



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 10, 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 Blundy, Ernst, Johnson, Martin, McIntyre, Moss, Sluder and Smith

Also Present: Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr, Finance Director Baxter, Planning & Development Director Oliphant, Public Works Director Rittenhouse, Police Chief Stevens, City Clerk Brod, Communications Specialist Roberts and Attorney Walton

1. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Led by Mayor Stevens.

Mayor Stevens introduced the WHIP-mas Tree Challenge. City Council provided canned goods to create a new community challenge to engage the community. She provided the rules and shared that all food will be donated to Washington Helps Its People. She challenged City Hall staff, the Police Department and Public Works to build their own WHIP-mas tree.

2. **ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD:** Alderperson Sluder shared the success of WCHS soccer, noting that they achieved Runner-up at State. He hopes they can be honored at a meeting. Mayor Stevens shared that the soccer team will ride the fire truck at 6:00 p.m. Alderperson Martin shared that the EDC will meet at 6:30 p.m., tomorrow at Historical Society. Alderperson McIntyre explained that a team building and roles and responsibility exercise was held recently. He appreciated the opportunity and hopes it will make Washington better.

3. **AUDIENCE COMMENTS:** None provided.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Alderperson Smith motioned to approve the October 13, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting minutes, Alderperson Johnson seconded. *Passed by voice vote.*

5. **NEW BUSINESS:**

A. *Halloween Decorating Contest Awards Presentation* – Communication Specialist Roberts shared that a lot of votes were received. Following were the results of the contest: Most Creative - 404 Jackson St.; Spookiest - 206 Lincoln St; Family Friendly - 100 Lynn St.; and People's Choice - 614 W. Jefferson St.

B. *Dallas/Westminster Intersection Pedestrian Safety* – At the October meeting, residents raised concerns about pedestrian safety at the Dallas/Westminster intersection, citing congestion caused by existing poles and signage. Staff reviewed traffic-calming options, including models used by the City of Peoria, but found limited solutions suitable for the location, as speed bumps and speed tables are not feasible. Flashing beacons, specifically rectangular rapid-flashing beacons (RRFBs), were identified as the most viable option. These could potentially be solar-powered and allow pedestrians to activate warning lights for drivers, at an estimated cost of \$50,000. Mayor Stevens noted that traffic safety is a recurring concern raised by residents and confirmed that staff is considering the development of a formal traffic-calming policy. Several council members agreed that visibility and driver behavior are issues at the Dallas/Westminster intersection, noting challenges such as trees, poor sightlines, speeding vehicles, and limited sidewalk visibility for pedestrians and children traveling to school. There was general consensus to pursue RRFBs as an initial solution while issuing an RFP and developing a data-driven traffic-calming policy or decision matrix to guide future actions, rather than

immediately installing a stop sign. Staff indicated that Peoria's traffic-calming policy could serve as a model for a Washington-specific approach, with council expressing interest in having measures in place before spring and seeking clarification on jurisdictional responsibilities. Staff and council also discussed jurisdictional, enforcement, and engineering considerations, noting that annexed properties bring roadway frontage under City responsibility and that effective traffic calming requires coordination among Engineering, Public Works, and the Police Department. Infrastructure constraints, including storm sewers and existing drainage issues, make raised intersections or speed-control measures impractical, further supporting the use of RRFBs despite the cost. Council agreed to move forward with RRFBs while developing a formal traffic-calming policy, acknowledging that current standards do not support a stop sign at this location and that driver failure to yield to pedestrians remains an ongoing concern.

- C. *Proposed 104-106 N. Main Street Redevelopment Project Financial Assistance Consideration* – P&D Director Oliphant reported that the former Foster Jewelry building was purchased and the owner is partnering with the owner/operator of Mud Creek Mercantile to make improvements to the building which is more than 100-years old. The building has had minimal maintenance over time, and the proposed work is mostly exterior, with the addition of an interior steel beam for load-bearing support. As renovations progressed, additional issues were discovered beyond the original scope. Ms. Stone estimates the business will create three full-time and three part-time jobs and generate \$8,000–\$12,000 in home rule sales tax and \$4,000–\$8,000 in state-shared sales tax. The assessor estimates approximately \$4,958 per year in new TIF increment. The project scored the highest on the scale, qualifying it to receive the maximum amount available. If approved, he recommended splitting the TIF payments over three years. The project is anticipated to be completed in early summer 2026, with Mud Creek able to operate during construction. P&D Director Oliphant noted that any remaining TIF funds would be returned to the taxing bodies if the TIF Fund is dissolved. Most alderpersons expressed support for using TIF funds, citing the positive impact on curb appeal and viewing the project as an investment in the Square. Alderperson Martin supported the project contingent upon approval from the Historic Preservation Commission. A consensus was reached to move forward.

- D. *2025 Tax Levy Discussion* – Finance Director Baxter shared the schedule, which includes setting a tentative levy and possible hearing, and noted that everything is due to the County on December 23rd. She explained that the largest portion of the levy covers pensions. For 2024 taxes, payable in 2025, the City received approximately 6.17% of the total amount of property taxes. The schools receive the largest portion of the tax bill. The tentative EAV for 2025 is \$474,566,809. Staff is adjusting this figure for potential Board of Review disputes, based on historical data, to \$474,000,000. This represents a 10.49% increase in the EAV compared to 2024. The additional revenue that can be generated because of this increase in the EAV is \$240,935. Other than the most recent four years, she has never seen these increases, which are driven by the real estate market. Finance Director Baxter shared four options:

Option 1 – Fully funds the special levies, keeps the General Corp levy the same, and adds an additional \$146,034 in the Fire and Ambulance levy. The tax rate remains unchanged and the levy increases, resulting in 10.49%. A Truth-in-Taxation hearing is required.

Option 2 – Fully funds the special levies and keeps the General Corp, Fire, and Ambulance levies unchanged. The tax rate decreases and the levy increases, resulting in a 4.13% increase. A Truth-in-Taxation hearing is not required.

Option 3 – The levy increase is equal to new development of 0.99%. This option results in a levy increase and would not increase the City's portion of the property tax. The special levies are fully funded, resulting in a decrease to the General Corp., and the Fire and Ambulance levies are unchanged. The tax rate decreases and the levy increases, resulting in a 0.99% increase. A Truth-in-Taxation hearing is not required.

Option 4 – The levy amount is unchanged from the prior year. This option fully funds the special levies, and the decrease of \$94,901 is taken from the General Corp., Fire, and Ambulance levies. The tax rate decreases, there is a 0% increase in the levy. A Truth-in-Taxation hearing is not required. Finance Director Baxter recommended Option 2. Alderpersons Sluder, McIntyre, Martin, and Ernst supported her recommendation. Alderperson Blundy asked for a detailed list of each fund. Regarding the Fire and Ambulance Fund, Finance Director Baxter explained that the budget has been created using years of data and is currently \$1.4 million, with the majority being paid out of the General Fund. She expressed the need to look at the total budget, not simply one fund, because they are affected by the special levies, and explained how the EAV impacts the levy. Finance Director Baxter shared that

she is helping mitigate a \$1.4 million contract that Council recently approved and further noted that more development could pay for this and help keep the tax levy under control. Alderperson McIntyre noted the biggest investment is in employee benefits and the need to maintain the funds. He further noted that home prices have increased, which affected the taxes. Alderperson Ernst stated reviews of the Fire and Ambulance budget should take place when the contracts are being discussed. Alderperson Johnson expressed favor for an unchanged property tax but feels the City has committed to the Fire and Ambulance, so a small increase could prevent an extreme increase in the future. Alderperson Moss favors Option 3 and would like to work to reduce expenses. The majority of Council favored moving forward with Option 2.

- E. *Washington Plaza Christmas Tree Lighting Update* – Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr announced that the Christmas tree lighting event will take place on December 8th, replacing the scheduled Committee of the Whole meeting. This change is fine since no Truth in Taxation hearing is required. The event will begin at 5:30 p.m., with the Beverly Manor band performing at 6:00 p.m., followed by Mayor Stevens lighting the tree at 6:25 p.m. The Park District, Chamber, and Library are all supportive of the event.
- F. *Walnut and Peoria Street Lights Retrofit and Electric Meters Discussion* – Public Works Director Rittenhouse explained that the City currently pays a monthly fee per pole for lights on the east end of town. Installing electric meters on these poles would reduce the City's monthly lighting costs. The estimated costs are: **Walnut Street**- LED retrofit at \$7,495.00 and electric meter installation at \$2,975.00. **Peoria Street**- LED retrofit at \$6,965.00 and electric meter installation at \$8,355.00. Several alderpersons supported moving forward due to the potential cost savings. Regarding additional information on the current monthly cost per pole and the anticipated savings, Director Rittenhouse stated that staff is gathering this information and will present it to Council at the next meeting.
Council took a brief break at 8:24 p.m. and returned at 8:30 p.m.
Public Works Director Rittenhouse shared that some work may be done in house for additional savings. He recommended a warm white light color. Further cost breakdowns will be provided.
- G. *Golf Carts on City Streets - Referendum Question Discussion* – Council discussed whether to place a non-binding referendum on the ballot regarding the use of golf carts on city streets. The City Attorney emphasized that the ballot question should be kept simple and straightforward. Several alderpersons supported moving forward with a referendum, offering suggestions on wording changes. Alderperson Moss opposed placing the issue on the ballot, stating it did not rise to that level. The majority of council members expressed support for a non-binding ballot question, after adjusting the wording.
- H. *IL America250 Participation* – The township passed this resolution as well. Alderperson Ernst volunteered to Chair the commission if it is adopted. Council supported this unanimously.
- I. *WPD Monthly Report* – The Police Department serviced over 1,200 events. Trends show that crime is down but all doors and vehicles should be kept locked.
- J. *WFD Monthly Report* – The Fire Department received 214 total calls with 209 medical, 26 fire related incidents, and 4 motor vehicle crashes. Enroute to arrival response time for in-city calls is 4.5 minutes which is excellent according to NFPA standards.

- 6. **OTHER BUSINESS:** The City received the 2025 Public Works Project of the Year award in the transportation category for the Nofsinger Road Realignment Project, recognizing projects between \$5 million and \$25 million. City leadership expressed pride in the honor, noting that projects of this size are not common for Washington and that the City has now received consecutive recognition following last year's Hilldale Project. Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr shared that Illinois American Water plans to construct a new water tower next year and offered the City the option to include its name or logo on the structure. While some council members appreciated the gesture, others expressed concern about associating the City's name with the utility, leading to mixed opinions and alternative ideas such as featuring an America250 logo. Alderperson Smith shared that the WCHS football team is advancing to the playoffs in New Lenox. Mayor Stevens announced an upcoming event at Washington Community High School honoring veterans and Max Tessier.
- 7. **ADJOURNMENT:** At 8:52 p.m. Alderperson Sluder moved to adjourn; Alderperson Smith seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.