



City Council Meeting Minutes
Monday, January 5, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.
Five Points Banquet Room - 360 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, Illinois

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

Roll Call *Present:* Alderpersons Blundy, Johnson, Martin, McIntyre, Moss, Sluder, Smith
Absent: Alderperson Ernst

Also Present Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Dennis Carr, Planning and Development Director Jon Oliphant, Public Works Director Brian Rittenhouse, Police Chief Jeff Stevens, City Treasurer Carol Crocker, City Clerk Valeri Brod, City Attorney Mark Walton, and Press

Pledge of Allegiance Mayor Stevens led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Presentation *Variance Request by Robinson Outdoor for a Large Billboard at 1230 Peoria St.* Danny Marler of Robinson Outdoor stated that the company purchases real estate for its signs and has pursued a Washington location since August 2024. The proposal includes an 8-foot by 16-foot double-sided digital billboard set back approximately 22 feet from the roadway, making it smaller and farther from the road than the Beck’s sign. Robinson Outdoor joined the Chamber of Commerce. Unused billboard space would be provided to the community at no cost, with the City receiving 760 impressions at all times for community messaging. Amber and weather alerts would display automatically as needed, and the sign would be available for use by the police department, fire department, and public works. The design includes stonework at the base with a message such as “Welcome to Washington.” After concern for the sign’s brightness was expressed, Mr. Marler explained that their signs follow state regulations and have auto dimming features. There is a similar sign in Pekin across from their mall. Mr. Marler shared that they signed a deal with the landowner in August of 2024. Planning and Development Director Oliphant clarified that this is the same intersection proposed earlier, but not the same location. Alderperson McIntyre noted the PZC did not recommend this to move forward. Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that both proposals were denied due to location. Alderperson McIntyre is concerned with the location due to the high traffic with school, but is not against the billboard. Mr. Marler explained the design can be adjusted. Alderperson Blundy expressed concern with the location and suggested pursuing better suited areas like Freedom Parkway, the bypass or McCluggage Road. Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained the process noting it would be up to Council to bring it back for consideration and if the location changes, it would most likely go back to PZC for a new variance consideration. Alderperson Martin said he has received comments about distraction from kids crossing. Mr. Marler noted there are no sidewalks on that side of BUS24 and they are willing to add strobe lights to the crosswalks to help with children’s safety. Alderperson Smith is also concerned with the location. Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained there are three components to consider:

1. Allowing a large billboard with maximum speed limit of less than 55 miles per hour;
2. Allowing a large billboard less than 20 feet from the property line; and
3. Allowing a large billboard within less than 500 feet from the nearest residential lot line

Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr explained that RFBs would need IDOT approval and doesn’t feel IDOT would approve blinking lights. As for turning the sign off during school times, Mr. Marler doesn’t recommend it, but their design team can share safety information during those times. It was noted that the sign would run 24 hours per day. The majority favored bringing it to the Committee of the Whole meeting for further discussion.

Audience Comments None provided.

Deletions/Additions None provided.

Consent Agenda Mayor Stevens presented the Consent Agenda for approval of the following items:

- A. Approve December 15, 2025 Regular City Council Meeting Minutes
- B. Accept Monthly Reports for October and November 2025

Alderperson Smith motioned to approve; Alderperson Sluder seconded.
7 Ayes: Blundy, Johnson, Martin, McIntyre, Moss, Sluder, Smith
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Mayoral Communication *Let’s Talk Washington Events* Mayor Stevens shared that her event was held in the main library meeting room with about 12 people in attendance. Topics included the referendum question, scooters and health hazards pertaining to burning. The next Let’s Talk Washington event will be held on Thursday, January 22 at 4:00 p.m. at Connect Center. The entire community is welcome to this informal event.

Five Points City Representative Update Alderperson Blundy explained that a meeting took place in December that provided a financial review. He noted the following: operations continue at a loss, cash and stability has a strong balance sheet, there is minimal long-term debt, membership is strong even with fee increases, program growth is working well, cost controls are going well, the City’s partnership forgiveness worked well, and fundraising is working well. Items posing challenges are: an aging facility, capital needs, pool operation and maintenance expenses, competition from outside fitness facilities, underutilized event spaces, wage increases, inflation, and general operating expenses. They are focusing on leadership succession and developing a capital plan to cover future expenses.

City Administrator Communication Council Report No questions provided regarding the report.

Engineering Agreement - Citywide Facility Needs Study Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr explained that the scope and hours of the study increased. We own quite a few facilities to maintain. We initially budgeted \$100,000 in 2021 for professional consulting. This is now at \$159,675 for an engineering agreement. He noted a few fees may be added or broken out until we get further along in the project. Staff suggests moving forward with Dewberry for the agreement.
Alderperson Johnson motioned to approve; Alderperson McIntyre seconded.
Alderperson Moss expressed concern that the proposed scope extends beyond a space study and into the planning phase. He suggested including a checkpoint in the agreement to allow the City to review progress and decide whether to proceed or opt out. He also requested that the potential fire department facility be included in the study. Alderperson McIntyre agreed and expressed interest in an overview of all City-owned spaces to assess weaknesses, needed improvements, and priorities. Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr noted that the architect’s process includes built-in pauses for staff and Council approval. He explained that he and Mayor Stevens met with the Police Chief and ambulance and fire department personnel, who expressed that they are comfortable in their current space; as a result, that facility was removed from the study. The fire department had expressed interest in expansion as well. He clarified that there are no timeline constraints for the process. Alderperson Blundy agreed with Alderpersons Moss and McIntyre, noting that City Hall is out of space and questioned whether it could be reconfigured. Alderperson Martin asked about Mayor Stevens’ prior thoughts and what prompted the study. Mayor Stevens agreed with the proposed process ideas and the opinions shared. Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr added that including the fire department building would require their willingness to participate, noting that the topic has been discussed with multiple City Administrators, each with differing approaches. Alderperson McIntyre acknowledged the need for the study and supported Carr’s approach of breaking out tasks, while emphasizing the importance of allowing stopping points.
Alderperson McIntyre motioned to table; Alderperson Martin second.
7 Ayes: Blundy, Johnson, Martin, McIntyre, Moss, Sluder, Smith
0 Nays:
Motion to table carried by roll call vote.

First Read Ordinances None provided.

Second Read Ordinances Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr presented the following for consideration:
Synopsis: Adoption of this ordinance would amend the City of Washington Code and City Council rules of Procedures regarding remote City Council meeting attendance. **Title:** Approve 3611(1-26) *Approve Remote Attendance Policy Amendment and Codification*
Alderperson Smith motioned to approve; Alderperson McIntyre seconded.
7 Ayes: Blundy, Johnson, Martin, McIntyre, Moss, Sluder, Smith
0 Nays:
Motion carried by roll call vote.

Alderperson Comments Alderperson Blundy shared that he sent information regarding the budget process to Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr and the Council. Interim City Administrator/City Engineer Carr explained that most budget items are considered discretionary, including employees. He noted that items are already broken out within the budget. He hopes ClearGov can be accessed to make the process easier, and that scheduling can be discussed with the new City Administrator.

Adjournment At 7:44 p.m. *Alderperson McIntyre moved to adjourn; Alderperson Johnson seconded.*
Motion carried by voice vote.