

MINUTES OF THE WASHINGTON CITY COUNCIL CALLED MEETING

October 06, 2025, at 8:00 a.m.

City Council Chamber, City Hall

102 East Liberty Street, Washington, GA 30673

The mayor and City Council of the City of Washington, Georgia, held a called meeting on Friday, April 25, 2025, at 3:00 P.M. in the City Council Chamber, City Hall. Councilmembers present were David Fisher, Newt Gunter, and Andy Anderson. Councilmembers absent were Larry Hill, Nathaniel Cullars, and Kimberly Rainey.

Special Called Meeting: Temporary Mayor Pro Tem Appointment and Ethics Complaint Process

Attendance and Quorum

- Quorum confirmed at 8:02 AM: Mayor present; three Council members present; Andy Anderson; Newt Gunter, and David Fisher. Council members are absent: Nathaniel Cullars, Kimberly Rainey, and Larry Hill.
- Purpose: Appoint a Temporary Mayor Pro Tem to establish an investigation committee for an ethics complaint filed by the mayor against the current Mayor Pro Tem, Larry Hill.

Procedural Opening

- Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Bruce Bailey.
- Meeting identified as a “called” meeting specifically to make a temporary appointment and initiate the ethics process.
- Columbus Day is recognized as an official city holiday; the meeting date for the October meeting has been adjusted to avoid requiring staff to work on the holiday.

Ethics Framework and Legal Guidance (City Attorney Adam)

- Current ethics ordinance lacks specificity for a case where both the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem are involved in the same complaint (both are disqualified from participating).
- City Charter Section 10 allows election of a Temporary Mayor Pro Tem when the mayor is absent; this logic extends to permit a Temporary Mayor Pro Tem when both regular roles are disqualified from handling the ethics case.

- Temporary Mayor Pro Tem's authority: Solely to appoint a three-person investigative committee for this complaint; does not replace the sitting Mayor Pro Tem.
- Council may select any eligible council member (not subject to the complaint); choosing the "next in line" (Councilman Fisher) is logical but not required.
- Administrative note: The appointee must notify the City Clerk in writing of the committee appointments. The 60-day timeline begins upon the whole appointment of the committee (not upon the meeting). If appointments are staggered, the clock starts after the final member is appointed.
- The ordinance uses "shall" regarding appointment—indicating a mandatory duty—but contains no explicit deadline for making the appointments. Attorney recommends timely action.
- Clarification: The Council, not any subcommittee, must appoint the Temporary Mayor Pro Tem; hence the called meeting.

Council Clarifications (Q&A)

- Motion and voting process:
 - The Council, not the mayor, designates the Temporary Mayor Pro Tem.
 - Any eligible council member can be nominated and voted upon, including those not physically present.
- Scope of authority: The Temporary Mayor Pro Tem's authority is strictly limited to appointing the investigative committee for this complaint.
- Question on self-appointment to the committee:
 - No explicit provision in code banning a Mayor Pro Tem from appointing themselves.
 - Past practice indicates it has occurred, but its propriety is uncertain.
 - Attorney's view: Mayor Pro Tem should not appoint themselves, aligning with the rule that the mayor cannot serve on such committees. Recommended clarification in future ordinance revisions.

Motion and Vote

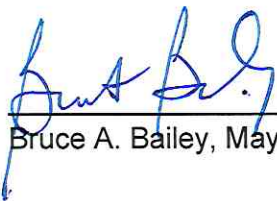
- Motion: Councilman Gunter motioned to assign Councilman David Fisher as Temporary Mayor Pro Tem solely for appointing the investigative committee related to the mayor's ethics complaint against Larry Hill.
- Second: Councilman Andy Anderson.
- Vote: Councilman David Fisher – Yes, Newton Gunter – Yes, Andy Anderson – Yes. The mayor did not vote on this item.
- Minutes to reflect the appointment's sole, limited purpose.


Perspectives on Ethics Complaints and Governance

- Will's statement:
 - Ethics complaints are characterized as lacking substance unless monetary or criminal; they are seen as time-consuming and unproductive.
 - Call to either cease frivolous complaints or eliminate the current mechanism; focus on substantive city business and mending a split council.
- Mayor's position:
 - Ordinances and procedures exist for a reason and must be followed as written.
 - If changes are desired, the Council should formally amend the ordinances; otherwise, compliance is required.
 - Emphasis on proper chain of command and adherence to decorum, ethics, and meeting rules.
 - Commitment to ensuring ordinances are executed consistently with the charter.
- Attorney's recommendation:
 - The ethics ordinance needs revision to address gaps and ambiguities (e.g., dual disqualification scenarios, appointment timelines, self-appointment rules).

Meeting Close

- No further questions, discussions, or comments.
- Meeting adjourned.


Bruce A. Bailey, Mayor


Yoshe T. Jenkins, City Clerk

ATTEST

