



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

July 17, 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, July 17, 2025, at 6:00 pm.

Members Present:

	Mayor Tyson Cooper	
Vice-Mayor Danny Staton		Stanley Coffey
Michelle Poluikis		Ronald Cash
	Melvin Henson	

Members Absent: Steve Webb

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: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE MAY 29, 2025, SPECIAL-CALLED COUNCIL MEETING & THE JUNE 5, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING & PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

ADG #4: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Ada Branham, 2646 Edgewood Road, informed Council some downed and dangling cable wires in Racey Acres that are laying across driveways and hanging in trees. She contacted Dominion and Comcast; Ron Cash with Dominion responded and serviced their lines and she is unsure if Comcast came out to check the situation. She also stated that she had not yet reached out to Brightspeed, but she believes these cables belong to them.

Mr. Tyree advised that he had just received the contact information for Brightspeed's Local Government Coordinator so he would be happy to reach out to them about this situation.
- Jesse Lineberry, 2525 Racey Drive, spoke in opposition of the proposed cigarette tax stating that it is targeting the low-income community and taking away from families as people are not going to quit smoking because of the tax therefore [financially] taking away from their family. He also feels that implementing this tax is a sign of laziness if this is the best thing we can do to raise money. He noted that he thinks we get a lot of business from people in the surrounding areas because we don't currently have the tax like Lexington and Rockbridge County do, so those folks are coming [to Buena Vista] to buy their cigarettes. Mr. Lineberry also spoke about the new

proposed dorms for SVU stating that they're beautiful but doesn't look like it's going to do much for him. He believes that this proposal is an admittance of how well the school is doing and the people who are struggling in Buena Vista just have to sit back and watch. He also feels that it is very suspicious that they want to move the project quickly and everyone should be cautious when considering the project for approval.

ADG #5: REPORTS

1. Mayor

None.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree reported that Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge were looking at having another joint regional meeting in July to further discuss RARO's future planning, but due to Rockbridge not having their own discussion until August 4th, it has been determined that we should hold off on the joint meeting until each locality has an opportunity to discuss amongst themselves.

Since COVID, Modine has been storing a large amount (roughly 400 gallons) of hand sanitizer for the City that was purchased with CARES Act funds by the previous City Manager. Modine is now in need of the storage space, so Steve Webb and community service workers have gone and picked it up, and we are now looking for people/facilities to donate it to. We have delivered and/or reached out to all the schools and a lot of nonprofits and are looking for more people to donate the sanitizer to.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees / Members

a. Budget & Finance

None.

b. Outdoor Spaces

Mr. Henson advised that they would be holding a meeting sometime in August.

c. School Facilities

Mrs. Poluikis reported that they held a meeting to discuss the proposal for a new school building; the estimated cost is \$69M, which the City cannot afford. However, knowing that the Mountain Gateway building on Vista Links Drive is becoming available, she and Mr. Tyree facilitated a tour for several teachers of the building. She noted that the building is in incredible shape, can easily be renovated due to the moveable, non-load bearing walls, and the teachers were blown away with some of them ready to move in immediately. There were minor concerns regarding cafeteria and library space as well as the lack of a gym; however, it was noted that the kids could be bused back and forth to the Ramsey Center until a new gym could be built there, and walls could be moved to increase cafeteria and library space. She also mentioned that the building currently has seven classrooms, which is exactly what the Middle School's needs are. There is also a greenhouse on the property that she feels could be utilized for growing their own produce. She also noted the improved parking capacity compared to the current street-parking situation at the Middle School. At this point

we just have to wait to see what the School Board and new Superintendent think about it.

5. Department Heads / Constitutional Officers / Court Clerks

Edward Armentrout – Parks & Recreation

- Events:
 - The Fourth of July celebration was a success. Party Crashers was the featured band, they had free watermelon, lots of children's activities, and fireworks.
 - Friday's in the Park have been successful so far this year. The next one is tomorrow, July 18, featuring the band Rewind.
 - The Beach Music Festival is coming up the weekend of July 25th. They've already begun booking campsites for that event.
 - Labor Day planning is underway. There is a slight error that they are fixing on the flyers that went out for this listing some incorrect performance times.
- There have been minimal complaints regarding the new rates.
- They experienced a computer crash resulting in 15 years-worth of data being lost. He is working to gather as much of this historical information as possible so that he can have more accurate data to report.
- There are currently 40 monthly campers at the park and 21 shelter rentals. Shelter 4 is up and running and available to rent; he mentioned that a lot of people have asked him to put horseshoe pits down there like there used to be, so he is looking into this.
- The pool has been a huge success and the attendance there has been high. The late-night adult swim has also been successful.
- Their online reservation system has gone live. People can now view, select, and book their campsite through the online portal.
- They are having issues with the shingles on the barn roof. The roof was recovered last year, but the contractor says that it was a "bad batch of shingles," so they are working together to get this resolved.
- Some of the vendors for the Nothin' Fancy Festival requested a 50-amp service next to the multipurpose pavilion, so he is looking into the pricing for this.
- Dominion is beginning a power line project soon that would potentially remove 315 trees within the park. The trees have to come down, but the problem is that they will just lie there until they decay away in 10-20 years and they will be right through the thoroughfare of the park. He is having conversations to see what can be done to cut down on the damage, but we need to come up with a plan to try to clear some of that up once they are done.

6. Invited Community Organizations

Jen Carpenter – Main Street Buena Vista

- **Downtown Activation Series – Connect BV:** A three-part community event series has been launched to increase walkability, community pride, and local commerce:
 - August 30th, 5-9 pm: Tours; Downtown Games; Business Scavenger Hunt Activities
 - September 13th, 11-2 pm: Vista Variety Show; Coffee & Cars; Bead Collection Scavenger Hunt

- September 27th, 6-8 pm: Movie Night Finale & Sidewalk Sales – movie starts at 7:30
- **Business Engagement:** Monthly collaboration meetings continue with downtown business owners, with active promotion of extended hours, sidewalk sales, scavenger hunts, and customer engagement strategies.
- **New Property Momentum:** Our team has received access to the Old Carpet Outlet building, which is now part of our walking tour and a key feature in our revitalization vision.
- **Movie Nights in Magnolia Square:** With support from the Community Foundation grant, we launched our first summer movie night. Despite weather challenges, the event was a success with strong community turnout and teamwork.
- **FINAL MOVIE:** August 1st at 8:30 pm (yard games 8-8:30)
- **VMS Grant Submissions:** Two VMS grant applications were submitted—one in partnership with the Design Committee. We’re awaiting results and preparing for the next funding cycle.
- **Skatepark Planning:** Weekly and biweekly meetings continue with the BV Skatepark Advocacy Group. We’re actively identifying grant opportunities and sponsorship connections to move this project forward.
- **Social Media Snapshot Report:**
 - Facebook – 176,805 views from January-June 2025
 - Instagram – 61,010 views in the last 90 days
 - TikTok – 27k views

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

Mountain Gateway Community College

Ms. Cheryl Hickman’s term on the MGCC Board expires on June 30, 2025. Ms. Hickman is unable to serve another term at this time. This is a four-year term and the second time it has appeared on the agenda.

Applicant: Byron Honore

Vice-Mayor Staton made a motion to appoint Mr. Honore to the MGCC Board with Councilmember Coffey seconding, and it was carried by Council.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: ROCKBRIDGE-VA250 PRESENTATION

Mr. Cash advised that Rockbridge-VA250 is our local part of the nationwide “America 250” initiative to celebrate the 250th anniversary of American independence, and he and Kristina Ramsey are the Buena Vista representatives. He shared his vision for Buena Vista’s participation in the celebration including the following projects:

- Install a grand American flag on Inspiration Hill with plans to eventually have a flag garden including the Virginia flag and a potential future Buena Vista City flag. He has estimated the project to cost around \$20,000, with funding coming through a stars and stripes sponsorship where someone could sponsor a star for \$200 (he has three committed already) or a stripe for \$500. He also encouraged everyone to collect their spare change to donate toward the project and invited everyone to get involved.
- An eagle nesting platform in Glen Maury Park, along the river with a viewing platform on the floodwall. Additionally, the installation of some tall poles to create Eagle fishing platforms. Dominion Energy has indicated an interest in providing and possibly installing the poles.
- The Ben Salem Wayside is in serious need of restoration. Mr. Cash would like to secure state and federal historic status for the site. The Forest Service has committed to removing all the invading trees that are growing in the lock and pushing the stones apart. He mentioned potentially creating a nonprofit group to oversee the project.
- A Time Capsule Ceremony to unearth the 1976 City time capsule and replace it with a new 2026 one. He would like to create a committee to oversee this project as well.
- He would like to organize “field trips” for local kids to area landmarks such as the Blue Ridge Parkway as part of patriotic and civic education. He would like to coordinate with the school and libraries for this effort.

In closing, Mr. Cash invited everyone to get involved and do whatever they could to contribute to this once in a lifetime celebration.

NB #2: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION

The City received several grant awards recently that need to be appropriated.

On June 25th, we were awarded \$82,825 from DCJS under the Victim Witness Grant Program; the budgeted amount was \$70,703 which is why we are seeking this request. With this new funding level, all but longevity pay (\$591) is covered by the grant.

Also on June 25th, we received \$2,500 for the BVPD under the Virginia Rules Summer Camp Grant Program. The funding revenue and associated expenditures are not in the FY26 budget, which is the reason for this appropriation request. This will support the BVPD summer camp starting on July 28th. There is no local match.

On June 16th, BVPD was awarded \$56,250 from DCJS under the Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant. This funding revenue and associated expenditures are not in the FY26 budget, which is why we are seeking this request. This is a reimbursement grant, so we need to make the expenditure first and then submit for the reimbursement from DCJS. They are requesting the grant purchases occur by September 2025 as the grant period end December 31st. A cash match of \$18,750 (2%) will come from the BVPD’s asset forfeiture fund.

The following Resolution was presented for consideration:

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:

Victim Witness Program (DCJS)

10.2401.50500	FT Salaries & Wages	\$2,811.00
10.2401.50850	Longevity	\$28.00
10.2401.51450	FICA	\$217.00
10.2401.51500	Retirement - VRS	\$333.00
10.2401.51510	Hybrid - VRS	\$99.00
10.2401.51600	Group Life Insurance	\$33.00
10.2401.51610	ST/LT Disability	\$1.00
10.2401.51650	Workers' Compensation	\$3.00
10.2401.52200	Telecommunications	<u>\$842.00</u>
Sub-total 1		\$4,367.00

Virginia Rules Summer Camp Grant (VA Attorney General's Office)

10.3101.58000	Public Education	<u>\$2,500.00</u>
Sub-total 2		\$2,500.00

Byrne/Justice Assistance Grant - Law Enforcement Equipment (DCJS)

10.3101.60255	Byrne/JAG Grant Expense	<u>\$56,250.00</u>
Sub-total 3		\$56,250.00

Total General Fund Appropriation **\$63,117.00**

Approved: This 17th day of July 2025.

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

On motion by Councilmember Poluikis, seconded by Councilmember Cash, the Resolution was unanimously **approved** by Council.

NB #3: DISCUSSION OF HOPE HOUSE REQUEST FOR OPIOID FUNDS

Lori Turner with The Community Foundation on behalf of Rockbridge Recovery is requesting the direct opioid funds that the City has received as part of the opioid settlements. Currently we have \$1,166.20 and she is requesting that for some repairs that need to be done to the back deck at the Hope House. She is planning to match this with some state funding that they are getting as well as the direct funds from Lexington; all three of these funding sources together will give them enough to complete the repairs. Mr. Kearney reminded Council that these funds are received sporadically every six months

or so, and it is very important that we use them for opioid-related purpose, which this request is.

Councilmember Henson moved to approve the request, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis. 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 request was unanimously **approved**.

NB #4: DISCUSSION OF ESTABLISHING A CIGARETTE TAX

The Budget and Finance Committee have recommended a 25¢ per pack tax, which would align with Lexington and Rockbridge County. The Commissioner of Revenue and Treasurer's Offices would oversee and administer stamp sales, the structure of which is the same as Lexington and Rockbridge as well. We anticipate this generating \$100,000 in revenue per year (the first year would be \$50,000 as this would be implemented January 1, 2026, if approved). The revenue generated from this would be dedicated toward wellness-oriented projects. If they decide not to approve the tax, we will need to account for that \$50,000 either by making a cut somewhere or increasing another rate/fee.

Councilmember Coffey raised concerns about losing business from people that come here to buy their cigarettes to avoid paying the tax in other localities and feels that implementing this tax is targeting a specific group of people for their habit and he does not agree with doing that.

Councilmember Poluikis assured everyone that there was no intention of penalizing anyone because of their habit, they just felt that this was a good way to increase revenue, and it was aligning with what the surrounding areas are doing.

Mayor Cooper directed Council to review the drafted Code Section to discuss at the next meeting at which time they will determine if they want to move forward with the process of scheduling a public hearing.

NB #5: DISCUSSION OF RARO

RARO is seeking all three localities' support to commission an actionable strategic plan. The roughly estimated cost is between \$30,000-\$50,000 (exact numbers have not been explored yet). Lexington is suggesting using the interest proceeds from the DSS project loan to pay for this. Mayor Cooper opposed this idea stating that the point of having it in an interest-bearing account is to help cover the cost of the interest while we are building the project. He added that if we want to pay for [the strategic plan] we should just pay for it, not by borrowing from one for another.

Mr. Tyree advised that currently RARO is just seeking guidance on whether or not to explore more exact numbers for a strategic plan. The consensus from Council was to move forward with exploring costs, but that they are not comfortable using the earnings from the DSS project to pay for it.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

According to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1) of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, for the purpose of evaluating the performance of the City Manager.

On motion by Councilmember Henson, seconded by Councilmember Coffey, City Council convened in Executive Session.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION:

On motion by Vice-Mayor Staton, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis, and carried by Council, 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 - <i>absent</i>
Councilmember Coffey ✓	Councilmember Cash ✓	Vice-Mayor Staton ✓
Mayor Cooper ✓		

AYES – 6 NAYS – 0

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING VOTE: Steve Webb

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING MEETING: Steve Webb

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