



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

March 20, 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, March 20, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mayor Tyson Cooper

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton

Steve Webb

Michelle Poluikis

Stanley Coffey

Melvin Henson

**Members Absent:** Ronald Cash

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

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

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

**Proposed FY2025 budget amendments, including federal ARPA funding, additional state grants, and additional general fund appropriations utilized during FY2025.**

Mayor Cooper opened the Public Hearing.

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

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

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

### **ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 6, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, PUBLIC HEARING & EXECUTIVE SESSION**

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

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

There was no public comment.

### **ADG #6: REPORTS**

#### **1. Mayor**

Mayor Cooper participated in the Virginia Main Street tour of downtown with Main Street Buena Vista. He also attended an open house showcasing a new 13'x16' stained glass and invited everyone to go view it at Main Hall of SVU.

## **2. City Manager**

Mr. Tyree reported that there has been a recent influx of complaints about roosters due to the noise and aggression toward children and small pets. Our current code does not limit the number of chickens or prohibit roosters. He proposed that staff look into updating the ordinance; Mayor Cooper suggested that they go ahead and include all “farm animals” when updating.

A VRS representative will be coming in to speak to City employees in late April. This will be mandatory for all City employees.

Mr. Tyree also informed Council that as of April 1st, Alan McMahan will be retiring from his position as Building Official for the City.

## **3. City Attorney**

None.

## **4. Council Committees/Representatives**

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

Mr. Webb reported that they met last week and discussed the city’s debt ceiling, which is approximately \$44M. We currently have about \$10M worth of debt, leaving our borrowing capacity at around \$34M. We will likely need to borrow around \$15M for the WWTP, which will bring us down to \$19M. We have also been urged to keep at least 5% available for emergencies, so that only leaves around \$15-\$16M available to be borrowed. That being said, the Committee believes, at this point, that building a whole new school is not financially in the cards as we have to prioritize the WWTP.

### **b. Outdoor Spaces**

Mr. Henson reported that there will be a Council retreat on Saturday, April 5<sup>th</sup>, to present the Committee’s findings and recommendations.

### **c. School Facilities**

Mrs. Poluikis reported on the joint Council and School Board meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup>, where they discussed the options and decided to move forward with cost estimates and how feasible it would be. She also praised the teachers, noting that no matter what kind of building they are in, the “real magic” happens inside the classroom.

Councilmember Henson noted that the American Legion was organized on March 17, 1919 (Post 126 was 100 years old last year). He also mentioned that Glen Maury Park is booming with campers, and the pool is drawing a lot of attention and people are waiting for it to open.

Councilmember Coffey thanked the Fire Department and Public Works for their work in clearing a downed tree in front of his house.

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

None.

## **6. Invited Community Organizations**

None.

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

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**OB #1: SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE ROCKBRIDGE AREA HEALTH CENTER AS TAX EXEMPT FOR REAL PROPERTY TAXES**

There being no changes to the text, Councilmember Henson moved to read the Ordinance by title only. Councilmember Coffey seconded the motion, and it was carried by Council.

Councilmember Webb made a motion to approve the Ordinance, with Vice-Mayor Staton 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			
Vice-Mayor Staton	X		X		
Mayor Cooper	X		X		

The following Ordinance was **approved** by a vote of 6-0.

**Ordinance for Tax Exemption for  
The Rockbridge Area Free Clinic**

**WHEREAS** the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic, D/B/A Rockbridge Area Health Center, acquired 2127 Magnolia Avenue on October 5, 2017, by Deed of record in the Clerk's Office of the Circuit Court for the City of Buena Vista as Instrument #170000532 (the "Real Estate"); and

**WHEREAS** the Real Estate has been retrofitted to provide medical services to the community. These services are being provided regardless of a person's ability to pay, thereby rendering a valuable and needed service to the citizens of Buena Vista; and

**WHEREAS** the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic has requested, effective as of January 1, 2024, that the Real Estate be designated as "exempt property" in accordance with Section 58.1-3651(B) (of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended) and Subsection 6(a)(6) of Article X of the Constitution of Virginia;

**WHEREAS** after a duly called public hearing the City Council addressed the criteria contained in Section 58.1-3651(B) as follows:

1. Where the organization is exempt from taxation pursuant to §501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954? ***The Rockbridge Area Free Clinic is exempt from taxation pursuant to Section 501(c)(3).***

2. Whether a current annual alcoholic beverage license for serving alcoholic beverages has been issued by the Board of Directors of the Virginia Alcoholic Beverage Control Authority to such organization, for use on such property. **No.**
3. Whether any director, officer, or employee of the organization is paid compensation in excess of a reasonable allowance for salaries or other compensation for personal services which such director, officer, or employee actually renders. **No.**
4. Whether any part of the net earnings of such organization inures to the benefit of any individual, and whether any significant portion of the service provided by such organization is generated by funds received from donations, contributions, or local, state, or federal grants. As used in this subsection, donations shall include the providing of personal services or the contribution of in-kind or other material services. **No part of the earnings inures to the benefit of any individual.**
5. Whether the organization provides services for the common good of the public. **Yes.**
6. Whether a substantial part of the activities of the organization involves carrying on propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation and whether the organization participates in, or intervenes in, any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office. **No.**
7. The revenue impact to the locality and its taxpayers of exempting the property. **Real estate taxes of approximately \$759.00 per year.**
8. Any other criteria, facts and circumstances that the governing body deems pertinent to the adoption of such ordinance. **None.**

**WHEREAS** after a thorough review of the criteria outlined above City Council has determined that the loss of revenue associated with this exemption is far outweighed by the benefit of the clinic to the citizens of Buena Vista.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Council for the City of Buena Vista that effective as of January 1, 2024, the Real Estate located at 2127 Magnolia Avenue, currently owned by the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic is designated as exempt from the City's real estate taxes.

**THIS ORDINANCE** may be revoked in accordance with the provisions of §58.1-3650 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, and is subject to the Rockbridge Area Free Clinic annually providing a statement to the Commissioner of the Revenue for the City of Buena Vista that their activities continue in full, or in part, to qualify for the designation contained herein.

This Ordinance shall become effective thirty (30) days after enactment.

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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

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **NB #1: UPDATE ON REGIONAL HOUSING STUDY**

Kristina Ramsey and Tom Roberts presented the findings of the comprehensive Regional Housing Study completed by the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission (CSPDC). The study focused on the unique housing challenges within [the CSPDC's] member localities, including Buena Vista. This study, funded by a grant from Virginia Housing and developed in collaboration with Virginia Tech's Center for Housing Research and Housing Forward Virginia, provides an in-depth analysis of local and regional housing trends and offers tailored strategies to address housing affordability and supply issues.

In addition to the Regional Housing Study, Rockbridge County, Lexington, and Buena Vista requested and contracted additional deliverables—specifically zoning analysis, comprehensive plan updates, and detailed mapping. These resources will provide further guidance on how we can address housing needs and will be shared once finalized.

#### **Central Shenandoah Regionwide Findings and Solutions:**

The housing challenges facing Buena Vista and the Rockbridge Region mirror those across the broader Central Shenandoah region, highlighting the need for coordinated solutions. Key regionwide challenges include:

- **Aging Housing Stock:** Many homes require critical repairs, with some in severe disrepair.
- **Affordable Housing Shortage:** A lack of affordable rentals and moderate-income homes affects workforce retention.
- **Vulnerable Populations:** Around 5,000 households are at risk of homelessness, with limited supportive housing.
- **Zoning and Regulatory Barriers:** Outdated policies limit housing diversity and density.

To address these challenges, the CSPDC will implement strategies across the region, including:

- Establishing a regional land bank to repurpose vacant properties for affordable housing.
- Expanding housing counseling for renters, buyers, and homeowners.
- Promoting home improvement grants to address deteriorating housing.

#### **Key Findings for Buena Vista and the Rockbridge Region**

Note: The data analyzed for this study was primarily sourced from statistical datasets available at the regional level, as Buena Vista's size often falls below the threshold for detailed data collection. The findings below integrate region-specific data with localized insights where available.

- **Affordable Housing Shortages**
  - A significant lack of affordable rental units limits housing options for residents and creates challenges for attracting and retaining a workforce. Buena Vista's rental vacancy rate is among the lowest in the region, underscoring the urgent need for investment in rental housing.
  - Affordable homeownership options are similarly constrained, creating barriers for first-time buyers and young families.

