



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 10, 2024, at 6:30 P.M.

Wilmor Fire Station, 200 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, IL 61571

Mayor Manier called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., in the training room with a quorum present.

Present: Alderpersons Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, McIntyre, Smith and Stevens

Absent: Alderpersons Butler, Martin

Also Present: City Administrator Snider, P & D Director Oliphant, City Engineer Carr, Public Works Director Rittenhouse, Police Chief McCoy, City Treasurer Abbey Strubhar, City Clerk Brod, Attorney Braskich

1. ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Alderperson Blundy asked about weeds on the Cruger Road bike path and shared that the code will be updated in September. Alderperson Brownfield shared concerns for door-to-door soliciting. Administrator Snider noted issues with our current code regarding soliciting and shared that it will be updated for proper permitting.
2. CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Washington residents John and Sharon Amdall provided comments regarding support for the evidence building, spending money on Council furniture, the lack of listening to experts and a concern for evidence that could be corrupted. Their comments are attached. Washington resident Betsy Christonson expressed concern about the cost of the evidence building, noted Morton has lower taxes and feels people are losing confidence in the Council. Her comments are attached. Township resident Allison Montgomery commented regarding OMA requirements for audio at meetings. She feels meeting equipment is not a frivolous expenditure. She shared that she couldn't hear what was said at portions of the meeting at Five Points. Washington resident Nancy Russel shared concerns about Airbnbs. She wanted to know how a home can be sold and turn into an Airbnb and about an ordinance regulating them. She asked about obtaining information about Airbnb guests. She is concerned about the safety of children and about home values and taxes. She wondered if a new ordinance would be retroactive. Washington resident Karen Gustafson expressed concern about Airbnbs and asked about restrictions. She has a small lot, and her neighbor put in a pool and sound system that she can hear. She noted a large amount of concrete and the conversion of a building to a party house. She asked about taxing them and about lights being on 24/7. Washington resident Luke Sawicki paraphrased a March 11th Council communication and shared possible projects he feels should be eliminated in order to cut expenses from the budget if we lose the 1% sales tax. He does not support amending the budget.
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Alderperson Brownfield motioned to accept the May 13, 2024, Committee of the Whole meeting minutes; Alderperson Smith seconded. Passed by voice vote.

P&D Director Oliphant shared that code does not contain language addressing Airbnbs but they are research other communities so they can bring information to Council in July. Mayor Manier noted that there are about seven Airbnbs in the City.

4. NEW BUSINESS:
 - A. Property and Liability Insurance Renewal – Dennis Hermann and Mark Whitlock from Summer and Associates explained that this the first renewal with Selective Insurance and there is a 7.7% increase partly due to an exposure increase and an increase in property values. They saw percentage increases in abuse and molestation liability which is a rate increase because they have not seen any issues. He noted that the City had a \$500,000 fire claim. The premium is under what they expected. Administrator Snider shared that \$238,300 was budgeted and the renewal is \$231,139. Mr. Whitlock shared that regarding the recent fire claim, the City received insurance money and they are still waiting for a title on vehicle. Mr. Hermann noted that almost all homeowner renewals have gone up and weather can affect it. He further noted that insurance companies are raising premiums and getting out of areas that they will not make money. He noted that one carrier paid too much in hail claims to write any new home policies. Mr. Hermann said he is thrilled with 8% after the fire. Alderperson Blundy and Administrator Snider clarified that the current evidence building's claim was about \$125,000. Mr. Hermann noted the replacement value is more. It was noted that the City had eight claims last year with a total about \$399,000. Mr. Whitlock referenced their relationship and shared that Selective would like to partner with the City for a long time. Council consensus was to move forward.
 - B. GPEDC Presentation/Funding – Chris Setti shared a quarterly report. He appreciates Washington because it appreciates regional success. He shared that they had a retreat regarding aligning schools with local industries in the region. They also presented on Career Spark which is for local eighth graders and will take place in October. They will collaborate with AgTechConnect and work with educational institutions. They will meet with Pringle Robotics who make robots for sanitation. They will host the Illinois Defense Network that focuses on defense manufacturing. He will then go to Chicago and meet with a Taiwanese company who might want to create a product outpost in the area. They work on behalf

of communities. They are well known for Covid relief and could leverage the resources from the State for small businesses. They secured 32 grants which brought about \$6 million. Mayor Manier noted that there were conversations with companies from “across the pond” although those meetings are confidential because it is early in the process. He noted a need to protect private businesses. Mr. Oliphant added that this is a long relationship, and the GPEDC does the things that we cannot do. This is imperative in supporting what the City does.

