

JOHNSTOWN CITY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
Wednesday, December 31, 2025

City Council met in a stated session for the general transaction of business. Mayor Frank Janakovic called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Britt offered the invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The following members of Council were present for roll call:

Mayor Frank Janakovic, Reverend Sylvia King, Mr. Arnone, Mr. Britt, Mr. Clark, Ms. Huchel, Mrs. Mock (7)

Arturo Martynuska, City Manager; Mike Capriotti, Assistant City Manager; Aimee Willett, Solicitor, Jenn Burkhart.

PUBLIC COMMENT-AGENDA ITEMS ONLY

Charlene Stanton, 184 Sell Street, addressed City Council regarding the proposed 2026 budget resolution, emphasizing that adoption of the City's budget is Council's most significant responsibility because it establishes all municipal functions and priorities and directly affects every resident of Johnstown. She highlighted that Council attempted at the December 10, 2025, meeting, and again at the current meeting, to adopt the budget without making the full-proposed budget available for public inspection as required by law, which she stated undermines transparency and public trust.

Ms. Stanton explained that the budget made available at City Hall and on the City's website included only the General Fund and the Capital Plan Fund, which she argued represented only a portion of the City's total financial activity. She stated a lawful proposed budget must include all City funds and revenue sources, including state and federal monies, and claimed that the Liquid Fuels Fund, CDBG Fund, State Home Fund, UDAG Fund, State Grant Fund, and American Recovery Act funds were not provided for public inspection. She maintained that withholding these documents violates legal requirements for public access and financial transparency.

Ms. Stanton noted the City's website and agenda materials, stating that while all funds appear to be listed in the materials Council is voting on, the public was never given the opportunity to review those funds prior to adoption. She noted that Council members likely had access to the complete budget while the public did not and reiterated that residents have both a legal and ethical right to review where all City revenues originate and how they are spent before the budget is approved. She urged Council to table the resolution and properly advertise the complete budget for public inspection.

Ms. Stanton also objected to references on the City's website indicating proposed revisions to the wage and salary ordinance. She stated that changes to the wage and salary ordinance cannot be made by the city manager and require formal action and a vote of City Council. She concluded by reiterating her position that the budget cannot be legally adopted at this time.

John DeBartola, 1197 Bedford Street, stated, after receiving a phone call from Ms. Stanton the previous evening, he reviewed the City's website and confirmed her claims regarding the limited budget information available. He explained that on the morning of the meeting, he went to City Hall and spent approximately one hour attempting to inspect the full City budget, exercising what he described as his constitutional rights under the Pennsylvania Constitution. He reported that the clerk provided only the General Fund and Capital Plan Fund budgets, and when he requested access to the remaining six budgets, none were available in printed form.

Mr. DeBartola explained that he specifically requested to speak with City Manager Mr. Martynuska to discuss his request for access to the additional funds. He noted difficulties in viewing the full City budget. He explained that any taxpaying resident who requests to inspect the City's budget should be able to view every line item, including funds such as ARPA, Central Park funding, and other state and federal sources, and stated he was denied access to six of the City's eight funds.

Mr. DeBartola stated he informed the city manager he would be contacting the solicitor and filing a formal complaint, asserting that the meeting and proposed budget action were illegal. He claimed that his rights under the Sunshine Act and the Pennsylvania Constitution were violated because he was denied the ability to review the full budget prior to Council's vote. He expressed frustration that this issue had arisen again within a matter of weeks and questioned why only two of eight budgets were posted on the City's website, particularly when prior years' budgets had been fully posted online. He emphasized that the issue was not the website itself, but that he was denied access in person as a taxpayer.

Mr. DeBartola stated he joined Ms. Stanton's call for transparency and formally requested that Council table the budget, re-advertise it for 20 days, and make the full budget publicly available. He argued that Council's obligation to provide transparency exists regardless of how many citizens request access and asserted that a full printed budget should be available for public inspection at City Hall. He challenged the solicitor to state on the record if he was incorrect about the City's legal obligations.

Mr. DeBartola concluded questioned how funds such as Central Park, state grants, UDAG, State Home, CDBG, and Liquid Fuels funds were being spent, stating that he could not obtain that information despite repeated attempts. He criticized Council's experience and oversight, characterizing the situation as embarrassing for the City, and stated, while he did not believe the issue stemmed from corruption, he believed it reflected incompetence. He concluded by asking Council to formally acknowledge its obligation to provide the full budget to the public, and if so, to table and reschedule the vote with full transparency.

Dustin Greene, 312 Chestnut Street, reiterated concerns that he raised at a prior meeting regarding the lack of transparency in the proposed City budget. He referenced the agenda, which listed eight separate funds scheduled for approval, including the General Fund, Liquid Fuels Fund, Capital Projects Fund, CDBG Fund, State Home Fund, UDAG Fund, State Grant Fund, and American Recovery Act Fund. He documented a screenshot taken at 4:23 p.m. on December 31, 2025, showing that the City's website provided public access to only three documents: salaries/wages, the 2026 Capital Plan, and the 2026 General Fund budget, which he described as unacceptable.

Mr. Greene explained that publishing complete budget documents online is a simple task and criticized the City for failing to do so. He stated a lack of transparency leaves the public uninformed about complex funding sources, such as the CDBG Fund, and contributes to public frustration and anger. He emphasized that there are eight budget items listed for approval, yet only three corresponding documents were available online, leading him to question why the remaining information was not shared and to suggest that the absence of disclosure gives the appearance that information is being hidden.

Mr. Greene compared Johnstown's practices unfavorably to neighboring municipalities and local governments, including Geistown Borough, Richland Township, and Cambria County, all of which he stated publicly publish their budgets. He described the City's approach as stagnant and expressed hope that incoming council members and staff will take a new direction focused on transparency in the coming year. He urged Council to table the budget and make the full documents readily available to the public, stating that repeated public complaints demonstrate that the issue has not been adequately addressed.

Mr. Greene stated the lack of transparency has damaged the trust between elected officials and the community. He expressed personal frustration as a longtime businessperson and community member, emphasizing that residents

should not have to repeatedly attend meetings to request basic financial information.

Joseph Warhul, 44 Clover Street, echoed the prior speakers' concerns that the budget information available online was incomplete and difficult to understand. He explained, although he attempted to review the posted materials, the documents did not clearly present line-item details in a way that an average resident could easily interpret, limiting the public's ability to understand how funds are allocated.

Mr. Warhul could not find any clear allocation for animal control in the proposed budget, a concern he said he has raised multiple times in the past. He emphasized that animal control funding should be clearly identifiable and last year's effective funding level was inadequate. He described ongoing issues in his neighborhood involving stray animals and stated the lack of municipal animal control services has resulted in unsafe and inhumane conditions, forcing residents and nonprofit organizations to address the problem using personal funds.

Mr. Warhul also raised concerns about public safety, referencing a prior incident involving a loose dog where, in his view, the absence of proper animal control resources left law enforcement with limited and inappropriate options. He urged Council to ensure sufficient funding for animal control before approving the budget, stating these issues could be mitigated with proper planning and investment.

Mr. Warhul could not find clear budget allocations for routine neighborhood maintenance, particularly grass cutting, despite repeatedly being told in prior years that such services were limited due to lack of funding. He asserted the online budget did not include key funding sources such as UDAG or Community Development Block Grant funds, making it impossible for residents to determine whether resources were being directed toward basic neighborhood needs. He stated, had this information been clearly available, he would not have needed to address Council.

Mr. Warhul concluded by expressing frustration that neighborhood concerns such as property maintenance, animal control, and code enforcement continue to be underfunded while other projects receive consistent support. He urged Council to carefully consider whether the proposed budget adequately addresses core services that directly affect residents' quality of life, particularly in neighborhoods like Moxham, and warned that without meaningful action, these issues would continue to be raised in future budget discussions.

Mr. Martynuska responded to Mr. DeBartola's comments regarding access to the budget documents. He acknowledged that Mr. DeBartola came to City Hall seeking hard copies of the budget materials but disputed portions of the account, stating that their interaction was not if described and he did not say the copiers were not working. He maintained that the City did not deny access to the budget and staff were attempting to provide copies when Mr. DeBartola left. He emphasized that, in his view, no denial of access occurred.

Mr. Martynuska provided a year-end summary of accomplishments for 2025, which he described as a "top 40" list of achievements by the City administration. He highlighted improvements in the City's financial position, including maintaining a double-A bond rating, increased revenues, progress on delinquent loans, and solid pension funding now fully covered by state aid. He reported that long-term contracts were secured for police and fire departments to improve recruitment and retention, and healthcare and Workers' Compensation costs were kept to modest increases through negotiation.

Mr. Martynuska outlined multiple operational, infrastructure, and cost-saving initiatives, including reduced cellular expenses through a new contract, upgrades to security systems and parking garages, new parking technology, and additional revenue from advertising partnerships. He cited investments in public facilities such as new police vehicles, repairs and upgrades to fire stations, improvements at Roxbury and Sargent's Stadium, a new skate park and playgrounds, sidewalk and park improvements, energy-efficient lighting, roofing and HVAC projects, and completion of required environmental cleanups. He also noted technological upgrades including development of a GIS system and implementation of digital bill payment.

Mr. Martynuska concluded by reporting that the City secured more than \$300,000 in grants, completed extensive neighborhood cleanup efforts, repaired sinkholes, and successfully organized a major city event on short notice. He expressed pride in the City staff's efforts and thanked Council for its support, stating that additional improvements and grant-funded initiatives, including expanded mental health services to better support public safety responses, are planned for the coming year.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 10741

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF JOHNSTOWN, CAMBRIA COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, ESTIMATING THE AMOUNT OF REVENUES TO BE RECEIVED BY THE CITY OF JOHNSTOWN FROM VARIOUS SOURCES AND APPROPRIATING SPECIFIC SUMS ESTIMATED TO BE REQUIRED FOR SPECIFIC PURPOSES FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE VARIOUS FUNDS, BUREAUS, DEPARTMENTS, THE PAYMENT OF DEBT SERVICE AND THE PENSION FUND OBLIGATIONS OF THE CITY OF JOHNSTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA, FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2026, INCLUDING THE FOLLOWING CITY OF JOHNSTOWN FUND SECTIONS, AND THE RESPECTIVE FUNDS BUDGET EXHIBIT DETAILS

- A. GENERAL FUND
- B. LIQUID FUELS FUND
- C. CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND
- D. CDBG FUND
- E. STATE HOME FUND
- F. UDAG FUND
- G. STATE GRANT FUND
- H. AMERICAN RECOVERY ACT FUND

Mrs. Mock made a motion to approve. The motion was seconded by Mr. Arnone.

Ms. Willett stated City Council has been actively and openly working on the City's budget for several months. She outlined the timeline of Council actions, noting that a publicly advertised budget meeting was held on October 27, 2025, that City Council adopted Ordinance No. 5375, setting 2026 employee salaries at its November meeting, and additional budget discussion occurred at that time. She explained the budget item was tabled on December 10, 2025, due to an advertising issue, after which the upcoming meeting was publicly reported by local media and formally advertised in the Tribune Democrat. She stated proof of publication was received, and the advertisement specified the purpose of the meeting and where the budget could be reviewed.

Ms. Willett clarified, while the total for Public Works was incorrectly added due to a spreadsheet issue, all individual salaries and positions listed in the ordinance were accurate and had been properly approved by Council at the

November meeting. She stated City administration reviewed the ordinance multiple times to confirm that the budget reflected all previously approved salaries, emphasizing that the error was limited to the calculation of a total and did not affect the validity of the approved positions or pay rates.

Ms. Willett further stated the City's proposed General Fund budget and Capital Improvement Plan were made available for public inspection and were posted on the City's website immediately following the December 10, 2025, meeting. She noted these documents remain accessible online, along with budgets from prior years, and she was advised that the same information made available in past years was provided this year. She asserted her opinion that the City Charter, City Code, and Third-Class City Code requirements had been satisfied and Council was legally permitted to adopt the budget at the current meeting.

In response to questions from Reverend King regarding the absence of the full budget, Ms. Willett noted her understanding that if a member of the public requested additional budget materials, they would have been made available. When it was noted that Mr. DeBartola had requested them and did not receive copies, she stated she was aware that a copy was in the process of being provided and she had not been informed that access was denied. She reiterated that Council complied with all applicable legal requirements.

Ms. Willett cited specific provisions of the City Charter and City Code, including Section 409 regarding public notice and availability of proposed ordinances, Section 1005 regarding the contents and form of the proposed budget, and Section 1007 regarding Council action and adoption of the budget. She explained that the ordinance containing the budget was approved in November, posted on the City's website, and prepared in a format consistent with prior years, which she stated satisfied the legal standards for public notice, inspection, and adoption.

Ms. Huchel questioned whether Council could amend its motion to adopt only the General Fund and Capital Fund.

Ms. Willett responded, stating that Council could do so and reiterating her opinion that the ordinance, City Code, and Third-Class City Code requirements had been met and that adoption of those funds would be legally appropriate.

Ms. Huchel made a motion to amend Resolution No. 10741, to accept only the General Fund and the Capital Projects Fund. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Mock.

Ms. Huchel stated, while she could not locate a specific line item for grass cutting in the budget, there is an animal control allocation of \$15,000 listed on page five. She acknowledged that this amount is insufficient to fully address the issue but indicated that it reflects the current proposed funding level.

Mr. Arnone questioned whether the six remaining budget documents not previously available would be printed and presented to the public as soon as possible. Mr. Arnone emphasized that providing those budgets was not optional and stated they must be made available promptly to meet both public expectations and legal requirements.

Ms. Willett responded that the remaining budget documents could be addressed at the January meeting along with any additional changes, stating that doing so would not affect city business conducted between the current meeting and January. She indicated that no operational or fiscal harm would result from proceeding in that manner.

Reverend King suggested the complete budget be placed on public display immediately and asked whether it would be appropriate to email the full budget to individuals who attended the meeting and requested it, provided they supplied their email addresses. Her comments were framed as an effort to promptly resolve public concerns and increase transparency.

Mr. Clark expressed frustration, stating that Council had already gone through this issue previously and the complete budget should have been fully displayed from the outset. He emphasized that “complete” means all funds and all documents and stated it was troubling that full disclosure had not occurred before the meeting, particularly for council members reviewing the budget for the first time.

Ms. Mock stated whatever information is available to Council should also be available to the public, reinforcing concerns about equal access to budget materials.

Mayor Janakovic was frustrated by the situation, noting his 12 years as mayor and service on Council without raising real estate taxes by one dollar. He emphasized that the proposed budget includes no tax increase and stated maintaining flat taxes over many years required significant effort. He expressed disappointment that compliance concerns overshadowed what he viewed as a major accomplishment of the administration and Council.

Ms. Willett clarified that Council was voting on an amendment to the budget resolution that would limit adoption of the General Fund and Capital Projects

Fund only. She recommended that if the amendment passed, Council should proceed with approving the resolution for those two funds alone.

Mayor Janakovic concluded by directing that copies of the budget be placed on display at City Hall immediately and that copies be made available without delay to the individuals who attended the meeting and requested them.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yea: Ms. Huchel, Mayor Janakovic, Mr. Britt, Mr. Arnone, Mrs. Mock, Mr.

Clark, Reverend King (7).

Nays: None (0).

Mr. Arnone made a motion to approve Resolution No. 10741, as amended. Mrs. Mock seconded the motion.

The motion passed by the following vote:

Yea: Reverend King, Ms. Huchel, Mayor Janakovic, Mr. Britt, Mr. Arnone, Mrs. Mock, Mr. Clark (7).

Nays: None (0).

#### PUBLIC COMMENT: NON-AGENDA ITEM

Ms. Stanton stated the animal control budget, which she noted is \$15,000 for the current year as it was last year, has not been effectively spent, with the City reportedly spending \$0. She described incidents in which residents called the police about stray dogs and were given only the options to release the dog or have it euthanized. She also highlighted the overpopulation of cats in the City, explaining that many are abandoned pets reproducing rapidly, and noted that residents, including herself, are funding trap-neuter-return programs out of pocket, without any city support despite the allocated budget. She emphasized that she has previously requested city funding for animal control and spaying/neutering programs.

Ms. Stanton shifted to public comment procedures, expressing concern that non-residents and non-taxpayers are increasingly being allowed to speak before City Council. She referenced a recent meeting, in which a non-resident was permitted to speak for three minutes, even after being told they did not meet the requirements and questioned whether the City has the authority to override administrative code regarding public comment periods.

Mr. DeBartola thanked Council members for listening and stated, despite prior frustrations, he does not want 2026 to be a year of conflict. He explained that he modified his remarks because he would prefer cooperation rather than confrontation. He referenced filing a complaint with the County Commissioners after learning of a joint meeting that occurred without public notice, stating that Commissioners acknowledged to him that policy discussions took place and two of the three Commissioners were present, potentially constituting a quorum. He was awaiting a response from the Commissioners' solicitor regarding whether the Sunshine Act was violated.

Mr. DeBartola expressed support for the concept of joint meetings among city leadership and related authorities, including the Housing Authority, Water Authority, County Commissioners, the Redevelopment Authority, and City Council, stating that he originally advocated this approach. He said he was encouraged by public statements supporting collaboration but was disappointed that a recent joint meeting occurred without public notice, media coverage, or community inclusion, which he said undermined trust.

Mr. DeBartola urged the new mayor and Council to commit to greater transparency in 2026 by publicly announcing meetings, including joint and intergovernmental sessions, and by using social media to inform residents. He stated many officials regularly post online but failed to share information about the meeting in question, leaving residents unaware of who attended or what was discussed. He emphasized that this lack of transparency fuels public skepticism and perceptions of "backroom meetings."

Mr. DeBartola concluded by emphasizing his desire to see meaningful change in the City, citing population decline, crime, job losses, and the departure of young people and industries as urgent issues. He stated that without transparent, inclusive, and decisive action, the City risks further decline. While acknowledging that criticism may be uncomfortable, he encouraged officials to continue sharing information publicly so residents can provide feedback and ideas, stating that open communication is essential to getting the City back on track.

Mr. Greene addressed the council, noting that the past month has demonstrated both failure and the potential for progress. He praised Mr. DeBartola and Reverend King for speaking up, stating that their efforts helped bring people together. He criticized the previous administration for failing to post the budget online, and commended Ms. Stanton for highlighting missing pages. He referenced a recent tax hearing, expressing concern about a Cambria County tax hike that was approved by a two-to-one vote, and shared a story about a young veteran who expressed disillusionment with the community.

Mr. Greene urged council members to pay closer attention to local hearings and to prioritize transparency over political rhetoric, emphasizing that the community's needs should come before highlighting accomplishments

Mayor Janakovic responded by noting that the City has avoided raising real estate taxes for 15 years and expressed pride in the accomplishments of the council and city administration. He acknowledged challenges and stated that ongoing work remains but expressed appreciation for the collective service of council members over the years.

Mayor Janakovic announced that City Council would enter into Executive Session upon the conclusion of the meeting.

#### RECESS/ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 5:55 p.m.