



City Council Meeting Minutes
Monday, March 3, 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:* Alderpersons Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens

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

Pledge of Allegiance All stood for the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Manier. Mayor Manier introduced Jeff Wynn from Senator Balkema's office. He shared that the senator has opened offices in Pontiac, Dwight and El Paso and he is one of three liaisons. He shared that Senator Balkema has set goals to uphold the constitution, build relationships, increase safety, increase the quality of life and services and reduce District 53 property taxes. He has introduced seven bills and is co-sponsoring 35 more. He would like to address issues with taxing social security. He would also like to address funds that would allow municipalities to lower their tax rates as well as address reviewing timelines so that deadlines don't run out before permits can be issued.

Presentations District 52 Superintendent Pat Minasian along with Principal Heather Bowman from Lincoln District 52 Proposed Grade School shared information about an upcoming referendum.
School Improvement Presentation Regarding the old building, they explained: The building was built in 1949. A new entry was added in 2013, allowing for a check-in system and offices. Their newest general classroom is 54 years old. They created a strategic plan in 2021 along with a new mission statement. They developed strategic goals that are difficult to follow with an older building. Modern education makes teaching in the old building inefficient. Heating and cooling are very inconsistent. Costs are increasing with the older HVAC systems. There is a lack of physical accessibility in the building. There are asbestos tiles throughout the building. Old windows cause utilities to rise. They are concerned with air quality. Smaller classrooms and narrow hallways are a daily challenge. It is hard to meet in groups due to smaller spaces. They would like to add technology. They are working with the Park District to acquire the old building, but it is not yet finalized. Regarding the new building, they explained: One campus would be located at the current middle school where they have 32 acres. This would provide savings in operations such as grounds, snow removal, daily operations, shared resources. Staff goes back and forth between buildings which takes time away from the classroom. They could better facilitate programs when older students buddy with younger students. The transition between 4th to 5th grades will be easier and reduce anxiety. This will improve security. This will provide dedicated small group workspaces and rooms for interventions. This will provide larger classrooms, increased accessibility, a sensory room and collab spaces for students and staff. This will provide better storage spaces and an added storm shelter. It includes a larger gym, improved traffic flow and better environments. Regarding the new campus grounds, they explained: The new building addition is southwest of the current building. They are planning adequate spaces for parking. Car traffic and busses are separated to keep them off of Main Street. There will be district and administration offices near the front of the building. The cafeteria is behind them. They will share a kitchen. Grades are separated by wings. The large gymnasium is centered in middle/back. Regarding the financial overview, they explained: Public schools are funded by local, state and federal funds. They rely on a lot less locally compared to the state averages. They spend less than state average per pupil expenditures. They spend resources efficiently. They are the lowest in Tazewell County of all K-8 tax schools. They will have all bonds paid off by 2027. They are asking for a \$23 million referendum which, if approved, will make them 4th in Tazewell County. A \$100,000 home would see an \$11 yearly increase. Regarding the timeline, they explained: They are targeting completion in the summer of 2027. They are inviting the community into the building to see it first-hand. They are creating tours to show how it works when students are in the building. If the referendum doesn't pass, they will have to renovate and remodel the current building, which will raise the tax rate because the work is still needed. They have bonds to sell. They feel the money would be better spent on a new building instead of renovating. Mayor Manier noted a new process in the passing of referendums allowing for a simple majority to pass the referendum.

Audience Comments Washington resident Simon Petravick read a statement that was sent to Council. He believes the mayor has a conflict of interest regarding the amphitheater. He noted that five members voted to have the attorney provide his opinion. He is asking Council to vote to release the opinion.

Agenda Deletions/Additions Alderperson Stevens asked to add discussion regarding holding a town hall meeting.

Consent Agenda Mayor Manier presented the Consent Agenda for approval of the following items:
A. Approve February 17, 2025 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
B. Payment Authorization for WTP1 Chlorination Upgrade Pay Request #5
C. Approve Washington Commercial Building and Property Improvement Grant Program Pay Request - Nena's Ace Hardware, 1880 Washington Road
D. Accept 2024 Glendale Cemetery Board of Managers Annual Report
Alderperson Smith motioned to approve the consent agenda; Alderperson Butler seconded.
Alderperson Blundy shared that he signed the accepted Civility Pledge. He noted that audience members have called out individual alderpersons and he prefers that the mayor stop the comments. Mayor Manier shared that there are first amendment rights allowing the public to speak unless it is abusive or threatening. He shared that another municipality was sanctioned for stopping the audience from speaking in a similar situation. Alderperson Butler noted the Rules of Procedure say that audience members shall not attempt to engage, which he interprets as meaning a one-on-one dialog, not the use of an alderperson's name.
Motion carried by voice vote.

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month Proclamation Mayor Manier welcomed Clerk Brod to read a proclamation proclaiming March as Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month. She read the proclamation in memory of her mother who had MS.
Alderperson McIntyre motioned to accept the proclamation; Alderperson Stevens seconded.
8 Ayes: Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

City Administrator Communication Council Report Planning and Development Director Oliphant provided the Council Report. No questions were provided from Council.
Alderperson Stevens asked about the potential town hall meeting and Mayor Manier explained that there has not been an offer to move forward yet. They are waiting on the foundation. He noted that some members of Council have requested more information but have not asked any questions. Alderperson Blundy feels the town hall will bring more information and allow the community to ask questions. He has asked questions that have not yet been answered. Alderperson Adams would like a town hall meeting but not until they can come back with answers. He has heard many questions that he would like answers for when they come back. Mayor Manier shared that some answers are on their website, but Alderperson Blundy hasn't received his answers. Mayor Manier noted that Council is not in a hurry to vote and further noted that the foundation pays for people to come. It was further noted that the letter of intent was received, and they are not ready to vote. Mayor Manier feels it is unfortunate that they haven't answered Alderperson Blundy's questions.

FY26 Budget Review - Group 2 & 3 Finance Director Baxter shared information about capital project funds that affect general funds. The following information was shared:
Police, Special Projects, Canine, Emergency Management, MFT, TIF2

- Training \$6,000 increased due to membership costs for training of the new canine and officer.
- Purchase Equipment increased 13,000.00 due to the purchase of dogs.
- Emergency Management saw no changes.
- MFT includes \$500,000 for the Candlewood Bridge, \$1,000,000 for road maintenance projects and \$100,000 for Rebuild Illinois Funds for Catherine Street design.
- Police Chief McCoy is the head of EMA.
- The TIF has budgeted funds for Tangled Roots and 120 Walnut Street.
- Miscellaneous improvements decrease from \$65,000 to \$20,000.

Washington 223, Nofsinger, Freedom Parkway, Catherine Street, Stormwater Management, Safe Routes to School

- Nofsinger realignment project complete.
- If approved, funds for infrastructure engineering would be \$200,000.
- The Freedom Parkway project is complete.
- The next three blocks of Catherine Street will take place for \$1.54 million.
- Stormwater management bonds will fund SE Square Drainage Priority Project K \$2.102 million, NE Square Drainage Priority Project L \$1.375 million and Grandyle Drainage Priority Project C \$522,500.
- Safe Routes to School fund will seek land acquisition at \$883,900 with only \$100,000 from local funds.

General Fund
Finance Director Baxter explained that department heads look at every single line item to determine needs and many operations budgets are down for the coming year. They don't spend the budget when they get to the end of the fiscal year.
Operating budgets - Legislative/Administrative, City Hall, Streets, Police, Tourism/ED, Planning/Zoning/Code Enforcement, Fire and Rescue, Telecommunications Tax, Stormwater Management, Cemetery

- Amounts shared show actuals for 2024 with final numbers from the audit as well as the proposed budget for coming year.

- Professional fees increasing for potential website update.
- Communications are decreasing due to the live steaming being under budget.
- Increase of \$31,500 for the recruitment for city administrator.
- City Hall has no noteworthy increases.
- Total expenses show a decrease from current year.
- Streets have a \$9,000 decrease with the completion of the garage door installation.
- They estimate less salt will be used which shows a decrease of \$10,000.
- Repair maintenance systems commodities decrease \$38,000.
- Purchase systems decrease \$329,000 due to inhouse pavement, curb and sidewalk projects.
- Washington estates drainage pond is included.
- The total is down almost 7% and Capital is down almost 35%.
- Chief noted that contractual funding has an increase of almost \$122,000 due to the quarterly payment to TC3 and it will go to every police and fire department.
- There are seven cameras.

Alderson Blundy asked about total police revenue of \$2.2 million and Finance Director Baxter explained that it includes grant proceeds for the evidence building. The total police expenses are \$6.7 million. Finance Director Baxter said these are all funded through the general fund and further information can be found in the unrestricted funds. She noted that revenue will not cover expenses.

- Contractual services and tourism will likely stay the same.
- The PAVCB will increase.
- The TOC is still \$15,000.
- ED expenses decrease.
- The private development assistance incentives stay the same.
- Core and Main tax sharing is up to \$20,00 through 2030.

Alderson Stevens noted a \$5,000 increase from the PACVB. She doesn't favor increasing it. She noted private incentives meant to help businesses outside of the TIF district.

Planning and Development Director Oliphant noted that the PACVB contract is in draft form and Council can adjust it. He also noted extra money allocated in the grant program could be allowed to be used in the TIF. He is hopeful more people will come to the Square.

Funds should focus on exterior work first. Alderson Brownfield feels using funds in the TIF would be good, if necessary, to bring in businesses. Mayor Manier shared that several realtors have reached out looking for buildings around the Square. It was noted that the Square TIF began in 1986 and went until 2009, then Council extended it twice. It is set to expire in 2033.

- Planning/Zoning/Code Enforcement has mostly remained the same or decreased.
- Annual software maintenance has a slight increase.
- Miscellaneous software is a new item at \$15,000.
- Nuisance abatement work increased \$2,000.
- Fire and Rescue increased \$30,000 due to cabinet updates.
- WVFD & RS Payments increased \$44,000 due to new contract.
- Telecommunication tax has gone down every year for the last 10 year with money allocated for the TC3 contract, but now TC3 has had significant increases. The reserves will eventually run out and we will have to find funding sources to cover it.
- The Stormwater management fund is newer when we did the bond.
- Engineering fees weren't budgeted previously but they are now.
- R&M commodities decreased \$25,000.
- Purchase systems decreased \$500,000.
- Systems engineering increased which will be used for the Washington Estates stormwater drainage pond and infrastructure of the 223 property.
- Cemetery showed a leaf vac purchase; no capital equipment was identified and the Columbarium Expansion Project is complete.

Finance Director Baxter noted that money has been set aside for the fire truck and ambulance purchases. It can be seen as a transfer from the fire department to MERF. It was noted that there is the potential loss of the grocery tax in January 2026. Finance Director Baxter shared that in 2024 the City saw a 4% increase. Using ARPA funds for public safety items allowed us to have reserves that we wouldn't usually have. She feels pensions are the biggest risk for the City because we are mandated to have them funded by 2040. She feels the general fund is healthy and department heads have done a good job of keeping budgets in check. She has heard talk about IMRF taking Tier 2 back to Tier 1 which will increase their pension liability.

Alderson Blundy asked if the surplus includes the sales tax. Finance Director Baxter noted that there is a \$500,000 reduction potential, but they have not heard anything from the state. She noted we are currently up in sales tax, but we might not be up 4% this year. She can provide more information. Mayor Manier thanked Finance Director Baxter and staff for their work. He feels we are blessed to have her on staff.

Planning and Development Director Oliphant announced that the WCHS Girls Basketball team won their game in overtime.

Local Grocery Tax Adoption Consideration

P&D Director Oliphant shared that state legislature approved a bill to repeal the grocery tax bill. Many municipalities are discussing a local tax to make up for the difference. Staff is seeking input from Council and notes that the impact would be substantial. He noted that the tax is not paid exclusively by residents, as many others shop in Washington. Mayor Manier shared that IML fought hard to allow municipalities to keep the tax. He said the tax has been in place since 1991 and groceries have seen large increases. Alderson McIntyre wonders how it will look to the consumer. He doesn't want to raise taxes. Planning and Development Director

Oliphant shared that it doesn't impact sales tax. Alderperson Butler noted that it isn't a tax increase, it maintains the current rate. He noted the burden is shifting from the general assembly to local communities. He is worried about a \$500,000 hole in our budget. Alderperson Stevens noted the current sales tax is 9% and people have said they shop at Morton Walmart because of it. Mayor Manier said Morton sales tax will likely go up but they own their own utilities. Alderperson McIntyre expressed concern for the substantial loss over 15 years, noting projects will still need to be done. Alderperson Blundy feels this could be considered later. Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that approval is needed by September 1, 2025, to be effective January 1, 2026. Alderperson Blundy noted the WACC tax generates a surplus above the bond. He wonders what the stormwater tax is generating. Finance Director Baxter shared that stormwater expenses use it and before the City was designated Home Rule they had to transfer from the general fund. Alderperson Blundy is not in favor of it. Finance Director Baxter noted the WACC bond expires in 2029. Alderperson Brownfield noted it can be started and taken away as the City gets more business. He feels it will be frustrating to find projects that won't get done. Alderperson Stevens expressed concern for implementing a tax by ordinance, even though it won't increase what consumers are paying. She feels this helps the grocery shopper in a small way, she is not in favor of this, but might feel differently if we were a municipality losing millions of dollars, but this is \$500,000 per year and the 2006 bond retires in 2029 at \$650,000. Mayor Manier expressed concern for the unfunded mandates placed on municipalities by the state. Alderperson Adams noted that people are already paying this and paying down the pension should be considered. He feels it is great political theater to say no to raise taxes but look at the great work we are doing with the ¼ percent sales tax that is paid not by property owners but by anyone who comes into the city. He noted costs continue to go up and he would like to see his roads continue to improve. Alderperson Martin noted the temptation to lower taxes, but this was money from the state, and now the state is cutting it, but it doesn't affect them at all. He noted the state is shifting the burden to municipalities. He wonders if it would be better to have this tax but drop \$500,000 on property taxes which allows visitors outside of the city to pay. Alderperson Adams noted the WACC tax would be great if we wouldn't need to do the trunkline. He feels it would be fiscally irresponsible to not look at things down the road. City Engineer Carr shared that the sunset of the bond is only \$300,000 and the rest is what is appearing right now. We will not get an additional \$600,000. Mayor Manier expressed concern about the future police pensions, IMRF and Fire and Rescue contracts. Alderperson Blundy said he has never seen a tax decrease. He understands the long-term challenges and would like to discuss priorities to help reduce taxes. Alderperson Adams feels the best way to lower taxes in a Home Rule community is to bring in development but those who don't want taxes also don't want development. Alderperson Blundy shared that he voted yes for stormwater and the restaurant on square. Mayor Manier shared that years ago John Blumenshine wrote a very long letter that he was going to read to Council but passed away before it was read. It pertained to development or remaining a bedroom community.

Resolutions: P&D Director Oliphant presented the following resolution for consideration: **Synopsis:**
R-1429 (5-25) Adoption of this resolution would appropriate local funds to cover the amount exceeding the
Approving the Joint Federal/State match for construction. **Title:** Approving the Joint Funding Agreement for the
Funding Agreement for North/Grant SRTS Project
the North/Grant SRTS Alderperson Stevens motioned to waive the second reading; Alderperson McIntyre seconded.
Project **8 Ayes:** Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, Stevens
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

First Reading Ord: P&D Director Oliphant presented the following resolution for consideration: **Synopsis:**
Vacating a Right-of- Adoption of this ordinance would allow for vacating a right-of-way located in the Eldridge
Way Located in the Addition Subdivision in the City of Washington, Tazewell County, Illinois. **Title:** Vacating a
Eldridge Addition Right-of-Way Located in the Eldridge Addition Subdivision
Subdivision

First Reading Ord: P&D Director Oliphant presented the following resolution for consideration: **Synopsis:**
Adoption of 2025 Adoption of this ordinance approves the City of Washington Official Zoning Map for 2025 as
Official Map of Zoning required by state statute. **Title:** Adoption of 2025 Official Map of Zoning Districts
Districts

First Reading Ord: P&D Director Oliphant presented the following resolution for consideration: **Synopsis:**
Pricing for Adoption of this ordinance will provide pricing for the two new units (Phase Two – East Wing
Columbarium and West Wing) of the columbarium at Glendale Cemetery effective upon Council approval.
Expansion – Phase II, **Title:** Pricing for Columbarium Expansion - Phase II, "East and West Wings"
"East and West Wings"

First Reading Ord: P&D Director Oliphant presented the following resolution for consideration: **Synopsis:**
Cemetery Grave Price Adoption of this ordinance will provide for a yearly increase of \$10 in the fees charged for the
and Burial Rate purchase of grave sites in the Traditional/Upright sections and Memorial Garden of Glendale
Increase Cemetery. Adoption of this ordinance will provide for a yearly increase of \$10 in the fees
charged for interments/inurnments in the Traditional/Upright sections and Memorial Garden of
Glendale Cemetery which include an increase in the interments/inurnments taking place after
2:00 P.M., weekends, and holidays, as well as weekdays. The increases will become effective
May 1, 2025, and occur every May 1st until otherwise amended by Council. The increases will
not affect infant interments/inurnments, or the primary columbarium price structure other than
interments/inurnments taking place after 2:00 P.M., weekends, and holidays. **Title:** Cemetery
Grave Price and Burial Rate Increase

Alderson Comments Alderson Stevens feels without a town hall, she cannot support the amphitheater. She noted that Mr. Petravick asked for the attorney's opinion and she made a motion at the last meeting that died due to lack of second.

Alderson Blundy asked about remote meetings. City Engineer Carr shared that staff is working to address issues.

Alderson Blundy asked Planning and Development Director Oliphant about the selection criteria for selecting Paul Knight to appraise the 223 property. Planning and Development Director Oliphant noted the City has used him multiple items in the past and shared that he does general appraisals. Alderson Blundy questioned Paul Knight's ability to appraise farmland. City Treasurer Crocker shared that her clients have used Paul Knight for many commercial properties, and they have always praised his work. Alderson Blundy suggested using someone who specializes in farmland. City Treasurer Crocker shared that he has high credentials.

Alderson Blundy motioned to have a town hall meeting on Wednesday, April 16, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Alderson Adams noted that the City can't force them to have answers. He wonders about the rush. Alderson Blundy shared that Council asked for a town hall meeting and received an open house. Alderson Adams would not want to waste time if they are unable to answer questions yet.

Motion died due to lack of second.

Alderson Blundy motioned to release the attorney's opinion regarding the possible conflict of interest; Alderson Steven's seconded.

Alderson Adams noted that when previously discussed, City Attorney Schryer provided his opinion and he asked Attorney Schryer to provide it again. City Attorney Schryer shared that it is not the City Attorney's job to disclose privileged information. City Council would need to decide to release the opinion. They recommend that opinions protected by attorney/client privilege do not get released to the public. Attorney Schryer clarified that their client is the City of Washington, who is represented by City Council in a public meeting. A single alderperson outside of meeting chambers does not have the authority to release the public opinion.

Alderson Stevens feels when there is an attorney/client situation, the attorney can't release it but the group can and if Attorney Schryer felt the opinion could be released, he would have said something at that point and it is up to Council to vote for its release. Attorney Schryer clarified that he did not make that statement and feels Alderson Stevens is putting words in his mouth. Alderson Stevens further clarified that they thought if it was voted to be released, it would be a liability to the City. Attorney Schryer stated that the original opinion was delivered to City Council members and they have not discussed potential liability and this body can vote to make the opinion public.

Alderson Butler feels the advice of City Attorney is clear and attorney/client privilege shouldn't be compromised. He shared that Council Members have read the opinion. He feels this is an attempt to make Mayor Manier look bad.

Alderson Stevens noted an investigation that shared an attorney's opinion in public.

4 Ayes: Blundy, Brownfield, Martin, Stevens

5 Nays: Adams, Butler, McIntyre, Smith, Mayor Manier

Motion failed by roll call vote.

Mayor Manier broke the tie.

Adjournment At 9:10 p.m. Council returned to open session and *Alderson McIntyre moved to adjourn; Alderson Adams seconded.*

Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.



Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk