

MINUTES OF THE WASHINGTON CITY COUNCIL MEETING

April 13, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

EDWARD B. POPE CONFERENCE CENTER

48B Lexington Avenue, Washington, GA 30673

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Bailey called the regular meeting to order and presided.

2. ROLL CALL

- Council Member Fisher — Present
- Council Member Hill — Present
- Council Member Gunter — Present
- Council Member Wiggs — Present
- Council Member Branan — Present
- Council Member Rainey — Present

Also present were Mayor Bailey, City Manager Long, City Attorney Nelson, City Clerk Jenkins, and Assistant City Clerk Bertrina Ivey.

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bailey delivered the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

4. EXECUTIVE SESSION

MOTION: To enter Executive Session at 6:03 pm to discuss pending litigation pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3(b)(1)(A).

Made by: Council Member Gunter

Seconded by: Council Member Fisher

Discussion: None.

Vote (Roll Call):

- Council Member Fisher — Yea
- Council Member Hill — Yea
- Council Member Gunter — Yea
- Council Member Wiggs — Yea
- Council Member Branan — Yea
- Council Member Rainey — Yea

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

The Council entered Executive Session at 6:03 pm and returned to open session at 6:10 pm. Mayor Bailey signed the executive session affidavit, which stated that two litigation matters were discussed and no final action was taken.

MOTION: To return to open session.

Made by: Council Member Branan

Seconded by: Council Member Hill

Discussion: None.

Vote (Voice): Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Bailey requested that an item be added to appoint Mr. Dominique Williams to the Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA) Board. Council Member Hill made a motion to amend the agenda to permanently move the Public Comment section to follow the Community Board & Authority Reports section.

MOTION: To permanently move the Public Input section of the agenda to the position following the Community Board & Authority Reports.

Made by: Council Member Hill

Seconded by: Council Member Rainey

Discussion: Council Member Wiggs expressed a desire for the change to be permanent. Mayor Bailey discussed the benefits of having public comments after the Council's discussion of agenda items so that citizens could comment on the business being considered. Council Member Rainey stated that citizens come first.

Vote (Roll Call):

- Council Member Fisher — Yea
- Council Member Hill — Yea
- Council Member Gunter — Yea
- Council Member Wiggs — Yea
- Council Member Branan — Yea
- Council Member Rainey — Yea

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

MOTION: To approve the agenda as amended, including the addition of an appointment to the URA Board.

Made by: Council Member David Fisher

Seconded by: Council Member Susan Branan

Discussion: None.

Vote (Voice): Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of March 9, 2026, Regular Meeting were presented for approval. Council Member Hill questioned a past agenda action item regarding public input on an ethics matter. Council Member Wiggs questioned the vote count on a previous motion recorded in the minutes.

MOTION: To approve the minutes of March 9, 2026, Regular Meeting.

Made by: Council Member Fisher

Seconded by: Council Member Branan

Discussion: Council Member Hill raised a question about a prior motion for public input related to the ethics complaint, which Mayor Bailey noted was for the previous month's agenda. Council Member Wiggs questioned the accuracy of a vote count from a previous meeting as recorded in the draft minutes.

Vote (Roll Call):

- Council Member Fisher — Yea
- Council Member Hill — Yea
- Council Member Gunter — Yea
- Council Member Wiggs — Yea
- Council Member Branan — Yea
- Council Member Rainey — Yea

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT / PUBLIC HEARING

- Doug Abramson, city taxpayer, spoke regarding the City's Code of Ethics.
- Jacqueline Smith, Orchard Street resident, spoke regarding concerns about the city water system and her health.
- Archie Acree, address not stated, spoke on the topic of Council Members' duty to serve all citizens of the city, not just specific districts.
- Adrienne Williams, address not stated, requested permission on behalf of UCAP and a coalition group to host a Juneteenth event at Reese Booker Park on June 21, 2026.

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. Consideration of Ethics Complaint Filed by Ms. Angie Novelli

Ms. Angie Novelli presented a complaint alleging that Council Member Hill violated City Ordinance § 2-231(a) Decorum and § 46-72 regarding the use of an amplifier, citing his participation in a protest on February 6 and his absence from a Council retreat on February 21. City Attorney Nelson outlined the procedure for the Council to determine the validity of the complaint. Council Member Hill, on the advice of his attorney, offered no comment.

MOTION: To move forward to the next step

Made by: Council Member Gunter

Seconded by: None.

Discussion: City Attorney Nelson clarified that a motion would seek to find whether a violation had occurred. No second was offered for the motion.

Result: The motion failed for lack of a second. No action was taken. Closed.

B. City and County Appointee Structure for Parks and Recreation Board

Mayor Bailey and City Manager Long provided information on the appointment structure for the Parks and Recreation Board, noting that one position alternates between a City and County appointee. Council Member Hill noted the history of the City's financial contributions to Parks and Recreation. City Manager Long stated that the Parks and Recreation budget is operating at a deficit.

MOTION: No action taken.

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discussion and Consideration of Ethics Ordinance

Council Member Fisher made a motion to abolish the City's current ethics policy, stating the City could abide by the state ethics laws in the interim and that the action would require the Council to create a new, more effective ordinance. Discussion included the financial cost of processing current ethics complaints and disagreement on whether to abolish the current ordinance before a replacement is drafted. Mayor Bailey noted a recent AI-generated complaint filed against Council Members in District 2 and himself, citing inapplicable ordinances.

MOTION: To abolish the current ethics policy.

Made by: Council Member Fisher

Seconded by: Council Member Gunter

Discussion: Council Member Hill expressed concern about abolishing the ordinance without a replacement in place. City Manager Long noted the

financial cost of processing ethics complaints. City Attorney Nelson stated the City of Washington is the only one of his clients for which he handles ethics ordinance matters, and that the system is broken. Mayor Bailey voted to break the tie, stating the need to move forward and cease spending money on frivolous complaints.

Vote (Roll Call):

- Council Member Fisher — Yea
- Council Member Hill — Nay
- Council Member Gunter — Yea
- Council Member Wiggs — Nay
- Council Member Branan — Yea
- Council Member Rainey — Nay

Result: The vote resulted in a 3–3 tie. Mayor Bailey voted " Yea to break the tie. Motion carried by a vote of 4–3, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

B. Ordinance Amending Chapter 38 of the Code of Ordinances Regarding Derelict Property

City Attorney Nelson presented a proposed ordinance establishing a procedure for addressing derelict vacant properties, as provided by state law. He noted the process runs through the municipal court, which sets the timeline and determines the remedy, with a minimum of 270 days before the city could act. Discussion included the ordinance as a tool to address blighted properties, particularly those held in heirship, and the protection it affords, applying only to vacant properties.

MOTION: To approve the ordinance amending Chapter 38 of the Code of Ordinances to add a procedure for addressing derelict properties.

Made by: Council Member Hill

Seconded by: Council Member Fisher

Discussion: Council Member Rainey expressed concern that property owners may not have the money to make repairs and could lose their property, but noted the ordinance applies only to vacant properties.

Vote (Roll Call):

- Council Member Fisher — Yea
- Council Member Hill — Yea
- Council Member Gunter — Yea
- Council Member Wiggs — Yea
- Council Member Branan — Yea
- Council Member Rainey — Yea

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

C. Ordinance Amendments regarding Decorum and Ethics

City Attorney Nelson presented proposed ordinance amendments to the ethics ordinance (Article Two, Section Two, Three, One B) and the decorum ordinance (Chapter Two, Section Two, Ten) to clarify that standards of conduct apply to officials when representing the city in any public forum, including social media. Following the discussion, a motion was made to table the items for a comprehensive future review of the ethics ordinance with public input.

MOTION: To table the proposed ordinance amendments regarding decorum and ethics.

Made by: Council Member Hill

Seconded by: Council Member Rainey

Discussion: Council Member Hill stated a preference to review the entire ethics ordinance comprehensively rather than in parts and suggested including public input. Mayor Bailey and Council Member Rainey discussed the distinction between acting in a personal capacity versus an official capacity. Council Member Hill suggested a future retreat to discuss the topic.

Vote (Roll Call):

- Council Member Fisher — Yea
- Council Member Hill — Yea
- Council Member Gunter — Yea
- Council Member Wiggs — Yea
- Council Member Branan — Yea
- Council Member Rainey — Yea

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

D. Consideration of Adding Good Friday as a City Holiday

Council Member Rainey proposed adding Good Friday as an official paid holiday for city employees. Discussion included the current number of holidays, potential costs, the importance of infrastructure and housing priorities, and the possibility of substituting an existing holiday. The item was subsequently tabled for further consideration.

MOTION: To make Good Friday an official paid holiday for city employees.

Made by: Council Member Rainey

Seconded by: Council Member Wiggs

Discussion: Council Member Hill stated that he could not support the motion at this time due to the city's pressing financial needs. Council Member Gunter noted his department's current practice on Good Friday. Mayor Bailey noted that the city currently has 13 holidays and suggested that a substitution could be considered.

Vote (Roll Call): The motion was tabled by unanimous consent before a vote was taken.

Result: Motion tabled.

E. Discussion of City Council Districts

Council Member Gunter requested that a motion regarding City Council districts be tabled. He stated he may bring the item back for consideration at a future meeting. No action was taken.

10. REPORTS

- **City Manager Long's Report:**
 - Reported that the Parks and Recreation Department is operating significantly over its budget and questioned the legality of the Family Connection board's action to remove Council members.
 - Stated that a comprehensive ten-year Capital Improvement Plan for the water system is being developed by Carter & Sloope, and the city is awaiting a proposal from Muni code for the City Charter review.
 - Reported that the city has applied for a \$750,000 grant from Senator Warnock's office to support housing initiatives.
- **Department Reports:**
 - Parks and Recreation Department activities include basketball, volleyball, baseball, softball, boxing, summer camp, Pop Warner cheer, and spring soccer.
- **Mayor Bailey's Comments:**
 - Requested the appointment of Mr. Dominique Williams to the Urban Redevelopment Agency (URA) Board and stated he would distribute applications for Council members to rejoin the Family Connection board.
 - Reported he has been in contact with state and federal representatives to advocate for the city's needs, particularly regarding water infrastructure funding.
 - Announced a future goal to create a public map display in City Hall to track progress on water, sidewalk, and road projects.
- **Council Comments:**
 - Council Member Rainey reported that she and another Council member were removed from the Family Connection board and reported on community events, including "Wall Street on Whitehall," a planned food giveaway, and a Habitat for Humanity meeting on May 4, 2026.
 - Council Member Wiggs questioned the city appointees on the Parks and Recreation board and requested an update on the City Charter review process.
 - Council Member Branan thanked staff for organizing a home buyer seminar, and Council Member Gunter addressed negativity on social media.

11. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: To adjourn the meeting.

Made by: Council Member Hill

Seconded by: Council Member Wiggs

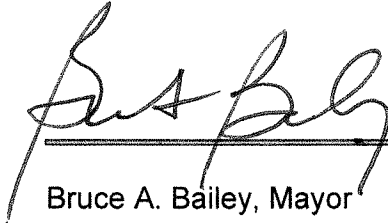
Discussion: None.

Vote (Voice): Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Result: Motion carried by a vote of 6–0, with 0 abstentions and 0 absences.

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,



Bruce A. Bailey, Mayor



Yoshe Jenkins, City Clerk

Attest:



AFFIDAVIT

**STATE OF GEORGIA
CITY OF WASHINGTON**

EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES

April 13, 2026

Washington, Georgia's Mayor and City Council went into executive session on April 13, 2026, at 6:03 p.m.

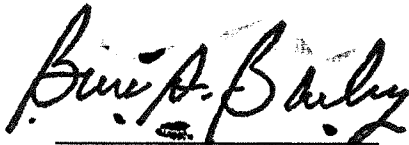
The following members were present: Mayor Bruce Bailey, Councilwoman Kimberly J. Rainey, Councilman Newton Gunter, Councilman David Fisher, Councilman Larry Hill, Councilwoman Susan Branan, and Councilman Calvin J. Wiggs, III, as well as Attorney Adam Nelson.

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 6:10 p.m.



Bruce A. Bailey, Mayor



Yoche T. Jenkins, City Clerk

