

MEETING MINUTES OF 8/10/2026

Posted: August 6, 2026, at 2:00 p.m.

Notice of Public Meeting

Washington Parish Council
Regular Meeting
Washington Parish Courthouse
908 Washington Street, Franklinton, Louisiana 70438
Council Chambers
Monday, August 10, 2026, at 5:30 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 Clark Harry, Steven Branch, Reginald McMasters, Carley King, Culpepper, and Kim Wagner. Shawn Rice was absent.

Item No. 5: Approval of Minutes: July 27, 2026, Regular 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.*

Councilman Culpepper: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to approve the minutes for the July 27, 2026, Regular Council Meeting.

Councilman Harry: Second.

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

Roll call of vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 6: Michelle Trueschwig: Kushner LaGraize, Audit Report

Michelle Trueschwig, Engagement Partner with Kushner LaGraize, presented the Parish's annual audit report. She stated that the audit was submitted to the Louisiana Legislative Auditor on June 23, ahead of the June 30 deadline, and was reviewed, approved, and issued on July 27. The report was also submitted to and accepted by the Federal Audit Clearinghouse.

Ms. Trueschwig explained that Washington Parish is subject to a single audit, which includes an audit of the Parish's financial statements as well as its major federal grant programs. The Parish received a clean, unmodified opinion on its financial statements, with no internal control findings

noted. The two major grant programs audited were the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program, totaling approximately \$1.2 million, and the Recreation Grant, totaling approximately \$498,000. Both programs received unmodified opinions with no findings.

Ms. Trueschwig reported that the Parish's government-wide net position increased approximately \$6.5 million, from \$75.4 million to \$81.9 million, with approximately \$4.8 million of the increase attributed to investment in capital assets. She also noted that a prior-year pension liability of approximately \$600,000 changed to a pension asset of approximately \$605,000 based on the applicable actuarial report.

Governmental fund balances increased from approximately \$1.1 million in the prior year to approximately \$1.2 million. Overall revenues decreased by approximately \$2.8 million, primarily due to a decrease of approximately \$1.2 million in sales tax revenues and approximately \$1.7 million in operating and capital grant revenues. Ms. Trueschwig noted that the prior year included approximately \$4.5 million in ARC funding, while the current year included approximately \$2 million from the DOTD Road Transfer Program and approximately \$498,000 from the Recreation Grant. Ad valorem revenues increased slightly by approximately \$370,000.

Opioid settlement funds increased from approximately \$1.4 million to \$1.9 million. As of December 31, 2025, approximately \$1.9 million remained in cash within the program.

Ms. Trueschwig reported that the General Fund decreased by approximately \$356,000 and had a fund balance of approximately \$1.9 million. Of that amount, approximately \$850,000 was committed, leaving approximately \$1.033 million in unassigned funds available for operational expenditures. She stated that the Parish maintains approximately five months of unrestricted fund balance, which exceeds the Government Finance Officers Association recommendation of approximately two months.

Ms. Trueschwig also discussed procedures performed in connection with the Louisiana State Library requirements. Two exceptions were noted concerning documentation of required sexual harassment and ethics training. Director of Finance/Personnel Lacy Buris clarified that the exceptions involved the absence of training certificates and were not violations involving allegations of sexual harassment or unethical conduct. Ms. Trueschwig stated that administration identified and corrected the issue immediately following year-end.

In conclusion, Ms. Trueschwig reiterated that the Parish received clean opinions on its financial statements and major grant programs, had no internal control findings, had no funds with deficit fund balances, and remained debt-free with no bonds, certificates of indebtedness, or outstanding loans. She thanked President Seal, Lacy Burris, and Parish staff for their assistance throughout the audit process. There were no questions from the Council.

Item No. 7: Theo Jones: Candidate for 22nd Judicial District Court – Division G

Theo Jones of Franklinton addressed the Council and introduced himself as a candidate for 22nd Judicial District Court, Division G. Mr. Jones discussed his background and local ties, noting that he was raised in Franklinton and graduated from Franklinton High School in 1992. He spoke about attending Louisiana State University, serving in the United States Army, and later working in journalism before pursuing a legal career. Mr. Jones stated that he graduated from Southern University Law Center in 2014 and discussed his professional experience and qualifications. He thanked the Council for the opportunity to introduce himself and speak about his candidacy.

Item No. 8: Parish President Ryan Seal: Presentation to recognize employee

Parish President Ryan Seal recognized Mr. Archie McGowan on his recent retirement following 29 years of service to Washington Parish Government. Although Mr. McGowan was unable to attend the meeting, the Parish President expressed appreciation for his many years of dedicated service, hard work, knowledge, and contributions to Washington Parish and its citizens. He also noted Mr. McGowan's roots in the Angie community and his continued service as a pastor. The Parish President thanked Mr. McGowan for his commitment to the Parish and wished him well in his retirement.

Item No. 9: Ordinance No. 26-790: Introduce an Ordinance to Amend the 2026 Annual Operating Budget for the Washington Parish Government.

Council Chairman McMasters: This is an introduction only. We will have a public hearing on this at our next Council meeting.

Item No. 10: Resolution No. 26-1522: Adopt a Resolution Appointing George Martinez to the Washington Parish Gas Utility District No. 2 Board of Directors

Council Chairman McMasters: The Personnel Committee voted to send this Resolution to the full Council at the Personnel Committee meeting that was held July 27, 2026. 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. 26-1522.

Councilman Branch: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 11: Resolution No. 26-1523: Adopt a Resolution by the Washington Parish Council Accepting the Lowest Responsible and Responsive Bid for the Purchase of Resuscitation Equipment for Washington Parish Fire Protection Districts No. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, Bogalusa Fire Department and Franklinton Fire Department, Utilizing Opioid Settlement Funds, and Authorizing the Parish President to Execute All Necessary Documents

Lacy Burris: I am going to ask that we table this matter tonight. We are not quite ready to move forward with that just yet.

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

Councilwoman Wagner: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to table Resolution No. 26-1523.

Councilman Harry: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 12: Resolution No. 26-1524: Adopt a Resolution by the Washington Parish Council Authorizing the Retention of Special Legal Counsel to Represent Washington Parish Government in Connection with Claims Arising from the August 22, 2025, Smitty's Supply Explosion, Including Participation in any Class Action or Required Litigation, for the Recovery of Costs Incurred by Washington Parish Government

Lacy Burris: After the explosion we did some environmental testing for our residents just to make sure everything was safe. The Parish spent about \$60,000 on that. We just wanted to join the lawsuit and see if we could recoup some of that expense.

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

Councilman Branch: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 26-1524.

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) Harry, Branch, McMasters, King, Culpepper, Wagner

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 13: Resolution No. 26-1525: Adopt a Resolution by the Washington Parish Council to Authorize the Parish President to Execute a Memorandum of Understanding with the Southeast Louisiana Pregnancy Center for Women and Children, for the Reimbursement of Eighty Percent (80%) of the Eligible Cost of a Maternal Substance Use Disorder Initiative Using Opioid Litigation Proceeds

Lacy Burris: The Pregnancy Center approached us and would like to employ a counselor to help at-risk women and do some training as well as get some technology to help the center.

Council Chairman McMasters: 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. 26-1525.

Councilman Harry: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 14: Public Participation:

Council Chairman McMasters: We will have our public participation at this time. The Council will allow you five minutes only.

Washington Parish Sheriff Jason Smith gave an update on the jail stating that they are 120 inmates over capacity. Most of the inmates over capacity are DOC and probation and parole

inmates with 83 DOC inmates and 36 probation and parole hold inmates. He also stated they have met with the design team for the construction of the new jail. Smith said he expects to have a design within the next eight months. He described how he met with the Superintendents and developed a security response for any critical incident that may occur at the schools.

Director of Washington Parish Development Foundation D'Ann Davis gave an update that they are continuing to work with the Town of Franklinton on the Fast Sites preparations. She explained that the surveying is done and an appraisal is in the works. She will be announcing press conference dates as soon as they become available. D'Ann also spoke about the continued work with local businesses on how to tap into federal money that they did not know was available. She stated there would be a workshop in September that will be a ten-week program to help businesses. She explained there were some exciting developments coming to Washington Parish.

Andy Jones of Franklinton expressed his opinions and concerns on new businesses and corporations coming into the Parish.

Council Chairman McMasters: Would anyone else 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 Branch: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENT: (1) Rice

Item No. 15: President's Report:

Parish President Ryan Seal: Michelle Trueschwig from Kushner LaGraize gave the audit report that I am very proud of. That did not happen by accident. I give credit to Lacy Burris for that. She was new to her position, and this was on her. In Parish Government or in any government, two of the biggest things are the audit and the budget. I've said many times, this is the most important role in parish government because it goes back to our credibility. Are we going to be good stewards of our taxpayers' dollars? Are we spending within the law? Are we spending what's right? Are we laboring the citizens for something we don't need to? Are we doing a good job keeping up with our finances? I am very proud of the work that Lacy and her entire staff have done.

Code Enforcement Kelvin Brown gave the Transportation Report for the month of July:

- Drainage Projects: 23 roads totaling 47 miles
- Cold Mix Distributed: 85 tons on 51 roads totaling 58 miles
- Culverts Installed: 9
- Graded Roads: 17 roads totaling 34 miles
- Bushhogged Roads: 105 roads totaling 207 miles
- Trash Picked Up: 336 bags on 51 roads
- Installed Signs: 43 on 21 roads
- Parish Grounds Maintenance: 13 locations
- 10 miles of road paved by in-house crew

Permit Office Report:

- Residential Constructions: 7
- Mobile Homes: 13
- Reconnects: 73
- Total Permits: 169

Director of Public Works Alex Sumrall: Our in-house asphalt crew completed Byron Dillon Rd., Otis Bickham Rd. and Jim Simmons Rd. and has moved to the Meadows subdivision to begin on Finch Rd., Skylark Dr., Pelican Dr., Falcon Dr., Eagle Lane, Sandpiper Rd. Lovebird Rd. and Bluebird Rd. Barriere will be working on asphaltting several roads this week. Together with contract and in-house crews, that will be 40 roads totaling 32 miles.

President Seal: I would like to say that asphalt that comes off the machines is very hot. They are doing a great job, and I am very pleased with Barriere and our in-house crew. They do a great job despite the heat. It is always frustrating hearing about 336 bags of trash that we must spend parish money picking up. Also, 43 signs having to be replaced is another expense to the parish. Stealing road signs is not a game and is a safety issue. Washington Parish Government was awarded a Keep Louisiana Beautiful grant for \$8,470 that will help us continue our litter provision and beautification efforts throughout the parish. Also, the Emergency Operations Center site preparations is underway. Our crews are working to prepare a foundation pad to provide a special base for RV's and temporary housing for emergency personnel during an extended emergency or disaster response. The American Public Works Association luncheon was this past week, and I was proud to be able to speak and take some of our employees with us highlighting the improvements in infrastructure and recognizing the importance we have in the parish to keep the parish moving forward. On the 15th of this month, Washington Parish Government is excited to celebrate participating in a ribbon cutting at Atoka. It has truly been a community effort and with the parish crews and community volunteers working together to prepare the grounds up there. What began with a vision is becoming a reality and we are looking forward to celebrating those milestones as well. I appreciate our employees' hard work from our Finance Department with Lacy and the Public Works Department with Alex and Kelvin's crew moving forward. The state is going to be having a detour on Highway 1055 starting on August 18th for highway construction and will be closed for approximately 69 days.

Item No. 16: Council Discussion:

The Council thanked everyone for their support and attending the meeting.

Councilman Branch recognized Mr. Scott for his 30 years as a Constable. He also encouraged everyone to take advantage of our state park on Labor Day.

Council Chairman McMasters: We will be transparent with all information regarding the solar matters to the public. School is also back in session and we want everyone to please respect school zones and be on alert for our young people. Our next meeting will be August 24, 2026.

Item No. 17: Adjourn:

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

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

Councilwoman Wagner: Second.

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

Roll call of the vote as follows:

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

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

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

The next meeting will be held August 24, 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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