

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE GURNEE VILLAGE BOARD**

**GURNEE VILLAGE HALL  
FEBRUARY 16, 2026**

**Call to Order**

Mayor Hood called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**Other Officials in Attendance**

Patrick Muetz, Village Administrator; Austin Pollack, Assistant to the Village Administrator; Bryan Winter, Village Attorney; David Ziegler, Community Development Director; Jake Litz, Assistant 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.

**Roll Call**

**PRESENT: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Hood led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**A. PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

**B. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

It was moved by Trustee Balmes, seconded by Trustee Ross to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

**C. CONSENT AGENDA / OMNIBUS VOTE**

The Village Administrator read the consent agenda for an omnibus vote as follows.

1. Approval of minutes from the February 2, 2026 meeting.
2. Approval of Ord. 2026 – 04 approving a three-year service agreement with Regroup related to the emergency mass notification system.
3. Approval of request from Administration Department to dispose of certain administrative documents as authorized by the State of Illinois Local Records Commission.
4. Approval of Public Works Department request to set a bid date of March 24, 2026 for the Fleet Garage Renovation Project –Trench Drains and Doors.
5. Approval of Payroll for period ending February 6, 2026 in the amount of \$1,004,159.22.
6. Approval of Bills for the period ending February 16, 2026 in the amount of \$2,100,998.59.

It was moved by Trustee Garner, seconded by Trustee Thorstenson to approve the Consent Agenda for an omnibus vote as read.

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

**D. PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

1. Administration of Oath of Office for the promotion of Police Officer Mark Szalkowski to Police Sergeant.

Chief Gaughan spoke about Officer Szalkowski's career and achievements.

Mayor Hood administered the Oath of Office.

Sergeant Szalkowski briefly spoke, introducing his family and thanking all that attended.

2. Approval of Mayor Hood's recommended appointment of Matthew Rose as Alternate PSEBA Hearing Officer.

It was moved by Trustee Garner, seconded by Trustee O'Brien to approve of Mayor Hood's recommended appointment of Matthew Rose as Alternate PSEBA Hearing Officer.

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

3. Presentation by Community Engagement Coordinator Matt Trujillo – Small Business Capital Grant Program Update and Proposed Transformational Grant recipient.

Community Engagement Coordinator Matt Trujillo reviewed a PowerPoint presentation related to the Small Business Capital Grant Program and Proposed Transformational Grant recipients. Information shared included:

Small Business Capital Grant Breakdown:

- Businesses Awarded: 58
- Business type by breakdown
  - Restaurants: 20
  - Retail: 14
  - Building Owners: 11
  - Entertainment: 3
  - Hotels: 5
  - Manufacturing: 5
- Total Impact Grants paid out: \$691K
- Total Impact Grants awarded: \$728K
- Total Transformational Grants paid out: \$200K
- Total Transformational Grants awarded: \$350K
  - (Does not include the proposed transformational grant)
- Approximate project investment back to the Community: \$5.7 million
  - (Does not include the proposed transformational grant)

Next, Coordinator Trujillo reviewed Impact Grant projects and awards since Fiscal Year 2022:

- FY 2022: 16 projects totaling \$132,902.84.
- FY 2023: 17 projects totaling \$148,132.31.
- FY 2024: 18 projects totaling \$161,832.23.
- FY 2025: 18 projects totaling \$186,616.55.
- FY 2026: 10 projects totaling \$98,668.46.
- Total amount awarded to date is \$728,152.39

Coordinator Trujillo then reviewed Transformational Grant projects and awards since April 2023:

- April 2023: Two grants awarded. One withdrew.
- April 2024: Two grants awarded. One withdrew.
- October 2024: Two grants awarded.
- April 2025: Three grants awarded.
- Total amount awarded to date is \$350,000.

Next, Trujillo highlighted three projects that participated in the grant program. This included:

- The Country Inn & Suites experienced roof damage, which resulted in water leaks in the top-floor rooms. In the fall of 2025,

the hotel completed a comprehensive roof repair, addressing all damaged wood and related issues.

- Comfort Inn upgraded all 63 rooms with new flooring and advanced RFID room locks. These enhancements offer guests a safer, more modern lock system compatible with the hotel's mobile app. The updated flooring also gives the hotel a fresh, contemporary appearance.
- AHA Sushi underwent significant renovations, including the installation of new tile flooring throughout the entire restaurant. In addition, the restaurant upgraded its plumbing system and air conditioning unit, enhancing comfort and reliability.

Coordinator Trujillo next reviewed the Winter 2026 Transformational Grant Award recommendation. The award is being forwarded from a selection committee which included Trustee Thorstenson, Planning and Zoning Board Chairman Sula, Gurnee Chamber of Commerce Chair Amber Aparcedo and village staff. The grant award is being recommended as the façade improvement at Gurnee East Point in April 2024 did not go through with the project by the 18-month deadline, which passed in November. The selection committee decided to reallocate these funds and open an application period this winter to award one grant. The funds for the proposed project were previously budgeted and set aside, so no additional funding is being requested from the Village Board in order to award this grant. Four projects were reviewed for this round of Transformational Grants. The committee and staff have reviewed the applications and recommend the following award:

Top Shelf Ice Arena: "Reconfiguration of the Mall Entrance for an NHL Themed Shop". By adding an interior entrance to the mall, especially with a unique retail destination like an NHL Themed Shop, this project will greatly enhance the vibrancy and activity in this part of the mall. The project budget is estimated at \$180,000, with the Transformational Grant Award being \$50,000.

Coordinator Trujillo concluded the presentation by thanking the Village Board and offering to answer any questions.

Committee of the Whole Cancellation

Mayor Hood said that there were no discussion topics on the agenda for the February 23rd Committee of the Whole meeting and asked the Trustees if they would like to cancel the meeting.

It was moved by Trustee Balmes, seconded by Trustee O'Brien to cancel the Committee of the Whole meeting for February 23, 2026.

**Voice Vote: ALL AYE: Motion Carried.**

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**E. REPORTS**

None.

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**F. OLD BUSINESS**

None.

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**G. NEW BUSINESS**

1. Approval of Ord. 2026 – 05 authorizing the execution of an Amendment to a Small Business Capital Investment Grant Agreement with Top Shelf Ice Arena LLC for property located at 6152 Grand Avenue, Gurnee.

Mayor Hood invited Kurt Carlson, Managing Member Top Shelf Ice Arena, to speak. Mr. Carlson stated he is deeply grateful for selecting Top Shelf as a Transformational Grant recipient. He stated the arena operates with integrity and works to ensure every enhancement serves the broader community. Mr. Carlson stated he is proud to be a part of the Village and proceeded to summarize the proposed entrance enhancement as previously summarized by Community Engagement Coordinator Matt Trujillo. He stated the improvement creates a single ingress and egress point. This is important based on the wide age range of those that visit the facility. He stated that in addition to the retail component, it provides a number of other benefits related to operations and the customer experience.

It was moved by Trustee Ross, seconded by Trustee Thorstenson to approve of Ord. 2026 – 05 authorizing the execution of an Amendment

to a Small Business Capital Investment Grant Agreement with Top Shelf Ice Arena LLC for property located at 6152 Grand Avenue, Gurnee.

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

2. Approval of Ord. 2026 – 06 granting a Zoning Map Amendment pursuant to the Gurnee Zoning Ordinance of 1125 N. Delany Road (Ganfield Therapeutics).

Administrator Muetz said the owner of the property at 1125 N. Delany Road (office building behind the gas station at 41 & Delany that formerly housed Ganfield Therapeutics/Therapies & Wellness) has requested to rezone the subject property from O-1, Restricted Office District to C-3, Heavy Commercial District. The property was formerly zoned similar to C-3 until a 1999 ordinance rezoned it to O-1 Restricted Office District. Since then, the property has been used for physical and occupational therapy services but has remained vacant for the last 18 months. The owner has stated the O-1 zoning designation has hampered efforts to sell the property. Administrator Muetz stated there has been interest from medical, dental, and veterinary practices which suggest that reverting to C-3 would allow a broader range of commercial uses consistent with the corridor's character. He stated the property is surrounded by C-3 zoning on the east, north and west. R-3, Single-Family Residential District, borders the property to the south. The request was before the Planning & Zoning Board on February 4th. The PZB is forwarding a unanimous favorable recommendation.

It was moved by Trustee Balmes, seconded by Trustee O'Brien to approve of Ord. 2026 – 06 granting a Zoning Map Amendment pursuant to the Gurnee Zoning Ordinance of 1125 N. Delany Road (Ganfield Therapeutics).

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

3. Approval of Ord. 2026 – 07 authorizing the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding to become a member of the Lake County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Group.

Police Chief Gaughan stated that for more than 20 years, Gurnee was an active member of the Lake County Metropolitan Enforcement Group (MEG) and for approximately five years participated in a DEA Task Force. Involvement in these specialized units was paused after COVID due to manpower constraints and staffing levels. With staffing now in a better position, the Department has interest in increasing its participation in different task forces. The Police Department is requesting to join the Lake County Special Investigations Group (SIG) and enter into the associated Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with the Lake County Sheriff's Office. Chief Gaughan stated SIG is a federally funded High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA-designated) multi-jurisdictional task force focused on long-term investigations involving drug trafficking organizations, money laundering organizations, criminal enterprises and human trafficking. He stated while there is some expense related to salary and equipment, these costs are minimal. SIG-related training is funded through HIDTA or the Lake County Sheriff's Office. Overtime incurred for SIG operations is reimbursed to the Village up to an annual cap per officer (currently \$22,155). Chief Gaughan stated SIG is comprised of multiple federal and local agencies, but does not include immigration enforcement. Participation requires execution of the Master SIG Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the associated Body-Worn Camera MOU.

Trustee O'Brien asked about body cameras and uniforms when they are acting as a member of SIG.

Chief Gaughan said they would have a second body camera. During undercover roles they would have a Lake County Sheriff's Office

assigned body camera and would not work for the Village. When then are not undercover, they could work for the Village.

It was moved by Trustee O'Brien, seconded by Trustee Ross to approve of Ord. 2026 – 07 authorizing the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding to become a member of the Lake County Sheriff's Office Special Investigations Group.

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

4. Approval of Ord. 2026 – 08 adding one Class 1 Liquor License by amending Section 6-56 of Article II of Chapter 6 of the Gurnee Municipal Code entitled "Alcoholic Beverages" (The Point Pancake House – 1952 N. US 41).

Administrator Muetz said the Point Pancake House has applied for a Class 1 Liquor License. He stated a Class 1 license allows the sale of alcoholic liquor for consumption on the premises where sold and shall permit the sale and service of "To Go" (off premises) mixed drinks and single servings of wine. The Point has indicated it would like to offer drinks such as mimosas and Bloody Mary's to complement its food. The Police Department has reviewed and found nothing to preclude issuance.

It was moved by Trustee Thorstenson, seconded by Trustee Balmes to approve of Ord. 2026 – 08 adding one Class 1 Liquor License by amending Section 6-56 of Article II of Chapter 6 of the Gurnee Municipal Code entitled "Alcoholic Beverages" (The Point Pancake House – 1952 N. US 41).

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

5. Approval of Engineering Division recommendation to award the Estes Region Water Main Improvements project to the low bidder, Everlast Blacktop, at a cost of \$4,313,068.07.

Administrator Muetz said this project consists of replacing main in the Estes area. The proposed improvements will include installing approximately 6720 feet of 6-inch water main and 2170 feet of 8-inch water main. The Engineering Division opened bids on Monday, February 9th. Four companies bid on the work with pricing ranging from \$4.3 million to \$4.9 million. Everlast Blacktop was the low bidder at \$4,313,068.07. Administrator Muetz stated that while Everlast Blacktop has not previously completed a project of this scale for the Village, Engineering did review references for comparable projects and found them to be favorable.

It was moved by Trustee O'Brien, seconded by Trustee Garner to approve of Engineering Division recommendation to award the Estes Region Water Main Improvements project to the low bidder, Everlast Blacktop, at a cost of \$4,313,068.07.

**Roll call,**

**AYE: 5- Ross, Garner, O'Brien, Balmes, Thorstenson**

**NAY: 0- None**

**ABSENT: 1- Woodside**

**Motion Carried.**

**H. PUBLIC COMMENT**

**Trustee Ross  
945 Charles Ave.  
Gurnee, IL**

Trustee Ross stated her statement was not political, but rather humanitarian. She stated the issue has been weighing heavy on her and that her comments were being made as both a Trustee and lifelong resident. She said it is time to make a clear and unambiguous statement

at the action of Federal agents in Gurnee. Trustee Ross stated the agents have acted recklessly across the country. She stated she is proud of the Gurnee Police Department and its professionalism and training. Trustee Ross stated the Department was not notified of the incident at the high school until after it was over. She stated Gurnee has a large, vibrant immigrant community and that everyone should be treated with respect and dignity. She stated if an arrest is necessary, it should be conducted with a warrant and in a safe manner. Trustee Ross stated Federal agents should be unmasked, identified, properly trained, have body worn cameras and conduct themselves with the highest standards. She stated she is requesting Attorney Winter consult with staff to prepare a draft statement that is legal and unambiguous for the March 2nd Village Board meeting. Trustee Ross stated the Village must follow the Constitution and state law, but Gurnee is compassionate and seeks to create an environment where all residents feel safe and can thrive.

**Trustee Thorstenson**  
**5559 Chapel Hill**  
**Gurnee, IL**

Trustee Thorstenson quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. as it relates to silence. She stated she is choosing to speak out against ICE and will not be silent. Trustee Thorstenson stated she chose not to post her statement on social media and rather this is defining her purpose and responsibility as a Trustee. She stated residents have asked Gurnee to make a statement regarding ICE's inhumane efforts. Trustee Thorstenson stated she too would like to see Gurnee take a lead role including a statement to denounce ICE's actions, establishing ICE-Free zones or creating an outreach program in partnership with churches to assist targeted Hispanic residents. She referenced action taken by Aurora, IL. Trustee Thorstenson stated Gurnee should review what other communities have done to see if it would work here. She encouraged Gurnee to take action now, so plans are in place. She stated that everyone in the community should feel safe regardless of race, skin color or accent.

**David Ross**  
**945 Charles Ave.**  
**Gurnee, IL**

Mr. Ross stated he knows the Village Board members are kind, compassionate and generous individuals. He stated it's time to act that way. Mr. Ross urged the Board to speak proudly about who we are as a community. He acknowledged the action of passing a resolution may not make a difference as it relates to what happens on the street, but it does make a difference to residents of the community. He then shared a classic story of love and compassion (The Starfish Story: Every Act of Kindness Counts). Mr. Ross stated while action by the Village Board may not have a global effect, it does have an impact on a few people. He urged compassion and boldness in Village actions.

**Trustee Garner**  
**578 N. First St.**  
**Gurnee, IL**

Trustee Garner stated if one of us is not safe, none of us are safe. He stated race and culture do not matter. Trustee Garner stated it's elected officials' duty to make sure we are a welcoming country. He stated if someone is here illegally, they have a problem, but they still should be treated with respect and dignity. As of late, this is not how the country is acting. Trustee Garner stated silence is complicit. He stated we must protect freedom and make sure everyone is safe. Trustee Garner concluded by stating if enough people stand up, within the realm of the law, their opinions will be heard.

**Closing Comments**

None.

**Adjournment**

It was moved by Trustee Balmes, seconded by Trustee O'Brien to adjourn the meeting.

**Voice Vote:    ALL AYE:    Motion Carried.**

Mayor Hood adjourned the meeting at 7:53 p.m.

**Andrew Harris,**  
**Village Clerk**