



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 14, 2025, 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: Alderpersons Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, and Stevens

Absent: Alderperson Smith

Also Present: Planning & Development Director Oliphant, City Engineer Carr, Finance Director Baxter, Public Works Director Rittenhouse, Deputy Police Chief Stevens, City Treasurer Carol Crocker, City Clerk Brod, Attorney Representative Tarryn Gardner

1. ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD: None provided.
2. CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD: None provided.
3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Alderperson McIntyre motioned to accept the March 10, 2025, minutes; Alderperson Adams seconded.
Alderperson Stevens asked to confirm accuracy in the minutes.
Passed by voice vote.
4. NEW BUSINESS:
 - A. *Water Rate Study Discussion* - Engineer Carr shared that the Water Rate Study information was covered previously by Raftelis and they are attending this meeting via Zoom if council has any questions. Staff prepared a fee structure based on the council's direction. They pared down the meter size and hope to not tax out not-for-profit organizations. Businesses making money using water would have a greater fee than a not-for-profit. They created a tax-exempt category which would receive the base fee that the residents would receive. He shared that these increases would pay for the BUS24 watermain reconstruction. He noted that the city has been using reserves, and this will make it right. This would be a 3.8% increase along with the automatic 5.2% increase making a 9% increase total increase. Engineer Carr shared that Scott from CMT is also here to answer questions. Finance Director Baxter shared that changes in the council's packet are marked in yellow. Finance Director Baxter clarified that per council discussion, the city is using the term "water infrastructure fee" instead of "fixed fee", and they are limited to how many characters they can use for the account name. Alderperson Stevens prefers the term "infrastructure fee". Regarding the watermain, Engineer Carr shared that the BUS24 watermain needs to be repaired multiple times a year, and with IDOT preparations, the cheapest time to do it, is during construction. This takes advantage of traffic control and other items. Waiting until after the construction would require the city to tear up new pavement which, in turn, would be more expensive to repair. Also, construction equipment on top of the area would cause more breaks. He also noted that IDOT has asked for the repair and replacement of the watermain. Engineer Carr shared that the city has been replacing areas under other projects and previous direction from council directed them to concentrate on the southeast side of town. Alderperson Blundy asked about the fee based on meter size, and wondered if a person would be paying \$19 per month extra as an additional fee. Engineer Carr explained that the \$19 is the 9% increase from what they are currently paying. They are currently paying \$17.46. Finance Director Baxter said it is not "in addition to". It is based on today's rate. Regarding the need for Water Tower 3, Engineer Carr introduced Scott from CMT, who shared there are three primary driving needs.
 1. ISO fire regulations require being able to provide fire flow within an area.
 2. IEPA regulations require for an average day demand in storage.
 3. Water Tower 3 would improve fire hydrant flows on the northeast part of town.

The ISO requirement also benefits insurance. Engineer Carr shared that IEPA recently reviewed our system and questioned our permitting for Water Tower 3. They wondered when it would be completed. Alderperson Blundy asked about using local sales tax to cover some of the cost. He noted the half-percent tax for stormwater. Finance Director Baxter noted that sales tax can't be used to fund water/sewer because they are enterprise funds, funded by the users. She noted that using general funds to subsidize a loan would be bad and raise a red flag to auditors. It would also impact IEPA loans negatively. Alderperson Blundy feels home-rule communities can use sales tax for infrastructure. She shared that sales tax can be used for general funds like roads but not a utility because users of the system are the ones who should pay it. Engineer Carr shared that the Sunnyland Water Redundancy Project will take place in 2026/2027 and 2027/2028.

- B. *Proposed 101 Washington Square TIF Redevelopment Project Financial Assistance Consideration* - Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that a request was received from Josie Wells for the back half of 101 Washington Square. She obtained two quotes and the lower quote was from Blue Sky for about \$75,000. Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that we have provided TIF funds on this building previously which included the Faire Coffee and County Financial locations. The city projects \$500,000 in the TIF fund through the end of the year and has about \$300,000 for the final Tangled Roots project. He noted that this is the second project since the new scoring model was adopted and this barely made it into the lowest tier to receive funding. If approved, he recommends having at least two payments and the policy calls for a maximum of 75% for the first payment but council can change that. Alderperson Blundy said part of this is to get a tax increment and roof improvements won't affect the value of the property. Since 2004, they have received \$600,000 for that building for improvements. Alderperson Blundy doesn't favor this. Mayor Manier noted that the building was in disrepair and close to being torn down before it was renovated by the Gross'. He noted that running water came from a hose and feels past was money well spent. He feels all three businesses in the building suffer if there is a rain event. Alderperson Brownfield feels this is affecting businesses that bring in sales tax and they are only asking for 20% of their expenses. Alderperson McIntyre was initially concerned about the roof replacement, but noted that there are three active businesses in this building, and we want to invest in the square. He also noted this is only 20% of the total expenses and the owner will invest \$75,000. Our share would be \$15,000. He feels this is a long-term investment in our community and supports this. Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared the TIF started in 1986 and last year this building has generated \$24,768 into the TIF fund. Alderpersons Martin, Adams, and Butler support the request. Planning and Development Director Oliphant clarified that the percentage is based on the scoring model and previously specific amounts were requested. He also clarified the scoring model accounts for the tax increment. He noted that it is a moving target and he was conservative for this one. While this request wouldn't generate *new* sales tax, this property currently generates sales tax.
- C. *Washington Commercial Building and Property Improvement Grant Program Round 2 Discussion* - Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that the inaugural program awarded funds to seven projects and one of the projects cannot finish. Staff is currently planning a request for applications near the end of the month and hopes to bring those projects back to Council in July. Alderperson Stevens would like to see a focus on the main drag, visually. She feels some of the signs in town look bad. Mayor Manier noted the sign ordinance can help. Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that a sign cannot advertise a business that is no longer there but it can advertise the sale of the property. He shared that they focused on the heavily trafficked corridors. Alderperson McIntyre likes this program and noted an email from a citizen who is not in favor of the program. He noted that the businesses also have to invest, and this is a good use of taxpayers' dollars. He likes the use of scoring sheets. He feels this helps make the area safer and helps bring in additional revenue to our city. Mayor Manier noted that some businesses have left BUS24, and this could provide assistance for restorations. Alderperson Adams supports this. He feels it is an investment and likes the scoring system. Alderperson Brownfield agreed. Alderperson Blundy supports the program and asked that Planning and Development Director Oliphant make it clear that even though a business might meet the requirements, they might not be approved. Mayor Manier shared that Russell's, Washington Family Restaurant and Nena's Ace Hardware all look beautiful and Nena's has won the Beautification Award. Mayor Manier asked if anyone was against it and no one answered.
- D. *Discussion – Public Works Storage Building* – Public Works Director Rittenhouse asked for council direction. He shared that they have received \$304,000 for repairs and after further review, they found more costly repairs. They now estimate \$340,000. He shared the following options to move forward:
1. Complete the repairs and heighten the building, which would be over \$600,000 to repair and raise.
 2. Demolish and build new.

3. Demolish and build a parking lot.

4. Sell the property and walk away.

Alderson Martin would like to see what it would cost to put in a metal pole barn-type building in the same spot. Alderson McIntyre is concerned that the building doesn't satisfy future needs. He feels raising it could complicate things and is expensive. He suggested a cold-storage building, noting that if the building is demolished, the city still needs to come up with storage options. He favors restoration if demolition is too expensive and doesn't want a building that doesn't fit long term goals. Public Works Director Rittenhouse shared how the building was used. He doesn't recommend raising it. He noted additional storage can be done at the now closed WWTP#1 as well as at the Park District shop. Even if we built new, he feels we may need something larger down the road. Alderson McIntyre expressed concern for the location ever meeting the city's needs. Alderson Butler noted a previous discussion regarding saving this building to use for police evidence and it was deemed important. He feels it should be repaired. Alderson Blundy would like to see long-term facility needs for public works. Alderson Brownfield favors repairing it and deciding later. Mayor Manier noted differing opinions, so this will need to come back for future discussion. Mayor Manier noted that it would be nice to have a new building in other areas but there are issues at other areas as well.

5. OTHER BUSINESS: Nothing provided.

6. ADJOURNMENT: At 7:28 p.m. Alderson Brownfield moved to adjourn; Alderson Martin seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk