



City of Buena Vista City Council Regular Council Meeting, Public Hearing, & Executive Session

March 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, & Executive Session on Thursday, March 6, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Tyson Cooper

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton	Steve Webb
Michelle Poluikis	Stanley Coffey
Melvin Henson	Ronald Cash

Members Absent: None

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

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

ADG #2: BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Consideration of granting a non-profit organization exemption from real estate taxation: The Rockbridge Area Health Center, 2127 Magnolia Avenue. The current assessed value of the property is \$83,400. The real property tax amount for 2023/2024 was \$1,059.16; the real property tax amount for 2024/2025 is \$758.94.

Mayor Cooper opened the public hearing.

There being no public comment, Mayor Cooper closed the public hearing.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 31, 2025, INTERJURISDICTIONAL MEETING AND THE FEBRUARY 6, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

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

ADG #5: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

There was no public comment.

ADG #6: REPORTS

1. Mayor

Mayor Cooper attended the last School Board meeting and was able to see how they highlight the students. He mentioned that the sports teams have had a number of state champions over

the last week or so, with two of his sons taking first place in the state track tournament. He also served as a judge for the Lexington Women's Society desert competition.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree reported that the City Council retreat that was scheduled for March 15th is going to be rescheduled for the beginning of April.

The feasibility study for the Mountain Gateway Community College building is still underway. MGCC will be moving out of that building as of July 31, 2025 to the Wilson Workforce Center downtown. We hope to have that study completed by the end of March so we can discuss what the next steps for that building will be.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees/Representatives

a. Budget & Finance

Mr. Webb reported that they held a brief meeting last week and discussed some of the upcoming financial struggles. He noted that they are also waiting for some proposed department budgets.

b. Outdoor Spaces

Mr. Henson reported that the Committee will be meeting on Saturday, March 8th at 9:00 AM to discuss their City tours and come to some decisions on what projects to move forward with presenting to Council.

c. School Facilities

Mrs. Poluikis advised that there will be a joint City Council and School Board meeting on Wednesday, March 12th at 6:00 PM to discuss the findings of the feasibility study.

5. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Court Clerks

Kristina Ramsey – Economic Development

Miss Ramsey shared that the EDA met on February 18th to review the applications that were received for the \$25,000 in façade grant funds. There were 15 applications received; Miss Ramsey noted that in the last couple of years doing this program there were only a few applications. The qualified area was extended this year beyond the downtown district to Bontex and all the way down 29th Street to the Visitor's Center and as far as 9th Street on Magnolia Avenue. It was also opened up to residential properties this time in an effort to dress up the gateway and corridors. The EDA made the decision to award every applicant something, with grant awards ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000 (one \$200 outlier) and it looks like most of them are going to proceed and do the improvements. They will be completing this work between now and June.

6. Invited Community Organizations

Jen Carpenter – Main Street Buena Vista

- Academic Partnerships:
 - Washington & Lee University – students are redesigning the MSBV website to improve online presence for residents, visitors, and investors.

- Virginia Tech – students are assisting with economic planning through a business survey for local business owners. This work supports the Business Triangle Initiative funded through the SmArP (Small Area Plan) grant from DHCD, which provides funding to create strategic plans for physical improvements and economic vitality in specific downtown areas.
- Southern Virginia University – marketing students are comparing Buena Vista to similar Main Streets and other similar cities throughout Virginia to identify areas that we can learn and grow from others.
- Virginia Main Street Program:
 - Site Visit – Virginia Main Street representatives will visit on March 12th at 1:30 PM to provide guidance for initiatives.
 - Main Street Signage – MSBV received a large “Main Street” sign and appreciate the City and Public Works Department’s commitment to helping with installation.
- Main Street Now Conference 2025:
 - The Main Street Now Conference will be held in Philadelphia from May 7-9, 2025, with special discounted rates for civic leaders. Mrs. Carpenter extended an invitation to anyone in the community and Council members to attend this event that is focused on community development strategies.
- Skatepark Project:
 - MSBV is eager to form partnerships with other organizations and are ready to work hard to make this project a success for our community. The skatepark aligns well with the MSBV mission of creating vibrant, inclusive spaces in downtown Buena Vista.

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

Economic Development Authority

- Mr. Brent Styler’s term expires on March 31, 2025. Mr. Styler is willing to serve another term if reappointed. This is a four-year term and the first time it has appeared on the agenda.
- Mrs. Jody Fix’s term expires on March 31, 2025. Mrs. Fix is willing to serve another term if reappointed. This is a four-year term and the first time it has appeared on the agenda.
- Mr. Michael Lonergan’s term expires on March 31, 2025. Mr. Lonergan is willing to serve another term if reappointed. This is a four-year term and the first time it has appeared on the agenda.
- *Applicants: Jeremy Becker & Neil Carpenter*

Councilmember Webb made a motion to appoint Mr. Becker to one of the open seats. Councilmember Coffey seconded the motion, and it was carried by Council.

Councilmember Poluikis made a motion to appoint Mr. Carpenter to one of the open seats. Councilmember Webb seconded the motion, and it was carried by Council.

Councilmember Henson moved to reappoint Mrs. Fix to the EDA, with Councilmember Webb seconding, and it was carried by Council.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION

Mr. Roberts advised Council that there are three current projects that will have expenditures in FY 2025 but are not included within the budget, so those funds need to be appropriated in order to expend them. He is requesting funds for Phase I implementation of the RDA municipal software; an Historic Structure Report and Feasibility Study for the Old City Hall (the current library); and the Buena Vista Flod Hazard Resilience Plan.

The City had previously contracted with another vendor, PCI, to provide new municipal software for several City departments. Using CARES Act funds, we paid the full implementation cost of \$159,600 up front due to the limitations on the CARES Act. After several years of almost no progress we canceled that contract and were able to retain a full refund of that money which has been sitting in our account, and now just needs to be appropriated for the new contract. The full value of RDA's contract with the City is up to \$165,000, but Mr. Roberts noted he doesn't believe we will need that full amount as there are several contingencies built into that price. Those contingencies include possibly having to write some software scripts to do specific things for us and on-site tech support for the actual implementation training. There will be an RDA employee here on site all day for a few weeks. This first phase of implementation is for the Treasurer's Office, Commissioner of the Revenue's office, and utility billing, which is targeting to be completed by August or September of this year. Phase II will include implementation for the Finance Department and Human Resources in the spring of 2026. Once implementation is complete, folks will be able to pay their bills online or with a debit/credit card in person.

The Historic Structure Report project is partly funded by a \$15,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation and partly funded by a \$10,000 cash match from the City. The \$10,000 was approved by Council at the November 21, 2024 meeting, but the full amount needs to be appropriated for expenditure. The consultant selected for this is CJMW Architecture. They will look at the condition of the whole building as well as looking at feasibility for different options for the building. The reason this is being done is because the condition of the building and its functionality as a library has been an issue raised to Council for several years and the building is continuing to deteriorate. Councilmember Webb brought up concerns about where the library will go if it is determined that this building is not best suited to continue housing the library.

The Resilience Plan project is partly funded by a \$72,000 grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation and partly funded by an \$8,000 cash match from the City; the City match breaks down to \$1,200 in-kind staff time and \$6,800 cash from the Community Development Department Professional Services budget line. The portion that needs to be appropriated is \$72,000. The Community Flood Protection Fund through DCR funds plans and/or projects related to flood hazard mitigation. The plan will address what flood hazards there are in the City, focusing mainly on creeks. The last time a comprehensive study of the watershed was conducted was in 1999. This new plan will build on the 1999 study to see if what we have completed is working properly and if the projects that were recommended are still relevant. They will review the different

creeks, checking the status, and identifying gaps for further study. Mr. Roberts added that this project could also potentially get us engaged in projects going into these creeks and repairing them.

Ms. Burch read 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, 2025**, from the UNAPPROPRIATED SURPLUS of the **GENERAL FUND** and expended as follows:

Municipal Software Phase 1 Implementation

10.1203.52125	IT Software	\$45,000.00
Sub-total 1		\$45,000.00

Historic Structure Report & Feasibility Study (Old City Hall)

10.3402.52500	Professional Services	\$25,000.00
Sub-total 2		\$25,000.00

Buena Vista Flood Hazard Resilience Plan

10.3402.56187	CFPF Resilience Plan Grant	\$72,000.00
Sub-total 3		\$72,000.00

Total General Fund Appropriation	\$142,000.00
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Approved: This 6th day of March 2025.

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Councilmember Webb moved to **approve** the Resolution as presented with Councilmember Poluikis seconding, and it was carried by Council. 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			
Mayor Cooper	X		X		

NB #2: FY2024 AUDIT PRESENTATION BY ROBINSON, FARMER, COX

Ms. Sadie Bagoon of Robinson, Farmer, Cox presented the audit for FY2024. She shared the following highlights from the report:

- The City once again received the Government Finance Officers Association Certificate of Achievement for excellence in financial reporting. This is now the 26th year that the City has received this.
- The City also received an Unmodified Audit Opinion, which is the highest level of assurance available.
- There were no material weaknesses found; however, there was one significant deficiency related to budgetary controls. They have recommended tighter budget revisions and adherence to appropriation requirements. The budget appropriation resolutions that have been presented and approved recently are the proper way to ensure proper accountability.
- The ending net position was \$11,354,061, which is an increase of \$805,930 compared to FY2023.
- The combined ending fund balances for governmental funds was \$3,352,973, a decrease of \$1,044,078 from FY2023. The general fund had an unassigned fund balance of \$2,242,749.
- The combined ending net position for business-type activities including the Water/Sewer funds was \$1,579,991. The overall income was \$275,829, which includes depreciation expense of \$387,800 and there was a combined increase in net position for the water and sewer funds of \$23,784.

***A complete copy of the audit and presentation are available in the City Manager's office.*

NB #3: BVPD CERTIFIED CRIME PREVENTION COMMUNITY PROJECT PRESENTATION

Community Resource Officers Stanley Tomlin and Joshua Guttmann began with an overview of the CRO program. On top of regular patrol duties, they are handling ordinance violations to include property cleanup and zoning violations and trying to improve the overall quality of life for the citizens. They are also working with businesses to help establish crime prevention. They have attended trainings focused on minimizing the probability of break-ins and larcenies. Their big project currently is working to be recognized by the Department of Criminal Justice Services as a Certified Crime Prevention Community (CPC). One aspect of the CPC is developing a community safety council which will be comprised of an officer and several members of the community. They will help establish and promote clear, healthy standards of community behavior as well as set goals to help minimize and prevent crime in high-risk areas within the City. They will also encourage participation in the governance process, such as Council meetings, zoning hearings, and budget hearings.

The CPC program, established in 2003, is an initiative by DCJS to recognize localities and help them implement comprehensive community safety and crime prevention strategies. Officer Guttmann

noted that out of approximately 220 municipalities, there are currently only 12 certified communities in the Commonwealth. The program consists of 12 core community safety standards and about seven optional programs. The core standards include:

- Develop a community safety council
- A DCJS-certified crime prevention specialist – Officers Tomlin and Guttmann are close to completing
- Develop a neighborhood watch program with training and documented support of watches
- Community policing/crime control planning process
- Organized distribution of community safety information to citizens – literature, video, social media, and internet resources
- Designation of a person or committee trained to conduct community security and safety assessments of at-risk neighborhoods and businesses – they have already began working on this
- Functional crime analysis capability
- Comprehensive school safety audit process conducted by training members of the local school safety team – they are in the process of building that
- Business outreach program – also in progress
- On-site victim witness coordinator – we already have one
- A delinquency prevention program targeting at-risk youth – they will partner with the school system for this and currently partner with the school for the police camp
- Local law enforcement agency must be accredited – BVPD is already accredited

The main goal is to implement all of these programs throughout the rest of 2025 and submit the packet for approval to DCJS in October 2025 with hopes to have approval by December. Some of the localities that are already certified include Rocky Mount, Franklin County, Hanover, and Norfolk.

Councilmember Cash asked about some of the ordinance compliance issues they have been handling. Officer Tomlin stated that they have been working with Tom Roberts and Alan McMahan on some nuisance properties. There was an incident where a resident dumped some decking material on a vacant property; they tackled that, and all debris has been removed. In the next month they will begin working on citizens living in campers, outbuildings, or tents, as that is a zoning violation.

NB #4: APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING MSBV SKATEPARK GRANT APPLICATIONS

Mr. Tyree reported that Main Street Buena Vista is seeking grant funding for a skatepark, and this resolution will allow them to apply for those grants. The potential skatepark would be in the 1700 block of Magnolia Avenue on two existing FEMA lots which, under FEMA guidelines, can only be used for recreation. This would add another amenity for our youth at no expense to the City, other than the use of the property that is otherwise unusable, and since it is City land, Public Works already maintains the grass, weed eating, etc. This would only take a portion of the green space on one of the lots and the plan is to expand the two existing former driveways to include a gravel parking lot. As far as insurance costs are concerned, skateparks are considered “skate at your own

risk," so there will signage posted stating that as well.

Jen Carpenter added that there are currently three grants that they wish to apply for but are continuing to seek more. The idea is to do a large cement pad, then as grant funding becomes available we will get the specific amenities and manufactured pieces which are commercial grade and have a 20-year warranty. In addition to skateboarding and in-line skates, they would like to design the park to be for BMX, rollerblades, and scooters as well. She added that they will be including the youth and the Greater Rockbridge Skateboarder Coalition to help design this so it can accommodate a variety of skill sets.

Ms. Burch presented the following Resolution:

**Resolution
Main Street Buena Vista
Skatepark Grant Applications**

WHEREAS the City of Buena Vista desires to provide recreation amenities for residents and visitors; and

WHEREAS the City Council Outdoor Spaces Committee and community partners have identified City-owned lots in the west side of the 1700 block of Magnolia Avenue as a suitable location for a skatepark; and

WHEREAS Main Street Buena Vista is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Buena Vista businesses and residents; and

WHEREAS Main Street Buena Vista has the opportunity to apply for several grant opportunities including, but not limited to, The Skatepark Project, Carilion Community Health Grant, and a Virginia Main Street Community Vitality Grant.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of Buena Vista supports this location for a City-owned skatepark; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Main Street Buena Vista is hereby authorized to submit grant applications and take other steps to advance the planning and construction of a skatepark at said location in collaboration with the City.

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Date of Adoption

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

NB #5: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE ROCKBRIDGE AREA HEALTH CENTER AS TAX EXEMPT FOR REAL PROPERTY TAXES

Ms. Burch read the following proposed Ordinance:

**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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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, City Council convened in Executive Session.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION:

On motion by Councilmember Cash, seconded by Councilmember Coffey, and carried by Council, City Council returned to the regular meeting 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 – *absent*

Mayor Cooper ✓

AYES – 6 NAYS – 0

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING VOTE: Vice-Mayor Staton

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING MEETING: Vice-Mayor Staton

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor