



CITY OF BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

January 15, 2026 | 6:00 PM

Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular Council Meeting on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 6:00 PM.

Members Present:

Mayor Jesse Lineberry

Michelle Poluikis

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton

Stephanie Noel-Branch

Amy Gilliam

Ronald Cash

Members Absent:

None

ADG #1: CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, & PRAYER

Mayor Lineberry called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM, and Councilmember Cash delivered the opening prayer.

Prior to beginning the meeting, Mayor Lineberry reminded everyone present that conduct during the meeting reflects on the Mayor and Council as a whole and emphasized the importance of maintaining a high standard of professionalism, integrity, and respect. He encouraged everyone to remain focused on the collective success of the City and to conduct the meeting in a manner that demonstrates commitment to the community.

ADG #2: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice-Mayor Staton moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis, and carried by Council.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 8, 2026, ORGANIZATIONAL & REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice-Mayor Staton, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis and carried by Council with Mayor Lineberry and Councilmembers Noel-Branch and Gilliam abstaining.

ADG #4: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Wayne Fitzgerald, 545 East 23rd Street, thanked City Council for their work and apologized for the conduct at the last meeting. He expressed support for open discussion during meetings but emphasized the need for discussions to be conducted in an orderly and respectful manner. He suggested allowing opportunities for individuals to address Council from the podium when additional comments arise later in the meeting, noting that the standard three-minute sign-up period may not always allow for all thoughts to be shared.
- Elizabeth Braddy, 55 Longview Meadow Drive, stated that she is a board member of Main Street Buena Vista. She thanked Council for their service and expressed that MSBV is eager to support and empower downtown efforts. She noted enthusiasm for working with Council and expressed optimism for making the coming year a successful one.

- Mealy Sizer, 788 Forge Road, stated that she has worked for the City at Glen Maury Park for over 20 years. She addressed comments made at the previous meeting regarding park operations and fees, noting that the park is City-owned, operates with limited staff and funding, and provides a significant number of events and services within those constraints. She explained that camping rates are set by Council and that recent rate increases reflect investments made by the City in campground and pool upgrades. Mrs. Sizer also clarified that while occasional nonpayment by campers can occur due to the park's open nature, most campers do pay through various methods, and she expressed concern that some criticisms do not reflect their typical practices. She highlighted numerous park events, including Easter, Halloween, and Christmas activities, and parades, many of which are supported by volunteers and community partners. She noted that planning for major events, including Labor Day and Christmas, requires advance coordination and emphasized the continued growth and success of these events, while acknowledging that additional funding would be needed for further park enhancements.

ADG #5: REPORTS:

1. Mayor

Mayor Lineberry highlighted the work of American Legion Post 126, noting its mission of veterans serving veterans and the broader community. He shared his family's positive experience attending a recent Family Game Day and encouraged residents to follow the American Legion on social media and participate in its events.

He also recognized the Valley Program for Aging Services (VPAS), which is sponsoring a "Soup, Socks, and Sunshine" drive through January 23. He explained that the group is seeking donations of canned soup, new men's and women's socks, and kind notes or drawings, with collection locations at the Maury River Senior Center in Buena Vista and Kendall at Lexington. Donations will be distributed to older adults receiving Meals on Wheels, with a goal of reaching 85 homes. He encouraged community support for the event.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree thanked the Mayor for highlighting VPAS, noting that a significant number of Buena Vista residents benefit from its services.

He also reported that Ms. Burch has contacted several vendors regarding live streaming of City Council meetings and potential meeting management software. A detailed report and recommendation are expected to be presented to the Budget & Finance Committee. He also noted that meeting dates and/or times for the B&F Committee may be adjusted to accommodate the new committee members.

He stated that he and Mr. Bolster plan to meet with Commissioner of the Revenue, Ashton Beverley, to discuss potential personal property tax relief for volunteers, as previously discussed. Following that meeting, a presentation will be made to the B&F Committee, with the intent of bringing recommendations forward at a future Council meeting.

He also advised Council that the Public Recreation Facilities Authority, which owns the property at 35 Vista Links Drive, formerly the MGCC building, has agreed to form a cross-representation committee to evaluate future use of the property, consisting of representatives from the PRFA, City Council, EDA, Planning Commission, City staff, and the City Attorney. He asked Council recommendation for a Council member to serve on this committee. Mayor Lineberry asked if anyone was interested in serving on this committee; Councilmember Poluikis expressed her interest in serving. There being no objections, Mrs. Poluikis was appointed to the committee.

Lastly, Mr. Tyree reminded Council that Conflict of Interest forms are due February 2nd and encouraged members to contact Ms. Burch with any questions or for assistance in completing the forms.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees/Members

None.

5. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Court Clerks

None.

6. Invited Community Organizations

None.

ADG #6: CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, & COMMITTEES

Board of Zoning Appeals

Ms. Jamie Green's term on the BZA expired on December 31, 2025. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on May 31, 2029. This is the fifth time it has appeared on the agenda.

As there were no applicants for this opening, it will be carried forward to the next meeting.

Maury Service Authority

Mr. Bill Fitzgerald has resigned from the MSA Board. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on May 31, 2029. This is the fifth time it has appeared on the agenda.

Applicant: Jennifer Humphrey

Councilmember Noel-Branch made a motion to appoint Mrs. Humphrey to the MSA Board. Councilmember Cash seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS

OB #1: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF PUBLIC COMMENT POLICY

Ms. Burch explained that most localities follow a structure similar to the City's current practice but noted that historically the City had allowed public comment for items not on the agenda at the beginning of the meeting, with additional opportunity for public comment on agenda items when they were taken up. She recommended, if Council wished to pursue this approach, opening public comment at the beginning of New Business and applying the same procedures each time, including speakers coming to the podium, stating their name and address, and addressing the matter at hand.

Mr. Tyree added that this format is commonly used in other localities. He noted that public comment is not typically taken under Old Business, as those items would have been addressed at a prior meeting.

Mr. Kearney clarified that under this approach there would be two standard public comment periods: one at the beginning of the meeting for items not on the agenda and second at the beginning of New Business for agenda items, emphasizing the importance of clearly defining these periods.

Councilmember Gilliam moved to approve the amended public comment policy, with Councilmember Poluikis seconding, and it was unanimously carried.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO BECOME A CERTIFIED CRIME PREVENTION COMMUNITY

Corporal Josh Guttmann of the Buena Vista Police Department provided an overview of the Certified Crime Prevention Community program administered by the Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and noted that only about 15 jurisdictions statewide currently meet the program's guidelines. He stated that participation would provide benefits such as preferred status for certain state grants, improved coordination and stronger engagement between the PD and the community. He outlined that the program requires meeting 19 core elements, many of which the City has already satisfied, including having a DCJS-certified Crime Prevention Specialist, distributing crime prevention literature, offering security assessments for homes and businesses, and maintaining School Resource Officers. He also explained that if the resolution is adopted, the City would have 12 months to submit documentation to DCJS for review. DCJS would then conduct an on-site audit, and upon approval, the City would receive certification and related signage.

When asked if there were any costs associated with the program, Corporal Guttmann stated that there are minimal costs, primarily limited to training-related travel expenses. He noted that much of the required training is available at no cost and that many program elements are already incorporated into his role as Community Resource Officer.

Ms. Burch presented the following Resolution:

Resolution of the City of Buena Vista Intent to Become a Certified Crime Prevention Community

WHEREAS the governing body of the City of Buena Vista is interested in the safety and security of its citizenry and the community at large; and

WHEREAS the governing body is prepared to support appropriate efforts to within the community to become totally prepared to promote crime prevention and community safety; and

WHEREAS The Department of Criminal Justice Services offers a program which is specifically designed to recognize Virginia communities committed to crime prevention and community safety while providing a framework for those communities to institutionalize crime prevention at the local level; and

WHEREAS this program is entitle the Certified Crime Prevention Community Program.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council that our community, the City of Buena Vista, wishes to participate in the Certified Crime Prevention Community Program, and that the leadership of this community fully supports all reasonable efforts to meet the DCJS requirements to become designated as a Certified Crime Prevention Community; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the program requires the existence or formation of a local community crime prevention/community safety council or coalition, and this governing body designates the Buena Vista Community Safety Council as representing our community for the purpose of participating in this program.

This resolution is in full effect upon its adoption this 15th day of January 2026.

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Councilmember Noel-Branch made a motion to **approve** the Resolution, with Vice-Mayor Staton seconding, and it was unanimously carried.

NB #2: APPOINT MEMBERS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES

Mayor Lineberry noted that, due to the current vacancy on Council, he would serve as an ex officio member of all committees and would attend and support their work as needed. He then proceeded to appoint Council members to the following committees:

- **Glen Maury Park Committee:** Vice-Mayor Staton
- **Cemetery Committee:** Vice-Mayor Staton and Councilmember Cash
- **Budget & Finance Committee:** Councilmembers Poluikis and Gilliam
- **Citizens Advisory Committee:** Councilmember Noel-Branch
- **School Facilities Committee:** Councilmembers Poluikis and Gilliam
- **Outdoor Spaces Committee:** Councilmember Noel-Branch
- **Events Committee:** Councilmember Cash

Mr. Tyree advised that staff will follow up with committee members via email to schedule initial meetings, select chairpersons, and establish regular meeting schedules.

NB #3: APPOINT COUNCIL MEMBER TO REGIONAL RECREATION COMMITTEE

Mr. Tyree explained that in October, representatives from Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge County met in a regional interjurisdictional meeting to discuss projects including the new DSS building and the creation of a joint regional recreation committee. The committee will consist of one elected member from each jurisdiction's governing body, along with the managers from each locality. The purpose of the committee is to coordinate and plan regional initiatives for the area. He noted that the committee has not yet met and that City Council's appointment is needed to move forward; once that is done, they will begin planning and scheduling the committee's first meeting.

Councilmember Noel-Branch expressed her interest in representing the City on this committee. There being no objections, Mrs. Noel-Branch was appointed to the Regional Recreation Committee.

NB #4: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER OPTION

Mr. Tyree presented two options for Council's consideration:

1. Internal Appointment of Chief Wayne Handley

- Chief Handley has demonstrated strong leadership, sound judgment, and knowledge of city operations.
- Appointing from within would minimize disruption and be cost effective, requiring no increase to the City Manager budget line aside from potential interim salary adjustments.
- Chief Handley has indicated willingness to serve as interim provided the permanent City Manager hiring process is progressing.
- Proposed timeline:

- February 5: Council would affirm current Assistant Police Chief David Clements as Police Chief.
- February 9: Swearing-in ceremony for Dave Clements; Chief Handley transitions to City manager office
- February 9 – March 15: Chief Handley and Mr. Tyree collaborate on ongoing projects and transition of responsibilities.
- March 15: Mr. Tyree's final day; Chief Handley formally assumes interim CM role.
- This option emphasizes leadership stability, continuity, and morale within city operations.

2. External Appointment – Berkley Group:

- Professional interim management service with extensive experience in municipal leadership.
- Estimated cost is an approximately \$14,000 per month increase to the City Manager budget.
- The Berkley Group can assist with creating a City Manager profile and nationwide recruitment.
- Provides experienced interim management with minimal disruption.

Mr. Tyree recommended the first option, noting that both options would provide capable leadership depending on Council's priorities.

Councilmember Cash motioned to table the discussion to allow additional time for Council discussion and executive session. Councilmember Gilliam seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried.

Councilmember Poluikis asked if the matter is tabled, would that affect the proposed transition timeline. Mr. Tyree responded that his 90-day notice provides flexibility, and a short delay of a couple of weeks would not significantly impact the overall transition schedule.

Councilmember Noel-Branch asked what type of schedule a Berkley Group appointee would work. Mr. Tyree explained that the group could provide a CM in-office 40 hours per week, with flexible arrangements for fewer hours at lower cost. He also clarified that the estimated \$14,000 per month would be additional to the current City Manager budget.

Councilmember Cash asked about the anticipated duration of a Berkley Group interim placement, to which Mr. Tyree explained that timelines vary depending on recruitment and Council preferences, but historically, ranging from four months to over a year.

NB #5: DISCUSSION OF PROCESS TO APPOINT A NEW CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

Ms. Burch explained that during the most recent vacancy, City Council accepted applications for a defined period, conducted interviews in an open meeting, entered closed session for deliberation, and then appointed a candidate in open session to serve until the next special election.

Mayor Lineberry asked about City Charter requirements. Mr. Kearney stated that the Charter does not address interim appointments and that, under the Code of Virginia, the only requirements are that the appointee be a qualified voter and that the appointment be made in a public meeting. He noted that using an application process is consistent with prior practice and allows Council to evaluate the pool of interested candidates.

Mr. Kearney also explained that Council has 45 days from the effective date of the resignation to make the appointment. Ms. Burch recommended advertising the vacancy for two weeks, with an application deadline of January 30th, allowing Council time to review applications and make an appointment at the February 5th meeting. She reported that four applications had already been received, one of which was on the ballot for election this past November.

Vice-Mayor Staton made a motion to move forward with the application process as discussed. Councilmember Poluikis seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:51 pm.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor