



## **City of Buena Vista City Council Regular Council Meeting & Public Hearing**

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

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular Council Meeting & Public Hearing on Thursday, November 6, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mayor Tyson Cooper

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton	Steve Webb
Michelle Poluikis	Todd Jones
Melvin Henson	Ronald Cash

**Members Absent:** None

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

Mayor Cooper called the meeting to order and Councilmember Coffey delivered the opening prayer.

### **ADG #2: BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING**

**The City Council of the City of Buena Vista will receive comment on the consideration of a Deed of Dedication of open-space land pursuant to Code of Virginia Section 10.1-1701 for approximately 6 acres of City-owned riverfront land near Advanced Drainage Systems and Chalk Mine Run. This deed results from a grant from the Virginia Outdoors Foundation to fund design of new river access points on the Maury River.**

Mayor Cooper opened the Public Hearing.

There being no comment, Mayor Cooper closed the Public Hearing.

### **ADG #3: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Prior to approving the agenda, Mayor Cooper read the following statement from SVU:

*Southern Virginia University respectfully requests that the City Council postpone the reading of the University's requested ordinance for a conditional use permit until January's council meeting. We feel that it would be appropriate to allow the newly elected officials who will be seated in January to provide input on this ordinance.*

*Sincerely,*

*James Ballstaedt, Vice President of Athletics & Strategic Growth*

Mr. Ballstaedt added that the University views the project as a significant investment in Buena Vista and wishes to ensure it is done correctly and noted that the incoming Council members may offer additional perspectives to further enhance the project. He invited the current and new Council members to reach out to him with any questions to help them prepare for the January meeting.

That being said, Mayor cooper proposed to amend the agenda to remove NB #3 and add that the first January agenda.

Councilmember Coffey moved to approve the agenda with the noted change, seconded by Councilmember Cash, and carried by Council.

#### **ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 16, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilmember Webb, seconded by Councilmember Coffey, and carried by Council.

#### **ADG #5: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS**

- Corey Bachman, 162 West 28<sup>th</sup> Street, spoke in opposition to the Conditional Use Permit for the proposed SVU dormitory. He expressed concern that the staff report focused primarily on parking issues and did not reflect Council's prior discussion regarding communication with the neighboring residents. He raised objections to the scale of the proposed building and retaining wall, noting potential impacts on neighborhood aesthetics and property values. Mr. Bachman also cited concerns about the 18-24 month construction timeline and the associated noise, dust, trash, and disruption for his family and neighbors. He asked Council to consider if they would want their children to deal with these issues in their formative years. He also encouraged Council members to visit 28<sup>th</sup> Street to observe the site conditions and consider the proximity of the proposed construction to the existing homes.
- Heather Madison, 1674 Cedar Avenue, also spoke in opposition to the proposed SVU dormitory. She stated that while recent discussions have focused on parking and landscaping, local opposition has always centered on the size of the building and its impact on the surrounding neighborhood. Mrs. Madison noted that the proposed 218,000-square-foot, five-story structure is almost nine times larger than the 25,000-square-foot threshold for large buildings in the institutional zone and argued that approving the Conditional Use Permit would undermine the City's zoning standards and set an unfavorable precedent. She expressed concern about the scale of the building, the height of the proposed retaining wall, and the potential negative effects on nearby residents. She urged Council to deny the permit, stating that the size of the project is simply incompatible with the character and size of the City and is not appropriate for the size of the University.
- Pat Bachman, 1266 Forest Avenue, also spoke in opposition to the proposed dorm. She expressed concern that that scale and location of the building and retaining wall would negatively impact the residents on 28<sup>th</sup> Street, including her son's family, by reducing privacy, diminishing property values, and creating significant noise and disruption. She stated that while she supports higher education and recognizes SVU's need for modern housing, she believes the proposed site is inappropriate and urged the University to consider an alternative location. Mrs. Bachman also encouraged City Council to review and update zoning ordinances to prevent similar situations in the future and to ensure adequate protection for neighboring property owners.
- Jesse Lineberry, 2525 Racey Drive, first expressed appreciation for the service of outgoing Mayor cooper and Council Members Coffey and Henson. He also stated that he feels that what Mr. Ballstaedt and SVU did tonight was honorable. Regarding the proposed dorm project, he stated that he will always place greater value on people over brick and mortar and believes that SVU

has other avenues to grow that align more closely with community interests. While recognizing that the final decision may disappoint some, he pledged that he—along with the rest of Council—will continue to work collaboratively with SVU to identify and support future development opportunities.

## **ADG #6: REPORTS**

### **1. Mayor**

None.

### **2. City Manager**

As Mr. Tyree was not in attendance, Ms. Burch reported that following last Thursday's Interjurisdictional Meeting, Council will need to appoint a member to the Regional Recreation Committee. This committee will explore the future of regional recreation as a whole. Mayor Cooper recommended to let the new Council make that decision in January.

### **3. City Attorney**

None.

### **4. Council Committees / Members**

#### **a. Budget & Finance**

Mr. We reported that at their recent meeting they discussed the importance of formally appropriating funds before any expenditures are made. He stated that we need to get in the habit of discussing it, appropriating the money, then spending it so we aren't putting the cart before the horse.

#### **b. Outdoor Spaces**

They will be having their final City tour on Saturday, November 15<sup>th</sup>.

#### **c. School Facilities**

None.

Mr. Henson also reported that the recent downtown events have been very successful and have drawn many visitors. He expressed his appreciation for MSBV, Parks & Rec., City Council members, and community volunteers for their support in making these events possible. He also mentioned that at the recent joint meeting with Lexington City Council and the Rockbridge County Board of Supervisors, several of those folks commented positively on Buena Vista's progress and vibrancy. They took a tour of the firehouse (where the meeting was held) and learned more about the dedication of the all-volunteer department and the scope of their responsibilities. He also mentioned that the time capsule near the flagpole at City Hall will reach the 50-year mark in June 2026 and suggested that we plan an event for this. Mr. Cash stated that this is something that is in the works, and they are looking to form a committee to put together a good event for the City.

Mr. Coffey congratulated the newly elected candidates and encouraged the community to offer them the same support given to the current Council. He reflected on his eight years of service, expressing appreciation for his fellow Council members and noting that he and Mayor Cooper have been together since day one. He stated that he is not disappointed by the election results and was encouraged by the high voter turnout on Election Day. He thanked all residents for their

support over the years, emphasizing that he has worked for the benefit of the entire community and appreciates everyone.

Mr. Cash provided some comments about the Rockbridge250 efforts regarding Veteran's Day and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War. Mr. Cash, a Marine Corps veteran, wanted to recognize and honor all veterans tonight—particularly Vietnam veterans and those who lost loved ones in the conflict. He invited any Vietnam veterans in attendance to stand to be recognized (there were none) then asked for all veterans in attendance to stand. He reflected on his memories of the Vietnam War news coverage during his youth and how it influenced his decision to serve. He emphasized the sacrifices made by service members from across America, Virginia, Rockbridge County, Lexington, and Buena Vista. Mr. Cash then read a list of 14 local Vietnam veterans and asked to hold a brief moment of silence for them. He noted the long history of American military service dating back to the colonial era and how Americans have always come together to defend our freedom and the freedom of others. He spoke of the proud tradition of being a patriot, and that Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge County are proud of our veterans and proud to continue that tradition.

## **5. Department Heads / Constitutional Officers / Court Clerks**

None.

## **6. Invited Community Organizations**

### **Eric Wilson – Rockbridge Historical Society/Rockbridge250**

Mr. Wilson, Executive Director of the Rockbridge Historical Society and regional co-chair of the Rockbridge250 Committee, provided an update on upcoming historical commemorations and community engagement initiatives. He first highlighted three notable anniversaries: the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War, Pearl Harbor Day on December 7<sup>th</sup>, and the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American next year. Mr. Wilson also noted some upcoming events:

- RHS is opening a Vietnam War exhibit focused on Virginia and adding Rockbridge ties to that. This exhibit includes mobile displays they will be taking to area libraries and schools.
- On Pearl Harbor Day, they will be holding a program at the RCHS auditorium, that will include a Rockbridge in Vietnam Roundtable. They will have an open mic portion for community members to participate and share stories.
- They are in the midst of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Appalachian Trail Conservancy; they have a hike planned for this weekend for anybody that wants to join.
- The Rockbridge250 Committee is in full swing planning how to celebrate this historic event. They are looking for community input on what stories people want told and what things need to be preserved. He added that the committee will continue rolling out educational and cultural events throughout the year.

### **Jen Carpenter – Main Street Buena Vista**

- They have a new logo that they will be rolling out soon.
- They have received the report from Place & Main, who came to town along with Virginia Housing and the Department of Housing and Community Development. The report, a 45-

page downtown reinvestment study, emphasizes opportunities for upper-story housing, retail, and adaptive reuse of downtown buildings. Because of this study, she has been invited to speak on a panel in Roanoke at the Governor's Housing Symposium. She encouraged everyone to take a look at the study on their website: [www.mainstreetbuenavista.org](http://www.mainstreetbuenavista.org)

- She attended the recent regional housing symposium and discussed the overwhelming housing needs we have in the area.
- Mountain Day had a record 4,700 attendees, 162 vendors, and strong sales—one-third of the vendors reported making over \$1,000 with several exceeding \$2,500. Some of the downtown businesses also reported that this was one of their best sales days since opening.
- Spooktacular was a success with a very steady turnout and the first golf cart parade where eight golf cars participated.
- Looking ahead, they will be launching the Shop Small campaign for downtown businesses, a window decoration contest for local businesses, and the Christmas tree lighting and parage on December 4<sup>th</sup>. There are already 17 folks signed up to participate in the parade.

#### **ADG #7: CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES**

##### **Rockbridge Area Department of Social Services Board**

Mr. Bill Fitzgerald has resigned from the RADSS Board. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on July 31, 2028. This is the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

There were no applicants for this opening, so it will be carried over 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 first time it has appeared on the agenda.

