



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, October 13, 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, Attorney Walton

1. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Mayor Stevens
2. APPROVAL OF REMOTE ATTENDANCE: Not needed.
3. ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Alderperson Sluder announced Let's Talk Ward One will take place on October 15th from 6:30-7:30 in a library study room. Alderperson Martin EDC on Oct 28th at the Historical Society. He will be sharing their approved core objectives with Council. Alderperson Ernst thanked the Fire Department for their open house and shared that the building improvements could be seen.
4. AUDIENCE COMMENTS: Washington resident Ashley Cole would like a safer crossing at Dallas and Westminster. Her children walk and bike often. She shared visibility issues, terrain issues, adding stripes, moving the crosswalk to the other side of street, slowing speed, the increased traffic, the lack of curbs, and adding a flashing sign. She reached out to Engineer Carr who responded that adding the yield sign doesn't follow safety regulations. The state law requires cars to stop for pedestrians. She would like to work with the City's communications specialist to help educate the community. Central School student Wesley C. shared that he rides his bike to school every day and recently was almost hit in the crossing. He shared that while one car stopped for him, another did not. He asked Council to help make it safer. A gentleman who identified himself as Chad Tucker handed a packet to Council regarding golf carts.
5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *Alderperson Ernst motioned to approve the September 8, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting minutes, Alderperson Smith seconded. Passed by voice vote.*
6. NEW BUSINESS:
 - A. *Consideration for the Removal of One Parking Space from 126 N. Main Lot* – Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr noted that the lot is adjacent to Brunks. Planning and Development Director Oliphant reported that the building has been purchased, and the new owners plan to redevelop it. Because of its size, they may subdivide the space and add a secondary entrance on the north side, which would require removing one parking space and obtaining HPC approval since the property is in the historic district. Alderperson Smith confirmed the change would not affect the Walldogs mural. Consensus supported removing the parking space. P&D Director Oliphant added that the C-2 zoning allows office or retail use and that ADA compliance would not be impacted.
 - B. *State Historical Marker Discussion - Candlewood Bridge* – Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr noted that this project had been previously discussed, with consensus for the Historical Society to take the lead. Jewel Ward highlighted the historic significance of Candlewood Bridge and noted a six-month lead time for the marker. Carr recommended installing the sign after bridge repairs are completed. Alderperson Smith suggested exploring additional historical markers, and Alderperson Martin supported the project, proposing limited tree removal to improve bridge visibility. Mayor Stevens shared that a new historical marker will soon be installed on the Square near Brecklin's, and it was sponsored by the Historical Society, Bicentennial Committee, and GFL. Mr. Carr added that the City owns the right-of-way on the bridge's north side and can assist with tree clearing. Alderperson McIntyre supported future collaborations with the park district. The financial impact is under \$6,000, and consensus was to move forward with the marker.
 - C. *Washington Park District Annexation of the 223 Property Discussion* – Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained that the Park District is interested in two southern parcels of the 223 property and the other two parcels are not currently in Park District boundaries. The City currently receives farm lease income from the property, which covers its property tax obligation. Annexation would increase the total tax bill by \$687.62 based on current rates, effective in the 2026 tax year, but this cost would be offset by the lease revenue. Alderperson Moss suggested delaying the decision for a year, while Oliphant noted that future bids would likely include the tax cost. Alderperson Ernst clarified that taxes would not increase for residents, as they are paid from lease proceeds. Most alderpersons supported proceeding due to the minimal financial impact. Alderperson McIntyre expressed that this action was overdue, and Alderperson Blundy suggested seeking a Park District rebate. Attorney Walton explained that other City properties are tax-exempt due to municipal use. The majority of the Council favored moving forward with annexation without pursuing a rebate.

- D. *Revised Solicitation Ordinance Discussion* – Attorney Walton shared a draft ordinance and emphasized caution when dealing with first amendment rights. He clarified that a “transient merchant” might be a temporary store and an “itinerant vendor” could be a fireworks stand. Alderperson Moss raised concerns about protecting minors involved in fundraising and suggested extending the permit ineligibility period for individuals with felony convictions beyond five years. The ordinance requires those soliciting for religious or political purposes to respect posted “No Soliciting” signs. Enforcement challenges were discussed, with Walton noting the process is complaint-driven and that homeowners may request placement on a no-solicitation list. Police officers would have authority to revoke permits immediately. A suggestion was made to include “designee” alongside the police chief in the enforcement language. Police Chief Stevens stated the ordinance is well-drafted, and Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr recommended adjusting permitted hours to “sunset or before.” Consensus was to proceed with the ordinance, incorporating minor revisions.
- E. *Health Insurance Renewal - Intergovernmental Personnel Benefit Cooperative (IPBC) Discussion* – Finance Director Baxter reported that the City joined the Intergovernmental Personnel Benefit Cooperative (IPBC) in 2017 for health and life insurance, which has helped control costs. Despite an 8.6% renewal increase this year, premiums remain lower than in previous years. Overall, 2026 premiums are less than 12% higher than FY16–17, averaging only a 1.28% annual increase. She noted that the City’s strong benefits and low premiums aid in employee recruitment. Options included keeping premiums unchanged or increasing them by \$20 per family and \$9 per individual per month. Given inflation rates of 15–19%, the Council majority favored keeping premiums unchanged.
- F. *Liftstation SCADA Improvements Discussion* – Public Works Director Rittenhouse explained that in summer 2022, Council approved developing a SCADA Master Plan as a Capital Improvement Plan for the City’s three systems. The City contracted Concentric Integration. SCADA systems operate and monitor the water, wastewater treatment plants and sanitary lift stations when staff is not present. The plan helps identify areas for equipment replacement and system improvements. The SCADA migration will unify the City’s three systems under the same programs and software. The Treatment Plant PLC replacements will update aging or discontinued equipment with new, supported models. For FY25–26, it is recommended that lift stations replace end-of-life components with current models. Staff received a quote of \$190,850 for designing SCADA improvements for six lift stations. The majority of Council favored moving forward.
- G. *223 Property Farm Lease Discussion* – Planning and Development Director Oliphant explained that Mr. Vercler has leased the property since 2018. The current agreement, includes two one-year renewal options for 2025 and 2026. The lease includes a base rent of \$376 per acre for 192.98 tillable acres, totaling \$73,508. It also includes a 2025 corn profit-sharing formula based on income per acre above \$1,200. The profit-sharing bonus is due by December 31. The City may terminate the lease with 10 days’ written notice, and no crops may be planted before April 15. Based on previous bids, Planning and Development Director Oliphant feels this is competitive. When asked about market changes, Alderperson Martin explained that he knows from experience that this is a good deal. The consensus favored moving forward.
- H. *Golf Carts on City Streets Discussion* – City staff is asking for Council’s direction regarding golf cart usage. Police Chief Stevens clarified that liability insurance is required for off-road vehicles and that statute prohibits off-road vehicles from being considered intended or permitted users of the roadway. Mayor Stevens asked Council members to choose whether they are in favor of allowing golf carts citywide or only in specific areas where traffic is lighter. Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr clarified that smaller towns nearby specify boundaries based on speed limits. After researching daily traffic counts, a map was created showing roadways with over 1,000 vehicles per day. He noted that the City’s road system has many T-intersections and suggested specifying that yellow roads cannot be crossed and red roads cannot be driven on. Alderperson Martin expressed concern with limiting usage to certain areas and stated he is not interested in implementing golf carts yet. Alderperson McIntyre feels this should be all or nothing and would like further discussion. He noted that Council has discussed this several times, raised questions about community input, and cited enforcement challenges and the uniqueness of the City, including difficulties reaching a gas station without crossing busy roads. Council discussed a potential referendum in March 2026, and Attorney Walton encouraged discussion on how to draft the ballot question. Alderperson Moss remains open-minded and wants to understand the community benefits, noting that multiple leaders say it is not a good idea but Council continues to discuss it. Alderperson Sluder shared that he receives complaints about scooters on roads, supports placing the issue on a referendum, and noted enforcement concerns, including the number of scooters already leaving the park. Alderpersons Martin and Smith are in favor of further discussion. Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr asked for direction on timeline expectations. Mayor Stevens favors limiting golf carts to neighborhoods that do not cross roads and did not hear support for citywide use. Alderperson McIntyre believes individual neighborhood restrictions make enforcement more difficult. Alderperson Martin does not want staff to provide additional work. Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr requested Council direction so the item can be finalized before December.
- I. *On Street Parking for Longer Vehicles Discussion* – Residents have requested discussion on parking time limits for trailers and RVs. Current code allows only for loading and preparation before departure. A 24-hour limit was proposed to accommodate cooling time for refrigerators. Chief Stevens noted that some trucks with hitches exceed the allowed vehicle length, suggesting that limit also be increased. Several alderpersons supported the 24-hour limit and extending length allowances, with Alderperson Moss recommending 24 hours within any 72-hour period. Discussion included restricting the rule to recreational vehicles and excluding commercial trailers. Consensus was to proceed with these amendments as recommended.
- J. *Jefferson Street Building - Historical Vehicle Storage Request* – The Township’s Road Commissioner requested displaying the City’s historic police car and fire truck in bays with glass doors facing Jefferson Street. Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr noted that the building’s west side is used

for Public Works storage and the east side by the Police Department, so modifications would require additional walls and glass garage doors. Council members expressed support for building improvements, only if space allows and it does not impact City storage needs. Alderperson Smith suggested the Historical Society could potentially purchase the building, while Alderperson Moss questioned whether the request is for aesthetics or storage needs. Mayor Stevens noted the Fire Chief supports displaying the engine, but Public Works Director Rittenhouse indicated two newly purchased plow trucks would also need the storage space.

- K. *IEPA Project Plan and Water Rate Study Update Discussion* – In March 2024, the City contracted CMT to prepare an IEPA Project Plan and Rate Study to pursue a low-interest State Revolving Fund loan. The plan, presented in May, outlined major water system improvements, including Water Tower #3, Cummings Lane, BUS24, Bondurant watermain replacements, and Well #13. The rate study evaluates the utility's financial plan, incorporates capital costs, and recommends appropriate rates. The previous Council deferred action to the newly seated Council. In June 2025, an engineering supplement updated the study to reflect a 5.2% CPI increase. Raftelis determined that an additional 2–2.5% revenue increase, through higher fixed fees for meters larger than one inch, would cover debt service for the IEPA loan, mainly affecting commercial accounts and larger residential meters. This adjustment could align with the regular May 2026 rate increase. Current code sets annual water rate increases at the greater of 2.5% or CPI, with recent increases ranging from 3.2% to 5.2%. Raftelis recommends raising the 2.5% minimum to 4% to limit future rate shocks, particularly for the BUS24 project. Council discussion noted that commercial businesses are most affected and emphasized the need to prepare for BUS24 improvements. Several alderpersons supported the fixed fee adjustment but not additional percentage increases and preferred waiting until May. Interim City Administrator/Engineer Carr clarified that the fixed rate structure has not changed significantly and that a larger meter will soon be installed at Newcastle and Gillman. Consensus was to move forward with the meter size adjustment but defer rate increases. Finance Director Baxter cautioned against using capital funds, noting it could harm credit ratings and signal financial weakness, as enterprise fund costs should be borne by system users. Carr added that, with the project six years out, many variables could affect implementation. Alderperson McIntyre expressed reluctance to raise rates but acknowledged the need to avoid large future increases, while noting that some residents already pay higher Illinois American Water rates. Alderperson Martin opposed any immediate increases.
- L. *Bicentennial Gift Idea - Community Christmas Tree* – This tree would be a gift to commemorate the City's bicentennial year. A goal setting session determined a push to make Washington Plaza a destination, and this could bring people seasonally. The plaza owner had shared a desire to put in a future green space, and this may enhance it. Options included planting a smaller live tree that can grow up to 40' tall or purchasing a reusable pre-lit artificial tree. The living tree would be cheaper now but comes with more risk of replacement. We have some funds to cover the purchase. Interim City Admin/City Engineer Carr explained how an artificial tree may be anchored. Most favor the artificial tree although some would prefer a live tree if it were feasible. Several Alderpersons also expressed favor for the addition of a greenspace and the potential economic development impact and community engagement it could bring. Alderperson Blundy noted that this would support the comprehensive plan. Partnering with the Chamber and Park District was encouraged as well as creating future events like a farmers' market.
- M. *Ordinance Amending the City of Washington Code to Establish the Office of Deputy City Administrator Discussion* – Attorney Walton explained that because we are Home Rule, we are not bound by a requirement to end this with the mayor's term. He also shared that other officer appointments include a provision for removal and this should match the process of the other officers. Alderperson Martin suggested including language to include "Interim" along with "City Administrator". Attorney Walton explained that the concept is for the deputy would fill the interim role until a City Administrator is hired.
- N. *WPD Monthly Report* – Police Chief Stevens shared that total calls were up 20% over last year.
- O. *WFD Monthly Report* – Police Chief Stevens shared that Fire Department calls are up 25% over last year and the average response time is five minutes in route and 42 seconds from the time they receive the call to the site. The Fire Department meets on the second Tuesday of each month, and meetings are open to the public.
7. **OTHER BUSINESS:** Interim City Admin/City Engineer Carr shared that IDOT is moving toward resurfacing the Square one week from today at 6:00 p.m., and will completely close the Square. Closings may take place for several nights.
8. **ADJOURNMENT:** At 8:52 p.m. Alderperson Sluder moved to adjourn; Alderperson Smith seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.



Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk