



CITY OF BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL

ORGANIZATIONAL & REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING - MINUTES

January 8, 2026 | 6:00 PM
Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for an Organizational & Regular Council Meeting on Thursday, January 8, 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:

Steve Webb

ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING

CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, & PRAYER

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

APPOINTMENT OF CLERK OF COUNCIL

Councilmember Cash moved to reappoint Sarah Burch as Clerk of Council. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Staton and carried by Council.

APPOINTMENT OF CITY MANAGER

Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to reappoint Jason Tyree as City Manager with Councilmember Poluikis seconding, and it was carried by Council.

APPOINTMENT OF CITY ATTORNEY

Councilmember Poluikis made a motion to reappoint Brian Kearney as City Attorney with Vice-Mayor Staton seconding. The motion was carried with Councilmember Gilliam voting in the negative.

ELECTION OF VICE-MAYOR

Councilmember Noel-Branch nominated Danny Staton to serve as Vice-Mayor for the next two years. Councilmember Poluikis seconded the motion and it was carried by Council.

DISCUSSION OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES & APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS

Mayor Lineberry first proposed a Glen Maury Park Committee. Vice-Mayor Staton moved to establish the committee, Councilmember Poluikis seconded, and it was carried by Council.

The next committee proposed by Mayor Lineberry was a Cemetery Committee. Vice-Mayor Staton moved to establish the committee, seconded by Councilmember Gilliam, and it was carried by Council.

A Budget Committee was the next committee to be proposed. Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to establish the committee, with Councilmember Poluikis seconding, and it was carried by Council.

The next committee to be proposed was a Citizen's Advisory Committee. Councilmember Poluikis moved to establish the committee, Vice-Mayor Staton seconded, and it was carried by Council.

Mayor Lineberry then proposed to continue the School Facilities Committee. Councilmember Poluikis moved to establish the committee, with Councilmember Noel-Branch seconding, and it was carried by Council.

Mayor Lineberry also proposed to continue the Outdoor Spaces Committee. Councilmember Cash moved to establish the committee, Councilmember Poluikis seconded, and it was carried by Council.

The final committee proposed was an Events Committee. Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to establish the committee, seconded by Councilmember Gilliam, and carried by Council.

Mayor Lineberry stated that he would appoint the members of the committees at the next meeting.

APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBERS TO THE PUBLIC SERVICE AUTHORITY

Vice-Mayor Staton made a motion to appoint Jesse Lineberry, Stephanie Noel-Branch, and Amy Gilliam to the Public Service Authority. Councilmember Poluikis seconded the motion and it was carried by Council.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Organizational Meeting was adjourned at 6:13 PM.

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

ADG #1: CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lineberry called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:13 PM.

ADG #2: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 11, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING

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

ADG #4: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Lew Hamilton encouraged Council to think creatively and provide a strong vision and energy for the City, noting that Buena Vista has significant untapped potential. He stated that Glen Maury Park is a "gold mine" if it was developed properly and emphasized the importance of accountability, clear reporting, and progress throughout City operations. Mr. Hamilton highlighted positive developments and improvements and encouraged the City to build on that momentum to make Buena Vista a true destination. He also urged Council to ensure transparency and a fair, open process when considering ideas or proposals from citizens and business owners.
- Pamela Camden encouraged Council to consider restructuring the personal property tax relief program for first responders. She expressed that while volunteer first responders should certainly be included, the City should also consider extending the relief to all first responders who live in and serve the community.

- Kathy Janiczek, 349 E. 26th Street, introduced herself to Council as an applicant for the Planning Commission opening.

ADG #5: REPORTS:

1. Mayor

Mayor Lineberry attended the recent Rockbridge CAN event at the Fire Department. He explained that their mission is to connect people with local resources in the community. He also reminded everyone that winter sports are in full swing and encouraged attendance at any school or RARO sponsored events.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree began his report by announcing Councilmember Steve Webb's resignation from City Council. As City Council must formally accept a council member's resignation, Councilmember Cash moved to accept Mr. Webb's resignation, seconded by Vice-Mayor Staton. The motion was carried with Councilmember Poluikis voting in the negative.

He also reported that he submitted his 90-day resignation to Council on Tuesday. He stated that by the next meeting, he would like guidance from Council on the desired direction for hiring an interim city manager, including whether Council prefers to contract with a firm such as the Berkley Group or to hire a specific individual.

3. City Attorney

Mr. Kearney advised that all Council members are required to complete training on the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and conflicts of interest. He noted that this training is mandatory every two years for both new and returning members. He will provide them with the information to complete the training and Sarah Burch will coordinate with Council members to ensure completion. Upon finishing the online training, they will receive a certificate, which must be submitted to Ms. Burch for verification.

Mr. Kearney also advised that Council has 45 days from today to appoint a replacement to fill Mr. Webb's vacancy, and the appointment must be made at a public meeting. He noted that the appointed member would serve on an interim basis until a special election in November at which time the seat would be filled by whoever wins that election for the remainder of the term.

4. Council Committees/Members

None.

5. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Court Clerks

Tom Roberts – Community Development

Mr. Roberts provided an update on the new software implementation for the City. He explained that the current software is about 20 years old; it is an internally developed system used for cash collection, tax management, utility billing, finance, accounts payable, and human resources. The existing system has significant limitations, including the inability to accept credit/debit or online payments. The new software, provided by RDA, is a commercially available system used by other local governments and will automate processes that are currently handled manually, improving efficiency, accountability, and customer service.

The total one-time implementation contract is \$165,000, which includes fixed costs and contingency for customization and on-site support; to date, we have spent about \$48,000, and overall costs are tracking below with contract maximum. Full implementation of the cash collection and utility billing is expected by the end of March, and the finance and human resources modules are expected to go live

by May. The ongoing annual licensing and support cost will be roughly \$17,000, which also includes technical support. The system also includes industry-standard security measures, which will improve data security compared to the current system.

Mr. Roberts also provided an update on the 21st Street Streetscape Project. Construction has begun at Forest Avenue and 21st Street near Penny Park. Additional work will take place at 21st Street and Magnolia Avenue as well as 21st Street and Sycamore Avenue. Improvements will include new sidewalks, crosswalks, landscaping, traffic signals, pedestrian countdown timers, sidewalk repairs, new street trees, and new street lighting. He noted that streets will remain open to traffic during construction, with only brief closures as necessary. Temporary traffic control measures will be implemented while traffic signals are being replaced, and public notices will be provided in advance of that work taking place. He added that the project is funded primarily through a Community Development Block Grant and Transportation Alternatives Program (VDOT) funds, with minimal City funds being spent. Construction is expected to be completed by May.

6. Invited Community Organizations

Jen Carpenter – Main Street Buena Vista

Mrs. Carpenter provided an overview of MSBV's activities and impact for 2025. She explained that MSBV was formed in 2022 and participates in the Virginia Main Street program through the Department of Housing and Community Development at the affiliate level, which requires ongoing reporting and training. She noted that their 2025 impact report is available on their website. Highlights from that include more than one million digital impressions across social media platforms, approximately \$47,000 in support from Virginia Main Street, and over 1,000 volunteer service hours contributed by community members. Major events supported or organized included Mountain Days, Spooktacular, the Christmas tree lighting, and assistance with the Christmas parade.

She also explained that the Main Street program focuses on empowering community members to be active participants in downtown revitalization. She noted that their board will hold a retreat to set goals for the coming year and will continue to utilize the state-provided transformation strategy and downtown redevelopment study.

Chad Coffey - RARO

Mr. Coffey reported that RARO has experienced record growth in participation for several consecutive years, with 2025 being the highest to date. He noted that Buena Vista has been a significant contributor to this growth, with local participation continuing to increase each year. He stated that RARO is planning for continued growth and emphasized their relationship with Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge is strong. He also noted RARO's commitment to providing high quality recreational programs for youth and residents of all ages.

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

Buena Vista Planning Commission

Mr. Jesse Lineberry has resigned from the Planning Commission. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on August 31, 2029. This is the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

Applicant: Kathryn Janiczek

Councilmember Cash moved to appoint Mrs. Janiczek to the Planning Commission. Councilmember Gilliam seconded the motion and it was carried by Council.

Rockbridge Regional Jail Commission

Mr. Jason Tyree's term on the Jail Commission expires on January 14, 2026. Mr. Tyree is willing to serve another term if reappointed. This is a one-year term and the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

Councilmember Poluikis moved to reappoint Mr. Tyree to the Jail Commission, seconded by Councilmember Noel-Branch, and it was carried by Council.

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 fourth 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 fourth time it has appeared on the agenda.

As there were not applicants for this opening, it will be carried forward to the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

OB #1: SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR RIGHT OF WAY ABANDONMENT IN BLOCK Y OF ENDERLY HEIGHTS

Ms. Burch presented the following Ordinance:

Abandonment of Public Right of Way Alley within Block Y, Slopes of Enderly Section, and West End of Piedmont Avenue

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that in accordance with Section 15.2-2006 through 2008 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, that the public right of way described in "Exhibit A", "Exhibit B", and "Exhibit C", attached hereto, ("the Property"), shall be vacated and abandoned upon receipt of the consideration noted in "Exhibit A".

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that as a condition of the aforesaid abandonment and vacation, the City retains a perpetual easement over, under, and across the Property for the installation, maintenance, repair, or replacement of all utilities, including, but not limited to, water and sewer lines; electric; cable; telephone; and gas lines; and garbage pick-up.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that this ordinance shall be recorded in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court for the City of Buena Vista, Virginia, and indexed under the names listed in "Exhibit A".

This ordinance shall be effective 30 days following adoption by City Council.

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Date of Adoption

Councilmember Cash made a motion to **approve** the Ordinance, with Councilmember Poluikis seconding. Ms. Burch completed a roll call vote of Council as follows:

Member	Present	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Councilmember Poluikis	X		X		
Councilmember Gilliam	X		X		
Councilmember Noel-Branch	X		X		
Councilmember Cash	X		X		
Vice-Mayor Staton	X		X		
Mayor Lineberry	X		X		

The Ordinance was unanimously **approved**.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: DISCUSSION OF RESTRUCTURING PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX BREAK FOR VOLUNTEER FIRST RESPONDERS

To begin the discussion, Mr. Tyree referenced a memo from Ashton Beverley, Commissioner of the Revenue, noting that currently all qualifying volunteer first responders receive \$200 relief off of the total tax on one vehicle they own. Council discussed increasing the tax credit to \$400 and simplifying the structure of the program. It was noted that similar tax relief programs exist in other localities and that eligibility requirements are established in state law. Information was shared regarding the number of volunteers who reside in the City and currently qualify for the credit (roughly 25-30), as well as stipends that are provided for volunteer first responders, which are separate from the tax relief.

There was also discussion regarding whether the relief should apply only to volunteer firefighters and rescue personnel or whether other first responder groups, such as auxiliary police officers, should be considered. It was noted that additional information would be needed to define eligibility criteria and determine total costs. Mr. Tyree also advised that additional analysis would be needed to determine fiscal impacts, which will depend on the level of relief Council wishes to consider.

No action was taken and Council directed staff to gather additional data on costs, eligibility, and options for expanding or adjusting the program for future consideration.

NB #2: DISCUSSION OF ADJUSTING CAMPING RATES AT GLEN MAURY PARK FOR CITIZENS

Council discussed the recently adjusted camping rates at Glen Maury Park, focusing on the rate for citizens, particularly those who participate in monthly camping. One concern mentioned was that while rate increases may be appropriate for non-residents, the increases for City residents may be steep given their payment of local taxes. Another concern brought up was the question of whether the higher rates may discourage local residents who have supported the park in the past and if those rates have negatively affected occupancy. The point was made that there is a need for the campground to cover its operating costs and avoid running at a deficit. It was also noted that utilities are included in the monthly rate.

There was no action taken; however, Council directed staff (and the newly formed Glen Maury Park Committee) to gather additional information, including comparisons with other campground rates and a clear understanding of the campground's financial performance.

NB #3: DISCUSSION OF PARKING PERMIT ZONE PLAN

Mr. Tyree noted that this is an issue that was previously considered by Council in 2023 but was not approved at that time. He advised that programs such as this cannot legally distinguish between students

and non-students, so any permit requirement would apply equally to all residents within a designated parking district, including long-time homeowners, which was the primary reason Council previously chose not to pursue this program. He also explained that while parking permit programs can help manage on-street parking, limit overcrowding in residential areas, and improve enforcement and vehicle identification, they typically do not pay for themselves. Other localities that have these programs, such as Radford, show that these programs often require ongoing subsidy from taxpayer dollars due to enforcement and administrative costs.

Benefits of the program discussed included reducing excessive numbers of vehicles at high-occupancy residences, ensuring fair access to on-street parking for neighboring homeowners, and providing better tracking of vehicles through permits and visitor passes. Challenges include the need for dedicated enforcement and the likelihood that revenues would not fully offset the program costs. There was also discussion regarding vehicle decals and registration requirements. Staff clarified that vehicle registration is based on the “domicile address” under federal law, meaning that students and military personnel are not required to change registration to their temporary residence. It was also noted, however, that the majority (about 90%) of the college students here register their vehicles with the City. It was also noted that SVU intends to implement a campus-wide parking permit system in the future, which may improve identification of student vehicles, though it would only apply to on-campus parking.

NB #4: DISCUSSION OF RECORDING/STREAMING CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

Ms. Burch reported that she recently requested updated quotes from vendors; prior quotes from about one year ago included two options. One system had an estimated implantation cost of approximately \$20,000 with an annual subscription of about \$9,000. A more basic alternative was roughly half that cost. She also noted that she will continue to gather more information and quotes.

Benefits of a system like this typically include agenda and minutes management, meeting notice distribution, recording and live streaming, and closed captioning for ADA compliance. Mr. Kearney advised that beyond transparency and public access, a major advantage would be time savings for staff. Automated transcription and minute generation would significantly reduce the time currently required to manually prepare meeting minutes, with time spent only on review and verifying accuracy. It was also noted that members of the public are already permitted to record meetings, provided that it is not disruptive, however, relying solely on public recordings does not address accessibility, consistency, or staff efficiency.

No formal action was taken, but there was a consensus to continue gathering information and revisit the matter with updated pricing and options.

NB #5: CONSIDER MODIFYING CITY COUNCIL PROCEDURE TO INCREASE PUBLIC COMMENT TIME LIMIT TO UP TO 5 MINUTES

Councilmember Noel-Branch shared some feedback from the recent VML newly elected officials conference she attended, noting that the standard among municipalities—ranging from large jurisdictions such as Fairfax to smaller localities—is a three-minute public comment time limit. Based on that, she expressed reconsideration of extending the time limit, noting that the three-minute standard appears to work effectively in other places. Councilmember Gilliams also noted support for maintaining the three-minute limit, suggesting that public input could be accommodated by adjusting the agenda structure rather than extending individual speaking time. She suggested that public comment could be allowed during any old- or new-business item that is under consideration.

It was determined that staff would prepare a “mock agenda” reflecting the proposed structure to clarify when public comment is taken, and Council would revisit the matter at a future meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 pm.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor