

Posted: Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 2:00 p.m.

MEETING MINUTES FROM 3/24/2025

Notice of Public Meeting

Washington Parish Council
Regular Meeting
Washington Parish Courthouse
908 Washington Street, Franklinton, Louisiana 70438
Council Chambers
Monday, March 24, 2025 @ 5:30 p.m.

Item No. 1: Call to Order: Council Chairwoman Wagner called the meeting to order.

Item No. 2: Invocation: The Invocation was led by Councilman McMasters.

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

Item No. 4: Roll Call: Council Chairwoman Wagner asked for roll call. Interim Council Clerk Danielle Folks called the roll. Present were Carley King, Joe Culpepper, Shawn Rice, Kim Wagner, Clark Harry, Steven Branch and Reginald McMasters.

Item No. 5: Approval of Minutes of March 10, 2025, Regular Council meeting.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: The minutes from March 10 from our regular council meeting are attached and were emailed to us for review. Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman McMasters: I make a motion to approve the minutes of our March 10 meeting with any necessary corrections.

Councilman King: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman McMasters and a second by Councilman King. Are there any comments from the public before we vote?

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 6: Sonnet Ireland, Washington Parish Library: Mrs. Ireland provided a brief update regarding grants the library has been awarded through the American Library Association. A \$10,000 grant was awarded from the Library's Transforming Communities, for the 3rd year in a row. Funds from this grant will be used for repairing a ramp and making bathrooms in larger branches more ADA accessible. A \$2,000 grant was awarded from the Community Connect Program, which will give the libraries five (5) hotspots. There is an Emergency

Preparedness Grant of \$10,000 and the Louisiana Project Grant of \$5,000, used every year for the summer reading program beginning at the end of May. Mrs. Ireland discussed recent training from the State Library Association, and that the larger library branches in Washington Parish had over 10,000 visitors this year. She discussed the branch at Thomas being repainted, a ramp at the Enon branch, and that the libraries had to obtain more passes to Louisiana State Parks. Mrs. Ireland advised of litter kits available at the libraries and that National Library Week was coming up. The library has also participated in All Things Mardi Gras and the Northshore Technical Community College Fair.

Councilwoman Wagner: Who is your grant writer for the summer reading?

Sonnet Ireland: The IP grant is usually done by Ms. Holiday and Ms. Porter. The Louisiana Project Grant was spearheaded by Ariel Matthews and myself, as well as Savannah Smith and Jennifer Seals.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: I sat on a committee last fall and their grants were very well written. I want to compliment the library on that.

Sonnet Ireland: That's one of the things that attracted me to applying for the directorship, is seeing all the grants that the library gets, and how well it uses the money.

Item No. 7: Ordinance No. 25-751: Introduce an Ordinance Authorizing the Parish President to Engage Pistorius Associates, LLC, as Architect for the Design and Management of Certain Construction Projects for Washington Parish.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: This is an introduction only.

Item No. 8: Ordinance No. 25-752: Introduce an Ordinance Directing the Washington Parish President to Sign and Execute Documents on Behalf of the FY2026-2027 Louisiana Community Development Block Grant Application.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: This is an introduction only.

Item No. 9: Resolution No. 25-1383: Adopt a Resolution to Appoint Member of the Washington Parish Recreation District Board #1. Council Chairwoman Wagner read the resolution in its entirety.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman King: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1383.

Councilman Branch: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman King and a second by Councilman Branch.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 10: Resolution No. 25-1384: Adopt a Resolution to Appoint Member to Board of Directors of Washington Parish Fire Protection District #6. *Council Chairwoman Wagner read the resolution in its entirety.*

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman Culpepper: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1384.

Councilman King: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman Culpepper and a second by Councilman King.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 11: Resolution No. 25-1385: Adopt a Resolution to Appoint Member to Washington Parish Library Board of Control. *Council Chairwoman Wagner read the resolution in its entirety.*

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman Branch: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1385.

Councilman Harry: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman Branch and a second by Councilman Harry.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 12: Resolution No. 25-1386: Adopt a Resolution to Declare Surplus Movable Property and Authorization to Donate. *Councilwoman Wagner read the resolution in its entirety.*

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman McMasters: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1386.

Councilman King: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman McMasters and a second by Councilman King.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 13: Resolution No. 25-1387: Adopt a Resolution Directing the Washington Parish President to Accept or Reject the Industrial Tax Exemption Program Application of Hood Industries, Project ID: 20240154-ITE.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman Culpepper: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1387.

Councilman King: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman Culpepper and a second by Councilman King.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: (1) McMasters

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 14: Resolution No. 25-1388: Adopt a Resolution Accepting/Rejecting the Industrial Tax Exemption Program Application of International Paper Company, Project ID: 20230024-ITE.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We recently had a meeting regarding this, and have set an ITEP Committee Meeting for Wednesday, March 26th regarding the Hood application. That resolution was for our Parish President to accept or reject. We also had a Finance Committee meeting to discuss both of these projects. Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment to accept or reject before the Council votes?

Robert Wiggy, a representative of International Paper, introduced himself and offered answers to any questions that may arise.

Councilman King: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1388, accepting the Industrial Tax Exemption Program application of International Paper.

Councilman Branch: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman King and a second by Councilman Branch.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

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

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: (1)

Item No. 15: Resolution No. 25-1389: Adopt a Resolution Declaring Surplus Movable Property and Authorization for Trade-In. *Councilwoman Wagner read the resolution in its entirety.*

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman Rice: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1389.

Councilman McMasters: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman Rice and a second by Councilman McMasters.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 16: Resolution No. 25-1390: Adopt a Resolution Supporting the Varnado and Bogue Lusa Water Works Districts Infrastructure Improvement Project.

Landon Tims: The parish government intends to submit an application for community project funding through the federal government and Senator Cassidy's office. We've received the necessary information from Professional Engineering Consultants, which is the engineering firm for Varnado Water Works and Bogue Lusa Water Works. The next resolution is for the same program; however, that is through Congresswoman Letlow's office. It will be funding for a bridge to culvert program.

Parish President Ryan Seal: Just to clarify, this is not the City of Bogalusa, this is Bogue Lusa Water Works.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman McMasters: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1390.

Councilman King: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman McMasters and a second by Councilman King.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 17: Resolution No. 25-1391: Adopt a Resolution Supporting the Washington Parish Bridge to Culvert Program.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone from the public like to come forward and comment before the Council votes?

Councilman Branch: As no one has come forward, I make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 25-1391.

Councilman Culpepper: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman Branch and a second by Councilman Culpepper.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 18: Public Participation

Sheriff Jason Smith: The Sheriff gave an update on the total number (224) of inmates, as well as the number of inmates (204) being housed at the jail. He spoke regarding progress in general cleanliness and operations at the jail and extended an invitation to council members to tour same. The Sheriff advised that there was no progress on a temporary lodging facility in Varnado; however, he did meet with an architect and has a plan to move forward. He advised that he had been meeting with the Director of Finance to confirm that all regulations were followed. Sheriff Smith spoke regarding the 911 Center that the radio systems had been installed. He has a tentative move-in date in the middle of April.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Would anyone else from the public like to come forward and speak?

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

Councilman Branch: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman Rice and a second by Councilman Branch.

Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()

Item No. 19: President's Report

Alex Sumrall: We dodged a bullet with the weather event recently. Our thoughts go out to our neighbors in Tylertown and Kentwood. President Seal reached out to President Miller in Tangipahoa Parish and Sheriff in Tylertown for any assistance needed. The intersection of Mitch Road and City Limits Road in Bogalusa will be closed soon. The pipeline company, Mardi Gras Midstream, will be performing the annual maintenance on the pipeline that day. Also, the HVAC system at the Bogalusa Health Unit is complete. That office will have a sanitarian from the State Sanitation Department on certain days. Once we have that information, we will update. We've recently been out to Leighton's Bluff in Angie to view the ditching that has been going on. I especially want to thank our crews for their work at the Varnado Recreation Center. They've been spraying fences and cleaning up the field, getting the brush away. We are trying to improve that area. I also want to mention the ridiculous amount of litter that is picked up every day. We have a landfill in the middle of our parish, and it takes more effort to load your stuff up and find a road to dump it on, then it takes to go to the landfill. We can do better. Look at the pictures – it's like half of a living room was dumped. We also have people stealing our road signs. We are constantly ordering them. Let's keep praying for our neighbors and be cautious of how we treat people. Instead of telling our neighbors just to grow thick skin, ask yourself, what can I do to make myself and Washington Parish better.

Ryan Seal: I want to thank the people who volunteer to serve on so many different activities – our volunteer fire districts, our recreation districts and our library boards. I do appreciate all for volunteering to step up and serve in their community. I think tonight was a great report from our libraries, and just to add how frustrating it is to see the litter. It goes beyond just a fast-food wrapper or beer can. It's whole furniture. I think we can do better. We've got Love the Boot week coming up, and we will also be visiting our schools to try to encourage our youth to stop littering and take pride in this community. I appreciate Sheriff's efforts in policing, as well as the DEQ on illegal tire dumping. We're getting rid of some surplus property and trying to update our equipment. In the past year we've purchased a new bushhog and front-end loaders, road graders and now this excavator. We've also just purchased a dump truck and we're working on maintaining our fleet equipment. We've got an excellent repair shop who keeps up with it all.

Recently I attended a prayer breakfast in Bogalusa, hosted by WPSO and BPD. I've also had the opportunity to attend a ribbon cutting at Fair City Upscale Boutique, and I've talked with the Retired School Board Members Association. There is a great group of people giving back to the community. Yesterday, I participated in the YouNight Cornhole Tournament with Sheriff Smith. He's better at cornhole than I am. We've got an Election Day coming up in Washington Parish. On the 29th we're voting for several amendments as well as a school board position in the Franklinton area. Finally, many of you may have seen the news update regarding the steel mill that Hyundai is building in Ascension Parish. That will be a \$4 or \$5 billion project. It will create many jobs for Louisiana.

I also want to extend my deepest condolences to the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office. Yesterday morning a sergeant was killed in the line of duty. He is survived by his wife and two (2) young children. We pray for his family and his co-workers, as well as all the men and women who walk the thin blue line, including the ones in this room. Thank you.

Lastly, we have the privilege of having Jim Raspberry with us today. He is the plant manager for Hood Industries. Councilwoman Wagner and I had the opportunity to meet with him and tour the facility recently. It's a very impressive operation. When Hood Industries took over that operation, there were about 106 employees. Currently there are 140, and by the end of the year they expect to have approximately 150 employees. We're grateful for their presence in Washington Parish and the jobs they provide. Years ago, when there was a fire, the company kept their employees on the payroll. From hauling chips to machine work, welding and fabrication, the plant does a tremendous amount. We're proud to have them in Washington Parish.

Item No. 20: Council Discussion:

Council Chairwoman Wagner: Please notice how wonderful our courthouse looks. It looks nice for the spring. Thank you for coming out tonight. It's a pleasure to have people in the audience and we appreciate your showing up and being involved in our community.

Please vote. Election day is coming up on March 29. We have some very important amendments on the ballot to help move our state forward and make some changes in our state. I know it's an odd time of the year to vote, but please get out and vote. On April 5 our Chamber is doing the Love the Boot cleanup and the Franklinton cleanup from 8-12. The parish provides bags and everything else, but it's always good. A lot of us get involved with picking up trash and tires and everything else with our communities. If you can please come out and help us, we'd like to make sure that our city and parish look great. I know I'm taking my time and they're ready to go. Our next meeting will be Monday, April 14. Thank you all for coming out.

Item No. 21: Adjourn

Councilman King: I make a motion to adjourn.

Councilman Branch: Second.

Council Chairwoman Wagner: We have a motion by Councilman King and a second by Councilman Branch.

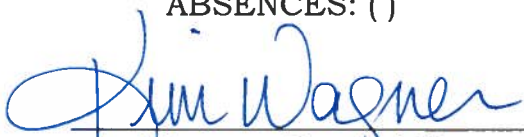
Roll Call of the vote as follows:

YAYS: (7) King, Culpepper, Rice, Wagner, Harry, Branch, McMasters

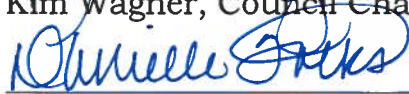
NAYS: ()

ABSTAIN: ()

ABSENCES: ()



Kim Wagner, Council Chairwoman



Danielle Folks
Interim Clerk to the Council

Order of Voting:

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

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 14, 2025

In accordance with the American Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance, please contact Danielle Folks, Interim 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 of the Council at 909 Pearl Street, Franklinton, Louisiana or at 985.839.7825, or wpgov.org)

****This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. ****

