

MEETING MINUTES OF 7/13/2026

Posted: July 9, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.

Notice of Public Hearing

Washington Parish Council
Regular Meeting
Washington Parish Courthouse
908 Washington Street, Franklinton, Louisiana 70438
Council Chambers
Monday, July 13, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.

Council Vice Chairman Steven Branch called the Public Hearing to order.

Ordinance No. 26-789: Adopt an Ordinance Establishing “No-Thru Truck Routes” on Certain Parish Roads as per Ordinance No. 13-577.

Director of Public Works Alex Sumrall: This is a section of Highway 1073 that the parish took over through the Road Transfer Program. It connects Highway 16 and Highway 60. By doing this, it preserves our road and safety of the residents on that road. The trucks can simply stay on Highway 16 and turn off onto Highway 60 or vice versa.

Council Vice Chairman Branch: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and speak before we close the Public Hearing? *No one came forward.*

Notice of Special Public Meeting

Washington Parish Council
Regular Meeting
Washington Parish Courthouse
908 Washington Street, Franklinton, Louisiana 70438
Council Chambers
Monday, July 13, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

AGENDA:

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

Item No. 2: Invocation: The invocation was led by Parish President Ryan Seal.

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

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

Item No. 5: Approval of Minutes: July 9, 2026, Special Council Meeting.

Council Vice Chairman Branch: 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 July 9, 2026, Special Council Meeting.

Councilman King: Second.

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

Roll call of vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 6: Austin Magee: Candidate for Louisiana's Congressional District 5.

Austin Magee spoke of his interest and concern for data centers. He described his idea of having an ordinance established that would put a ban on data centers for our parish.

Item No. 7: Ordinance No. 26-789: Adopt an Ordinance Establishing "No-Thru Truck Routes" on Certain Parish Roads as per Ordinance No. 13-577.

Council Vice Chairman Branch: Alex explained this Ordinance to us during our Public Hearing. Would anyone from the public like to come forward and speak before the Council votes? *No one came forward.*

Councilman Rice: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to approve Ordinance No. 26-789.

Councilman King: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 8: Resolution No. 26-1507: Adopt a Resolution Authorizing a Workforce Development Stipend for Washington Parish Government Employees Who Successfully Complete the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) Training Through Geaux Jobs

President Ryan Seal: We partnered with Geaux Jobs to provide CDL Training for our team employees that qualified. There were 15 employees who completed and passed the program. We wanted to give them an award for going the extra mile.

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

Councilman Culpepper: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-1507.

Councilman King: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 9: Resolution No. 26-1508: Adopt a Resolution by the Washington Parish Council to Authorize the Parish President to Sign an Intergovernmental Agreement with Tangipahoa Parish Government for the Rehabilitation of Cecil Painter Road.

Director of Public Works Alex Sumrall: This is a resolution for an intergovernmental agreement with Tangipahoa Parish Government on Cecil Painter Road. Half of the road is in Washington Parish, and the other half is in Tangipahoa Parish. There is a drainage issue and a culvert that splits right between the parish line. By passing this resolution, we will be able to partner with Tangipahoa Parish and split the cost.

Council Vice Chairman Branch: Would anybody from the public like to come forward and speak before the Council votes? *No one came forward.*

Councilwoman Wagner: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-1508.

Councilman Harry: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 10: Resolution No. 26-1509: Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the Washington Parish President to Execute an Agreement with RCL Architecture, LLC for Schematic Site Planning and Conceptual Design Services for the Varnado Recreation Center, and to Utilize Opioid Settlement Funds for Said Project

Director of Public Works Alex Sumrall: This Resolution would allow Washington Parish Government to execute an agreement with RCL to develop a master plan for our Varnado Recreation Center using opioid funds.

Director of Finance/Personnel Lacy Burris: As far as the budget is concerned, we have enough in there now for the initial plans and once we see what the total cost will be, we will amend the budget to include it. It is a good use of opioid money.

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

Councilman King: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-1509.

Councilman Harry: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 11: Resolution No. 26-1510: Adopt a Resolution Authorizing the Washington Parish President to Execute an Entity/ State Agreement with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) for State Project No. H.015433 / Federal Aid Project No. H015433, George Jenkins Road over Berry's Creek

Director of Public Works Alex Sumrall: This is an agreement between Washington Parish and DOTD. I've talked about George Jenkins Bridge multiple times. This will allow it to be replaced by DOTD.

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

Councilman Culpepper: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-1510.

Councilman Harry: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 12: Resolution No. 26-1511: Adopt a Resolution of the Washington Parish Council Authorizing the Parish President to Execute an Entity/State Agreement, Funding Commitment Letter, and any Related Documents with the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) for State Project No. H. 016879 / Federal Aid Project No. H016879, LA 25: Washington Parish Sidewalk Segment A2

Director of Public Works Alex Sumrall: This is another agreement between the Washington Parish Government and DOTD. This is for the next phase of the Sidewalk Project going from Dobson Street to Bean Street towards the Fairgrounds.

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

Councilwoman Wagner: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-1511.

Councilman Rice: Second.

Council Vice Chairman Branch: I have a motion by Councilwoman Wagner and a second by Councilman Rice.

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 13: Public Participation:

Washington Parish Sheriff Jason Smith: We set a record today. We have the greatest number of inmates in the jail since I've been there. We have 265 in-house, which is 121 over capacity. We have 277 that we are responsible for that are housed in Bogalusa and Tensas Parish. We are still the jail in Louisiana that has the highest percentage of overcrowding. The good news is that the Governor signed the Capital Outlay Bill that will designate Washington Parish to receive money for the construction of a new jail. We are getting \$500,000 in cash to spend this year on the design process, and then \$27 million in Priority five money to be awarded for the construction of a new facility. This is not a loan that we have to pay back. This is a very unusual Capital Outlay request because the state does not provide money to local jurisdictions to build jails. That is usually on the back of the taxpayers here in Washington Parish. Our argument has been that if you're going to house half of the prisoners in the state at the local level, and you're going to get a financial break in order to do that, then it shouldn't be the responsibility of the taxpayers in Washington Parish to build a facility. I met with the design team to discuss some things, and I plan to get the new jail built as soon as possible. Another issue we have right now is emergency preparedness across the parish to include consolidation of the three 911 call centers that we have in the parish. We've got some work that we need to do on inmate per diem rates and we need to get serious about what funds are we going to use and how we are going to generate revenue to maintain this new facility once we get it.

Andrew Jones of Franklinton gave his opinions and concerns for the proposed solar farms in the parish.

Dewitt Perry of Franklinton expressed his concerns for the proposed solar farms.

Executive Director of the Washington Parish Economic Development Foundation D'Ann Davis gave some updates on what the foundation has been working on recently. She let everyone know that on their Facebook page, citizens can take a survey to help with the future of economic development in our parish. She also said that she will be launching their website by the end of the month.

Council Vice Chairman Branch: Would anyone else from the public like to come forward and speak before the Council votes to close public participation? *No one came forward.*

Councilwoman Wagner: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to close Public Participation.

Councilman Culpepper: Second.

Council Vice Chairman Branch: I have a motion by Councilwoman Wagner and a second by Councilman Culpepper.

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Item No. 14: President's Report:

Director of Personnel/Finance Lacy Burris: I don't have a financial report, however I do want to let you know that our Audit Report has been closed out and sent to legislative auditor for approval. Once it is approved, by them, we will have our auditors here to meet with you guys.

Director of Public Works Alex Sumrall gave a Transportation Report for the month of June.

- Drainage Projects: 29 roads totaling 58 miles
- Cold Mix Distributed: 83 tons on 47 roads totaling 54 miles
- Hot Mix Distributed: 1,040 tons on 9 roads totaling 2 miles
- Culverts Installed: 7
- Graded Roads: 14 roads totaling 28 miles
- Bushhogged Roads: 96 roads totaling 193 miles
- Trash Picked Up: 203 bags on 23 roads
- Road Signs Installed: 28 on 11 roads
- Parish Grounds Maintenance: 8 locations cleared/cut

Alex also gave a Public Works Report stating that weather permitting, Thursday the crews will begin at Zach Magee Road as well as Bickham Road. He also stated that bushhogging has been being done daily to ensure the grass does not get too high. He gave an update on the Sidewalk Project segments D and E from Liberty Street to Old Union Road past Riverside Medical Hospital. This project will be constructing 1.3 miles of sidewalk.

Parish President Ryan Seal: When I was running for this position, I talked about improving recreation in Washington Parish. We have done a lot down at the Plainview ball field as well as helped facilitate some grants and have some work done at the Atoka Facility. We have also begun to work at the Varnado Recreation Center, improving the basketball court. We are looking forward to having a master plan to move the rest of the project forward. Also, on July 1st we dedicated Washington Parish's Civic Tree at our Veterans Memorial Park as part of the American 250 initiative. Thank you to the Commissioner of Agriculture, Dr. Mike Strain, for donating a live oak tree to every parish in Louisiana. We are also thankful to Mike Baham for coordinating this meaningful event and Bogalusa high School JROTC for coming out to be a part of the event and presenting the colors. I had the honor as serving as Grand Marshall for the American Legion's Fourth of July Parade as well as celebrating Bogalusa's 112th birthday. The Watermelon Festival was a great event with good music, food, sponsors and vendors. The fireworks show that evening was outstanding. Washington Parish Government flags have been flown at half-staff for a Proclamation from President Trump on behalf of South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham who passed away unexpectedly this weekend. At the end of this week, I will attend the 2026 National Association of Counties Annual Conference in New Orleans which will provide an excellent opportunity to meet with other county officials across the country and share ideas and discuss different priorities and get back some valuable information that can benefit Washington Parish. That is most of my report this week. I would like to finish my comments by taking a walk down memory lane concerning these solar facilities in Washington Parish. There are a lot of people out there saying things that are not true. A lot of them are designed to malign me and influence elections. But I am going to keep telling the truth. I'm going to share some things with you tonight. Several years ago, I think it was 2018, I was the Economic Development Director here in the parish, and one day I was sitting at my desk and the phone rang. I answered the phone and the lady asked me who I was. I told her and she said that she got my number from the Parish Government and she was a part of a company that was going to put a solar facility at the LSU Experiment Station. To my knowledge, that was the first contact, or first conversation about solar in Washington Parish with somebody from Washington Parish. During my tenure in

economic development, I did not once, recruit or try to entice a solar company to come to Washington Parish. And anybody that says anything different is a liar. When you know the truth and you keep telling that lie, it doesn't make it true. If you tell it a thousand times, it only makes you a bigger liar. So, when the lady told me she was going to have this solar facility at the LSU Experiment Station, I was kind of shocked. My first question was: "What's going to happen to LSU Experiment Station?" She then told me that they weren't going to take the whole thing, that they were taking part in it. I got her information. She's asking me what the incentives were involved and what some processes were, and I told her I got her information, told her I'd do what the Economic Development Director is supposed to do. I'm not here to say what's right or wrong with the parish. I'm here to give information to the decision-makers, who at the time were the Parish President and Parish council. So, after I got off the phone with her, I started working the phones, called the Parish President and Parish Council, our Legislative delegations, and nobody knew a lot about this. So, we went through the process, and it came forth they were applying for the ITEP position. Now, keep in mind, the LSU Experiment Station is owned by LSU, which is the State of Louisiana. So, they wanted to apply for this ITEP and by this time, the ITEP rules had changed when Governor John Bel Edwards came in, and you had to get a local approval from the Sheriff, the School Board, and the Parish Council of the area it was in, and that's what the process did. There are some people that say I forced this through. There's no way to force through an ordinance. It is legal or it's not. We had a great attorney that oversaw that then, Mr. Wayne Kuhn. So, you can't force something through. You put it on the agenda. It stays there two weeks, it's voted on. It's public. And it was approved six to zero with one person absent. The Sheriff signed off on it, and the School Board signed off on it, and that was it. That's what we were. Then after that process, at some time there, I was walking into a health club in Bogalusa on a Saturday morning at about 9:00, and my phone rang. It was a person that I recognized. They had the number of my phone, and they told me that this solar facility was buying that land across the street, the Boudreaux property. Now, a guy stood up here last week saying he knew how you feel because that was his cattle. It was his cattle, but it wasn't his land, and Mr. Boudreaux was a private landowner. What happened was capitalism. What happened was free markets. They made Mr. Boudreaux an offer, and he took it. That wasn't expropriated land. The Parish Government didn't regulate that sale. Most of you have bought and sold property in your life. You don't get the government's permission to buy and sell your land. So, what happened was Mr. Boudreaux got a better offer. Whatever he was making in lease, he probably figured that out and said, "You know, they're going to pay me this", and that was it. Now, the people renting that property, they could have probably matched the offer, but for some reason they didn't. That's what happened. That's capitalism. Meanwhile, doing all this between the first project, the LSU project, and the project across the road, Sunlight Solar, all these things started popping up everywhere. Everywhere. Not only in Washington Parish, but in other parishes. Tangipahoa, Morehouse, all over the state. These things started popping up everywhere. The other night, Mr. Nick Smith said the person responsible for this was in the room. That was a lie. The person responsible for this has never been in this room. The person responsible for this is the politicians and policies out of Washington DC, not Washington Parish. It's federal tax policy and these big companies that Mr. Magee is talking about. It's big data that's driving this, and even these utility companies. Someone said, "We want to get 50% of our power from green sources within 10 years or 20 years." It's Entergy, it's Microsoft, it's Apple. It's all these big guys. I have never drunk the "going green Kool-aid". You're right, they are ugly to look at. Like I said, it's just what it is. But the bottom line is this idea that somehow or another, I wronged this parish because I recruited solar is total fallacy. There's no truth to that. These things were happening everywhere, all over the country. I've said before, I've never recruited a single one in my entire life, as Parish President, as Economic Developer, or private citizen to come to Washington Parish. I am tired of that agenda being pushed, and I've just kind of had enough of it. Come what may, I've had enough. Come what may, I've had enough. It is my responsibility as Parish President to abide by the oath I took. I raised my hand and said, "I'm going to follow these laws and follow these rules," and that is what I will do. We've got a system of government where we have a checks and balance system with this council. I can't sneak anything through. It's public record. But somewhere mixed up in all of this, truth becomes a casualty, and it becomes a casualty when they start pushing that agenda. So, what I would like to do going forward here, if we're going to make any decision, I want it to be based on truth and not somebody's attempt to destroy somebody. Whether it's election season or not, whether you create a fake profile on Facebook or not, whether you run to Facebook with this kind of drama, when it's all a lie is just pitiful for a grown man. Thank you very much. Does anyone have any questions? I think I'm through with my comments.

Item No. 15: Council Discussion:

The Council thanked everyone for coming out to the meeting and encouraged everyone to attend the next Parish Council meeting on July 27, 2026.

Item No. 16: Adjourn:

Council Vice Chairman Branch: May I have a motion to adjourn?

Councilman Culpepper: I make a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Councilman King: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) McMasters

Council Vice Chairman Branch: Meeting adjourned.

Steven Branch, Vice Chairman
Washington Parish Council

Jesse Applewhite, Clerk
Washington Parish Council

Order of Voting

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

The next meeting will be held July 27, 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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