- C. *Countryside Banquet & Catering Commercial Grant Program Project Increased Funding Request Discussion* – P&D Director Oliphant shared that this has been discussed several times. Kristi Cape, owner of Country Side Banquet Facility has proposed a two-phase project for resurfacing her parking lot. The cost for phase one would be \$139,000 and the total for both phases would be \$389,000. Ms. Cape asked if she could just do phase one and if the City would increase its portion to 50% which would total \$69,500. Alderperson Blundy and Mr. Oliphant clarified that phase one is marked in blue on the map in the agenda packet materials. Mr. Oliphant clarified the size and cost for each section in the diagrams. Alderperson Blundy noted the purpose of the grant and expressed concern for only doing a part of the lot. Ms. Cape shared the use of the different parking areas noting handicap parking and its poor condition. She also noted an area for staff parking and shared that patching will be included. She noted the staff parking area will not be repaved. Alderperson Blundy expressed concern for the future phases and future agreements. He favors providing a 30% share. Ms. Cape asked about applying for future grants and wondered if Alderperson Blundy feels Ms. Cape would be allowed to ask for future grants even though the new grant process does not allow for it. Alderperson Stevens noted issues with the process, noted the purpose of the grant and feels the parking lot is the main thing you see. She feels the whole lot needs to look uniform. She wants to support providing grant money but prefers keeping it at 30%. She also feels Ms. Cape should replace her sign and Ms. Cape noted that the sign was just replaced six months ago. Alderperson Brownfield noted that Council did not provide staff with direction in the grant application process which created the confusion, and he feels Council it is councils fault and noted that they had the funds in the last budget but couldn't get it right. He supports providing 50%, noting that she is matching it. Alderperson McIntyre agreed. He was shocked by the overall cost but thinks we need to make it right. He also feels the handicap area should be completed. Alderperson Adams also agreed and noted that it is about \$46,000 less than the initial plan. Alderperson Smith feels that she was led to believe that the money was available, that there weren't any restrictions, and it would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Alderperson Stevens feels the 50% is acceptable to get this done. Alderperson Blundy Ms. Cape applies for phase two, would it follow the new grant program. Alderperson Brownfield noted that it could be a new Council at that time. Mr. Oliphant will provide a new ordinance with 50% and bring to the next Council meeting.
- D. *Washington Commercial Building and Property Improvement Grant Program Applications Review* – P&D Director Oliphant shared that the City has received 10 applications. He highlighted the Summer and Associates application is less than the \$5,000 minimum, Washington Family Restaurant shows a total of \$224,000, which is different than the \$130,000 from the applicant, Signature Investments does not have an executed lease and the owner has done a little work. Mr. Oliphant also shared that Deiters shows that everything is an eligible expense except for the interior painting. He noted that the painting would be done after the exterior was fixed. He shared that the total for all 10 projects is \$632,000 and if the scoring was used, it would be total not to exceed about \$200,000. Mayor Manier noted that Washington Family Restaurant has structural issues that resulted from tornado damaged. Mr. Oliphant clarified that the investment property applicant gave a six-month hypothetical completion and she has invested in it and feels the exterior will make it more marketable. Mr. Oliphant shared that smaller contributions can be made. He also noted that we could allow another call for projects if we choose. Alderperson McIntyre is excited to see the business come forward. He feels Council could look past the small issues since it is under budget. He supports moving forward with all of them. Alderperson Blundy prefers to focus on BUS24 and feels we do not have to spend all the money. He favors businesses who also put in money of their own. He supports moving forward with ACE Hardware, Mt. Vernon Plaza and Washington Family Restaurant and putting another call out for projects at a later date. Alderperson Adams appreciated the number of applicants. He noted local business contributions are \$500,000. He is not in favor of supporting the project that is under the minimum amount, covering interior painting, but supports the rest. Mayor Manier expressed caution when knit picking proposals and feels staff should simply bring projects forward for Council to vote yes or no. Alderperson Brownfield noted that Russell's is also on BUS24 and BUS24 is not specified in the application. Alderperson Smith and Mr. Oliphant clarified that applicants receive a list of guidelines. Alderperson Stevens feels the EDC could decide then bring recommendations to Council. She doesn't want to have to choose. She also feels signage is important doesn't favor properties that are for sale. Mayor Manier noted previous issues with the EDC when members turned down a business because it was a competitor. Mr. Oliphant asked for clarification regarding the interior painting for Deiters, whether to do an agreement with Signature Investments and whether to do an agreement with Summer Associates. A straw poll revealed the following: Alderperson McIntyre favors all the projects so long as items fall within the guidelines; Alderperson Blundy agreed with McIntyre but favored only his previously mentioned three properties. Alderpersons Brownfield Adams, Stevens and Smith agreed with Alderperson McIntyre. Alderperson Blundy expressed that he could agree with Alderperson McIntyre as well.
- E. *Budget Amendment Discussion* – Regarding the budget amendment to accommodate a new evidence building, City Administrator Snider explained that all documents were provided to Council. He shared that Representative LaHood has a four-year timetable and DCO has two years once it is started. He explained that they need a 2/3rd (6) vote to amend the budget. Chief McCoy shared that Washington has low crime. He shared that the cost has gone up since it started in 2019. Chief McCoy explained that Chamlin and Associates were chosen because they were nationally respected. He feels continuing to store evidence in East Peoria is not possible. He also noted that some evidence needs to be kept forever. Alderperson Brownfield feels this is a need and it would not be financially smart to put the grant money in the old building. He also feels it would be okay to not do certain projects to afford this. Alderperson Adams agreed and noted that this has been discussed this for two years. He explained that it is a liability

to not allow the City to store evidence properly. He shared that the City is often under budget on items and he has never seen the City reach its full budget. Alderperson Blundy highlighted an original cost of \$840,000 and shared that he was told we will get grant money. He noted that grants provided \$878,000 after which, taxpayers will fund \$1.6 million. He feels Chamlin and Associates likely responded with what we wanted to hear and wonders about using the existing building. He favors looking into partnering with other communities and leasing options. He does not feel there is a rush and he does not support the budget amendment. Chief McCoy said this is need and noted the current building doesn't have water, heat, or air conditioning. He doesn't feel we can share a space with another community. Alderperson Blundy would like to see costs to rehab the current building. He thinks it can be done for under \$1 million. He asked about obtaining a long-term lease. Chief McCoy shared concerns with co-mingling evidence. Alderperson McIntyre feels it was already determined that this is a need and the current facility wouldn't work. He feels it needs to be located in town and under the care of our officers. Alderperson Stevens shared that there is a remaining balance with the Dewberry contract. Engineer Carr explained that the original contract contains the engineering contract in phase one and there is an additional amendment for the construction side. Alderperson Stevens wondered about taking the lowest bid. Administrator Snider feels this is the lowest and responsible bid. He explained there is a base bid and an alternate bid that also includes the epoxy floors. Alderperson Stevens said that Peoria Metro would win the low bid. Administrator Snider explained that the Council could reject all bids, accept the base bid or accept the base bid with the epoxy. Alderperson Stevens expressed concern with having to make this decision. Alderperson Adams shared that Chamlin and Associates determined that the current building is not usable for evidence storage. He shared that he and Alderperson Stevens visited the current building, and he is embarrassed at how evidence was stored. He feels this is needed. Alderperson Stevens supports a new building but doesn't support amending the budget. Alderperson Smith was undecided but appreciated PJ Hoerr for speaking and thinks we need evidence building. She fears litigation if we don't go with the lowest bid. Mayor Manier noted that \$300,000 will come from cures money. Administrator Snider clarified that it is general funds reserved. He noted that the federal government gave it to us without rules, so the money was given to police salaries and insurance and benefits which relieved the general fund of that obligation. This will technically use general fund reserves, but looking back, the City did not miss any retail sales at that time. Alderperson Blundy feels there is another budget amendment coming for the fire department. Mayor Manier noted that previous Council consensus was to take the base bid.

Engineer Carr shared the following project updates. The Nofsinger project will require a closure near Santa Fe and shut down a section of Nofsinger. Freedom Parkway received asphalt and Catherine and Felkers have shifted to July. There may be a change order on the Felkers project.

5. OTHER BUSINESS: Alderperson Stevens asked about the future of the damaged evidence building. Mr. Rittenhouse shared that they are still waiting on the okay to do an assessment. The fire report will then be provided. Regarding the adjudication code enforcement, Mr. Oliphant shared that they had their first hearing and the process was efficient and effective. Alderperson Stevens asked if they will provide a chart of code infractions Mr. Oliphant noted the sensitivity of sharing sensitive information. Administrator Snider clarified that information shared with Council is deemed public. Mr. Oliphant shared the process for dealing with tall grass. Regarding Candlewood Bridge, Engineer Carr shared that CMT has submitted a report to IDOT and now we are waiting on IDOT.
6. ADJOURNMENT: At 8:21 p.m. Alderperson Smith moved to adjourn; Alderperson Brownfield seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.


Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk

Washington City Council Comments

June 10, 2024

We are John and Sharon Amdall and we live in Washington.

We are astounded at the inability of some members of this Council to distinguish "wants" from "needs."

If this community cares about and supports our "Hometown Heroes" - which we believe they DO - then let us support the critical, desperate -need for an appropriate Police Evidence Building.

This Council is considering spending money on "wants," namely expensive video equipment and ... NEW FURNITURE!!

While at the same time, some consider the new Evidence Building as "too expensive" while the knowledgeable, credentialed professionals consider it to be "bare bones."

None of the City Council members are experts in the legal, regulatory, and professional requirements for an appropriate Police Evidence Building so police evidence can be handled and stored properly. And we DO have reports from credentialed professionals who ARE those experts.

What's the point of the police doing any work at all ... if the evidence they produce is corrupted by lack of proper storage?

Could we please clearly distinguish between "wants" vs. "needs" and make sure that our critical, essential, vital, "needs" are funded, including the Police Evidence Building.

Thank you

John & Sharon Amdall

My name is Betsy Christison and I have been a Washington Resident for 18 years. I am very concerned about the cost and question the necessity of the proposed Police Evidence Building. The cost just for the consultant's opinions and engineering quotes alone is shocking. How much did we pay Chamlin and Associates for the "survey" to simply affirm the department's desire for this building? Why is rebuilding the original storage building not even on the table? The use of high paid consultants to make decisions is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

But more importantly, what exactly is the evidence that will be stored in this building? I am highly skeptical that there is SO much vital criminal evidence that is generated in a town of this size with an extremely low crime rate that a \$2.4 million building is the only option in which to store it. There were a total of 4 murders in Washington between 2011 and 2022. Hardly a rash of violent crime generating crucial evidence for a trial. What other purposes will the building have? It certainly would not cost nearly that much to rehab and update the former building which was allowed for years to fall into disrepair while still storing evidence. And why in the world does this new building need \$160K in epoxy floor and walls? How can that be reasonable in anyone's mind?

The large amount of Fed and State grant money that has been lassoed in for this project comes from taxpayers .. It is not "free money" to lavishly spend while pretending there is no need for accountability in the way it is used. Federal and State dollars are taken from people or printed and re-distributed and every one of those dollars should be used to fund projects that will benefit the most people in a given jurisdiction. A storage building costing over \$2 million does not significantly improve life for anyone in Washington other than a handful of Police Dept employees. And those dollars are then unavailable for other projects that very well could bring direct benefit to more townspeople.

I understand that the city is currently spending \$2000 a month in rental fees to temporarily store the evidence. To put the sheer cost of the new building project in perspective, one could pay that rental fee for 99 years to equal the cost of this proposed building. And that does not even take into account the ongoing budgetary costs of maintaining a new building. Ameren and other utilities, insurance, mowing and snow removal, WiFi, video monitoring and cleaning will all be additional permanent taxpayer burdens.

Projects like the evidence building, along with other expenditures like giving away \$300K a year in grants to paint the interior walls of a funeral home, repave the parking lot of an accountant's office or install landscaping and a tree for some attorneys is jaw dropping. These businesses are perfectly capable of paying for those things out of their business revenue and it is a slap in the face to the rest of us to have our tax dollars subsidize these projects. Spending \$10K on fancy bicentennial badges for police officers to wear for one year is another example. Did any of you oppose that frivolous use of taxpayer money?

Remember every dollar you spend comes out of the pockets of hardworking people in this community or elsewhere. Your goal should be to provide basic infrastructure services at a reasonable cost while allowing people to keep as much of their own earned income as possible to put into their businesses, homes, families and retirement funds. When government leaders demand more and more money or waste the money they already have taken from us, over time, you will drive people out of a town just as the State of IL has done with high taxes and outrageous spending. The city of Washington is not gaining population. Morton has lower taxes in every area and a high quality of life. I truly feel that this leadership has lost all perspective on what your goals should be. You are losing the confidence of a good portion of people in town with irresponsible financial decisions. If you include funding in the budget for this \$2.4 million evidence building it will only decrease our trust and respect for you as elected officials who are supposed to be serving us.