- **Demographic and Workforce Trends**
  - Buena Vista's aging population mirrors broader regional growth trends, with increasing demand for senior-friendly housing and many seniors facing housing cost burdens.
  - The shortage of affordable housing affects the ability to attract and retain a workforce, specifically younger residents and essential service workers, which is essential for sustaining local businesses and services.
- **Housing Market Dynamics**
  - The housing market faces tight conditions across rental and ownership sectors, driven by limited inventory and rising costs.
  - The City's strategic location near larger regional metro areas, such as Staunton, Roanoke, and Lynchburg, influences housing demand.
- **Zoning and Infrastructure Needs**
  - Outdated zoning ordinances and limited infrastructure capacity were identified as barriers to new development. Strategic updates to these systems are vital to support growth and diversity in housing.

## **Recommended Solutions for Buena Vista**

- **Flexible Zoning Updates**
  - Adjust zoning codes to allow diverse, higher density housing types such as accessory dwelling units (ADUs), cottage-style homes, and small-scale multifamily housing.
  - Streamline development processes by simplifying residential zoning regulations to make the development of smaller homes and medium-density homes easier.
  - Proactively address barriers to housing development by introducing pre-approved designs and pattern books to expedite permitting.
- **Expand Residential Development Incentives**
  - Explore expanding existing tax abatement programs to encourage property owners to improve or build new homes.
  - Establish a revolving loan fund to provide grants to homeowners for critical repairs, with repayment upon sale of property.
  - Strengthen the Economic Development Authority's role in offering financial incentives, such as infrastructure investments, to support housing improvements and new developments.
- **Increase Affordable Housing Supply**
  - Partner with developers to create affordable rental housing including townhomes, duplexes, and small-scale apartment buildings.
  - Identify underutilized properties with existing infrastructure to encourage development without extensive new land use.
  - Leverage state and federal funding for planning and feasibility studies to support housing.

- **Encourage Mixed-Use Development**
  - Identify and prioritize redevelopment of underutilized parcels for mixed-use projects that combine residential and commercial spaces.
  - Support Main Street Buena Vista's efforts to become a Virginia Main Street program affiliate to unlock state and federal funding opportunities.
  - Leverage historic preservation tax credits to enhance mixed-use development opportunities, particularly in downtown areas.
- **Invest in Infrastructure**
  - Expand water and sewer capacity to support housing development in high-priority areas.
  - Engage the community to build support for new housing and infrastructure projects.
- **Promote Workforce and Senior Housing**
  - Collaborate with employers and schools to develop workforce housing tailored to service and manufacturing employees.
  - Encourage accessible housing options for seniors near healthcare and essential services.

### **Upcoming Housing Summit**

In partnership with Rockbridge County, Lexington, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Rockbridge Highlands Association of Realtors, we are planning a Housing Summit for the Rockbridge Region. The summit will formally present the regional housing plan to the public, bringing together key stakeholders to address housing challenges and develop actionable solutions to increase affordable housing. The event will focus on collaboration, data-sharing, and policy development, with key speakers and stakeholders discussing challenges and opportunities. Local officials, housing developers, community organizations, business leaders, financial institutions, and residents will all participate. We are currently planning for a September event (more details to come).

*\*\*A complete copy of the Regional Housing Study Consumer Report is available in the City Manager's office. The complete study can also be accessed at: <https://connect.cspdc.org/cspdc-housing-study>.*

### **NB #2: RESOLUTION TO ACCEPT DONATION OF ONE CITY LOT ON LINDEN AVENUE**

Mr. Roberts advised that this property is a single lot (6,250 sq. ft.) fronting on Linden Avenue near 9<sup>th</sup> Street. Pedlar Gap Run goes straight through the middle of the property. There is no meaningful land on either side of the creek banks, and it is not developable. It is almost, if not entirely, within the floodway. The property owner approached the City asking to donate this lot to the City because it is not developable and has little value (assessed at \$800). Because of its low assessed value, the loss of tax revenue is minimal at less than \$10 per year.

This City's standard policy is to not accept land donations unless there is a clear purpose. In this case, the property owner offered the lot for sale to the adjacent property owner at 922 Linden Avenue, but they declined. The land on the other side of this property is owned by RYT, LLC, the owner of the former sawmill, which is currently for sale. City ownership of this short section of creek would make any future flood hazard mitigation project, if needed, simpler because the City would

not need to secure any construction or maintenance easements or permissions before conducting work.

Mr. Roberts requested a verbal resolution from Council to accept the donation, noting that the City Attorney and City Manager will handle the paperwork.

Councilmember Webb made a motion to **accept** the donation with Councilmember Coffey seconding, and it was carried by Council.

**NB #3: FIRST READING OF A BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE**

Mayor Cooper presented the following Ordinance:

**Budget Amendment Ordinance**

**WHEREAS** on May 16, 2024, the City of Buena Vista adopted its budget for Fiscal Year 2025; and

**WHEREAS** the City Council on March 20, 2025 held a public hearing on the proposed budget amendment for Fiscal Year 2025; and

**WHEREAS** the City Council approved certain projects and activities requiring additional funds and the usage of fund balances to be appropriated during the current fiscal year.

**NOW THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Council for the City of Buena Vista, Virginia, in accordance with Section 15.2-2507 of the 1950 Code of Virginia that the FY 2025 adopted budget be amended to increase or modify the following line items by the amount shown:

**GENERAL FUND**

**Byrne Justice Assistance Grant (BVPD Community Resource Program - 12 months)**

10.3101.50500	Administration	\$108,758.00
10.3101.51450	FICA	\$8,320.00
10.3104.51500	Retirement - VRS	\$12,888.00
10.3101.51550	Health Insurance	\$29,194.00
10.3101.51600	Group Life Insurance	\$1,283.00
10.3101.51650	Workers Compensation	\$4,285.00
10.3101.52080	Police Equipment	<u>\$60,000.00</u>
<b>Sub-total 1</b>		<b>\$224,728.00</b>

**Façade Improvement Grant Program**

10.3401.60270	Façade Grant	<u>\$12,410.00</u>
<b>Sub-total 2</b>		<b>\$12,410.00</b>

**DHCD CDBG Buena Vista Downtown Revitalization Grant**

10.3402.60680	Connect BV Grant	\$48,200.00
<b>Sub-total 3</b>		<b>\$48,200.00</b>

**Town Square Project**

10.3402.56186	Town Square Project	<u>\$100,000.00</u>
<b>Sub-total 4</b>		<b>\$100,000.00</b>

<b>Sidewalks, City-wide Repairs</b>		
10.4102.82050	Capital Outlay	\$216,087.00
<b>Sub-total 5</b>		<b>\$216,087.00</b>
<b>Maury River Senior Center Roof Repair</b>		
10.4302.82050	Capital Outlay	\$60,000.00
<b>Sub-total 6</b>		<b>\$60,000.00</b>
<b>Glen Maury Park Pool Renovation Project (transfer from General Fund)</b>		
10.9314.67600	Transfer to Parks and Recreation Fund	\$750,000.00
<b>Sub-total 7</b>		<b>\$750,000.00</b>
<b>6th Street Water Line Extension (transfer from General Fund)</b>		
10.9314.67660	Transfer to Water Fund	\$20,000.00
<b>Sub-total 8</b>		<b>\$20,000.00</b>
<b>Total General Fund Budget Amendment</b>		<b>\$1,431,425.00</b>

#### **PARKS AND RECREATION FUND**

<b>Glen Maury Park Pool Renovation Project</b>		
12.7105.50400	ARP Fixed Assets	\$750,000.00
<b>Sub-total 1</b>		<b>\$750,000.00</b>
<b>Total Park and Recreation Fund Budget Amendment</b>		<b>\$750,000.00</b>

#### **WATER FUND**

<b>6th Street Water Line Extension</b>		
13.1811.82050	Capital Outlay	\$20,000.00
<b>Sub-total 1</b>		<b>\$20,000.00</b>
<b>Total Water Fund Budget Amendment</b>		<b>\$20,000.00</b>

This Ordinance will be effective through the 30<sup>th</sup> day of June 2025.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

