

MINUTES OF THE WASHINGTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING

January 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

EDWARD B. POPE CONFERENCE CENTER

48B Lexington Avenue, Washington, GA 30673

The Mayor and City Council of Washington, Georgia, held their regular monthly meeting on Monday, January 12, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Edward B. Pope Conference Center. The following members were present: Mayor Bruce Bailey, Councilman Newton Gunter, Councilman David Fisher, Councilman Larry Hill, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey, and Councilwoman Susan Branam. Attorney Adam Nelson was also present.

a. Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance, and Swearing-In

The meeting began with an invocation led by Councilman Larry Hill, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilman Larry Hill, Susan Branam and Calvin J. Wiggs III were sworn in as new council members. A closing prayer was offered to the new members.

b. Approval of December 8, 2025, Regular Meeting Minutes

The council approved the December 8, 2025, regular meeting minutes after confirming that corrections to the November 2025 minutes had been completed. Motion was made by Councilman David Fisher, seconded by Councilman Newton Gunter. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - N, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - N, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branam - Y. Approved 4-2.

c. Approval of Meeting Agenda

A debate arose over moving the public comment section from prior to executive session to the beginning of the agenda. A motion to approve the agenda as-is failed. The chair broke a tie to move citizen comments to the top of the agenda for this meeting only, stating that the public forum will be at the end of the agenda. A new motion by Councilman Larry Hill, seconded by Councilwoman Kimberly Rainey, to approve the agenda with the citizen comments moved before the city Administrator's topic. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branam - Y. Unanimous vote.

d. Review of Committee and Board Reports

- The council reviewed reports from various committees, including Parks and Rec, Animal Shelter, and the City of Washington Fire Department, as provided in their meeting packets.

a. Public Comments

- **Laura Toburen:** Thanked the community for attending the Veterans Day celebration and announced a Memorial Day event on the square on May 25th.
- **Sheriff Darrell Powers:** Addressed a “disturbing video” of a traffic stop, advising the public to bring issues with deputies to his office. He also defended a heavy police presence in the Whitehall community as a proactive measure that prevented a gang-related incident.
- **Nathaniel Cullars, Sr.:** Spoke about de-escalation with deputies and called for an individual to step down over an ethics issue and a lawsuit.

b. Community Announcements and Concerns

- **Cake Artist Visit:** The Friends of the Mary Willis Library will host a world-renowned cake artist for a free public event on Thursday, February 12th at 3 p.m.
- **MLK Events:** The annual MLK Sunday service will be held on January 18th at 3 p.m. at the Pope Center, followed by the MLK parade on Monday, January 19th, with lineup at 12 p.m.
- **Traffic Light:** A request was made to restore the traffic light at the four-way stop due to a recent near accident.

c. City Administrator Topics

- d. City Attorney:** Adam Nelson was appointed as the city attorney for a one-year term. It was suggested that RFPs be used for this role in the future. Motion made by Councilman Larry Hill, seconded by Councilman David Fisher, Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branan - Y. Unanimous vote.

e. Mayor Discussion Topics

- **City Attorney:** Remediate the process of contacting the City Attorney to be discussed at the Council’s Retreat.

f. Mayor Action Topics

- **Board and Committee Appointments:** The council approved a slate of appointments, including Councilman Hill to the Animal Shelter and Cemetery Community, Councilman Wiggs to the Electric Committee, Fire and Rescue, and Parks and Recreation, and Chelya Silva to the Housing Authority. Motion made by Councilman David Fisher, seconded by Councilman Newton Gunter. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branan - Y. Unanimous Vote.

g. Council Members' Discussion Topics:

- **Council Districts:** Councilman Newton Gunter proposed investigating the elimination of council districts to foster unity and represent the town.

- **Andrew Drive Road Work:** The project, which began on August 4th, is stalled. The contractor, selected by engineering firm Carter & Sloope, damaged a new pipe and failed to provide a required payment bond. The city has spent no money and will not pay until the work is completed correctly. Concerns were raised about the contractor's legitimacy and the vetting process, which is Carter & Sloope's responsibility for state grant-funded projects.
 - **Fence Repair on Rusher Street:** Concerns were raised about incomplete fence repair. The city administrator confirmed the contractor has not been paid and that payment is withheld until the job is finished. Delays were attributed to holidays and scheduling.
 - **Water Infrastructure:** The city has been fixing leaks identified by sensors and is waiting to determine the full scope of pipe work before applying for a large grant. A federally required notice about potential lead and copper pipes was sent to residents, who are responsible for pipes on their own property.
 - **City Budget:** The final budget is available on the city website. The city ran a surplus of \$1.8 million despite a \$12 million revenue shortfall. Un-reallocated funds are being held for potential water grant matches.
 - **City Administrator Spending Limit:** A proposal was made to limit the administrator's spending authority to \$10,000 without council approval due to a "lack of trust." The topic was deferred to the council retreat.
 - **Strategic Planning:** A suggestion was made to form a committee with council members and citizens for strategic planning. It was stated that a separate meeting would be needed for citizen involvement.
 - **Whitehall on Wall Street:** A monthly free yard sale will begin on the last Saturday in February at 9 a.m. on Whitehall Street.
 - **Council Communication Tools:** New laptops have been ordered for new council members, and a discussion was held for the city to provide cell phones to the council members.
 - An ethics complaint filed by Amethyst Wesley against Mayor Bailey is ready for a hearing, which is suggested for the February meeting.
 - A complaint filed by Ms. Cobb is still under review by the investigative committee.
- e. **Council Members' Action Items:**
- **Funding for 501c3 Organizations:** A motion was made by Councilman Larry Hill to reinstate funds for WCCP and 4E Youth Organization, seconded by Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III. The debate centered on a policy not to fund any 501(c)(3)s and a contradiction regarding the Animal Shelter. The city administrator was tasked with researching the shelter's 501c3 status. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - N, Councilman David Fisher - N, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branan - N. Motion failed 3-3.

- **Council Communication Tools:** A motion made by Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III, seconded by Councilwoman Kimberly Rainey, to provide optional city-funded cell phones and service plans. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branam - Y. Unanimous vote.
- **Assistance for Brightwood Community:** A motion was made by Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey, seconded by Councilman David Fisher, that any citizen of Brightwood Community whose utility bills were elevated while they were displaced should contact the city clerk to be reviewed and brought before the city council for approval. This is to be done on a case-by-case basis. The city administrator will propose budget sources to fund assistance. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branam - Y. Unanimous vote.
- **Ethics Ordinance:** A motion was made by Councilman David Fisher and seconded by Councilman Newton Gunter to abolish the current ethics ordinance and create a new one with "teeth," stalled, as a member was unwilling to vote without a replacement to review. It was noted that the city charter would require a state legislative amendment to support a stronger ordinance. The matter was **tabled** for the next month. Any pending complaints will be handled under the current system.

f. Executive Session

Councilwoman Kimberly Rainey made a motion, seconded by Councilman Newton Gunter, to go into executive session. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branam - Y. Unanimous vote.

g. Return to the Regular Session and proceed to cast any necessary votes.


- Councilman David Fisher made a motion, seconded by Councilman Larry Hill, to reconvene. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branam - Y. Unanimous vote.
- Councilman Larry Hill made the motion to give Will Long, City Administrator, the authority to terminate the contract for the Andrew Drive project if all documents were not produced by the end of the day, seconded by Councilman David Fisher. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branam - Y. Unanimous vote.

h. Adjournment

- Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Councilman Newton Gunter. Call for vote: Councilman Newton Gunter - Y, Councilman David Fisher - Y, Councilman Larry Hill - Y, Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III - Y, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey - Y, and Councilwoman Susan Branan - Y. Unanimous vote.



Bruce A. Bailey, Mayor



Yoshe T. Jenkins, City Clerk

ATTEST



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**STATE OF GEORGIA
CITY OF WASHINGTON**

EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES

January 12, 2026

Washington, Georgia's Mayor and City Council went into executive session on January 12, 2026, at 7:40 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Bruce Bailey, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey, Councilman Newton Gunter, Councilman David Fisher, Councilman Larry Hill, Councilwoman Susan Branan, and Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III, as well as Attorney Adam Nelson.


A quorum was present; Mayor Bruce Bailey called the meeting to order and presided.

Executive Session Summary

During the executive session, the council discussed two litigation matters. No action was taken.

The open session was reconvened at 8:19 p.m.


Bruce A. Bailey, Mayor


Yoshe T. Jenkins, Clerk

