



City Council Meeting Minutes
Monday, February 17, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.
Five Points Banquet Room - 360 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, Illinois

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:* Council Members Adams, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
Absent: Council Member Blundy

Also Present Finance Director Joanie Baxter, Planning and Development Director Jon Oliphant, City Engineer Carr, Public Works Director Brian Rittenhouse, Deputy Police Chief Jeff Stevens, City Clerk Valeri Brod, City Attorney Derek Schryer and Press

Pledge of Allegiance All stood for a moment of silence in honor of former Council Member, Al Howerter followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Manier.
Mayor Manier read the following statement:
After last Monday's meeting, we received several comments from the public, city staff, and elected officials expressing concerns about the need for improved decorum at our meetings. I share these concerns, and agree that the professional atmosphere at our meetings has diminished in recent years.
That is why you will see a resolution adopting Illinois Municipal League's Civility Pledge on tonight's agenda. This pledge is a step toward restoring the level of respect and professionalism that our meetings deserve.
Moving forward, I also encourage all those in attendance to refrain from call-outs, interruptions, or any actions and language that is disrespectful. Those wishing to speak, please do so during your designated time on the agenda and refrain from speaking over others as they take their turn sharing their views and opinions. We want to make sure everyone has an opportunity to be heard in an orderly and respectful manner.

Audience Comments Washington resident Jackie Mason thanked Council for their vote to have a town hall meeting, asked several questions regarding the amphitheater, and shared that over 125 petitions requesting a 90-day hold have been submitted. Her comments are attached and made part of these minutes.
Simon Petravick shared concerns with the tax revenue that may be generated by the amphitheater. He feels the report includes assumptions that are based on the number of tickets for sale. He noted the Lee Greenwood concert at Five Points sold only half the tickets. He wonders if more people will come to the amphitheater venue. He said that some artists are saying the amphitheater is not their type of venue. He shared that he checked revenue and noted the 2024 tax return is not yet available. He suggests the rental price of the property to be set to cover the taxes and give a credit if they meet certain revenue goals. He is concerned if Mayor Manier has a conflict of interest. He noted that City Hall windows were previously discussed and during that time, some council members suggested using common sense. He gave an example that if a member were part of a jury and a person's spouse were on the board, should that person sit on the jury.
Washington resident, Beth O'Brien is curious about the status of the land appraisal. She feels it should be released to citizens before council votes.
Washington resident Mark Barra, addressed previous citizen comments. He noted that one comment said that no one want to sit outside in the heat and bugs, but he listed several other outdoor venues that he feels would disagree. He noted a person from Limelight made comments regarding the Devon that included the college population but college students aren't in town during the amphitheater season. He noted comments stating the Chamber stopped having live music at Good Neighbor days because there wasn't interest in live music; the Chamber told him it was due to expenses and water issues in the area. He feels it would be good to hold Good Neighbor Days on the grounds of the Amphitheater. He noted the beer tent was eliminated because the property owner no longer wanted alcohol on his property. Mr. Barra noted that comments were made suggesting the amphitheater move to Freedom Parkway but the City doesn't own land in that area. Mr. Barra expressed concern that trying to sell the land to a residential developer would be difficult in this market and the schools couldn't handle the massive residential expense. He is concerned schools will have to build new buildings when they are over 70% of his tax bill. He noted the Council Member Blundy stated that the schools will just figure it out.

Agenda Deletions/Additions Council Member Stevens asked for an update regarding: the letter of intent, the motion to remove Mayor Manier for perceived conflict of interest, the appraisal of the 223 property, the hiring of a new city administrator, and a meeting date for the town hall meeting.
Mayor Manier shared that Council Member Stevens received information regarding the conflict of interest from the city attorney, the appraisal is still being discussed, and the town hall meeting has not been scheduled.

Council Member Stevens asked if Attorney Schryer could explain his conflict-of-interest opinion. Attorney Schryer shared that Council had received the opinion and it is not their job to release the information on behalf of the City. City Council would have to vote to release the opinion to the public. She wonders if the motion should have said “and release to public”. Attorney Schryer explained that it is never their recommendation to release information that is protected under attorney client privilege.

Council Member Stevens made a motion to have the opinion released to the public.

Attorney Schryer explained that it would not be appropriate for this section of agenda. Council Member Stevens asked for a timeline of when appraisals are released. Staff members shared that they are not aware of a time when an appraisal has been released.

