



Minutes
City Council - Special Session
Thursday, April 23, 2026 - 5:00 PM

The City Council convened in special session in the Government Center Boardroom. Mayor Dan Brady called the meeting to order and led the Pledge of Allegiance, ending with a moment of silent prayer/reflection.

Roll Call

Present: Council Member Jenna Kearns
Council Member John Danenberger
Council Member Michael Straza
Council Member Cody Hendricks
Council Member Kent Lee
Council Member Abby Scott
Council Member Sheila Montney
Council Member Mollie Ward
Mayor Dan Brady

Absent: Council Member Micheal Mosley

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Consent Agenda

No items were considered.

Regular Agenda

The following Item was presented:

Item 7.A. Overview and Discussion on April 17, 2026, Tornado Response.

City Manager Jeff Jurgens briefly thanked the Mayor, Council, and staff for attending the special meeting and provided an update on the April 17, 2026 tornado and the City's response.

He noted that the National Weather Service had confirmed that one long EF-1 tornado spent over 20 miles on the ground impacting both Bloomington and Normal. He confirmed that self-reported damage aligned with the storm's path. He highlighted strong interdepartmental coordination beginning Friday night and continuing through Saturday at the McLean County (County) Emergency Operations Center with County Emergency Management Agency (EMA) Director Kathy Beck, along with Public Works, Parks, Police, Fire, Engineering, and Water Departments, as well as other field crews. He credited prior training for the effective response, cited 104 emergency 911 calls, 148 non-emergency calls, and 78 fire calls, and described ongoing collaboration with the County EMA, Red Cross, state agencies, the Chamber, and Ameren. While fewer than 20 people appeared to have been displaced, the Red Cross had reported that no one had used formal shelter from displacement. He emphasized the need for residents and businesses to submit damage reports via the City's website to support potential state and federal relief and noted 151 self-reported damage cases to date in the City.

Public Works Director Mose Rickey thanked the Mayor, Council, and City Manager and emphasized his pride in his Public Works staff, noting that their work in the field and on the phones made the response successful. He explained that crews began responding the night of April 17 around 10:30 p.m. and dealt with blown-around infrastructure setups and worked to clear roadways while prioritizing worker safety due to numerous downed power lines. He stated that by the end of Wednesday, they had removed roughly 250 truckloads of debris and were still collecting data on hours worked and total loads. He asked residents to avoid parking directly beside or in front of brush piles—ideally staying about 10 feet away—to speed cleanup. He explained that formal storm cleanup was expected to be completed by May 1, after which remaining debris would be handled through normal operations. He also noted that despite the storm response, solid waste services continued without interruption, allowing the City to maintain all regular solid waste offerings while managing the cleanup.

Parks & Recreation Director Eric Veal reported that Parks & Recreation worked closely with Public Works, beginning storm response around 11 p.m. Friday, with forestry crews putting in 10–12 hour days and logging about 372 hours so far across forestry, parks maintenance, and Highland Park Golf Course, which was also hit. He stated that about 70 storm-damage work orders had been completed (including City trees on houses and cars), with 197 still pending and more expected as additional hazards like hanging limbs had been identified. He noted that Clearwater Park, Stevenson Park, and the Holiday Knolls area were among the hardest hit. He explained that Holiday Knolls was especially vulnerable due to the area having primarily silver maple trees—now prohibited as street trees due to weak wood and invasive roots—noting that the City now followed International Society of Arboriculture planting standards. He publicly recognized key staff (City Forester Dave Lamb, Superintendent Jeff Heineman, and Tom Rakestraw for communications) and the broader Parks and Public Works support staff. He reminded the Mayor, Council, and City Manager of an Arbor Day tree-planting event at Benjamin School at 10 a.m. the following day.

City Manager Jurgens noted that, in addition to the City’s efforts, there were tree assistance programs available—such as one through Ameren—and staff could help connect residents who lost trees to those resources. He thanked Deputy City Managers Billy Tyus and Sue McLaughlin for their continuous support in organizing the response, reiterated his appreciation for all field crews working in difficult conditions, and expressed gratitude that no one was injured and that the community had been patient during the cleanup.

Council Member Ward thanked staff for their hard work and, noting her prior service during the June 2021 storm, asked for a future comparison of the impact of the current storm to the 2021 event once data was available. She also requested information on any lessons learned from the 2021 response that benefited this event and what additional changes staff would make going forward based on their current experience.

City Manager Jurgens responded that he could not yet compare this storm response to the June 2021 event as he was not involved, but that he would identify those who were and provide that information. He noted that staff would conduct a debrief to evaluate what worked, what could be improved, and what should change, and cited Anthony Nelson’s recent implementation and real-world testing of new emergency protocols at Bison games (Grossinger Arena) as an example of the City’s commitment to continuous improvement and learning from events.

The following Item was presented:

Item 7.B. Presentation and Discussion Regarding the Approval of the Proposed Continued Declaration of Local Disaster Emergency.

City Manager Jurgens explained that on Saturday, the Mayor of Normal, the County Board Chair, and Mayor Brady each issued local emergency declarations, which were the first steps toward determining eligibility for additional relief or assistance. He explained that under City ordinances, the Mayor is empowered to extend the City's Declaration for up to seven days, after which the Council is required to vote to continue it and noted that this requirement was the reason for the special meeting. He stated that given cleanup and the damage assessment that are underway, he recommended extending the City's Declaration in alignment with the Town of Normal and McLean County.

Council Member Straza made a motion, seconded by Council Member Hendricks, to approve the Item as presented.

Mayor Brady directed the Clerk to call roll:

Ayes: Kearns, Montney, Danenberger, Straza, Hendricks, Ward, Lee, Scott

Motion Carried.

RESOLUTION NO. 2026 – 049

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE EXTENSION OF DECLARATION OF CONTINUED LOCAL DISASTER EMERGENCY

Mayor Brady noted that the Council's immediate action on extending the Emergency Declaration was complete and thanked Council for meeting on short notice to represent their wards and the City. He also recognized McLean County EMA Director Kathy Beck and explained that during visits to the hardest-hit areas over the weekend, residents consistently reported being safely sheltered in their basements when the tornado hit, a result he credits to the timely activation of warning sirens under her direction.

Council Member Straza thanked the emergency management team again and emphasized that the timing of the warnings and the public's response saved lives. He noted that 3-4 of the most heavily impacted areas were in Ward 5, and emphasized that he was still contacting residents to ensure they received the assistance needed. He complimented the City for assisting with cleanup that would have been very costly for residents to address on their own. He described strong neighborhood cooperation and volunteer cleanup efforts and stressed residents avoiding downed power lines. He praised Public Works, Ameren, and other partners for their work and concluded that the event demonstrated the value of prior preparedness by the City and County, and acknowledged focusing on areas for improvement.

Council Member Montney thanked Council Member Straza and Mayor Brady for their strong on-the-ground presence in Ward 5 after the storm and noted that residents observed and appreciated the time and effort they spent in the area and commended them for their public service.

Mayor Brady stated that the shared goal of the Council and City Administration was to reassure residents that help and resources were on the way, and that this was accomplished through the efforts of many people. He highlighted and thanked utility providers Ameren and Corn Belt for their round-the-clock work and emphasized the effective cooperation among the City, Town, County, and State. He concluded that the response showed "there is no 'I' in team" and thanked residents for taking care of one another.

City Manager's Discussion

No Discussion was had.

Council Member Discussion

No Discussion was had.

Mayor's Discussion

No Discussion was had.

Executive Session

No Executive Session was held.

Adjournment

Council Member Montney made a motion, seconded by Council Member Hendricks, to adjourn the meeting.

Mayor Brady directed the Clerk to call roll:


Ayes: Kearns, Montney, Danenberger, Straza, Hendricks, Ward, Lee, Scott

Motion Carried. (Viva Voce)

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 PM.

CITY OF BLOOMINGTON

ATTEST



Dan Brady, Mayor



Ashley Lara, Records & Licensing Specialist

