



## Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

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Monday, July 14, 2025, at 6:30 P.M.

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

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

*Present:* Alderpersons Blundy, Ernst, Johnson, Martin, Moss, Sluder and Smith

*Absent:* Alderperson McIntyre

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

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1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
2. ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Regarding the newly approved code allowing chickens, Alderperson Blundy asked when the code will be updated online. City Administrator/City Engineer Carr explained that the contract with Civic Plus specifies a quarterly update. Alderperson Blundy asked how long until it is shown on the website. City Clerk Brod explained that she can send the details to him when she is back in the office. City Administrator/City Engineer Carr offered to send the ordinance sent to Alderperson Blundy, but he said that he found it in the meeting information.
3. CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Washington resident Pam Tomka shared that she lives on Centennial and represents the Washington Lions Club. She shared that they operated for 50 years and provide items like glasses, hearing aids, scholarships and books. They also help WHIP, Hearts for Change and other local organizations. They would like to grow their club. She shared that they meet monthly at Kep's. She also shared the concept of installing a wayfaring sign and asked if the City would allow them to install a similar sign. She had Vital Signs quote it and asked if there were any grants to help create the signage. Mayor Stevens said they will consider the concept and reach back out.
4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Alderperson Martin motioned to accept the June 9, 2025, Committee of the Whole and Meeting Minutes; Alderperson Ernst seconded. Mayor Stevens called for a roll call vote. The vote passed unanimously.
5. NEW BUSINESS:
  - A. *City Administrator Recruitment Update* – Finance Director Baxter shared that per council's direction, staff sought quotes from MGT and Arndt Municipal Support. MGT, previously known as Gov HR, had served Washington, and the other was recommended by former Administrator Tim Gleason. Arndt's proposal includes advertising, MGT does not. She suggested a hybrid approach allowing the utilization of company resources but also using staff expertise which may help reduce the overall cost. Arndt are willing to work with a hybrid model. Alderperson Smith noted that during a meeting on May 12<sup>th</sup>, Finance Director Baxter shared that staff didn't feel they had time for this. Finance Director Baxter explained that due to the annual audit, her schedule would not allow her to complete the tasks, but City HR resources and communications specialist could help complete tasks. She feels this will add value to the process. She clarified that she can send out the internal tasks as soon as she receives more information. Alderperson Martin favors the hybrid in order to save money. Alderperson Johnson agreed, as long as the division of duties is correct. Alderperson Blundy would like more information. He feels \$24,000 is not a huge expense. He expressed concern with roles and accountability and does not favor the hybrid approach. He feels bias may be introduced by City staff if the current Interim Administrator might be interested in applying.

- B. *Potential Billboard Code Amendment Discussion* – Planning and Zoning Director Oliphant shared information regarding our current signage code. He noted that signs of this type can only be located on the BUS24 corridor, they have a maximum 672 square feet, the minimum set back is 300 feet and where the maximum speed is not less than 55mph. PZC had received a billboard request on BUS24 which was denied. Robinson Outdoor decided not to pursue it further. Civic Digital Display has proposed a similar sign at the BUS24 and Eagle Ave. intersection. This would require a variance or code change. Jeff Giebelhausen provided a brochure and shared that their company is two years old and they have seven signs. They try to integrate in the community, provide an architectural design, and use their signs as a messaging tool. Mr. Giebelhausen feels the 55-mph restriction takes away from what Washington businesses need. Cody Giebelhausen feels that they are trying to provide a solution for each budget, especially smaller businesses. He shared that they have installed signs in Morton, Metamora, Bartonville, Canton and other towns. Some towns use it to announce construction and hiring needs. They are proposing a sign about 20-feet tall. They are offering to help clean the area with excess asphalt in front of the Dollar General property. Alderperson Smith likes the concept but is not sure about the location. Alderperson Ernst agreed sharing that this allows people not on social media to view information. Alderperson Sluder agreed as well. Alderperson Martin expressed that he is indifferent but likes the idea of community messaging. He is not in favor of the design however. Alderperson Moss noted the current code is intentional and we don't want too many billboards. He suggested structuring our code so that we don't get too many on BUS24. Alderperson Johnson agreed, noting that this could set a precedent. She expressed concern about a big lighted display at that intersection. Alderperson Blundy wondered about considering its placement when entering town or closer to commercial properties. He expressed concern for safety at that intersection because kids frequent the intersection. Mayor Stevens feels there are two purposes, one welcoming people to the city, the other is a general electronic billboard that any company can use. Chief Stevens shared that there are no definitive studies about electronic billboards and crashes but expressed public safety concerns at this particular location. He noted that backlighting can affect the view of pedestrians. Alderperson Martin also wouldn't favor more than 1 or 2 in the city. He feels the Wilmor intersection could be helpful for advertising Five Points events.
- C. *Washington Commercial Building and Property Improvement Grant Program Applications Review Discussion* – Planning and Zoning Director Oliphant shared that staff received applications from Sleep Inn, Ben Franklin, Cherry Tree Shopping Center, Countryside Banquets, and Russell Cycling. Each scored high enough for up to 50% award. The total would be \$139,050 if all grants were awarded and staff budgeted \$200,000 for the program. Alderperson Blundy supports the Ben Franklin due to the building's condition. He feels Cherry Tree makes sense. He noted the other three are not on BUS24 and he does not favor parking lot improvements. He favors awarding grants for their visual appearance of buildings and does not favor Countryside's request because they have received grant money previously and he does not favor Russell's because it is just exterior painting. Alderperson Martin noted that they all have met the requirements. Alderperson Moss asked if properties that may need this grant are targeted. He is not opposed to any of these. Planning and Zoning Director Oliphant shared that the city sent emails to businesses and the Chamber of Commerce helped as well. He noted that it was also shared on the city's website and social media. Alderperson Moss would like more businesses to apply. Alderperson Sluder likes the process he is in favor of accepting the applications, feeling it gives back to the community and it is budgeted.
- D. *Public Works Storage Building Discussion* – Public Works Director Rittenhouse explained that staff received appraisals. He explained that insurance agreed to pay \$340,000 and we've received \$304,000. Several options were discussed and staff recommends doing repairs and using the building for storage. Alderperson Smith favors repairing it and reviewing it in future plans. Public Works Director Rittenhouse confirmed that \$340,000 would repair it to the original condition. He expressed some concern that the price of materials may have increased. Alderperson Martin appreciates the time staff has spent on this and favors moving forward with the repairs. Alderperson Blundy asked about the city's 5–10-year needs, and the use of this building. Public Works Director Rittenhouse explained that it will be used for storage. Regarding other improvements such as painting the exterior, Public Works Director Rittenhouse will have to look into further information. Alderperson Blundy feels the building is an eyesore and would like to paint it, using additional fund if needed.
- E. *Sanitary Sewer Overflow Cleanup Update* – Public Works Director Rittenhouse explained that crews were notified on Monday about a sewage smell and found sewage coming from a manhole. Crews called Hoerr for a jetter truck because ours was out for repair. The IEPA was contacted as required. Regarding cleanup measures, GA Rich started cleaning up the bridge areas. The EPA came out due to reports of dead fish. Hoerr came out on Wednesday and cleaned up other bridges. One inch of rain was received on Tuesday, which helped clean up the bridge sites. Samples tested better with each day and visual inspections looked good. Public Works attempted to use a skid steer in a back yard area, but the ground

was too wet. They hope a brush attachment to help clear the area. They filled out all necessary IEPA forms. Alderperson Martin asked if the blockage was caused by grease. Public Works Director Rittenhouse shared that Hoerr saw a grease chunk in the manhole they were in, but there were roots and other items as well and grease that they found would have come from grease dumped down drains. Alderperson Blundy asked when it is safe to play in creek. Public Works Director Rittenhouse explained that due to liability, he wouldn't feel comfortable telling any kids to swim in a creek where there is road and farm run-off. Based on DO levels, our creek is back to a healthier state. Public Works Director Rittenhouse feels the health department would need to help identify creek water safety. Alderperson Blundy liked the use of CodeRed but wondered about sending all clear messages. Public Works Director Rittenhouse noted we are still working on the area and if rains come, it may leach down the stream so we are not 100% ready to say all clear. He assumes we would use the same way to notify an all clear. City Administrator/City Engineer Carr noted that a farm that uses fertilizer, pesticides and other chemicals is located 100 yards north of this area and we can't tell anyone it is safe to play in. He also noted the usage from wildlife and explained that we can only clean up our mess.

- F. *WPD Monthly Report* – Chief Stevens shared that crime is down. The month-to-month numbers don't show much and noted the year-to-date is better data. He explained that residents on Gillman have provided feedback regarding the new speedbumps but he doesn't have data for speeds yet. Mayor Stevens shared that this started years ago along with Boblink.
  - G. *WFD Monthly Report* – Chief Stevens shared that emergency medical calls seem to be up and the fire department feels this will happen with the aging population. We may need to remember this when they have to evaluate their building.
  - H. *Gauging Interest in the Legalization of Golf Carts* – City Administrator/City Engineer Carr explained that this has been discussed three previous times. Chief Stevens feels off-highway vehicles are not safe for on-highway use. There may be certain areas where they could work, but wonders what the benefits really are. He doesn't think regulation is the best idea. When looking at how they are used in other communities, there is difficulty when enforcing people who should not be operating on them, which may involve ticketing teens and impounding golf carts. The definition of golf cart would also need to be reviewed. Other carts seen in other communities go beyond the definition. Illinois law allows local authorities to define the use, but he recommends caution when doing so. Alderperson Blundy has neighbors ask why they can't take their golf carts to certain events, noting that other central Illinois communities use them. He also shared that the comprehensive plan said to be pedestrian friendly. He feels it can provide mobility options for seniors. He suggested meeting with Metamora about safety concerns and see how they drafted their ordinance. A straw poll revealed the following: Alderperson Blundy is in favor of golf carts; Alderperson Martin is not interested in discussing this right now because more work needs to be done. He could be okay with it, but would like to hear more from the community; Alderperson Moss feel conflicted expressing concern for city liability; Alderperson Ernst is favor of future discussion; Alderperson Smith is favor of more discussion and would like more information from Metamora. She is concerned with safety; Alderperson Sluder is in favor of looking into it but has safety concerns and would be open to more discussion; Alderperson Johnson favors more discussion after speaking with Metamora and constituents. She feels some restricted areas, like Sunnydale may work for seniors. The City Attorney will review other communities. Moss suggested looking into similar size communities with similar traffic patterns.
  - I. *Communication Position Update* – City Administrator/City Engineer Carr shared that a candidate has been found and an offer has been made. If the candidate accepts, he thinks council will be happy and this will benefit the community. He will provide more details on Monday.
6. OTHER BUSINESS: ---Mayor Stevens shared that the July "Let's Talk Washington" event will be at 6:00 p.m. at Myers Tinting on Muller Road. Alderperson Moss and Chief Stevens will be attending. Applications for boards and commissions are rolling in and the portal is open to all of the public to apply. She would like to start making appointments as early as next Monday. City Administrator/City Engineer Carr shared that regarding Candlewood Bridge, the bid opening is soon which will put construction in late August or early September. They hope to have it open in the winter. They have also received nine proposals for the citywide space study and construction begins on Grandyle on Monday. MFT spray patching will begin soon, and hot in-place recycling and fog coating will begin in August.
7. ADJOURNMENT: At 8:01 p.m. Alderperson Sluder moved to adjourn; Alderperson Martin seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.