



MINUTES

City Council Workshop BUILDS Building, 4221 S. Wilson's Creek Blvd. April 22, 2025 at 11:00 AM

Eric Franklin, Mayor
Eric Gerke, Ward I
Garry Wilson, Ward II
Christopher Updike, Ward III
Justin Neal, Ward IV
Justin Shaw, Ward I
Darran Campbell, Ward II
Brian Fields, Ward III
Daniel Harter, Ward IV

Call Meeting to Order

The work session meeting of the City Council of the City of Republic, Greene County, Missouri, was called to order by Mayor Eric Franklin at 11:17 a.m. Council Members present included Justin Neal, Darran Campbell, Garry Wilson, Chris Updike, Eric Gerke, Daniel Harter, and Justin Shaw. Others in attendance were: City Administrator David Cameron, City Attorney Megan McCullough, Fire Chief Duane Compton, City Clerk Laura Burbridge, Network Engineer James Strathdee, Police Chief Brian Sells, Principal Planner Chris Tabor, Chief Financial Officer Bob Ford, Chief of Staff Lisa Addington, Community Development Director Karen Haynes, Code Compliance Official Kendall Jones, Data Analytics Director Josh Jones, Engineer (E.I.) Angel Falig, Engineer (E.I.) Stefani Fitzpatrick-Duncan, Judge Ben McBride, and Parks and Recreation Director Kris Parks.

Presentations and Discussions

1. Presentation and Discussion on Code Compliance.

City Administrator David Cameron introduced the topic and expressed the desire to understand what City Council believes code compliance should look like moving forward. He noted that Judge McBride was present to include judicial implications in the discussion. Karen Haynes and Kendall Jones gave a presentation on current code compliance procedures.

David Cameron then opened the floor to Council for discussion and guidance on how they would like staff to proceed. Council Member Neal commented that he is less concerned about issuing citations as long as residents are making efforts to comply. He emphasized concern with prolonged non-compliance and its impact on neighbors, stating that years of unresolved violations are unacceptable. He referenced the City of Springfield's recent passage of a towing ordinance for unlicensed vehicles and noted that even moving an inoperable vehicle to a backyard instead of leaving it in the front yard helps improve the issue.

Council Member Harter agreed with Council Member Neal, stating that 45 days is too long in some cases, particularly tall grass. He noted receiving calls regarding inoperable vehicles with expired plates, some of which have not moved in five years.

City Attorney Megan McCullough stated that the City could review the existing code to assess timelines not mandated by state law. Karen Haynes added that the current timelines are often based on delays in residents receiving mailed letters. She noted the City prefers to avoid physically entering private property to serve a notice and instead relies on mail service. David Cameron emphasized that code compliance is not a law enforcement issue and that the challenge of it falling under law enforcement is often a resource limitation. Council Member Neal clarified that code enforcement staff in other cities are often not commissioned officers. David Cameron added that some residents are aware of how to skirt the law and questioned whether any state-level legislation could provide stronger authority. He noted that in some cases—such as when a resident is a widow—there may be an opportunity for nonprofit assistance to help bring properties into compliance. He also emphasized the need to notify citizens when the City intends to increase enforcement of code requirements.

Mayor Eric Franklin asked whether any different action could be taken when a violation presents an immediate health hazard to a neighbor. Megan McCullough responded that due process must still be followed, and that revisiting timelines may be the most feasible change. Karen Haynes explained that the Building Official could declare a structure unsafe, which could result in a person being rendered homeless. To do so would require obtaining a warrant to verify interior conditions, posting the structure, removing the occupant, and obtaining a court order to correct the violation. She stated that this type of situation currently exists within the City of Republic.

David Cameron said that Council support would be necessary to proceed with such actions in dangerous cases. Megan McCullough added that there are currently no provisions for emergency proceedings. David Cameron recommended drafting policy language to bring back to a future work session that would outline clear procedures for staff.

Judge Ben McBride suggested that the City define the difference between public and private nuisances to help determine when administrative search warrants are appropriate. He recommended allowing discretion for private matters under normal circumstances, reserving stricter measures for dangerous conditions.

Council Member Chris Updike inquired about taking additional action against habitual offenders. David Cameron responded that consistency in applying the law is essential. He acknowledged the need for legislative work to reduce limitations and suggested that the City could work with the Missouri Municipal League (MML) to pursue needed changes in state law. He emphasized the importance of using common sense and remaining within the legal framework while striving to improve the overall cleanliness of the community.

David Cameron also mentioned that a previous city-wide cleanup effort had unintended consequences, with individuals bringing in items from outside the city. However, he expressed interest in holding another cleanup event with improved controls to prevent abuse. He noted staff concerns about enforcement actions resulting in someone being removed from their home.

Mayor Eric Franklin asked whether the City could consider modifying the hours for the brush and yard waste facility to better accommodate residents.

Council Member Darran Campbell asked about overall responsiveness from residents regarding nuisance violations, aside from a few extreme cases. Karen Haynes replied that most residents are cooperative once contacted. She stated that non-compliance is often due to lack of time or financial resources, rather than willful disregard. Most issues are resolved through letters, follow-up calls, and inspections, and the majority of cases are closed within a month.

Council Member Darran Campbell recommended making the public more aware of the City's goals. Karen Haynes mentioned the potential for a designated city cleanup period and time dedicated to educating residents on nuisances and the code compliance program. David Cameron supported this idea, stating the goal is a cleaner Republic and encouraging neighbors to help one another. He added that Council would need to pass a Resolution to formally designate a cleanup week. He also proposed launching a marketing campaign—similar to those used for water and sewer issues—to raise awareness of legal requirements and available assistance.

Council Member Darran Campbell expressed willingness to personally help if staff encounters a situation involving a widow or other hardship case in need of assistance.

2. Update from the Historical Society on their Building Progress.

Terri Mooneyham provided an update on the building campaign progress.

3. Discussion of Proposed Council Workshop Proposal Policy.

Laura Burbridge presented the proposed policy.

City Administrator David Cameron requested number 5 of the policy be clarified that directives to staff must come from the full City Council and must be issued during a public meeting. He emphasized that staff cannot act on individual Council Member requests unless those directives are formally made in an open session. General questions may still be directed to staff; however, any request that requires significant staff time must receive full Council approval.

Mayor Eric Franklin stated that the priorities of both staff and the Council need to be clearly communicated and aligned. He emphasized the importance of following the Sunshine Law (SSL) and conducting official discussions in open meetings. Mayor Franklin also requested the policy add clarification on a vote versus consensus on these topics.

City Administrator David Cameron added that Council Members cannot email one another to deliberate or provide direction. All official discussions and decisions must occur during public meetings, with proceedings recorded and available for public view. He noted that the city has added additional work sessions specifically to provide opportunities for these discussions to take place openly and transparently.

City Administrator David Cameron stated that while the city avoids calling frequent special session meetings, these regularly scheduled work sessions are intended to facilitate in-depth Council discussion without requiring special meetings.

City Administrator David Cameron concluded by referencing Missouri Municipal League (MML) training, noting that the approach being followed aligns with best practices recommended for municipal governance.

Staff agreed to make the requested changes and will provide the final version once completed.

Report from Staff

City Administrator David Cameron provided an update on recent legislative developments. Last week, \$6 million was recommended for the MM Highway project, and \$25 million was allocated from the Senate for the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP). Currently, a total of \$35 million in funding for Republic projects is included in the budget under conference discussions. However, he cautioned that these allocations are not final until the Governor signs the budget, and some or all the funding may be removed during the final conference process.

Council Member Darran Campbell was sworn in by City Clerk Laura Burbridge.

Council Member Eric Gerke inquired about whether the \$25 million for the WWTP was in addition to previously allocated funding. City Administrator David Cameron confirmed that it appeared to be additional funding and believed it may not require a local match. He noted that provisions in the bill would reduce the amount drawn from the State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan. More details will be provided if the appropriation is finalized by the Governor.

Mayor Eric Franklin thanked City staff for their presentations and extended appreciation to Judge McBride for participating in the code compliance discussion. He noted that Council Members frequently receive calls from constituents about code issues and expressed his gratitude for the increased clarity and transparency in the enforcement process.

Adjournment

Mayor Franklin adjourned the meeting at 12:59 p.m.

ATTEST:

Laura Burbridge, City Clerk

Eric Franklin, Mayor

DRAFT