



Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 11, 2024, at 6:30 P.M.

Wilmor Fire Station, 200 N. Wilmor Road, Washington, IL 61571

Mayor Manier called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., in the training room, with a quorum present.

Present: Alderpersons Adams, Blundy, Brownfield, Butler, Martin, McIntyre, Smith, and Stevens

Absent: None

Also Present: City Administrator Snider, P & D Director Oliphant, City Engineer Carr, Public Works Director Rittenhouse, Police Chief McCoy, City Treasurer Abbey Strubhar, City Clerk Brod, Attorney Derek Schryer

1. ALDERPERSONS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Nothing provided at this time.
2. CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD: Nothing provided at this time.
3. APPROVAL OF FEBRUARY 12, 2024, MINUTES – Alderperson McIntyre motioned to accept the minutes; Alderperson Smith seconded. Passed by voice vote.
4. NEW BUSINESS
 - A. *Pearl Technology/Varwig Studios Portable Audio/Visual Meeting Streaming Proposal* - Administrator Snider explained that staff hopes have a portable system and use the far banquet room at Five Points. He introduced Pat Venditte with Pearl Technologies who explained that the proposed system will have voting capabilities, three cameras in the room, use two portable speakers on stands and hired staff to man the cameras. Alderperson Brownfield and Mr. Venditte clarified that streaming would require hardwiring and voting could be wireless. Alderperson Martin and Mr. Venditte clarified that the platform choice would dictate searchability and live captioning. The application can upload to YouTube as well. Alderperson Blundy and Jeremy from Pearl Technology noted that support will increase after the first year and it will not be done in house. Administrator Snider shared that knowledgeable support will set it up, operate it and put it away. Other cities use a similar system including the Capital building. Alderperson Adams favors this idea and appreciates the streaming and closed captioning. Jeremy from Pearl Technology explained how the microphones work. Mayor Manier thanked everyone, and Administrator Snider asked for Council to discuss and provide a decision so that staff can move forward with an RFP and negotiate with Five Points for storage of equipment. It was noted that the City will own the equipment and the system can be made permanent with mountings. Alderpersons Stevens and McIntyre expressed favor. Administrator Snider noted that the Granicus system in a previous proposal is used by Galesburg, and it allowed users to interact with the agenda and jump to parts of the video. It is run out of Dallas, TX. Jeremy from Pearl Technology shared that the Pearl system is compatible with the Granicus system if Council chooses to add it at a later date. Administrator Snider noted that expertise is needed to set it up for each meeting. Alderpersons Smith and Brownfield are also in favor. Mayor Manier asked if anyone objected. Alderperson Butler is in favor but feels the majority of City residents won't use it and feels there are better ways to use tax dollars. Consensus is to move forward with the system. Administrator Snider will move forward with a RFQ and contact Five Points to develop an agreement. He noted that it might take 2-3 months to get things up and running.
 - B. *Washington Chamber of Commerce Update* – Planning and Development Director Oliphant shared that a summary and letter from the Chamber was provided. Kris Hasten was available at the meeting for questions. She shared that Good Neighbor Days will be scaled back to a carnival and food trucks and they are working on a property location. She also shared that there will be no fireworks but they are still reviewing dates. Ms. Hasten noted a major hurdle is securing a location and we don't have approval yet.
 - C. *Discover Peoria Presentation* - The President and CEO of PACVB shared that he was born and raised in Washington. He thanked Council for the continued commitment and shared that they have grown from five to eleven communities. The state average for \$1 spent on tourism \$11 is returned. This includes sales, hotels, etc. He noted that they have seen record growth in hotel, restaurant, and amusement taxes in all communities. He shared a quarterly report that provides details to make sure we are getting what we need. He noted there are 36 articles about Washington with more than 30,000 views and shared that because of our partnership, we have a seat on the board. He shared that Washington has a dedicated page on their website and they are considering doing a custom promotional video for Washington. They have seen an increase in advertising sporting events and conventions. They also boost social content so that online searches provide better results. Alderperson Stevens feels the website is difficult to use and she is disappointed. She asked how the board seat helps Washington and JD shared that the board position contributes and is up for a leadership position. P&D Director Oliphant shared that he meets with Ashley quarterly. Alderperson Brownfield

asked how Washington could receive more and noticed that Thursday nights on the Square have not been advertised. JD noted an increase in messages and shared that they look at the calendar of events to advertise. He said that any communication from the Chamber is helpful. They are currently looking into highlighting the bicentennial which should be highlighted across the state and they will help with that. Alderperson Brownfield expressed concern that the message isn't getting out compared to the money we are spending. He feels it hasn't changed. Alderperson Adams agreed noting that the City brings in a national basketball tourney and it is not mentioned and doesn't see how it can be missed. Alderperson Stevens shared that in 2017 the payment was 1% of the hotel motel tax, in 2018 the fee was \$15,000 or 1% of hotel motel, this year they are asking for \$20,000 and next year they want \$25,000. Mayor Manier and Alderperson Adams clarified that the TOC teams don't stay in Washington because the teams need bigger hotels, but their families stay and eat locally. P&D Director Oliphant noted that the hotel/motel tax has been flat because no new hotels have been added. It has been about \$14,000-\$15,000 per year. Alderperson Martin and JD discussed the promotion of events at Five Points on their webpage and social media. They could also do radio if they get a contract on WEEK. Alderperson Blundy and JD discussed how our fees compare with other municipalities noting that we are right in the middle to top of the range. Mayor Manier asked for Council direction regarding moving forward with the PACVB. Alderperson Blundy feels it doesn't make sense to agree to a higher amount, and suggested staying at the \$20,000 and reevaluating next year. Mayor Manier noted that when things happen in a community, people don't go to a Peoria website to find more information, they would look locally. Alderpersons Adams, Stevens and McIntyre agreed with Alderperson Blundy. Mayor Manier asked JD to come back with more reports and asked Council to provide suggestions to P&D Director Oliphant to get more focus on Washington. He also feels it would be good to hear from Steve Brown our board representative. Alderperson Butler feels the event page on the website isn't user-friendly. Mayor Manier thanked JD for the presentation.

- D. *WTP1 Chlorination Upgrade Project Update* - Engineer Carr shared an update, explaining that two bids were received and both exceeded the engineer's estimate. He noted that during discussions with the bidders, they discussed changes that could lower the cost by moving the scrubber to a more accessible location which will change plans enough causing the need to put this out for a rebid. While plans were being finalized, the IEPA updated their regulations for lead pipe, copper pipe with lead solder and galvanized pipe. Engineer Carr further explained that when the report was re-sent the number of lead services increased and that they are in the process of determining if the issue is taking place inside homes. He shared that Cornwall is not confident about the water quality with those pipes and they are requesting more testing which could cost \$150,000 before the plant can be flipped to chlorination disinfection. They are also working on receiving direction from the IEPA regarding the pipes. He is hoping they will allow us to offer filters for the identified lines after the transition is done. Alderperson McIntyre asked if after the filters are given, then is the homeowner responsible in the future and Mr. Carr shared that the filter would be provided only during the transition.
- E. *IEPA Project Plan and Water Rate Study* - Engineer Carr shared his concern, noting that this is a large capital project. He explained that we discussed several large projects such as Water Tower #3 and upsizing the watermain on Cummings as well as addressed other areas in town that have had watermain breaks. He explained that the Water Fund can't handle doing these without a bond. Discussion tonight is for contracting with CMT to create a project plan that would be a capital plan for the watermain. The plan would cost about \$70,000. Engineer Carr clarified that the fixed fees have been raised and it is not good practice to use general funds for a utility. Alderperson Stevens is not in favor of raising water rates. She asked if we could identify sales tax money for this. Engineer Carr explained that the fixed fees pays for capital projects and the water rate covers operations and it is operations that are no longer covered. He also explained that water is its own utility and is intended to stand on its own. Alderperson Stevens said the BUS 24 watermain replacement project would cover for all business in Washington and we only have 5000 residents in the City that it would cover. Administrator Snider noted that this is normal for municipalities and our rates are conservative compared to Illinois American because they are a for-profit company. He doesn't recommend spending general funds for a utility. Alderperson McIntyre and Administrator Snider clarified that the current rate is based on the CPI so it has been increasing. Administrator Snider noted that everything has increased which is affecting this and it is unlike a private business, where you can get more sales. He noted that Bloomington rates went up 50%. Alderperson Brownfield is in favor of the rate study. Alderperson Butler and Engineer Carr clarified that sewer rates can be studied as well. Administrator Snider noted that sewer rates are in better shape but can see if there is value in reviewing them both. Alderperson Adams noted that raising rates in the past was not enjoyable but he doesn't see any way around it. Alderperson McIntyre noted that we can't continue to sell water for less than we can make. Consensus was to move forward with the study.
- F. *Park District Water Discount* - Engineer Carr explained that this was talked about a month ago when the Park District asked for a water rate reduction. He shared information regarding water usage at the pool and splash pad. Council requested to discuss this again. Brian Tibbs from the Park District was present to provide that they are asking if they can get water at cost for the pool and splash pad. He noted the splash pad is fresh water each time and not recirculating. They use an average of 1.5 million gallons and their bill has been about \$7,000-\$8,000 per year. They are also affected by inflation. Mr. Tibbs explained that it is a good year if they can break even at the pool and they have two water meters, one is water only for the pools and the other is for the bathhouse which includes sewer. Mr. Tibbs clarified that closer municipalities don't have recirculation systems. Alderperson Stevens said people come to Washington for these facilities and we just saved \$5,000 by not going to the next level with the PACVB. Alderperson Brownfield expressed concern that the Park District is a taxing body just like the City and he worries that the high school then might come back. Mr. Tibbs shared that splashpads have agreements in other municipalities. Alderperson Brownfield noted that Five Points just emptied their pool to fix a leak and they haven't asked for a free refill. He is worried that we are already losing money on water. Alderperson McIntyre agreed with Alderperson Brownfield but noted the splashpad is for the greater good because it brings people to the area. He noted nearby pool closures. He would like more comparables and feels it is a good investment for \$6,200. Alderperson Blundy feels LaHood Park is for the public good and pools bring people here. He supports helping the


