

**City Council
SPECIAL MEETING**

June 22, 2026

5:30 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

The Pledge of Allegiance to the American Flag was given by all that were present.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Knebel called the Special Meeting of the Vandalia City Council to order at 5:30 pm.

ROLL CALL:

Aldermen Bowen, Brosman, Lester, Barker, Hubler, Lewey, and Stunkel were present. Hobler was absent.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS AND CONCERNS:

Ryan Connor reviewed the public participation rules with those in attendance. He said the applicants will have an opportunity to speak and give information to the Council. The Council will ask the applicants any questions and get information they need in order to place the matter up for discussion. Public comment will be made prior to the Aldermen engaging in a deliberative discussion. There will be a 3-minute time limit for each public comment. During this time, there will not be a Q and A session with the Aldermen. Only one person can speak at a time. The Aldermen will then have a discussion which ultimately will culminate in a vote to determine what they are going to do on the action item on the agenda.

John and Karen Barker, event coordinators, addressed the Council. She said they have requested Gallatin Street be closed between 4th and 5th Street on August 22 from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. She said this year the event will be held in August this year. The event is

scheduled from 12 Noon to 8 p.m. with vendors setting up beginning at 10 a.m. and tearing down after 8 p.m. John Becker stated the question has been asked regarding businesses that will be affected by the street closure. He said in the past when the street was closed in front of his business, nobody asked him if it would affect his business. He stated this event has been very successful in the past. Karen Becker said this year they decided not to have food trucks because there are plenty of places downtown that visitors could eat. Barker asked the Beckers if they would consider moving the event to Fifth Street next to City Hall where Gallatin Street does not have to be closed. Karen Becker said she was inclined to not move the event to Fifth Street. John Becker said he did not think they should have to move the event. Karen Becker said this is a family-owned business and basically they have to man their store and event with very little volunteer help. Barker said he is representing what his constituents have requested. Karen Becker said the downtown businesses will benefit from this event. She pointed out the Car Show will be held from 9 a.m. until 11 p.m. Gallatin Street being closed from Third to Fifth Streets.

Dan Holstein addressed the Council and expressed his opposition to the event. He cited Illinois statute 720 ILCS 5/11-21 regarding harmful material for minors and stated his belief that allowing the event could expose the City to potential legal liability. Holstein stated that he did not view the event as innocent in nature and expressed concerns that minors could be exposed to sexualized content, including drag

performances and transgender individuals in attire he characterized as inappropriate for children. He urged the Council to exercise caution and not permit the event.

Shane Bowen addressed the Council. He stated Gallatin Street has been closed on numerous occasions for community events. He further stated that decisions regarding the request should not be based on religious beliefs or personal feelings.

Chloe Fleming addressed the Council. She said she has been to many events on Gallatin. She said the City uses Gallatin Street as a place to gather. She said this decision is about an event where people gather. She said elected Aldermen are to provide non-partisan representation for the people, but it is also a fact that Council members cannot base their decision on this road closure because it is for Pride. She urged the Council to act in a neutral, nonpartisan manner.

Lisa Newsome addressed the Council. She said this should not have anything to do with religion or personal feelings. She has been a vendor at Pride events since the first event and stated it is family friendly. She said all humans need to be treated fairly and equitably.

Mr. Wagemann addressed the Council and expressed concerns regarding the proposed Pride event. He stated that he moved to Vandalia from California in 2021 and referenced his experiences with Pride events there, which he said included nudity and other behavior he considered inappropriate for children. He

questioned how event participants could ensure acceptable conduct and expressed concern about the event's location on Gallatin Street. Wagemann stated that he believed a compromise could be reached by holding the event at a different location. He also stated his view that existing legal recognition of same-sex marriage was sufficient.

Angelica Sandlin addressed the Council. She said there has not been any nudity at past Pride events. She said it has always been an accepting and family-friendly event. She said this is a vote on whether or not to close one block.

Kate Gerlach addressed the Council. She said the event has always been very tasteful. She said this event gives people a camaraderie that they need. She said it is a good thing for kids to see acceptance and love in a community that is waiting for them. She stated John and Karen do an excellent job.

Jerry Swarm addressed the Council. As a former Alderman, he said it is hard to make tough decisions. He said he is not for or against the event. He said he has never observed anything that is disrespectful or inappropriate during past Pride events. He said nobody is forcing anybody to go. He said the Council has permitted this event in the past on Fifth Street. He pointed out that Gallatin Street has been closed many times before.

RESOLUTION 2026-6-22-A: A Motion was made by Bowen and
RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING seconded by Stunkel to approve
ROAD CLOSURE FOR THE 2026 Resolution 2026-6-22-A: A Resolution
THIS-N-THAT PRIDE EVENT - Authorizing Road Closure for the
AUGUST 22, 2026:

2026 This-N-That Pride Event -
August 22, 2026.

Lester asked Connor for his legal opinion on the matter.

City Attorney Connor addressed the legal considerations related to the request. He stated that the matter before the Council was solely a request for a street closure and not a determination regarding the content or subject matter of the event. He explained that because the City's Ordinance does not establish specific criteria for approving or denying street closures, the Council must evaluate the request in a content-neutral manner consistent with how other street closure requests are considered.

Connor advised that the Council could not base its decision on approval or disapproval of the event's message or subject matter. Instead, the Council's consideration should be limited to whether the requested street closure is consistent with past street closures and appropriate under the circumstances. He stated that denying the request based on the event's content could constitute a violation of constitutional protections and potentially expose the City to liability.

Connor further explained that constitutional principles require government entities to remain neutral regarding the viewpoints expressed in public forums. He stated that the Constitution protects minority viewpoints regardless of whether they are supported by a majority of constituents and that the Council's

role is constrained by those constitutional requirements when considering requests involving the use of public spaces.

ADJOURNMENT:

Following discussion on Resolution 2026-6-22-A: A Resolution Authorizing Road Closure for the 2026 This-N-That Pride Event scheduled for August 22, 2026, a roll call vote was taken: Brosman, yea; Hubler, yea; Barker, nay; Stunkel, yea; Lester, yea; Bowen, yea; Lewey, yea. Hobler was absent. Motion carried 6-1.

Motion was made by Hubler and seconded by Lewey to adjourn the meeting at 6:09 p.m.



City Clerk