The City Council of the City of Gardner, Kansas met in regular session on September 8, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at Gardner City Hall, 120 East Main Street, Gardner, Kansas, with Mayor Todd Winters presiding. Present were Councilmembers Mark Baldwin, Kacy Deaton, Mark Wiehn, Steve McNeer, and Kelly Johnson. City staff present were City Administrator Jim Pruetting; Deputy City Administrator Amy Nasta; Finance Director Matt Wolff; Police Chief Kelly Herron; Parks Director Jason Bruce; Community Development Director David Knopick; Public Works Director Kellen Headlee; Utility Director David Hunter; City Attorney Ryan Denk; Clerk Renee Rich. Others present included those listed on the sign-in sheet and others who did not sign in.

There being a quorum of Councilmembers present, Mayor Winters called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Winters led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

PRESENTATIONS

PUBLIC HEARING

1. **Consider holding a public hearing to receive public input regarding the City's intent to exceed the revenue neutral rate**

Councilmember McNeer made a motion to open a public hearing to receive public input regarding the City's intent to exceed the revenue neutral rate

Councilmember Johnson Seconded.

With all of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

Bradley Steinmetz is concerned about the increases in budget costs. Discusses information from the budget book detailing some of the operational increases and utilities cost increases. The revenue neutral rate is already increased by the increased valuations from Johnson County. Believes the increases are going towards health insurance, and merit increases as well as a new phone system. Asks council to vote the resolution down.

Lynn Stewart said his utilities have increased every year he has lived here. He likes the golf course but feels the city has let it fall apart and does not spend any money on it.

Bill Bonine would like the council to think about the people they are serving and take the burden off of the taxpayers for a year or two.

Ty Bingaman is concerned about the increase in the revenue neutral rate. Questions where the numbers come from. Believes the new entertainment district will cost the residents and plans to come to the next meeting when that is discussed.

Councilmember McNeer made a motion to close the public hearing.

Councilmember Baldwin Seconded.

With all of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

1. **Consider adopting a resolution of the City of Gardner, Kansas, to exceed the revenue neutral rate for the fiscal year 2027 budget**

Finance Director Wolff said the city's 2027 Budget is based on the mill rate of 17.814 which exceeds the revenue neutral rate calculated by the county as 16.933.

Baldwin explained how the RNR calculation is determined and the mill rate the city has control over. McNeer said RNR is a tax increase and suggested everyone look at their tax bill to understand who is getting the most from the taxes. Johnson asked the dollar value between revenue neutral and keeping the mill levy the same. Wolff confirmed it is about $261,000.

Councilmember Johnson made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2204, a resolution levying a property tax rate exceeding the Revenue Neutral Rate for the City of Gardner, Kansas.

Councilmember Wiehn Seconded.

With a majority of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the Resolution passed and was assigned number 2204.

Deaton:	Yes
Wiehn:	Yes
Johnson:	No
McNeer:	No
Winters:	Yes
Baldwin:	Yes

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Consider holding a public hearing to receive public input regarding the proposed FY 2027 Budget.

Councilmember Johnson made a motion to open a public hearing to receive public input regarding the proposed FY 2027 Budget.

Councilmember McNeer Seconded.

With all of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

Ty Bingaman said he feels like the costs for doing roadwork on Center seems a bit steep. Also concerned about the cost for the ballfields. Asks if the city needs some of the items or just wants them.

Bradley Steinmetz thanks Johnson and McNeer for voting on behalf of the public. Has already spoken at the Board of County Commissioners meeting. Plans to run for City Council.

Lynn Stewart thanks Johnson & McNeer for voting against the revenue neutral rate. Believes the city does not care about its people. Does not believe we need to re-pave the roads, those are wants. There are other things that need to be taken care of.

Dr. Sharilyn Ray said council is tasked with community survival. Kansas is ranked 19th in taxation. Thinks the road paving costs are too high. Believes there are things going on behind closed doors that should be more transparent.

Councilmember McNeer made a motion to close the public hearing.

Councilmember Johnson Seconded.

With all of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

2. Consider adopting an ordinance adopting the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget

Finance Director Wolff explains the year end fund balances based upon the Proposed 2027 Budget. The proposed mill levy is 17.814 mills which is the same as the prior year.

Administrator Pruetting explains the budget process. Requests are made for items needed for city business. Then the budget is reviewed and cuts are made. Review includes one-time expenses and if items are pushed, we lose operational efficiency and pay a higher fee for the following year. It's based upon growth of the city and additional needs we will have. Some purchases come out of different funds that are not coming out of property taxes rather out of revenue funds.

The baseball fields at Celebration Park is coming out of the Transient Guest Tax, which comes from people staying in the hotels, but that money can only be spent on certain items. The cost of road repairs comes through a bidding process, and grants are sought after to help fund those. The contracts are included in council packets.

A question came up about the $300k dump truck included in the budget. The fleet has not been expanded since 2009 when the city was about 1/3 of the size it is now. This new addition is about double the load capacity of our current dump trucks. This adds capacity and is more equipped to handle the additional roadways we have picked up in the last ten years. Other items of discussion are current vacancies and vehicle replacements. Pruetting explains the VERP program based upon costs and repairs. Some positions stay open for a longer period of time because they require specialized experience. The people living here are grateful for the city services and amenities. There is concern about cutting some of the openings. Pruetting explains that if we put off purchases and staff additions, we will be doing catch-up later. As the city grows, we will have to provide additional city services that we are not budgeting right now. Items discussed for cutting from the budget included closing the pool, canceling the Independence Day Festival, and pushing the phone system purchase another year.

Councilmember Wiehn made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2888, an ordinance adopting the 2027 Budget of the City of Gardner, Kansas and setting the mill levy rate as specified in the previously adopted resolution.

Councilmember Baldwin Seconded.

With a majority of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the Ordinance passed and was assigned number 2888.

Wiehn:	Yes
Johnson:	No
McNeer:	No
Winters:	Yes
Baldwin:	Yes
Deaton:	Yes

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public came forward.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. **Standing approval of the minutes as written for the regular meeting on August 17, 2026**
2. **Standing approval of City expenditures prepared August 13, 2026 in the amount of $1,621,135.41; August 19, 2026 in the amount of $135,780.79; August 21, 2026 in the amount of $1,048,562.60; August 27, 2026 in the amount of $1,195,691.99; and August 28, 2026 in the amount of $176.80**
3. **Consider an appointment to the Planning Commission**
4. **Consider authorizing the renewal and upgrade of Microsoft Office GCC G5 Licensing.**
5. **Consider authorizing the City Administrator to execute a contract with Price Construction Management to construct the Alleyway Improvements project.**

Councilmember McNeer made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda.

Councilmember Johnson Seconded.

With all of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

PLANNING & ZONING CONSENT AGENDA
COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS
OLD BUSINESS
NEW BUSINESS

3. **Consider adopting an ordinance to condemn property through eminent domain action to construct the planned 167th Street Improvements Project**

Public Works Director Headlee discusses New Business Items 3-5. This action details the remaining properties that have not come to agreements in the negotiation process. This is necessary to construct the projects and maintain project timelines.

Councilmember McNeer made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2889 to condemn property through eminent domain action to construct the planned 167th Street Improvements Project.

Councilmember Wiehn Seconded.

With a majority of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the Ordinance passed and was assigned number 2889.

Johnson: Yes
McNeer: Yes
Baldwin: Yes
Deaton: Yes
Wiehn: Yes

4. Consider adopting an ordinance to condemn property through eminent domain action to construct the planned 175th Street Improvements Project

Councilmember McNeer made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2890 to condemn property through eminent domain action to construct the planned 175th Street Improvements Project.

Councilmember Johnson Seconded.

With a majority of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the Ordinance passed and was assigned number 2890.

McNeer: Yes
Baldwin: Yes
Deaton: Yes
Wiehn: Yes
Johnson: Yes

5. Consider adopting an ordinance to condemn property through eminent domain action to construct the planned Grand Street Roadway Improvements Project, from Pine to Center Street

Councilmember Wiehn made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2891 to condemn property through eminent domain action to construct the planned Grand Street Roadway Improvements Project, from Pine to Center Street.

Councilmember Johnson Seconded.

With a majority of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the Ordinance passed and was assigned number 2891.

Baldwin: Yes
Deaton: Yes
Wiehn: Yes
Johnson: Yes
McNeer: Yes

6. Consider accepting voluntary annexations with landowner consent

City Administrator Pruetting said this is a voluntary annexation for property at the southeast corner of US56 and Waverly. This property will allow us to annex across Waverly Road up to the railroad tracks.

Councilmember McNeer made a motion to accept the Voluntary Consent Annexation Agreements from the property owner identified within and adopt Ordinance No. 2892, an ordinance annexing land to the City of Gardner, Kansas.

Councilmember Johnson Seconded.

With a majority of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the Ordinance passed and was assigned number 2892.

Deaton: Yes
Wiehn: Yes

Johnson: Yes
McNeer: Yes
Baldwin: Yes

COUNCIL UPDATES

Councilmember McNeer thanks everyone for their patience and letting the whole process be heard all the way through.

Councilmember Johnson thanks all who spoke. Also, thanks city staff who work on the budget. Wishes everyone a reflective Patriot's Day on the 11th.

Mayor Winters thanks Director Wolff and Administrator Pruetting for their work on the budget.

Council President Baldwin reminds everyone to think of those who died on September 11.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Consider entering into executive session to discuss matters of attorney-client privilege

Councilmember Baldwin made a motion to recess into executive session for consultation with an attorney for the body or agency which would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship pursuant to K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(2) beginning at 9:00 pm; returning to regular session at 9:10 pm.

Councilmember Wiehn Seconded.

With all of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

Councilmember Baldwin made a motion to resume regular session at 9:10 pm.

Councilmember Deaton Seconded.

With all of the Councilmembers voting in favor of the motion, the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council, on a motion duly made by Councilmember Baldwin and seconded by Councilmember McNeer the meeting adjourned at 9:11 pm.

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City Clerk