



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 11, 2024, at 6:30 P.M.
Five Points Washington, 360 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, IL 61571

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

Present: Council Members Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith and Stevens

Also Present: Planning & Development Director Oliphant, City Engineer Carr, Finance Director Baxter, Public Works Director Rittenhouse, Police Chief McCoy, City Treasurer Carol Crocker, City Clerk Brod, Attorney Derek Schryer and press.

1. COUNCIL MEMBERS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Council Member Blundy asked about livestreaming. Clerk Brod shared that this is the first night and they will be putting the channel link on the City's website once it is verified that it is working.
2. CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Washington Resident Katie Beale provided remarks regarding the proposed amphitheater project. She provided a list of questions regarding the developers, noise and impact. Her comments are attached and made part of the minutes. Washington Resident Max Nelson provided remarks regarding the proposed amphitheater. He feels this will provide opportunities for the community to enjoy music. Washington resident and WCHS Band Director Jim Tallman read a statement provided by Dr. Freeman, the superintendent of the high school. He feels music and the arts are important and feels the amphitheater will be a welcome venue for students. He shared that this would offer educational events, collaborations, increased student engagement and inspire future musicians. He appreciates the investment in the arts and our community. His letter is attached and made part of these minutes. Mr. Tallman feels this could put Washington on the map for arts and entertainment and he supports the project.
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Council Member McIntyre motioned to accept the October 14, 2024, minutes; Council Member Martin seconded. Passed by voice vote.
4. NEW BUSINESS:
 - A. *Presentation – Water System Improvement Projects* – the presenter she shared the following:
 - Project 1** would construct the new Water Tower #3 and would address issues with ISO fire flow recommendations of having a minimum storage equal to the highest flow for 3 hours. The estimated cost is \$4.3 million.
 - Project 2** would drill a well near the public works building. This will help in the event of another failure of Wells #11 and #12 and will create a Well #13. This will also help with future development and the estimated cost is about \$1.5 million.
 - Project 3** would address BUS24 watermain relocations. It would serve both residential and business and would go from Legion Road to Lynn Street. The current line is under the pavement and IDOT would like it moved from under the roadway. The estimated cost is \$7,730,000 for the total length.
 - Project 4** would provide southeast area watermain improvements. This would replace the aging infrastructure of cast iron piping. The estimated cost is \$8.8 million for the entire area but they recommend breaking it into multiple projects.
 - Project 5** would address the Sunnyland water service redundancy. The issue stems from the area having only one 10" water main serving the entire area. A failure would be catastrophic. The estimated cost is \$875,000.
 - Project 6** would replace the watermain on Bondurant Street. The age of the current system is past its life expectancy and this area services the entire high school. The estimated cost is \$375,000.

Potential Funding Sources for these projects could be City of Washington water revenue, the IEPA State Revolving Fund Loan Program, Utility Revenue Bonds or Municipal Bonds. She shared that the next step would be to perform a rate study then CMT will finalize the project report. Engineer Carr shared that most of these projects have impacted us through watermain breaks.

Council Member Blundy remarked about the State Revolving Fund. Engineer Carr explained that approval for projects is needed and it is not guaranteed. Then we would be ranked by the IEPA based on need, population and other demographics to determine how much and the timing of the possible funding. BUS24 was identified as a priority. Staff also recommended Water Tower #3 as well and the Sunnyland water redundancy. The presenter noted the SRF funding process is lengthy, and we wouldn't likely see funding until July 2026. He explained that this is why they recommend getting ahead of the projects because once approved, a project plan is good for 5 years. We are not committed if a project goes into the plan, but we do have to show how the projects would be funded. He further noted that a rate study will help prioritize projects, then we would look for funding opportunities for the projects. Council Member McIntyre wonders if BUS24 and southeast Main improvements can be made while working on the roads. He also feels Sunnyland's issue is a life safety issue as well as Bondurant and expressed concern that some areas might be impacted by fire flow for sprinkler systems. He favors focusing on BUS24 and the new water tower. Engineer Carr shared that some road construction is already budgeted, and they would schedule working around the high school during a summer. Council Member Brownfield agreed that

BUS24 would be a priority and Water Tower #3 should be next. Public Works Director Rittenhouse shared that most of the water main breaks happen near but not on Bondurant and feels they may be able to complete the project in-house. Council Member Stevens said we have 5,400 customers and asked if Washington Estates/Illinois American Water was included, and Engineer Carr explained that this plan was started before Washington picked them up as a customer. Mayor Manier suggested that staff can bring back a draft schedule.

- B. *Hengst Foundation Amphitheater Feasibility Study Presentation* – Mayor Manier shared that Jim Hengst went to WCHS, went on to own and sell a successful pharmaceutical company. He now would like to gift Washington with an amphitheater in memory of his late wife who he enjoyed going to concerts with. Nick Maloof recognized Veterans Day and thanked all the veterans in the room. He shared that Mr. Hengst lives 1,300 miles away and still loves his hometown. He and his late wife loved listening to music with friends and they attended many concerts. Mr. Hengst would like to gift a concert venue in his late wife's name and give back to his hometown. He feels this will keep giving for generations. Nick explained Mr. Hengst contacted Mayor Manier to share his idea, then called area businesspeople to create a foundation. The foundation then contacted Terra Engineering and Core Construction who have worked on other projects in Washington. Mr. Maloof further explained that the foundation then contacted Nick Leroy who books venues in four states and he feels this can become a partner with Five Points. Mr. Maloof introduced Ed Curley who is from Washington and works in the Chicago architectural firm, Epstein. He noted his company is a 103-year-old firm and they work on local and international projects. He shared that they have started the design and it is not yet finalized but it helps to see if it will fit in the area. They started to review budget estimates and feel this will be a premier venue for live music events. Mr. Curley introduced Patrick Carata who shared a vision board. He explained that they wanted to focus on local events that already take place in the community and include a bike path and children's play area. He shared that they liked the area because they are not disturbing existing residential areas. He shared that this allowed them to direct the amphitheater for sun and sound. The plan has been reviewed by an acoustic engineer and contains a covered stage and a small building for functional use. They left an open area to be filled with greenery and tried to create an iconic form with the canopy. Nick Leroy with NTL Productions. shared that he has 15 years' experience working with clubs, amphitheaters, the performing arts center and the Corn Crib Stadium. He addressed that there would not be competition with Five Points. He feels the capacity, indoor vs outdoor and different seasons will play a factor. He noted the support acts that tour with the larger acts like to come back to the area that they just played and they can play at both venues. He feels they could cross advertise events with each other. Mr. Leroy also shared that 70% of concert goers come from 50 miles away or greater and they will use restaurants and hotels. Kevin Graham, a landscape architect with Terra Engineering shared that he usually does larger civic projects like ICC, Peoria Riverfront and they are currently working on Ravinia in Highland Park. He shared that they brought in Hunden Partners to look at the viability of the local market. They also looked at industry demand and as for return on investment, they aim for a flexible design. They feel accessibility is also important. They studied how to angle the building to be a good neighbor and this helped form a site plan. They reviewed the need for ample parking, 20% VIP seating, concessions and permanent restrooms. The plan shows about 3,000 seats and 2,000 lawn seating. It is oriented with access of Nofsinger and parking can be completed over time. There is also ample stormwater management. He further shared that the canopy is about 11,000 square feet. He noted the primary focuses are the theater site and the rest is an opportunity to consider green space. They are looking at 15 acres for the development and additional space for parking. When reviewing the market, they feel this can be a revenue generator which can outweigh the expenses after the first year. Engineer Carr shared information about the infrastructure noting that the days of the company coming in to build roads are gone. He noted that any development on the property would require an infrastructure investment from the city. He explained that they would need to expand the water main and sanitary sewer which is estimated at about \$3.2 million. It would cost about \$3.5 million to connect to the next parking lot and \$6 million if they want the full road to go to a secondary exit on Cruger. He noted that these could be done in phases. Caleb Wyss with Core Construction shared that they are a local company with employees that live here and they have grown from Central Illinois to a national company. They are excited to be part of this project. Hengst Foundation President, Rennie Atterbury sent a letter that was read. Their benefactor has provided funds to have the feasibility study done. They will then create an endowment to assure that the City of Washington would not be responsible for the maintenance of the amphitheater. They ask Council to support this project and would like to begin soon. They shared that members of the foundation board are Rennie Atterbury, Lada Manier and Nick Maloof. Council Member Brownfield expressed his excitement for the project. He shared that they had big plans for the 223 property before the tornado. He shared that there was another interest in 2018 then Covid hit later. He feels this could be an anchor and bring people to Washington. Council Member Blundy expressed surprise and shared that this is the first time they have seen this and they haven't reviewed it. He feels the need for caution. He wonders about the number of seats and wants more time to see if this is something the city wants to invest in. He wonders about the return on the investment. It was noted that an 11,000 square foot canopy covers about 700 seats. Council Member Stevens feels the need for a niche and questioned the value of the land. She does not support using taxpayer money for it. Mayor Manier explained that this will generate sales tax. Council Member Stevens feels sales tax doesn't mean anything because she doesn't see it. Council Member Blundy wondered about the potential return before deciding. Council Member Martin feels it is an outstanding opportunity and he doesn't want to lose it to Eureka. He would like to see where the City can participate and note the value in property changes with the installation of infrastructure. He would like to see a more finalized design. Mayor Manier clarified that the 223 acres are farmland without the infrastructure. He also noted that the infrastructure on Freedom helped get grants. Council Member McIntyre feels positive about the possible financial impact, also saying this is an installation for our community and children. Council Member Butler is in favor of moving forward. He feels this will be an asset. Council Member Adams, noted that they are going to discuss tax levy later in the meeting and this is a way to help alleviate the taxes. He favors the lesser of the investment options to start and feels this will help bring the City's portion of the tax bill down. Council Member Blundy would like a dollar amount for the return on investment. Council Member Martin clarified that they are not voting on this tonight. He noted that they would pay \$3 million for infrastructure and get \$15 million given to the City. He explained that the value

of the farmland will go up when it is developed. Council Member Blundy doesn't feel the numbers add up and said the MPV is negative. He noted that the City had an agreement with Five Points, and they came back and asked for \$600,000. Council Member Butler noted the return on investment would be spread over the entire value of the 223 acres, over time. He also noted they invested in the infrastructure along Freedom Parkway without an ROI. Council Member McIntyre clarified that Freedom Parkway is not owned by the City and this is just one portion of the whole property. He feels this infrastructure directly enhances the lives of Washington residents because it is not on private property. Mayor Manier feels the opportunities are endless. He thinks the debt service would be manageable if bonded. Mayor Manier shared that Jim Hengst will likely not travel back to Washington but wanted to do something good for the people of Washington in memory of his late wife. Council Member Smith asked about the status of the 501c3, and Mr. Maloof shared that they are just waiting on a letter from the IRS. Council Member Smith, likes this idea but would like to have input from the public. The presenter shared that they are still reviewing the costs of details in the design. Council Member Blundy said total hard and soft costs show \$60 million and the representative clarified that that was for a different design. Engineer Carr explained that a feasibility study is to explore what the area can handle before they start looking into details and what Council Member Blundy asked for Phase 2 of the design. This is the developer asking to move forward out of Phase 1. Mayor Manier noted that if we move forward, we would need pull in all entities and there is more legwork before a vote will take place. Mayor Manier recapped feedback, noting that for most part, Council is excited but wants a little more information. He feels this will likely not be completed until 2026.

- C. *Discussion – Proposed Large Memorial at Glendale Cemetery* – Public Works Director Rittenhouse explained that the LaHood family contacted the cemetery and would like to purchase 96 graves on the south side of the cemetery in order to create a family site. Staff does not have any concerns and is bringing it to Council because of the scale of the project. The graves are \$780 each for a total of \$74,880. Council Member Stevens favors it and likes that this will mirror older parts of the cemetery. Mayor Manier and Mr. Rittenhouse explained that the revenue could help install the newer roads and be used for other improvements like a new building. Council Member McIntyre expressed favor. No one expressed disfavor.
- D. *2024 Tax Levy Discussion* – Finance Director Baxter shared that this is the 2024 tax levy which will act in December and the largest share is for funding retirement and pensions at 68%. Special levies are included as well as fire and ambulance. She shared that the City's portion of the total tax bill is only 6.04% and schools have the largest portion at 75% paid. A complete breakdown of the proposed levy options is attached to the meeting agenda and was shared with Council members. She noted that last year was the quadrennial assessment at the township which was caused by the real estate market because houses are being purchased well over the asking price. This also affects this current year. This increases our EAV for the second year. She further shared that the City also needs to raise funds to cover the police pension fund. She shared because they are not asking for the same amount as last year for the police pension fund because that money could then go to fund fire and ambulance. She shared that an abatement ordinance will be presented. Finance Director Baxter provided two scenarios that take advantage of the total EAV due to fire and ambulance increase, as well as the elimination of the grocery tax, which they estimate a loss of \$500,000. She shared that Peoria is implementing a 1% local tax to make up for loss of the grocery tax. She emphasized that this only pertains to the City's portion which would not increase, but does not pertain to rates from schools or other entities. She noted that the ambulance contract was 25% of the levy before this proposal and now the contract has increased. Staff is asking to take advantage of the increase in the EAV. Council Member Blundy feels we will tax ourselves out and is not in favor of either option and wants to keep it flat even with the extra fire contract. He said the schools will max themselves out and wonders what cuts can be made to offset the property taxes. Council Member Adams expressed that no one likes raising taxes but this keeps the tax rates the same. He noted a large difference between the City's and the school's portions. He shared that Council just had an agenda item regarding bringing people in to spend money and you can't have it both ways. He agreed that the tax bill is too high but hopes people complaining on social media are going to their school board meetings. He favors keeping our tax rate the same and capturing the EAV. Council Member Stevens favors the tax rate staying the same. She said the city gets money through sales tax and feels our tax rate is supposed to go down. Finance Director Baxter clarified that the EAV will increase whether we take advantage of it or not. Council Member McIntyre feels we should keep the rate neutral by not raising taxes but take advantage of the increased EAV. Council Member Brownfield agreed. Council Member Butler feels the tax rate should have been discussed when Council committed to the fire department. He shared that the fire department takes care of the entire township, even outside the City but we are paying for it. He feels 8.56 should be the minimum. Council Member Stevens feels the money should have been added before the budget. The majority of Council favored the 8.56% option. Mayor Manier shared that Fairview Heights does not have to levy property taxes because of their sales tax and if you vote no for the levy the City gets nothing.

OTHER BUSINESS: Council Member Brownfield shared that the open meeting for Five Points Board of Directors will be November 27th at 7:00 a.m., at Five Points. Attorney Schryer clarified that this is a meeting of a private not-for-profit corporation and members of public serve on the board. He asked that Council Members not interact with the private foundation.


Council Member Stevens didn't see the meeting sign on the door showing that this is a City meeting. She shared that she was late to the PZC meeting because she came to Five Points instead of the fire station. She asked Planning and Development Director Oliphant if there were any time sensitive items on the PZC agenda. Mr. Oliphant clarified that all four items are time sensitive and will come to Council as a first reading ordinance one week from tonight.

Council Member Smith expressed her appreciation for the new audio and feels it is a move forward for Council. Council Member Blundy shared that he received the Chamber's invite for the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast and wondered why it is not Five Points. Mayor Manier explained that it is a Chamber decision not the City's. Council Member Blundy feels the City should put pressure on the Chamber to use Five Points because Council approved \$20,000 for the Chamber and one of the items is the Mayor's Prayer Breakfast and we can use this facility for free.

Council Member Blundy referenced City Code regarding the residential requirement for the City Administrator. He noted that Mr. Snider's employment agreement ends in February 2025. Mayor Manier clarified that individuals do not have the authority to ask for legal counsel and it should be provided by all of Council. Council Member Blundy interrupted with language from the City's Rules of Procedure regarding legal opinions and individual requests. Attorney Schryer explained that the rules are regarding procedural matters in a Council session, not a single Council Member. He further noted that there was only one other Alderperson interested in the legal opinion which did not meet a majority of Council. Alderperson Blundy asked if anyone else was interested in asking for a legal opinion and no one responded. Council Member Butler clarified that the contract is what requires residency, not the ordinance and wondered if Council Member Blundy's goal is to make Mr. Snider move back and should we force him to come back to sit in the audience. He stated that Mr. Snider left because he felt harassed by some individuals and feels he is still being harassed. He feels the City has an agreement and needs to honor it. Council Member Stevens agreed with Council Member Butler in that his separation agreement is now in play. She also asked about an older couple who came to a previous meeting to express concern for a curve on Zinser. Council Member Brownfield shared that he went out with Chief McCoy and they are looking at a few solutions with public works. The Police Department has also made contact with the truck driver who cuts the curve.

Engineer Carr shared that Council will remain in the room after adjournment to review the new meeting set up. No business will take place.

5. ADJOURNMENT: At 9:25 p.m., Council Member McIntyre moved to adjourn; Council Member Brownfield seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.



Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk

11-11-24
VB

November 11, 2024

I am excited to hear more about the amphitheater project on the 223. I think for someone who has moved out of Washington to want to come back and honor his hometown and his wife is such a thoughtful generous and wonderful gesture. I just want to wrap my mind around some of the logistics. This is a property and project surrounded by a lot of chatter over the last 2 years, I made a list of some of the questions I hope are addressed tonight, so I am just going to throw them out there, maybe it will spur conversation if any of it isn't addressed.

1. Who will be the developer? Generally, developers own the land and are responsible for building roads. But this is city owned, with a donated building. Who's paying for roads?
2. Who will maintain the green space?
3. Has park district been involved or consulted?
4. Who will staff the venue or contract with a 3rd party to do so?
5. The council unanimously adopted the Plan Washington comprehensive plan in 2022 (23?). How does this project coincide with the comprehensive plan?
6. Will this area have any use year-round like indoor event space for the arts? Or is it seasonal?
7. Does the city plan to sell land to developers for housing and business after this is settled?
8. How do you anticipate having in a loud outdoor venue impacting the development of future housing?
9. Where is this in priority compared to freedom parkway? (Development wise)
10. Who is actively seeking businesses/housing to come to Washington- Still the mayor alone or is there a plan for a commission to tackle that going forward?

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak. I'm excited to hear more.

Katie Beale

11-11-24
UB

It is with great enthusiasm and pride that we gather here today to discuss a vision that will not only enrich our community but also provide lasting benefits to the education of our students: the creation of a new amphitheater in Washington, Illinois.

The importance of music education in our schools cannot be overstated. Studies show that music and the arts help develop critical thinking, improve academic performance, and foster a sense of discipline and teamwork. For students in Washington, Illinois, an amphitheater would be a welcome addition—a venue where they could come together to showcase their talents, express their creativity, and grow in confidence. Whether it's a choir performance, a band concert, or a theatrical production, this space would provide our students with the opportunity to perform in a professional setting, preparing them for future academic and personal success.

Imagine the pride our students will feel, standing on stage in a beautiful, purpose-built space designed just for showcasing the arts, performing before their peers, families, and the community. It would be a setting where they could truly shine—where they could experience firsthand the power of music and performance as tools for connection, inspiration, and achievement.

Additionally, the value to our schools is immeasurable. This amphitheater would offer a venue not only for student performances, but also for educational events, concerts, and collaborations with other schools and local organizations. It would elevate our schools' arts programs, increase student engagement, and inspire future generations of musicians, performers, and artists.

We are also deeply grateful to individuals like Jim Hengst, whose generous contributions to education within our community have made this vision possible. Jim's commitment to supporting our students, fostering a love of the arts, and investing in the future of Washington is something we can all be incredibly proud of. His passion for education and his willingness to invest in our youth reflects the very best of what our community stands for. We want to thank him for his leadership, his generosity, and his unwavering dedication to the betterment of our schools and our students.

Together, let's make this dream a reality. Let's build an amphitheater that will not only enhance our students' education but also serve as a lasting legacy for generations to come.

Thank you.

Kyle W. Freeman
Superintendent of Schools
Washington Community High School Dist. #308