.....⇒ JUDGE DEAKINS' ACTIONS RE: PLANNING BOARD.

As you know from previous newsletters, Act 519 of 2025 which went into effect 8/5/25 amended Arkansas Code 14-17-203 to require that *"A majority of the voting members of the county planning board shall reside in unincorporated areas of the county."*

Prior to that, as early as last fall, Washington County Judge Patrick Deakins made it known to the quorum court that he wanted to remove member Joe Maynard from the Washington County Planning Board. On October 16, 2024, Judge Deakins sent the following email to Washington County Justices of the Peace:

"*To the Honorable Washington County Justices of the Peace:*

> *All in an effort to keep you informed….*
>
> *I want you all to know that I take our board appointments for all our assorted county boards very seriously. I try to solicit interest from people who truly love our county and want to see it improved for all citizens and to ignore personal benefit or politics. I look at public service as the highest calling, and a true honor and privilege. By and large, we have great success in finding people who believe in these tenant (sic), but, unfortunately I come to you today with an issue I need you to be aware of.*
>
> *I want you all to be aware that I no longer consider Mr. Joe Maynard as fit for service on our planning board. He had my endorsement when we all first started this term. I was willing to put aside his blatant political activism and his confrontational personality in hopes we would gain the insights and service of one of Washington County's business owners. Unfortunately, I believe all these issues have reared their ugly heads. His destructive comments and actions of late have caught me off guard and, I believe, are traceable back to some issues ongoing*

internally in the Republican Party of Arkansas. We have no room for that in county business. I will also share that his volatile actions have recently led to me revoking his badge access to county buildings.

Removing him would require confirmation by the Quorum Court. While some may find that drastic, I, unfortunately see no other option in hopes of continuing the crucial work of the planning board in a healthy manner. The attached exchange will inform you to the point of stalemate we have arrived at. I was hoping cooler heads would prevail, but alas….. His continued service is up to you, but I felt obligated to inform you that he no longer has my or staff's confidence to continue service."

The quorum court, in its wisdom, chose to ignore the judge's letter and that was the end of the matter, at least as far as I knew. **For a while anyway.**

Next, there was an ordinance presented to the County Services meeting on June 30, 2025, requested by Judge Deakins, to abolish the existing Planning Board and allow him to appoint an entirely new board.

Watch this which starts at 25:52 in this video from the 6/30/25 County Services meeting. That ordinance failed.

Next JPs received this email from Planning Director Sam Ata on July 28, 2025 telling us meetings were canceled and projects on hold until further notice – compliance with Act 519.

At **10:39 a.m. on August 21 (the day of the QC meeting)**, County Judge Patrick Deakins sent this email to Justices of the Peace stating:

*"My plan is to re-nominate **all** (emphasis added) the current planning board members, with a new nomination of a resident living in the unincorporated areas."*

However, that did **not** happen. Despite clearly stating he would re-nominate *all* current members, Judge Deakins, when making the nominations, excluded one Planning Board member: **Joe Maynard**.

Watch this happen during the meeting starting here at 40:33.

At 42:11 I call for a "Division of the Assembly," which is the same as asking for a roll call vote. I did this because the judge just called for a "voice vote" with "yeas" and "nays" and I did not believe he had the necessary votes to pass. When he did the roll call vote, eight JPs stood in favor: Wilson, Lyons, Ecke, Dean, Washington, Dennis, Ricker and Pond.

Did all these JPs realize (I am sure some did) that the judge had omitted Mr. Maynard's name from the list? After all, the email said he was nominating **all** the current planning board members. This happened quickly and the names were read rapidly.

I sent this letter to County Attorney Brian Lester on Friday 8/22/25 raising concerns about the vote and whether the judge's nominations did, indeed, have enough votes to pass.

Robert's Rules of Order, 12th Edition, Section 44:4, addresses matters related to *depriving an individual of membership or office.* Specifically, it states that:

> "A two-thirds vote is required to adopt any motion that… (e) takes away membership."

This same section also requires a two-thirds vote to adopt any motion that:

> "… (d) closes nominations or the polls, or otherwise limits the freedom of nominating or voting."

The vote Thursday night with regard to the Washington County Planning Board *effectively deprived Mr. Joe Maynard of his confirmed membership* on the Washington County Planning Board. Under Robert's Rules, such an action **requires a two-thirds vote**, which did not occur.

Additionally, Robert's Rules' summary table of motions clearly classifies "Expel from Membership" (which, again, effectively happened when Mr. Maynard was not nominated) as a motion requiring a two-thirds vote. Furthermore, the approval of the Judge's new appointments had the effect of closing nominations or limiting the freedom of voting, which also falls under actions requiring a two-thirds vote.

There's not only the issue with Robert's Rules. There is actually an Arkansas Statute Arkansas Code 14-14-705 (County Advisory or Administrative Boards)

"(E) A person may be removed from a county board ***for cause*** *by the county judge* ***with confirmation by resolution of the quorum court****.* ***Written notification stating the causes for removal shall be provided to the board member prior to the date established for quorum court consideration of removal,*** *and the* ***board member shall be afforded the opportunity to meet with the quorum court in their deliberation of removal****."* (all emphasis are mine)

Mr. Maynard was removed - no cause given - no notification given - not afforded the opportunity to defend himself - and there was actually no deliberation.

This should alarm every Washington County resident. If a disagreement with the county judge can lead to public humiliation and removal from a board or committee, what does that say about fairness, transparency, and accountability in our local government? If community members who volunteer their time—often for little or no compensation—are subjected to this type of treatment, we weaken our county. We discourage qualified individuals from serving, and we risk decisions becoming less fact-based and more politically motivated.

Is Washington County better for this? Absolutely not. If this goes unchallenged, it will happen again. The only question is: **who will be next?**

There are other questions, for example: Even after all this, do we have a legally established Planning Board? What will happen with regard to Planning Board actions if the board is later deemed to be illegal or not properly formed? If Mr. Maynard's removal is declared invalid by a court of law?