



City Council Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 4, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.  
Five Points Banquet Room - 360 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, Illinois

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**Call to Order** Mayor Gary W. Manier called the regular meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., with a quorum present.

**Roll Call** *Present:* Alderpersons Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens

**Also Present** City Administrator Jim Snider, Finance Director Joanie Baxter, Planning and Development Director Jon Oliphant, City Engineer Dennis Carr, Public Works Director Brian Rittenhouse, Police Chief Mike McCoy, City Clerk Valeri Brod, City Attorney Derek Schryer, Planner Joe Boyer and Press

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**Pledge of Allegiance** All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Manier.

**Audience Comments** Washington resident Sharon Amdall spoke regarding a recent legal investigation involving several members of Council. She wants to know what is the next step and asked how will people will know how Alderpeople acted? She stated that this is important for transparency. Ms. Amdall feels in another time, this behavior would have been covered by the news. She is looking forward to seeing action take place and the rebuilding of confidence. Her full statement is attached and made part of these minutes.

**Review Agenda for Deletions/Additions** Nothing added or deleted at this time.

**Consent Agenda** Mayor Manier presented the Consent Agenda for approval of the following items:  
A. Approve Minutes of the February 19, 2024 Regular City Council Meeting  
B. Accept Financial Reports for Periods Ended December 31, 2023 and January 31, 2024  
C. Approve Purchase Authorization for Wastewater Treatment Sludge Disposal  
Alderson Brownfield motioned to accept the Consent Agenda; Alderson Stevens seconded.  
8 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens  
0 Nays:  
Motion carried by roll call vote.

**Proclamation** Mayor Manier read a proclamation proclaiming March 4-10, 2024 as WCHS Pantherette Week.  
*WCHS Pantherette Recognition* He welcomed the WCHS Pantherettes and their coaches who accepted the proclamation. The coaches shared highlights of their season and Alderson Adams stated that the team put in the hard work and deserve this honor.  
Alderson Adams motioned to accept the proclamation; Alderson McIntyre seconded.  
8 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens  
0 Nays:  
Motion carried by roll call vote.

**Proclamation** Mayor Manier read a proclamation proclaiming March as Amyloidosis Awareness Month.  
*Amyloidosis Awareness Month* Washington resident Cindy Byrd accepted the proclamation in honor of her son Corey who is diagnosed with Amyloidosis. She shared that it is terminal, and he was originally misdiagnosed which is why awareness is needed. She also shared that he is a candidate for stem cell treatment and is currently in remission, however; he has irreversible damage to his heart and organs. Ms. Byrd and her family are grateful that the City accepted this proclamation.  
Alderson Stevens motioned to accept the proclamation; Alderson Smith seconded.  
8 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens  
0 Nays:  
Motion carried by roll call vote.

**Proclamation** Mayor Manier welcomed Clerk Brod to read a proclamation proclaiming March 10-16, 2024 as  
*MS Awareness Week* Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Week. She read the proclamation in memory of her mother who had MS. Brian Gorsich, Chair Central Illinois Community Council Peoria of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society, accepted the proclamation. He shared that Washington has one of the highest prevalence rates in the tri-county area and that this is a great community to receive support. He welcomed everyone to the MS walk on April 25th.  
Alderson McIntyre motioned to accept the proclamation; Alderson Smith seconded.  
8 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens  
0 Nays:  
Motion carried by roll call vote.

**City Administrator  
Communications**  
*IML Update*

City Administrator Snider shared that the State of Illinois is proposing to eliminate the 1% sales tax on groceries, which is dedicated to municipalities. This would cost the City \$500,000 per year and the Illinois Municipal League is opposed to this and encourages elected officials and citizens across the state to provide their objection to the proposal. He shared that the General Assembly has a history of taking away local tax distributions from municipalities and counties. Prior to 1970, the Constitutional Convention put a stop to taxing independently and put the taxing in a uniform way which wasn't a problem for forty years. He shared that 15 years ago, due to the economic crisis, the General Assembly wanted money by assessing an administrative fee and the State has since been chipping away at the money that cities receive. He also noted that public safety officers were directed to not ticket anyone driving under 25 mph over the speed limit. He asked Council to support blocking this. Mayor Manier noted that this information was provided at a budget address and nothing is set yet, however, this may become law. Mayor Manier confirmed the percentages that they are taking from municipalities. He encouraged everyone to send notes to senators and state representative to help stop this. Administrator Snider clarified that home rule cities will likely need to raise its rates to help offset the cost.

*FY2025 Budget Review  
Group 3*

Finance Director Joanie Baxter shared the following information regarding the budget: Regarding the General Fund as a whole, Ms. Baxter shared

- there is almost a 20% increase primarily due to the proposed livestreaming expenses
- legal fees increased due to FOIAs and lawsuits
- professional fees and support of InterGov increased
- there was an overall decrease in City Hall expenses

Public Works Director Brian Rittenhouse provided the following budget information regarding streets:

- Regarding Repair and Maintenance Systems - Contractual increased due to 70/30 sidewalk program
- Training increased doing more supervisor training and management training.
- Repair and maintenance commodities decreased due to completion of projects.
- Repair and systems increased due to in-house paving projects. Taking are going to try to take advantage of paver rental this year.
- Capital improvements increased \$164,000 due to larger paving projects such as mill and overlay, curbs gutters, sidewalks, Candlewood bridge, repaving the fire department, and the Jackson Street pedestrian bridge.

Ms. Baxter shared that the Police budget was already reviewed, and some transfers may change because some items were estimated. She also shared that information regarding Tourism and Economic Development has already been reviewed but minor changes may be made due to personnel. This is the same with fire and rescue. She noted the following:

- The TC3 contract was included in the telecommunications tax information, and we have 5-6 years that we can continue to use those funds, noting there is a decrease in the use of the telephone so that tax is decreasing.
- New departments are included.
- The cemetery usually charges enough to cover all the expenses.
- We've done capital projects to improve the cemetery.
- Stormwater management is treated the same since we will create a new capital project fund because the home rule tax covers non-bond payments.
- She created a summary in ClearGov and provided it in the Council's packet. This will show what the different departments are in the general fund. She noted that it is after the general fund summary on page 4 of the electronic document.
- On the general fund spreadsheet, on the page showing the unrestricted general fund, it will show most of the revenue. It is on pages 12-14.
- Reserves were not used last year and we are now showing a positive.

Public Works Director Brian Rittenhouse shared the following information:

- Cemetery operations is the same as last year except they will be purchasing a new \$4,000 leaf vacuum for the mower.
- They are budgeting \$30,000 for a potential columbarium expansion which will be brought back to Council for approval.
- The stormwater budget shows \$100,000 for potential projects including easements, ditch cleaning and outfall maintenance.
- Repair and maintenance systems commodities will continue to do catch basin maintenance, brick manholes need to be lined, and they will address issues with bank stabilization and outfalls.
- Capital purchase systems shows the Jackson Street pedestrian bridge, Felker's drainage project, and the Candlewood historical bridge which will come out of stormwater and general funds.
- They also budgeted for televising and lining.

City Engineer Carr shared that even though the Park District has potentially approved the berm project, they still need to sign off on it. The berm may affect the need for the Jackson Street pedestrian bridge and it should not be affected by the baskets on the frisbee golf course. Also, bonding has been discussed for the improvements in Felker's which will be completed with the proceeds instead of splitting the funds, allowing it to be funded through one account and not split between funds.

Finance Director Baxter opened the floor for questions, and none were provided.

City Engineer Dennis Carr provided the following information:

- The MFT Fund resolution was recently passed, approving \$1,000,000 for maintenance projects.
- They will focus on areas north of Hilldale this year.
- They will do hot in-place recycling.
- They will focus on areas north of the bypass and roads east of Cummings and south of Santa Fe. The other areas will be next year.
- They are using Rebuild Illinois Funds to help pay for the engineering of Catherine.
- The Capital Funds are similar to what was shown at the strategic planning meeting.
- They have been working hard to make up for lost time on the Nofsinger project and hope to be completed around November but there may be some landscaping to do in 2025.
- Freedom Parkway/Lakeshore Drive improvements have not started paving due to weather and it should be completed this year.
- Hilldale improvements will carry over.
- Catherine Street is in the next set of projects.
- Stormwater Management and Capital Fund is our recent bond and includes Project K, which is south of Catherine and streets to the east of Elm. It also includes Project L which focuses on an area near St. Pat's Church.
- Project K will likely start first and Project L was submitted for a grant.
- The SRTS is continuing the design of the North Grant Street projects. We will need to acquire a few easements and complete to IDOTs standards. They budgeted an additional \$30,000 in case they receive a grant for Phase 2.

Alderson Blundy asked about the impacts of eliminating the \$500,000 grocery tax and the upcoming fire department contract. He asked what could be removed from the budget to make up the difference. Administrator Snider shared that we currently have reserves, but Council would need to decide how to move forward. Alderson McIntyre agreed with the concern and thinks this might not be the year for meeting streaming. He expressed caution due to potential shortfalls and is also not in favor of raising taxes. Administrator Snider shared that 80% of the budget is workforce and manpower. He invited Council to share projects that they may want to remove from the budget, noting that it is a Council decision. Alderson Stevens asked about the remaining money in the 70/30 sidewalk program. She asked about Elm and High near Melvin Street. Engineer Carr shared that there are two funds used for funding. Engineer Carr and Planning and Development Director Oliphant clarified that a few projects were submitted for potential future grant funding which included a signal at Wilmore and Jefferson, a signal on Freedom at the Walmart/Menards entrance, continuing the Centennial rec trail to Freedom Parkway, extending Jefferson west, and improving a section of Dallas Road between Westminster and Cruger Roads. They noted that potential projects are reviewed every five years and this does not lock the City into funding the projects but provides resources if we move forward with the projects.

**First Reading Ordinance:** City Administrator Snider provided the following ordinance for review:  
*Code Enforcement Administrative Adjudication Process*  
**Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance would establish an administrative adjudication system for the handling of certain Municipal Code violations.  
**Title:** Adopting Code Enforcement Administrative Adjudication Process  
 Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that this would handle the non-tall weed and grass cases. He noted that we don't have too many per year, but this would expedite the cases and would be more cost efficient. He noted that Planner Joe Boyer is familiar with this process.

**First Reading Ordinance:** City Administrator Snider provided the following ordinance for review:  
*2024 Official Map of Zoning Districts*  
**Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance approves the City of Washington Official Zoning Map for 2024 as required by state statute.  
**Title:** Adoption of 2024 Official Map of Zoning Districts  
 Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained this is required yearly by state statute and there are no new rezoning filings.

**Second Reading Ordinance:** City Administrator Snider provided the following ordinance for consideration:  
*Amending Chapter 70 of the Municipal Code Regarding Excessive Engine Braking Noise*  
**Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance would amend the Washington Municipal Code to prohibit excessive engine braking of commercial vehicles that emit excessive noise within the City, and to post signs prohibiting excessive engine braking noise at certain locations.  
**Title:** Amending Chapter 70 of the Washington Municipal Code Regarding Excessive Engine Braking Noise  
 Alderson Stevens motioned to accept the ordinance; Alderson McIntyre seconded.  
6 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens  
2 Nays: Brownfield, Butler  
Motion carried by roll call vote.

**Alderson's Comment** Alderson McIntyre thanked Planning and Zoning Director Oliphant for his work on the first reading ordinance, noting that it was good information.

**Adjournment** At 7:34 p.m. Alderson McIntyre moved to adjourn; Alderson Smith seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

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Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk

# Washington City Council Comments

March 4, 2024

These comments are from both John and Sharon Amdall and we live in Washington.

In the February 5 City Council meeting, we heard and read the results of an unbiased independent legal investigation that found that at least two Council members engaged in improper conduct that exposed both the City and themselves to potential fines and sanctions.

We have waited patiently – nearly one month – to see the next step in this situation. But we have seen nothing.... yet.

How will people who were not in the room on February 5 know that two Council members have engaged in this behavior? How will they know that their representatives cannot be trusted?

Is there no action that can be taken? Perhaps censure? Recall or impeachment (as suggested by the report)?

Could the city perhaps put out a brief press release that explains the remedial actions that will be taken to prevent and/or detect improper behavior? Transparency is important, so this would be an important step towards transparency about this issue.

Back in the day of investigative journalism, this disclosed behavior would most likely have sparked newspaper coverage and perhaps further digging by investigative reporters. We have not seen any news coverage about this sad news.

We are looking forward to seeing some type of action to support transparency and rebuild confidence in our City Council.

Thank you.

John & Sharon Amdall