There were no applicants for this opening, so it will be carried over to the next meeting.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

None.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

##### **NB #1: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION**

Mr. Bolster reported that this appropriation resolution covers two items. The first is the Community Resource Officer program, a grant-funded initiative that ran through September 30, 2025. Due to some expenditures occurring after the anticipated completion date, a total of \$58,420—including \$48,815 in grant funds and \$9,605 in local funds—will need to be appropriated from the General Fund. The second item involves carryover grants for the school division, which are multi-year grants with remaining balances totaling \$416,237. These appropriations are intended to align the financial

records between the City and the schools and provide transparency. Mayor Cooper clarified that no new funds are being awarded, this is paperwork for what's already been done. Mr. Bolster confirmed that the purpose is to document existing grants and ensure the City's financial management system reflects the approved carryovers.

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 Criminal Justice Services – Community Resource Officer Program**

10.3107.60110	Byrne Grant	<u>\$58,421.00</u>
<b>Sub-total 1</b>		<b><u>\$58,421.00</u></b>
<b>Total General Fund Appropriation</b>		<b><u>\$58,421.00</u></b>

**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 **SCHOOL FUND** and expended as follows:

#### **School Fund – Carryover Grant Funding**

19.6600.69130	School Expenses	<u>\$416,237.00</u>
<b>Sub-total 1</b>		<b><u>\$416,237.00</u></b>
<b>Total General Fund Appropriation</b>		<b><u>\$416,237.00</u></b>

**Approved:** This 6<sup>th</sup> day of November 2025.

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Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

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Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Councilmember Webb moved to **approve** the Resolution as presented, with Councilmember Poluikis seconding. Ms. Burch completed a roll call vote of 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		X		

The Resolution was unanimously **approved**.

**NB #2: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION FOR VOF DEED OF DEDICATION OF OPEN SPACE LAND**

Ms. Burch presented the following Resolution:

**Resolution**

**WHEREAS** the Virginia Outdoors Foundation (“VOF”) has awarded the City of Buena Vista (the “City”) a \$50,000 Open Space Lands Preservation Trust Fund Grant (“Grant”); and

**WHEREAS** pursuant to this Grant the Property hereinafter described is to be retained and used by the City in perpetuity as an open-space pursuant to Chapter 17, Title 10.1, Section 10.0-1701 of the Code of Virginia 1950, as amended.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that in the best interest of the citizens of the City of Buena Vista, the City will dedicate a 6.04-acre tract shown on “Exhibit A” as an open-space in perpetuity by Deed of Dedication of Open Space Land.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that Jason Tyree, City Manager for the City of Buena Vista, is hereby authorized to sign whatever documentation is necessary in order to effectuate the Deed of Dedication of Open-Space Land as a part of the VOF Grant.

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Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

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Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

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Date of Adoption

Councilmember Henson asked whether the six-acre area was limited to watercraft access or whether other recreational uses could be developed, such as a youth soccer field that he had

previously discussed. Mr. Roberts confirmed that the easement allows for a broad range of open space and recreational uses such as fields, water access, and picnic areas.

Councilmember Henson made a motion to **approve** the Resolution. Councilmember Cas seconded the motion, and it was carried by Council.

**NB #3: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR A SINGLE LARGE BUILDING EXCEEDING 25,000 SQUARE FEET**

This item was removed from the agenda at Southern Virginia University's request.

**NB #4: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR RIGHT OF WAY ABANDONMENT FOR PORTIONS OF BLOCKS 22, 25, 30, & 31 OF SECTION 5**

Ms. Burch read the following Ordinance:

**Abandonment of Public Right of Way  
Portions of Streets & Alleys Surrounding Blocks 25 & 31, Section 5**

**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" and "Exhibit B" 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; communications; 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."

Councilmember Henson asked whether, since the CUP was being held over until after the first of the year, the proposed street closures should also be delayed. Mr. Ballstaedt explained that the streets in question had already been discussed in both the Planning Commission and prior Council meetings, and most folks already understood them to be university-controlled, and since they are not part of the actual dorm proposal, the University did not see a need to postpone the first reading. Mr. Ballstaedt noted that the University intends to build something there and already owns most of the surrounding easements, with plans to purchase the remaining ones.

Councilmember Coffey brought up the idea he mentioned at a recent meeting about whether the proposed dorm could be split between two locations and whether the University had considered alternative locations, such as the field off of Chestnut Avenue near 25<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Ballstaedt stated that a range of options had been considered, and the alternative site that Mr. Coffey is proposing might pose greater issues for the nearby neighbors as it is more visible than the current proposed location. Mr. Coffey noted that he believes that [the Chestnut Avenue location] could better accommodate the building and parking than the currently proposed location.

Mr. Kearney reminded Council that the ordinance under consideration only concerned the street closures, not the dormitory project, which had already been tabled. Mayor Cooper suggested that

Councilmember Coffey and Mr. Ballstaedt meet to walk the areas in question and discuss the ideas further.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

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Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor