies and procedures for hiring new employees.
Closing Comments	None.
Adjournment	It was moved by Trustee O'Brien, seconded by Trustee Garner to adjourn the meeting. <u>Voice Vote:</u> ALL AYE: Motion Carried. Mayor Hood adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.
Andrew Harris, Village Clerk	