

MEETING MINUTES OF 7/9/2026

Posted: July 8, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.

Notice of Special Public Meeting

Washington Parish Council
Special Meeting
Washington Parish Courthouse
908 Washington Street, Franklinton, Louisiana 70438
Council Chambers
Thursday, July 9, 2026, at 4:30 p.m.

AGENDA:

Item No. 1: Call to Order: Council Chairman McMasters called the meeting to order.

Item No. 2: Invocation: The invocation was led by Councilman Branch.

Item No. 3: Pledge of Allegiance: The Pledge was led by Councilman King.

Item No. 4: Roll call: Council Clerk, Jesse Applewhite called the roll. Present were Carley King, Kim Wagner, Clark Harry, Steven Branch, Reginald McMasters, and Joe Culpepper. Shawn Rice was absent.

Item No. 5: Approval of Minutes: June 15, 2026, Regular Parish Council Meeting.

Council Chairman McMasters: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and speak before the Council votes to approve the minutes? *No one came forward.*

Councilwoman Wagner: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to approve the minutes for the June 15, 2026, Regular Council Meeting.

Councilman Harry: Second.

Council Chairman McMasters: I have a motion by Councilwoman Wagner and a second by Councilman Harry.

Roll call of vote as follows:

YEAS: (6) King, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters, Culpepper

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 6: Resolution No. 26-1506: Adopt a Resolution Placing a Moratorium on the Approval and/or Permitting of All Solar Panel Farms, Commercial Solar Power Plants, Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), and Similar Energy Generation or Storage Facilities.

Council Chairman McMasters: Would anyone like to come forward and speak before the Council votes?

Shelly Thomas of Bogalusa: What happens with the Moratorium?

Councilman Culpepper: The purpose of the Moratorium is to give the law firm that we have engaged to update our existing solar ordinance and create battery storage guidelines.

Shelly Thomas: What happens when the ninety days are up?

Councilman King: If the law firm has finished with the updates, we then review their changes, and it goes back and forth several times until it is complete and all necessary additions and changes have been made. If this is not finished within ninety days, we will extend the moratorium like we have done in the past.

Councilwoman Wagner: If the law firm gets us what we need ahead of time, we can go ahead and get the ball rolling on the battery storage facilities because that is something that has brought a lot of attention to that area, as well.

Shelly Thomas: Why was that area chosen since it is so close to residential schools and churches?

Councilwoman Wagner: We did not pick that area, the company, Origis, picked that area.

Shelly Thomas: Are you all allowing them to do this?

Councilwoman Wagner: We do not have zoning here. The company picked that area. Their landowner picked that area.

Shelly Thomas: Do you all have the ability to say whether they can or can't do what they have proposed?

Councilwoman Wagner: They are following the solar ordinance.

Councilman Culpepper: We have a solar ordinance in place right now with rules and guidelines. Because of the proposed battery storage on site, we have no local rules. There are already state laws governing it with regulations, but we have none locally. That is our goal, to make sure that the safety of the residents is taken care of.

Council Chairman McMasters: What we want the citizens of the parish to know is that we are trying to put a moratorium in place to stop all permitting with solar to give our attorneys time to put some teeth into things. We cannot stop private owners from doing what they want to do on their private property. Our job here is to protect the quality of life the best we can.

John Brown of Franklinton: Why can't we go ahead and extend the moratorium for a year so the public can have time to study and gain information about it. The last project we had, the company told us all this information, however, we didn't know if the information was right or wrong.

Council Chairman McMasters: We are going to trust the attorneys that we have engaged to bring the information back to us. As a group of elected officials, we are going to come together, review it, and hopefully it's going to be up to our standards, and we will have the complete ordinance that will protect the citizens.

John Brown: Why just ninety days for the moratorium. Why can't we extend it to a year right now?

Council Chairman McMasters: We picked ninety days, If the ordinance does not come back from the attorneys the way we want it to, we are going to extend the moratorium. We will involve our citizens in what we are planning to bring to the table. It will come in the form of an ordinance. We are going to introduce it, and you all have the right to come and speak your opinions and concerns before it is voted on.

Councilwoman Wagner: Our solar ordinance is strong, and I trust what we have. We worked hard putting that ordinance together several years ago. It just needs some updating because it has been four years since then. One of our main concerns is battery storage. That is what we have asked the attorneys to really focus on.

John Brown: Shouldn't our ordinance be as strong or stronger than the state's regulations?

Council Chairman McMasters: It will. That is why we are trying to put the moratorium in place to give us time. There will be no permitting of anything, so we can review and update our ordinance. We are trying to do everything we can as elected officials within the law to make sure that we take care of all our parish's needs.

Parish Attorney Matt Garver answered Councilman Branch's question asking how many parishes have copied our solar ordinance to use for their own parish?

Matt Garver: I do not have an exact number right now, however we were one of the first to create a solar ordinance and when I attend continuing education meetings, talking with attorneys from other parishes, many of them use a copy or slightly modified version of what we have. Washington Parish was at the forefront and has set the bar for other parishes. Since it has been about four years and its evolving technology, it should be updated.

Andy Jones of Bogalusa explained his opinion on our current solar ordinance and his concerns for how it will impact our parish and about non-disclosure issues.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: I would like to state for the record that we did not sign an NDA.

Council Chairman McMasters explained that the Council is and will continue to be transparent regarding all matters.

Tiffany Hawkins of Franklinton explained her opinions and concerns about the matter, such as, transmission lines having to be installed across neighboring properties that stretch for miles. She expressed her recommendations for changes to the ordinance.

Council Chairman McMasters: Does anyone else from the public like to come forward and speak regarding this specific resolution being voted on? *No one came forward.*

Councilman Branch: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-1506.

Councilman Culpepper: Second.

Council Chairman McMasters: I have a motion by Councilman Branch and a second by Councilman Culpepper.

Roll call of the vote as follows:

YEAS: (6) King, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters, Culpepper

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 7: Public Participation:

Wayne Verdel of Bogalusa gave his opinion and concerns on the matter, specifically, if a natural disaster happens and damages the solar farm, the citizen's tax dollars should not help pay for the repairs.

Council Chairman McMasters informed Verdell that the parish would never be held responsible for damages to a power company.

Walter Adams of Bogalusa: How much money will the parish receive if this solar farm is established?

Councilman Culpepper: There is a 1% of the total cost of the project including, permitting fee, that the parish would receive.

Walter Adams: Do you have an exact figure?

Councilman Culpepper: We do not have one yet.

Councilwoman Wagner: I want to say that the Company Origis who has proposed a project on Wardline and Cooper Road, have not applied for a permit.

Walter Adams asked how the Council informs the public about what is happening in the parish.

Council Chairman McMasters explained how to access all meeting dates, agendas, minutes, and documents.

Jay Varnado of Bogalusa: Has Origis requested an industrial tax exemption, and would the Council consider this, if so?

Council Chairman McMasters along with several other council members expressed that they would not consider a tax exemption.

Jay Varnado: If this is ultimately approved with the battery storage facility, will there be an allowance for fire prevention because lithium batteries are flammable and hard to extinguish once burning. Would it be strictly the company's responsibility to provide these resources and not the parish?

Council Chairman McMasters: Yes, that is one of the things we are wanting to add.

Ashley Little of Bogalusa explained her many concerns including health and safety as well as home insurance questions.

Shelly Thomas: Will communication between the Council and the solar company be made public?

Councilwoman Wagner: We can't all meet as a Council outside of these meetings. It is a violation of our laws. A few of us met with Economic Development and Origis to hear about the project and get a better understanding of it. We asked them to have a town meeting which is what they held at the Coke Plant and was a public process. We have never had any email correspondence or phone calls.

Shelly Thomas expressed her concern for the company not informing the neighboring residents of the proposed project.

Matt Garver: The Parish Council is the legislative body of the parish. These solar projects that we are discussing are primarily negotiated between private companies and landowners. The Parish Council writes and approves ordinances that create law and dictate for that process works. They are not involved in this project negotiation. That is between a private citizen and a private company. The Council can only outline and do the legislative framework for what they believe is best for the parish.

Shelly Thomas asked if the 300-foot buffer zone could be extended to 500 feet. She also asked if Entergy has filed for a permit yet for their proposed project on Hwy 21.

Council Chairman McMasters said that all these questions are going to be addressed to the law firm helping to revise the ordinance. He also stated that Entergy has filed their permit request, but the moratorium will put a hold on all permitting.

Nick Smith expressed his opinions and concerns on the matter.

Robert Little asked when the next Parish Council meeting would be. Chairman McMasters let everyone know the next meeting will be on Monday, July 13, 2026.

Councilman McMasters: Would anyone else like to come forward and speak before the Council votes to close public participation? *No one came forward.*

Councilman Branch: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to close public participation.

Councilman King: Second.

Council Chairman McMasters: I have a motion by Councilman Branch and a second by Councilman King.

Roll call of the vote as follows:

YEAS: (6) King, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters, Culpepper

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 8: President's Report:

Washington Parish President Ryan Seal read a letter that he wrote to the Vice President of Project Development for the Origis company.
October 29, 2025

Mr. Daniel Ferrell
Vice President of Project Development
Origis Energy
3157 Gentilly Boulevard, #2227
New Orleans, Louisiana 70122

Dear Mr. Ferrell,

It has come to my attention that Origis Energy recently distributed correspondence to residents in Washington Parish, stating that the project would receive a 10-year tax abatement.

This statement is both inaccurate and misleading. During our recent meeting with you and representatives from the Washington Parish Economic Development Foundation, I clearly advised that Washington Parish Government does **not** offer tax abatements for such projects. At no time was any commitment or authorization made by this office or the Parish Council to grant an abatement of any kind.

Additionally, no permit application or supporting documentation for this proposed project has been submitted to Washington Parish Government. Therefore, any public communication regarding approvals or incentives is premature and inappropriate.

I must insist that Origis Energy immediately correct the misinformation circulated to residents and issue a written clarification stating that Washington Parish Government has not granted, nor intends to grant, a tax abatement related to this proposed project.

Washington Parish Government values responsible economic development and welcomes investment that aligns with our local regulations and community standards. However, accuracy, transparency, and respect for the local approval process are non-negotiable expectations when engaging with this administration and the residents we serve.

Sincerely,
Ryan Seal, President
Washington Parish Government

Item No. 9: Council Discussion:

The Council thanked everyone for attending the meeting along with sharing their concerns and ideas. They also encouraged the community to attend the meetings and stay informed of things happening around the parish.

Item No. 10: Adjourn:

Council Chairman McMasters: May I have a motion to adjourn?

Councilwoman Wagner: I make a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Councilman King: Second.

Council Chairman McMasters: I have a motion by Councilwoman Wagner and a second by Councilman King.

Roll call of the vote as follows:

YEAS: (6) King, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters, Culpepper

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Council Chairman McMasters: Meeting adjourned.

Reginald McMasters, Chairman
Washington Parish Council

Jesse Applewhite, Clerk
Washington Parish Council

Order of Voting

Carley King	Steven Branch
Shawn Rice	Reginald McMasters
Kim Wagner	Joe Culpepper
Clark Harry	

The next meeting will be held July 13, 2026.

In accordance with the American Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance, please contact Jesse Applewhite, Clerk to the Council, at 985.839.7825, describing the assistance that is necessary.

(All Ordinances, Resolutions, and attachments in their entirety are available at the office of the Clerk to the Council at 909 Pearl Street, Franklinton, Louisiana or at 985.839.7825, or wpgov.org.)

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