



City of Buena Vista City Council Regular Council Meeting & Executive Session

October 2, 2025, 6:00 PM
Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular Council Meeting & Executive Session on Thursday, October 2, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present:

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton	
Michelle Poluikis	Steve Webb
Melvin Henson – <i>arrived at 6:15</i>	Stanley Coffey
Ronald Cash	

Members Absent: Mayor Tyson Cooper

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

Vice-Mayor Staton called the meeting to order, and Councilmember Coffey delivered the opening prayer.

ADG #2: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Councilmember Webb moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilmember Coffey, and carried by Council.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE SEPTEMBER 18, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING & PUBLIC HEARING

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilmember Coffey, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis, and carried by Council, with Vice-Mayor Staton abstaining.

ADG #4: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Jesse Lineberry, 2525 Racey Drive, emphasized the importance of listening to residents who speak tonight, noting that it is essential to remember the value and perspective of citizens and that each person represents not only themselves but their families as well.
- Corey Bachman, 162 West 28th Street, spoke in opposition to the proposed SVU dorm project planned near his home. He cited sections of the City's zoning ordinance emphasizing livability and organic growth, noting that extremely large single-building projects require careful review to protect neighborhoods. Mr. Bachman expressed concern about potential impacts such as noise, trash, debris, and stormwater runoff, and shared that several long-term residents in his neighborhood are also distressed by this project. He requested that, if the CUP is approved, the City include appropriate stipulations to protect nearby residents. He also stated that, despite the repeated comments about "being a good neighbor," he and his neighbors have not been contacted by the University regarding the project.
- Heather Madison, 1674 Cedar Avenue, also spoke in opposition to the proposed SVU dorm project. She supported Mr. Bachman's concerns and cited the City's Comprehensive Plan and

Seminary Hill District zoning, emphasizing the community's responsibility to protect historic and cultural resources from incompatible development. Mrs. Madison stated that the dorm's large size—nearly nine times the recommended institutional zoning limit—would significantly alter the character and visual prominence of the historic area. She also questioned SVU's rationale for the project, noting that local housing challenges appear to stem from affordability rather than availability, and raised concerns about insufficient parking planning for the additional students. She also noted that previous dorm projects were much smaller in scale and expressed concern over the lack of regular public updates from the University to City Council and further noted that many residents weren't aware of this proposal at all. Mrs. Madison urged Council to fully evaluate the project's long-term impacts on the City's historic environment.

- Amy Gilliam, 1710 Spruce Avenue, is also opposed to the dorm project, expressing concerns about stormwater runoff, insufficient inspections, and the overall review process. She stated that oversight has been inadequate in the past and she is worried that the project is being rushed to meet deadlines without proper vetting. She also questioned the justification for the dorm's construction, noting that it could lead to further university growth that the City's limited footprint and resources cannot support. She opined that the proposed building is too large for the residential neighborhood and would detract from the character of the neighborhood, and also noted concerns related to parking, lighting, and student safety. Mrs. Gilliam expressed doubts about the project's safety and feels that the City lacks the capacity in the Building Official's office to ensure compliance with regulations, referencing her own previous experience of poor oversight. She asked Council to consider the long-term effects on residents, property values, and neighborhood quality of life, stating that the dorm's size and scale are not in the best interest of the City or the citizens.
- Edward Qubain addressed Council regarding the ongoing conflict in Gaza, which he described as a genocide recognized by several international organizations, including the United Nations. He expressed concerns about US involvement through military and diplomatic support for Israel and urged local residents to take a stand on the issue. Mr. Qubain stated that he spoke with Representative Ben Cline and is seeking citizens interested in meeting with Rep. Cline to discuss opposing US support. He also asked City Council to consider passing a resolution condemning the genocide in Gaza, which he could present during that meeting.

ADG #5: REPORTS

1. Mayor

None.

2. City Manager

A joint regional meeting between Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge County is scheduled for Thursday, October 30th.

He reminded everyone of the Regional Housing Symposium on Tuesday, October 21st at the Virginia Horse Center from 8:30 am – 3:30 pm. Registration is required.

On September 21st, Mr. Tyree along with Kristina Ramsey as well as some regional and state stakeholders met with and toured several Buena Vista manufacturers. They discussed workforce needs—particularly a shortage of welders—and opportunities to connect local training programs, such as Mountain Gateway's welding program, with area employers.

There are ongoing citizen concerns about creek maintenance. Mr. Tyree explained that the City's actions are restricted by the EPA and DEQ regulations and that two permits—the DEQ Water Protection Permit and the Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide Permit #3—are required for maintenance activities. The application fees alone total approximately \$12,000, excluding permit costs. This issue will be reviewed by the Budget & Finance Committee before returning to Council for discussion and potential funding allocation, depending on what direction Council chooses to go. He also noted that, currently, the City is only obligated to maintain creeks associated with FEMA flood resiliency projects, and any additional maintenance would be at Council's discretion.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees / Members

a. Budget & Finance

The Committee met on September 23rd and discussed a potential ordinance change related to tax-exempt status. The City's current ordinance defines "utilities" as electric and gas only and is basically silent on water and sewer services. As a result, some individuals or entities with tax-exempt status are not exempted from water and sewer charges while others are. Mr. Webb suggested that Council may want to review and consider amending the ordinance in the future to clarify whether water and sewer should be included under the definition of utilities for tax-exempt purposes.

b. Outdoor Spaces

They are planning the final City tour for November 8th, which will focus on 15th Street to the southern city limits.

c. School Facilities

They have a meeting scheduled for Monday, October 6th.

Mr. Coffey asked whether the Seminary Hill area is still designated as historic. Mr. Roberts clarified that several years ago the City renamed the 'Seminary Hill Historic District' to the 'Seminary Hill District,' but the change was in the name only and did not alter the underlying code or requirements. The local historic overlay district remains in effect and continues to require a Certificate of Appropriateness for projects within its boundaries. It was also noted that Seminary Hill is not listed on the state or national registers of historic places but serves as a local land use control tool to ensure additional design review for development in that area.

Mr. Henson reported that the Nothin' Fancy Bluegrass Festival held the weekend after Labor Day experienced one of its most successful years in its 23-year history, with 1,310 tickets sold, 125 performers, and 30 volunteers. The following weekend, the Pickin' Family Music Rally also drew good attendance, filling the park with both new and returning visitors and benefitting local businesses and downtown events supported by Main Street Buena Vista.

Mr. Henson also attended a regional workforce development meeting via Zoom, which provided updates on the Wilson Workforce & Rehabilitation Center and discussed the upcoming Career Fest to be held at the Horse Center in March 2026. The event will focus on middle school students, giving them opportunities to meet industry leaders across fields such as

manufacturing, hospitality, retail, public safety, and healthcare to help inspire future career paths.

Mr. Webb mentioned that the community garden is getting ready to get a timber frame pavilion installed, so they are open for volunteers to help prep the site for that.

5. Department Heads / Constitutional Officers / Court Clerks

Tom Roberts – Community Development

- The preconstruction conference was held for the 21st Street Streetscape Project. This has been a multi-year effort funded by Community Development Block Grant and VDOT Transportation Alternatives Program funds. The project scope includes:
 - Sidewalk reconstruction along 21st Street and at the intersection of Sycamore and Forest.
 - Curb bump-outs at all corners of Forest and 21st.
 - Sidewalk repairs and replacements between intersections.
 - Installation of new street trees and streetlights on Sycamore.
- Magnolia Square construction is ongoing, with completion expected in 3-6 weeks. Delays have occurred due to Dominion Energy's electric connections, but power is expected to be installed soon. Bathroom facilities are also nearly finished.

6. Invited Community Organizations

Jen Carpenter – Main Street Buena Vista

- Buena Vista was the first community to participate in the Commonwealth Preservation Group's free service through Virginia Main Street, which conducted 3D lidar through Matterport scans of two downtown buildings to assist with design and revitalization planning.
- Mrs. Carpenter attended the Regional Rev Up in Clarksville, gaining training and networking opportunities focused on downtown redevelopment. She also connected with the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond through the Rural Investment Collaboration program, and Buena Vista has been invited to apply next summer for additional community investment training and resources.
- The Connect BV series concluded successfully, bringing strong participation and positive feedback from local businesses, residents, and students. The program fostered collaboration and introduced new visitors to downtown businesses. In total, five downtown events have been held this year, including two outdoor movies.
- Mountain Day will take place next Saturday, October 11th, featuring over 160 vendors and expanded space. This is anticipated to be the largest Mountain Day in history.
- Spooktacular will return on Halloween and include a new golf cart parade as part of the festivities.

Mrs. Carpenter expressed her appreciation for Council's continued support and investment in downtown revitalization, noting that community collaboration has been key to Buena Vista's growing success and momentum.

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

None.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION

Steve Bolster presented the appropriation resolution which involves two Virginia Department of Fire Programs grants awarded to the Buena Vista Volunteer Fire Department. The first is the Fire Program Fund; this allocation, included in the FY 2026 budget, came in \$2,134 higher than anticipated. The funds are a pass-through from the City to the BVFD. The second is the FY 2025 Mini-Grant Program. On September 23rd, the City received \$12,080.64, which will reimburse the BVFD for previously purchased personal protective equipment. Mr. Bolster noted that no local match is required for either grant and recommended that Council approve the resolution as presented.

Ms. Burch presented the following Resolution:

Appropriation Resolution

BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of Buena Vista, Virginia, that the following appropriations are and the same is hereby made, for the period ending **June 30, 2026**, from the UNAPPROPRIATED SURPLUS of the **GENERAL FUND** and expended as follows:

VA Department of Fire Programs Grant & 2025 Mini-Grant Program - BVFD

10.3202.60010	Fire Programs Grant	\$3,134.00
10.3202.68015	Programs Activities	<u>\$12,081.00</u>
Sub-total 1		\$15,215.00

Total General Fund Appropriation	\$15,215.00
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Approved: This 2nd day of October 2025.

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Councilmember Webb moved to approve the appropriation resolution, with Councilmember Coffey seconding, and it was carried by Council. Ms. Burch polled the Council as follows:

Member	Present	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Councilmember Henson	X		X		
Councilmember Poluikis	X		X		
Councilmember Webb	X		X		
Councilmember Coffey	X		X		
Councilmember Cash	X		X		
Vice-Mayor Staton	X		X		
Mayor Cooper		X			

NB #2: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR A SINGLE LARGE BUILDING EXCEEDING 25,000 SQUARE FEET

Ms. Burch presented the following Ordinance:

**Conditional Use Permit
Blocks 25 and 31, Section 5, 2700 Block of Magnolia Avenue**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that after a duly called public hearing, in accordance with the general welfare of the citizens of Buena Vista and in accordance with good zoning practices, pursuant to Section 506 and Appendix B of the Land Development Regulations, a Conditional Use Permit shall be issued for a single large building in excess of 25,000 square feet located in the Institutional Zone, to be addressed 2727 Magnolia Avenue, generally located in Blocks 25 and 31 of Section 5. The building is a 218,000 square foot, five story residence hall. This location is shown on the attached site plan, “Exhibit A.”

There was extensive discussion of the proposed dormitory project which would add 600 beds, increasing total on-campus housing to about 1,000 beds. SVU’s goal for the project is to alleviate current overcrowding and allow more students to live on campus, thereby freeing up rental housing in the community. It was noted that there will be third-party vendors to assist the City with all inspections related to the project, including specialized building and stormwater inspections; this will all be funded by the University.

Ongoing parking issues in neighborhoods adjacent to the University were heavily discussed. Mr. Roberts explained that on-street parking is city-controlled, while off-street parking is the University’s responsibility. The city will review parking signage and restrictions with the Police Department, Public Works, and SVU staff to determine appropriate adjustments. James Ballstaedt, Vice President of Strategic Growth and Athletics at SVU, reported that the University currently has approximately 700 parking spaces and plans to increase capacity to over 1,000 with the new project. SVU is also implementing a new parking permit system requiring serialized permits per vehicle, and will begin issuing tickets, tows, or boots for violations; these parking permits will be issued on a first come first served basis. The goal is to reduce the overall number of vehicles on campus. There were concerns raised about residents losing access to street parking; the possibility

of a residential parking permit system was mentioned. It was also noted that strict parking enforcement could eventually improve compliance.

The matter of neighborhood communication, and lack thereof, was discussed at length, with Councilmember Poluikis encouraging the University to visit with the adjacent neighbors and invite them up to campus to have a discussion about how this project is going to affect them. Mr. Ballstaedt acknowledged that communication had been limited and committed meeting with those residents to address their concerns and share updated plans.

Other items that were discussed included alternate locations, smaller and/or separate buildings, and landscaping efforts. Overall Council agreed that the project would help address student housing needs and benefit the University and City. However, parking, communication, and visual impacts remain significant concerns.

Councilmember Poluikis made a motion to table the matter until SVU has conducted neighborhood meetings with those adjacent residents, giving them until the November 6, 2025 Council meeting to do so. Councilmember Cash seconded the motion and it was unanimously carried.

NB #3: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR RIGHT OF WAY ABANDONMENT FOR PORTIONS OF BLOCKS 22, 25, 30, & 31 OF SECTION 5

Councilmember Poluikis motioned, with Councilmember Webb seconding, to table the first reading until the November 6, 2025 Council meeting. The motion was unanimously carried.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(5) of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, for the purpose of discussing the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made of the business or industry's expanding its facilities in the community and to specifically brief the members of City Council on a potential request to the City for financial assistance to contribute to the funding of a possible expansion of an existing business or industry.

On motion by Councilmember Webb, seconded by Councilmember Coffey, and carried by Council, the City Council convened in an Executive Session.

REGULAR SESSION

On motion by Councilmember Henson, seconded by Councilmember Webb, and carried by Council, the City Council reconvened in regular session with the following certification.

Certification of Executive Meeting

WHEREAS the Buena Vista City Council has convened an Executive Meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of The Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS Section 2.1-344.1 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the Buena Vista City Council that such Executive Meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Buena Vista City Council hereby certifies to the best of each member's knowledge that: (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the Executive Meeting to which this certification resolution applies, and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the Executive Meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Buena Vista City Council.

VOTE:

Councilmember Henson ✓	Councilmember Poluikis ✓	Councilmember Webb ✓
Councilmember Coffey ✓	Councilmember Cash ✓	Vice-Mayor Staton ✓
Mayor Cooper - <i>absent</i>		

AYES – 6 NAYS – 0

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING VOTE: Mayor Cooper

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING MEETING: Mayor Cooper

Sarah Burch, Clerk of Council

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor