



City Council Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 16, 2024 at 6:30 p.m.
Banquet Room A at Five Points - 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, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
Present: Council member Martin

Also Present Finance Director Joanie Baxter, Planning and Development Director Jon Oliphant, City Engineer Dennis Carr, Public Works Director Brian Rittenhouse, Police Chief Mike McCoy, City Treasurer Carol Crocker, City Clerk Valeri Brod, City Attorney Keith Braskich and Press

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

Agenda Nothing provided at this time.
Deletions/Additions

Audience Comments Washington resident John Amdall provided comments regarding the tax levy. He noted that the levy only represents 6% of total tax bill. He questioned why Council is concerned for the donation of an Amphitheater which will bring businesses. He suggested a donation to Five Points for naming rights and he doesn't feel Council knows how economic development works. He also provided a comment regarding term limits. His comments are attached and made part of these minutes.

Washington resident Simon Patrobick expressed that he appreciates the amphitheater proposal but feels this creates a perception of a conflict of interest due to Mayor Manier's wife on the foundation. He feels they have been working on this for some time and Council is responsible for protecting the city. He feels the mayor needs to excuse himself. He questioned the feasibility study and noted perceived schedule conflicts. He asked for further review of issues tied to tax generation, the proposed detention basin and the extension of Wellington.

Consent Agenda Mayor Manier presented the Consent Agenda for approval of the following items:

- A. Approve Minutes of the December 2, 2024 Regular City Council Meeting
- B. Approve 2025 Meeting Schedules
- C. Approve Bills & Payroll
- D. Accept Financial Reports for Period Ended October 31, 2024
- E. Acceptance of TIF Joint Review Board Minutes for December 12, 2024
- F. Approve Payment Authorization for Well #12 Emergency Repair
- G. WTP1 Chlorination Upgrade Change Order 1 & 2

Council member Smith motioned to approve; Council member Brownfield seconded.

7 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens

0 Nays:

Motion carried by roll call vote.

Mayoral Communications / Requested Actions Mayor Manier noted that a date has not been set for a townhall meeting regarding the amphitheater.

City Administrator Communication Council Report Council member Stevens asked if staff has started the appraisal process for the 223 property. Planning and Zoning Director Oliphant shared that they have not been given direction to do so. Council member Stevens motioned "for staff to begin the process for the appraisal for the property for the amphitheater, both as raw farmland and ready-to-go commercial property". Council member Smith seconded. Council member Adams expressed concern about spending the money if they have not yet agreed to the development of the land. Council members Stevens and Blundy feel they need the value of the land so they can do a financial analysis. Planning and Zoning Director Oliphant shared that appraisal fees would be \$500-\$1,000 dollars. Alderperson Brownfield feels an appraisal is premature until Council decides if they are moving forward. Council member McIntyre clarified that the lowest amount the City could take out of an appraisal is 80%. He noted the motion asks for two different items that will impact the value. He asked Council member Stevens to clarify if she is asking for the appraisal to include the assumed value with the road in place. Council member Stevens said farmland is worth a certain amount of money but if land is set aside for commercial purposes, there is a different value. Council member McIntyre clarified with Mr. Oliphant that the land is currently zoned R1-A, single-family residential.

5 Ayes: Blundy, Butler, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens

2 Nays: Adams, Brownfield

Motion carried by roll call vote.

Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that the City's last appraisal fee for the South High property was \$1,750. City Engineer Carr then shared that a ribbon cutting for the Nofsinger/Dallas realignment is scheduled on Wednesday at 10:00 a.m.

Direction on Term Limits City Attorney Braskich explained that they need to consider if term limits are for all elected officials, or just certain positions and if the term limits are consecutive. He noted there is state law regarding cross city offices. Council member Smith favors consideration for the office of mayor and Council members and favors three terms. She thinks cross position is acceptable. Council member Blundy prefers two terms and includes all positions and appointments would be in addition to the two terms. Attorney Braskich noted that it is Council's discretion to focus on specific terms. Council member McIntyre feels appointments should not exceed a full four-year term. He does not favor two terms because there are not people wanting these positions. He also feels the clerk should be treated independently due to the needed continued learning. Council member Stevens favors term limits for council members and the mayor. She feels the clerk and treasurer have working relationships with staff and favors three elected terms. Council member Adams also favors three terms for the mayor and council members. He expressed concern for finding people who will want to run and noted that only one position is opposed and one is empty. Council member Blundy feels this needs to be done because people have been here a long time. Council member Stevens asked to consider if someone finished their terms and then came back. Council member Brownfield feels the clerk is also a historian and noted the long service of clerks Carol Moss and Pat Brown as well as the wealth of knowledge that Ellen Dingedine brought as the treasurer. He does not favor those who would circle back to serve additional terms. Mayor Manier asked Attorney Braskich to bring a draft ordinance for further review.

First Reading Ord: City Engineer Carr presented the following ordinance for consideration:
Residential Cemeteries Prohibition Zoning Code Text Amendment **Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance would prohibit cemeteries from being located on properties in residential zoning districts that have principal residential structures.
Title: First Reading Ordinance Approving Residential Cemeteries Prohibition Zoning Code Text Amendment

Second Reading Ord: City Engineer Carr presented the following ordinance for consideration:
3563 (44-24) Abating 2024 Tax Levy in Connection with the \$4,735,000 General Obligation Bonds, Series 2023 **Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance would abate the levy for the year 2024, made in connection with the \$4,735,000 General Obligation Bonds, Series 2023, of the City of Washington, Tazewell County, Illinois.
Title: Second Reading Ordinance Abating the 2024 Tax Levy in Connection with the \$4,735,000 General Obligation Bonds, Series 2023
Council member Brownfield motioned to approve; Council member Adams seconded.
7 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Second Reading Ord: City Engineer Carr presented the following ordinance for consideration:
3564 (45-24) Levying the Annual 2024 Municipal Property Tax **Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance would levy the annual 2024 Municipal Property Tax for the City of Washington, County of Tazewell, State of Illinois (Taxes paid in 2025).
Title: Second Reading Ordinance Levying the Annual 2024 Municipal Property Tax
Council member Adams motioned to approve; Council member McIntyre seconded.
Council member Stevens noted that the tax rate will stay the same but it will increase the amount of taxes so she will need to vote no.
5 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, McIntyre, Smith
2 Nays: Blundy, Stevens
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Second Reading Ord: City Engineer Carr presented the following ordinance for consideration:
3565 (46-24) Rescinding Ord. 3551 Adopted October 21, 2024 and Approve Amendment to the Use Agreement with the WACC **Synopsis:** Adoption of this ordinance would rescind Ordinance No. 3551 adopted on October 21, 2024, and approve and authorize the Mayor and City Clerk of the City of Washington, Tazewell County, Illinois, to enter into an amendment to the use agreement with the Washington Area Community Center.
Title: Second Reading Ordinance Rescinding Ordinance 3551 Adopted on October 21, 2024 and Approving an Amendment to the Use Agreement with the Washington Area Community Center
Council member Butler motioned to approve; Council member Adams seconded.
6 Ayes: Adams, Brownfield, Butler, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
1 Nays: Blundy
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Council Member Comments Mayor Manier introduced Chief McCoy who shared that the City's K-9, Loki passed away. He shared that Loki received Honor Guard escort to Deiters Funeral Home. The police department is currently in search of another K-9 handler.
Council member Brownfield provided a shoutout to Carol Moss and Karen Hill for coordinating the Wreaths Across America event. He shared that Glendale Cemetery has over 1,000 veteran's graves and they had a good turnout. He also thanked the American Heritage Girls and the Boy Scouts.

Council member Blundy motioned for the city attorney to provide a recommendation or opinion on whether the mayor should recuse himself from any discussions or votes related to the amphitheater or infrastructure required to support the amphitheater based on the potential for real or perceived conflict of interest.
Council member Stevens seconded.

Council member McIntyre expressed concern with involvement due to the lack of an administrator, noting that Mayor Manier is currently the acting administrator. Council member Stevens said that Engineer Carr, Planning and Zoning Director Oliphant and Finance Director Baxter have been assisting the with city administrator role and they know the information. Attorney Braskich asked for clarification regarding if the mayor should or should not be able to vote or provide no administrative duties whatsoever. Council member Blundy does not favor any in-session discussion or votes. He feels the mayor should recuse himself during public session. City Engineer Carr asked for clarification regarding the amphitheater or the road itself, noting that the road is not just for the amphitheater, it is for other businesses as well. He also wonders if BUS24 would have the same issue because the mayor may know a business owner. He clarified that the amphitheater is separate from the road and this request puts the two items together. Council member Blundy feels it is both the road and the amphitheater because the road is going in for the amphitheater project. Council member Brownfield feels more clarity is needed. Council member Blundy restated his motion for the city attorney to provide a recommendation or opinion on whether the mayor should recuse himself from any discussions or votes related to the amphitheater or infrastructure required to support the amphitheater based on the potential for real or perceived conflict of interest.

5 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens

2 Nays: Brownfield, Butler

Motion carried by roll call vote.

Council member Brownfield clarified that he voted no because if it comes back no, people on Facebook will blame the City's attorney and if it comes back yes, they will say I told you so. He is frustrated because he feels Council needs the input that Mayor can provide. Mayor Manier shared that his wife has worked for attorneys for over 50+ years and would not put herself in a position that would provide a perception of wrong doing.

Adjournment At 7:17 p.m. Council member Butler moved to adjourn; Council member McIntyre seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.


Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk

Washington City Council Comments

December 16, 2024

We are John and Sharon Amdall and we live at 901 Wellington in Washington.

Tonight the City Council will vote on the Property Tax Levy that includes an increase. The property tax supports the pensions for our public servants and funds the increased costs of the fire department agreement that was approved by this City Council earlier this year.... and represents only 6% of the total property tax bill.

The situation is simple, but uncomfortable. A Council Member who votes NO is being both hypocritical and irresponsible. A NO vote is politically motivated rather than a responsible vote serving the voting public who placed them on this Council.

So, how do we reduce taxes when faced with inflationary increases and increased infrastructure repairs? For the City, the only way to reduce taxes for residents is to increase the tax base without crushing the schools. This means new commercial developments and businesses that increase the sales tax and property tax revenue. The simple situation is that the only way to reduce taxes for residents is to increase the number of taxpayers and thus reduce the tax for each individual taxpaying resident.

Therefore, we are in despair over this Council's reaction to the proposed gift of \$12M... the only criteria that we believe we have heard about the donor are that (1) he wants his wife's name on a prominent building in Washington and (2) he wants that building to offer music. Since the donor is assuming all the risk in operating this new building, why is this Council questioning the motives and assumptions? We would have hoped that this Council would have been focused on being easy to do business with and explore ways to quickly help this donor achieve his goals.

For example, perhaps this donor would consider giving \$12M to Five Points Washington if they put his wife's name on the building? Five Points hosts many musical productions and could do more and better with additional funding. This City Council could help make these connections to explore this.

It appears that some Council members do not understand how economic development is done ...and yet they still refuse to listen to our credentialed professionals who do. It appears that some Council members do not understand how to lower taxes for our residents without damaging our community and the people who live here. Economic development is the path to lower taxes.

For politicians, it is easy to talk about cutting city projects to lower taxes without identifying income sources to meet the City's future needs. But let us pause to think about the residents who are being damaged and will be damaged without those planned projects.... the residents with 100-year-old infrastructure producing frequent water main breaks... the residents with flooding issues during every stormwater event... and many more.