Park District. He feels there isn't a difference between a taxing body or a private corporation asking for the discount like Five Points. Alderperson Brownfield noted that we have sales tax that covers the Five Points request and the Park District has tax that they are getting from the taxpayers. Alderperson Martin noted the price per gallon with the total gallons needed would amount to a loss. Engineer Carr clarified that the cost is to get water out of the ground but doesn't include treatment costs, running the plants or repairs. Alderperson Martin expressed concern with selling them water that is less than our true cost, noting that we would be subsidizing another taxing body. Engineer Carr shared that discounted rates would put the burden on the residents. Administrator Snider shared that residents with leaks want a break and if you give a break to one you have to give it to all. Mayor Manier noted that on June 1st when the rates go out, customer service ladies at City Hall get yelled at during phone calls. Mayor Manier expressed his appreciation for Mr. Tibbs and noted that the City reimbursed them \$10,000 previously. Alderperson Butler is concerned that we are already operating in a deficit. He noted that we don't have City sales tax on gas to help with visitors and doesn't think people will go shopping if they are all wet. He feels the Park District can levy their own tax to cover this. Alderperson Adams shared that his father used to run the pool and people do come from other communities but he is still not sure if this is the right thing to do even though he sees the benefit to the community. Alderperson Butler and Adams discussed what is the benefit of the pool and splashpad. Alderperson Adams wondered if there is anything in economic development that can help. Alderperson Blundy noted previous Five Points discussions and Alderperson Brownfield noted that Five Points isn't a taxing body and the City has a sales tax to cover it. Mayor Manier wrapped it up by sharing that we will need more information from surrounding communities.

- G. *Washington Commercial Building and Property Improvement Grant Program Guidelines Discussion*- P&D Director Oliphant explained that Council previously expressed desire to make changes to the proposal. The two items inserted included capping the City's cost at \$50,000/FY, per project as well as allowing a completion time of one year. P&D Director Oliphant provided a sample to establish a minimum criterion for scoring. It is set up to allocate 24 points using nine criteria. This is intended to put more impact on curb appeal, focus on non-service or office businesses and target businesses that are fairly visible. P&D Director Oliphant added that because we are close to the end of the fiscal year, it might be best to hold off until the new fiscal year. Alderperson Blundy noted that businesses within Cherry Tree or Washington Plaza don't own the building. P&D Director Oliphant clarified this is set up to focus primarily on exterior improvements. Alderperson Brownfield likes the idea of calling for projects once or twice a year. P&D Director Oliphant said if there is consensus from Council to move forward, this gives time to advertise and businesses to pull information together. P&D Director Oliphant clarified that there is language stating that funds are at discretion and upon availability by Council. Alderperson Stevens feels the need to address Mrs. LaHood/Cape's application as well as the guidelines. She shared that the City has \$250,000 and an application for parking lot improvements and noted that maybe the carnival can be on her lot. She is in favor of giving a percentage to Mrs. LaHood/Cape. Alderperson Brownfield agreed. He noted that we had a call for projects with no parameters and it is Council's liability and Mrs. LaHood/Cape did everything as asked. Alderperson Brownfield also noted that this is a visible business, and she has been here for 30 years. He feels we can give 30% of her asking amount. Alderpersons Stevens, Smith and Adams agreed. Alderperson Adams noted that this business brings people to our town and Council can work on something more specific moving forward. Alderperson Blundy agreed and added maybe giving up to \$150,000. He also thinks that Council has created unfair competition for this business. He would like to see discussions for business outside the TIF district, noting empty spots on BUS 24. Alderperson Martin feels it is logical to separate this first application. Alderperson McIntyre agreed with Alderperson Brownfield. He feels this gives Council the opportunity to fix the situation with Mrs. LaHood/Cape. Alderperson Butler thinks the problem is \$250,000 which is a percentage of the General Fund expenditures. He feels \$150,000 could do a lot of the parking lot. Alderperson Butler clarified that this is designed to do the entire project, then provide reimbursement. Mayor Manier restated the consensus was to give \$115,000 toward the \$389,000 total and everyone was pleased with the score card. P&D Director Oliphant said we can draft an agreement for Council consideration.
- H. *FY2025 Budget Review - Group 4*- Administrator Snider shared that Finance Director Baxter will present Group 4 when she returns next week.

5. OTHER BUSINESS: Administrator Snider shared that Governor Pritzker will likely not make a decision about the sales tax until June. He shared that if the General Assembly removes the sales tax, it only affects 1% of groceries and if the Council would like to give .25% of the home rule tax they could. Administrator Snider recommends waiting to hear from the General Assembly and shared that staff was asked to provide items to cut from the budget. Administrator Snider asked Council to give clear direction to staff on how to move forward. Alderperson Adams said he is not in favor of overhauling the budget on a what if from the Governor. He feels adjustments can be made later if needed. He noted we did that in the Covid year. Alderperson Stevens is in favor of waiting. Mayor Manier reminded Council that they make policy decisions and this table asked staff to do something they should not be doing. Alderperson Martin noted the General Assembly could have taken the money out of the state's portion, not the municipal portion. Administrator Snider shared that state cannabis revenue went from \$85 million to \$132 million in 2023 and the State is doing well in some areas of cash flow. He also shared that most smaller cities don't have home rule sales tax and they are already maxed out on their General Corporate Tax Levy. Alderperson Butler and Administrator Snider clarified that if the state eliminated it, we are better off if the City requests the 1% because we get all of it. Mayor Manier noted that he has been contacted by radio stations in Chicago stating that because we are home-rule, we can recoup some of the cost. Alderperson Brownfield expressed his appreciation for all the dialog and stated that he respects everyone's opinions. Alderperson Stevens asked if she missed a memo about the water fund that was in so much trouble, where in the budget process she can bring up the space study and if this is the last year of the five-year capital improvement plan. Administrator Snider noted that this was talked about in the strategic planning meeting and the consensus from Council was to not proceed with a space study. Engineer Carr shared that since he has been with the City, the sewer fund has not been a strong account but water has not. He shared that 5,400 people are responsible for the water. Alderperson Martin clarified that the 5,000 people include commercial businesses. Alderperson Blundy asked if the watermains were replaced when they improved the road to Washington Plaza and asked when BUS 24 is redone, will the watermain be moved. Engineer Carr said yes, IDOT will

recommend it. Mayor Manier shared that BUS 24 finally received engineering consideration. Engineer Carr explained that Washington is in a group of projects that are waiting to be submitted and we may get engineering started in the next two years. Engineer Carr clarified that there is more than just paving to be done on Freedom Parkway. He shared information about paving, sidewalks, signals, intersections, and engineered soil. He thinks it will be complete during the summer and it won't be driven on until the job is complete.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION: at 8:49 Alderperson Brownfield motioned and Alderperson Adams seconded to move into executive session for the purpose of 5 ILCS 120/2(c)(2) Collective negotiating matters between the public body and its employees or their representatives, or deliberations concerning salary schedules for one or more classes of employees.
7. ADJOURNMENT: At 9:12 p.m. Alderperson Brownfield moved to adjourn; Alderperson McIntyre seconded. Motion carried unanimously by voice vote.



Valeri L. Brod, City Clerk