- Consent Agenda** Mayor Manier presented the Consent Agenda for approval of the following items:
- A. Approve February 3, 2025, Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
 - B. Approve Bills & Payroll
 - C. Accept Financial Reports for Period Ended December 31, 2024
 - D. Approve Washington Commercial Building and Property Improvement Grant Program Pay Request - Washington Family Restaurant, 1269 Peoria Street
 - E. Approve Pay Request #4 for WTP1 Chlorination Upgrade

Council Member Stevens motioned to approve the consent agenda; Council Member Smith seconded.

Motion carried by voice vote.

Mayoral Communication Mayor Manier congratulated the WCHS Pantherettes and introduced Council Member Adams who shared that the Pantherettes received first place in jazz and lyrical at State and had the high overall score and received Grand Champions. JV received a first at State as well. Alderperson Stevens asked about the City’s involvement with the bicentennial luncheon. Mayor Manier shared that the City is turning 200 years old and is involved.

City Administrator Communication City Engineer Carr provided the Council Report. No questions were provided from Council.
Council Report

FY2026 Budget Review- Group 1 Finance Director Baxter shared that she provided a packet to Council. She explained that these include single purpose funds. It includes Audit Fund, Liability, IMRF, Social Security, WACC Debt Service and Stormwater Debt Service funds. She shared that we will be audited by Lauterbach and Amen and they have seen a slight increase in legal fees. For Liability they budgeting an increase due to the cyber security premium. The Social Security Fund numbers will be refined as they go through personnel details. It is funded from property taxes and other taxes. They have seen an increase in personnel. The IMRF will likely see a small increase. Finance Director Baxter noted the debt service fund for WACC will be paid off in May 2029 and it comes from the General Fund. She explained that there is a new fund to reflect the debt service for stormwater management bond. We had an interest only payment this year, but the next payment includes principal and interest and comes from the .5% sales tax. Finance Director Baxter shared that Group 2 will include the entire General Fund and Capital projects. No questions were provided by Council.

New Personnel Proposals City Engineer Carr introduced Deputy Chief Stevens who shared a memo that explains why they are asking to increase personnel. He explained that this comes down to investigations being more complex. A patrol officer will be moved to work with financially related crimes which takes a lot of time. This leaves them short on patrol and they need to have more officers available to respond to events.

Council Member Stevens asked how many officers we have, and Deputy Chief Stevens said there are 26 fulltime officers. He also shared that their entire building is full, and it was remodeled 15 years ago, and they are at the point where they might convert an interview room into a workspace. Council Member Stevens said the west wall of the evidence building could be expanded if needed. She regrets they didn’t keep the space study in budget from last year and noted the previous use of the building. Council Member Brownfield asked how many officers a town of our size should have, and Deputy Chief Stevens said there are national averages per 1000, but we are not a national average community. He further explained that Command is looking at needs right now and the need is to keep a minimum number of officers on the street. Deputy Chief Stevens said he would like to have three officers on the street right now to reply to calls with more than three individuals. He shared that if no one was off duty due to injury, illness or training, the department only has two. Council Member McIntyre appreciates and understands the ask. He hopes Council understands how important this is. He asked for an explanation of cyber security issues. Deputy Chief Stevens shared that Council sees the report of cases that move to investigations, and we have to triage them to see what we have time for and what we are likely to solve. He noted that waiting for court action for a financial case takes time. He noted there is a lot of time investment. Council Member McIntyre also noted there is a lot of training time needed, and courts change the requirements which justifies the need for more people.

Finance Director Baxter shared that she is creating a succession plan for her position, and she would like to retire in 2026. They are looking for the least costly but most effective transition. This proposal would allow four months’ overlap for training. This might begin about January 2026 allowing a person to see the budget process and make sure they are the best fit. After the four-month transition the new person will take over. She provided estimates because she is not sure about actual salary. Finance Director Baxter shared that there is a promotional opportunity in her customer service department. She then introduced Planning and Development Director Oliphant who shared that Joe Boyer wants to retire next June. They would like to provide an

overlap to allow for training. They would like to find someone who can do code enforcement with some planning and zoning background. They are calling the position Planning, Building and Zoning Coordinator. Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared they would also like to hire an office assistant for about 10-15 hours per week for general help with clerical. Council Member Brownfield favors the plans but doesn't want Finance Director Baxter to leave. He noted the need to start looking for a replacement in September or October. Finance Director Baxter would help with the interviews. The hope is to have a city administrator as well. Other staff and department heads will be included in the interview process. She feels it is important for them to be collaborative with staff. Council Member Brownfield would like to see the office assistant provide some communications specialist duties. He feels we need to provide more information, so people don't have to trust Facebook. Council Member Stevens noted a similar situation when Mr. Rittenhouse replaced Mr. Schone. Finance Director Baxter noted that Sheri Parker would receive a promotion and gain more responsibility and they are considering a summer co-op student to be an office assistant. McIntyre agreed with Council Member Brownfield and noted that Finance Director Baxter will be hard to replace. He also feels they may need to start the search earlier. He supports the other positions and wonders if outside resources can help locate candidates. He really likes the idea of including student workers and agrees with the communications needs. He also complimented Ms. Parker on her friendliness.

Phase 2B Compromise Alignment-Michaels Pipeline Site Visit Proposal City Engineer Carr shared this is a proposal from Michael's Pipeline. Strand has been working on the compromise alignment previously discussed. They would like to have Michael's Pipeline review the underground areas as well as the impact of the bore holes and receiving holes. The fee they submitted to Strand would allow them to assist in reviewing those items and look at open cut versus direction boring. They are requesting \$25,000. This is a budgeted item. *Council Member Adams motioned to approve; Council Member McIntyre seconded.*
7 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Discussion of Proposed code Amendment to Provide Term Limits for Alderpersons and Mayor Council Member Martin shared that he made the motion to put this on the future ballot pending agreed upon text, but it is not a rush. He would like Council's opinion. Council Member Stevens noted the next election is two years from now. Council Member Brownfield asked if this council could request this this far out. Attorney Schryer said he would have to analyze it to see if there is a time limit. He also explained that he can analyze if we could have it on other non-Washington election ballots. Council Member Brownfield supports the discussion if it is still relevant in two years. Council Member Martin would like to discuss the specific language. Council Member Stevens suggested putting it on the May Committee of the Whole Agenda. City Engineer Carr shared that this council can close up their previous business, seat the new Council then include this as a discussion item. City Engineer Carr clarified that this has been the usual process. Council Member Butler clarified that the motion on the table is to amend the code to provide direction for term limits and we have not had a motion to remove the item from the table for more discussion. If we don't take action to remove the tabling, per Roberts Rules of Order, the motion dies. Attorney Schryer clarified the process. *Council Member Martin motioned to remove the item from the table for further discussion; Council Member McIntyre seconded.* Attorney Schryer clarified that putting a motion for a referendum might be premature, but they can analyze the timing. He can however; put it as a discussion item. Council Member Smith suggested putting term limits on for the mayor if there are concerns for the Alderperson positions. Council Member Butler shared that a "no vote" means they are not passing the ordinance and a "yes vote" means they are passing it. After further clarification, Council voted the following:
0 Ayes:
7 Nays: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
Motion failed by roll call vote.

Resolutions: City Engineer Carr presented the following resolution for consideration: **Synopsis:** Approval of this resolution would approve the City of Washington adoption of the Civility Pledge. **Title:** Adoption of Illinois Municipal League Civility Pledge. *R-1428 (3-25) Civility* Council Member Stevens read from the IML Magazine stating the Civility Pledge was created in 2023 to aim for all officials to be open, honest and transparent in order to build relationships. City Clerk Brod explained that after the previous meeting she was contacted by several people about the non-businesslike atmosphere of the meeting. The document provided by IML is brought as a first step that has been adopted by many other municipalities. It aims to show that we promise conduct ourselves respectfully and invite the public to do so as well. *Council Member Brownfield motioned to approve; Council Member Stevens seconded.* Council Member Brownfield shared that he was a little disappointed with conduct as well. He noted that this is challenging and staff is stepping up and he supports this 100%. Council Member Stevens said this is us recognizing that we need to be respectful. She wonders if Mayor Manier would stop a meeting if they weren't being respectful. Mayor Manier shared that he would. Council Member Smith thanked City Clerk Brod for bringing this item and hopes it will be a positive step forward on both sides of the table.
7 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

First Reading Ord: City Engineer Carr shared that he sent out the land information and due to time constraints to meet next leading, this is moving quickly in order to get it to IDOT for the Safe Routes to

3567 (2-25) Transfer School Project on Grant Street. He presented the following ordinance for consideration:
with waiver of second **Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance would allow for the transfer of property and easement
reading grant from the Washington Park District. **Title:** First Reading Ordinance Adopting the Transfer
of Property and Easement Grant from the Washington Park District (with a Request to Waive
Second Reading)
*Council Member McIntyre motioned to waive the second reading; Council Member Smith
seconded.*
7 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

*Council Member Brownfield motioned to accept as presented; Council Member Adams
seconded.*
7 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Council Member *Council Member Martin motioned to put a discussion item on May Committee of the Whole
Comments Meeting to discuss putting term limits on the next ballot; second by Council Member Stevens*
7 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Council Member McIntyre acknowledged Clerk Brod for receiving a scholarship to attend her first International Institute of Municipal Clerks conference.
Council Member Stevens asked if we received a letter of intent. Attorney Schryer explained that details will be provided during the agenda item that appears after Alderperson's Comments. Regarding the townhall meeting, Mayor Manier shared that he does not have a schedule yet. Council Member Stevens provided a timeline of events when previous City Administrator Forsythe left and when City Administrator Snider was hired. She noted that a new Council will be seated first meeting in May and wondered about when to start the new process. Manier shared that the city administrator is appointed by the mayor and there will be a new mayor on May 5th.
Council Member Stevens motioned to discuss the hiring of a city administrator during the March Committee of the Whole meeting; a second was not provided.
Mayor Manier shared that this has been previously discussed and it was noted that it would be hard to find an applicant when they don't know who will be seated until after the election. Council Member Stevens asked if anyone else wanted to talk about the process.
Council Member Brownfield noted that two staff members have done a good job providing support in the absence of a city administrator and he wondered if one of them might be interested being an interim until the new administrator is hired. He noted that a new mayor may need help as well.
Council Member Adams agreed with the suggestion of a staff interim. He understands that the way our code is written, council has participated in the past in the interviews, it makes sense to not start the process until a new mayor is seated.
Council Member McIntyre appreciates the process and noted it takes time. He agreed that staff members would be a great option for an interim. It will be important to get outside advisement sooner rather than later. He understands the dilemma.
Council Member Stevens noted that the mayor is the acting city administrator. She also noted the code regarding the HPC and signs, specifically addressing the Tangled Roots sign. Planning and Development Director Oliphant feels the signs were approved with previous approval of the exterior façade items.

Executive Session At 6:58 p.m. *Council Member Brownfield motioned to move into executive session: for the setting of a price for the sale or lease of property owned by the public body. ILCS 120/2(c)(6); Council Member Butler seconded.*
5 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, McIntyre, Smith
2 Nays: Martin, Stevens
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Council Member Stevens motioned to release attorney opinions regarding the mayor's conflict of interest request; no second was received.

Adjournment At 9:07 p.m. Council returned to open session and *Council Member Butler moved to adjourn; Council Member Adams seconded.*
Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk

I respectfully request the contents of this letter be included in the minutes of this meeting.

Good evening. My name is Jackie Mason and I live at 406 N Lawndale. I know I spoke at last week's City Council meeting, but since then, I have spoken to many citizens to get their input regarding the amphitheater.

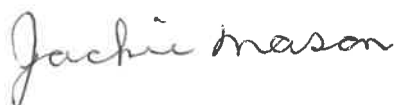
We want to thank Mayor Manier and all the Alderpersons for voting at last week's meeting to have a Town Hall meeting. Many residents and I are looking forward to this meeting in hopes of getting more information, answers to our questions that are listed on the 90 day hold petition and many other questions the community will have. Some additional questions to add: what is the big rush regarding this big expenditure? Has a date and location been scheduled for the Town Hall meeting? Will you consider input from the community during the Town Hall meeting?

Regarding the 90 day hold petitions, as of the meeting on February 10th, 125 signed petitions had been submitted. Can the City Clerk tell us the total number of signed petitions received to date at City Hall?

Mr. Hengst is giving us a very generous gift. I am asking all of you to please listen to the Citizens of Washington, think and pray as to what to do with this gift. Your decision on this project will affect our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Thank you very much for your time.

Jackie Mason

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jackie Mason".