



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 9, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.

Five Points Washington, 360 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, IL 61571

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

Present: Alderpersons Ernst, Johnson, Martin, McIntyre, Moss, Sluder, Smith and Stevens

Absent: Alderperson Blundy

Also Present: Planning & Development Director Oliphant, City Engineer/City Administrator Carr, Finance Director Baxter, Police Chief Stevens, City Clerk Brod, City Treasurer Crocker, Attorney Mark Walton

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
2. SWEARING IN: City Clerk Brod swore in Jeff Stevens as Chief of Police.
3. ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Alderperson Martin asked for any updates from Hengst Foundation. Mayor Stevens said not to her knowledge. Alderperson McIntyre thanked Public Works and the City Administrator for their work handling a water issue over the weekend. He congratulated Chief Stevens and recognized members of the police department in attendance.
4. CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Linda McDonough asked about the Candlewood Bridge and City Administrator/Engineer Carr shared that prefinal plans have been submitted to IDOT and are awaiting the review process. The historical designation of the bridge causes the process to take longer.
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Alderperson Martin motioned to accept the May 12, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting minutes; Alderperson Ernst seconded. Passed by voice vote.
6. NEW BUSINESS:
 - A. *Property and Liability Insurance Renewal Discussion* – Finance Director Baxter introduced Mark Whitlock, to provide an overview of the city's insurance coverage. A memo was shared outlining both Selective Insurance and alternate carriers. Whitlock recommends remaining with Selective due to the city's property insurance claims history, specifically noting a significant fire claim, which makes switching carriers less favorable. He reported a 24% increase in cyber insurance rates but found an alternative carrier offering similar coverage with a 25% cost savings. He noted that the deductible would increase under the new policy, consistent with market trends. Additionally, property blanket limits were increased by 5% to account for rising construction and reconstruction costs. Finance Director Baxter will bring a recommendation back to the Council for consideration. No questions were raised following the presentation.
 - B. *Greater Peoria Economic Development Council Presentation/Funding* – Planning and Development Director Oliphant recognized the GPEDC as an advocate for Washington. Chris Setti from GPEDC provided an overview of the organization, which has served the region for 42 years. Funded by local municipalities and private companies, GPEDC focuses on the region's economic strategy and promotes business development across multiple communities. He highlighted recent successes, including attracting EPIC, a medical products company coming to Pekin, and supporting an electric bus manufacturer seeking a larger facility in the area. GPEDC also supports existing businesses, assists international companies in navigating tariffs, and helps identify available grants. They host "Career Spark," an annual workforce development event for area 8th graders. Mr. Setti emphasized the strength of the regional workforce and noted GPEDC's focused on business connections during the COVID. No questions were raised following the presentation.

- C. *Communication Specialist Discussion* – City Administrator/Engineer Carr shared that staff is working to refine the job description for the communications position, adding and clarifying duties and responsibilities. Funding sources have been reviewed, and staff feels the position can be supported within the current budget. Staff feels this is essential to improving public communication, highlighting city services, and strengthening relationships with local businesses. The job posting should go out within the next week. Council members expressed support. Alderperson Smith supported moving forward. Alderperson McIntyre emphasized the need to address a perceived disconnect between the City and the community. Alderperson Martin appreciated the role's potential in resolving public concerns and manage formal complaints. Alderperson Johnson agreed, noting it would provide a single point of contact for communications. Alderperson Moss supported the proposal and feels it's time for the City to take control of its narrative and brand. There were no objections. Interim City Administrator noted staff is continuing to refine the job description in preparation it for posting.
- D. *Square Parking Discussion Follow-up* – Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained that there has been an increase in demand for Square parking due to the opening of Tangled Roots. This shows positive downtown growth. He noted fewer recent public comments about parking. He also recommended amending City Code, as parking regulations have not been updated since 2002. He shared where the limited parking spaces were located on or near the Square. He noted 104 Zinser and 105 N. High should be eliminated because they are not city-owned. He suggested placing limitations that align with business hours in front of Faire Coffee. Planning and Development Director Oliphant then shared that if supported, staff can bring it back to Council for further considerations. Alderperson McIntyre supports this and agreed with specified hours for the spaces in front of Faire Coffee. Alderperson Smith is in favor as presented. Planning and Development Director Oliphant clarified where the ADA spaces are located around the Square and feels the spaces meet state code. Alderperson Ernst is in support. Alderperson Moss agreed and noted an increase in pedestrians crossing the Square. Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained that IDOT will address increased safety measures later this year. He also explained that staff is not proposing additional dedicated spaces, but if desired, they could be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- E. *Former Blumenshine Property Cell Tower Lease Extension Consideration* – Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that staff received a draft lease agreement extension from Tower Alliance, on behalf of ATC for the Verizon cell tower located on City-owned land about a half-mile east of City limits. The current lease began in 2002, was extended in 2018 and includes one-year renewals. They prefer to have 20 years on each agreement extension. Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that it is more beneficial to them for tower add-ons. ATC would like to keep current lease agreements with a 15% increase every five years. Planning and Development Director Oliphant clarified that Verizon is the only renter on the tower. Alderperson McIntyre is familiar with the tower rental business and noted what the City is receiving, is average and easy income and if we want more tenants, we could ask for more. He supports this. Attorney Walton shared that this is common and noted other tenants could cause for additional revenue sharing. Alderperson McIntyre feels having Verizon is a good thing. Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained the history of the Blumenshine Farm location and noted the cell tower on a half-acre parcel of the property.
- F. *Wireless Propco, LLC, Cell Lease Agreement Buyout Consideration* – Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared staff received a Letter of Intent to buy out the City's lease agreement with T-Mobile on Water Tower #1 for \$750,000. T-Mobile currently pays a 3% annual increase, and the lease runs through July 2027 with an optional five-year extension. If exercised, the City would be guaranteed a payment of over \$300,000. We have had prior proposals that would be a longer. Staff is banking on this lasting longer than 2032. T-Mobile likely would not extend the agreement until we get closer. We have not heard any issues from the current tenant. Staff recommends moving forward as is and not taking the risk. Alderperson McIntyre agreed with staff's recommendation. Planning and Development Director Oliphant noted that we also have an agreement with Verizon to co-locate on the tower but this is solely for T-Mobile agreement. Mayor Stevens recommended going with the recommendation from staff.
- G. *Fire Department Exhaust System Update* – City Administrator/Engineer Carr shared that the fire station is a City-owned building and noted a failure in the exhaust system. The installed system was cheap and they have not found anyone willing to work on the current system. They sought quotes and received two. Staff recommends approval of the Plymovent quote for \$110,277. Jermy Doerr shared that the current system is almost 30 years old and there are no parts for it. He shared that the living quarters pull in air from the bay where the exhaust fumes are located. They also recommend Plymovent and hope they can use some of the infrastructure to save additional money. Alderperson McIntyre supports it. Everyone else nodded in agreement.

- H. *Fire Department Budgeted Renovation* – City Administrator/Engineer Carr shared that the City budgeted \$30,000 for Fire Department renovations. The Fire Department would like it to be used to remove the old tile flooring, grind floor and seal the concrete. Alderperson McIntyre agreed and feels it would help them get their kitchen done. Alderperson Smith is also in favor, noting that it is budgeted. The consensus was to move forward.
- I. *Hengst Foundation Letter of Intent Update* – Attorney Walton received a letter on June 2, 2025 from Bob Brown withdrawing the Letter of Intent from the Hengst Foundation for the proposed amphitheater. The foundation no longer wishes to discuss or negotiate the project with the City. The withdrawal was submitted ahead of the City’s deadline. Alderperson Martin expressed disappointment, noting the loss of potential cultural, community, and economic benefits. He emphasized the importance of remaining open to future opportunities. Alderperson McIntyre agreed and acknowledged the project’s potential and the challenges related to required infrastructure. He hopes future proposals will come forward. Alderperson Ernst feels it is an unfortunate loss but looks forward to exploring other options for the property. Alderperson Moss appreciated the proposal but stressed the Council’s responsibility in evaluating projects. He noted the timing and leadership transition may have impacted discussions and wished the foundation had reached out to newer council members and is discouraged that it was pulled.
- J. *N. Main Street Jurisdiction Transfer Discussion* – City Administrator/Engineer Carr explained that the Tazewell County Engineer reached out to see if the City would consider taking over maintenance of a county-controlled road. He noted this is common and typically follows a progression from township to City, then to county or state. While the road could be annexed, the County currently has jurisdiction. City Administrator/Engineer Carr does not recommend accepting it unless it is first brought up to City standards. Alderpersons Moss, Martin, McIntyre, and Smith agreed the City should only consider taking ownership if the road is improved. Alderperson McIntyre also noted the absence of a sidewalk on the east side. City Administrator/Engineer Carr explained that the City could request improvements, including sidewalks, as a condition. Regarding snow removal, the City coordinates well with other entities but will confirm specific responsibilities.
7. OTHER BUSINESS: Mayor Stevens shared that she will meet with Finance Director Baxter regarding the City Administrator search tomorrow.
- Regarding the electric aggregation program, Finance Director Baxter shared that some residents expressed concerns about net metering for solar customers. She and City Administrator/Engineer Carr met with Good Energy and Homefield and will have another meeting with Ameren to get accurate information. Finance Director Baxter shared that those who net meter should opt out. She also expressed concern regarding how to make sure that the correct information is shared to everyone. One person shared with her that they are net metering but did not get a letter. She will keep everyone updated.
- Mayor Stevens shared that she has started to work on a Board, Committee and Commission application process. She is working to post all vacancies so the community can apply for positions.
8. ADJOURNMENT: At 7:38 p.m. Alderperson McIntyre moved to adjourn; Alderperson Martin seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk