



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

September 18, 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, September 18, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Tyson Cooper

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton

Steve Webb

Michelle Poluikis

Stanley Coffey

Ronald Cash

Members Absent: Melvin Henson

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 adding a new Article “Cigarette Tax” to Chapter 16 of the Buena Vista City Code to authorize the levy of taxes upon the sale of cigarettes in the City.

Mayor Cooper opened the Public Hearing.

There being no 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 SEPTEMBER 4, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING PUBLIC HEARINGS, & EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

ADG #5: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Amy Gilliam, 1710 Spruce Avenue, advised Council that a member of her family went to Glen Maury Park to inquire about month-to-month camping over the winter, and she was informed that they do not offer monthly camping in the winter. Mrs. Gilliam questioned if this is accurate, and if so why aren't we looking at this as a revenue source since we are already staffing the park in the winter.

Mayor Cooper asked if there were any objections to moving New Business #2 to this point on the agenda, as there were a few people here from SVU to accept the Resolution and they had to leave.

NB #2: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF A RESOLUTION FOR THE RESTORATION OF THE 34TH STREET PLAYGROUND

Ms. Burch presented the following Resolution:

**Resolution of Appreciation
34th Street Playground**

WHEREAS the City acquired two lots at the corner of 34th Street and Locust Avenue in the 1970s and developed a small neighborhood park there; and

WHEREAS this playground is the only public park north of 29th Street, and therefore serves a large number of families in this neighborhood; and

WHEREAS over the last fifty years the playground became dilapidated and overgrown; and

WHEREAS in 2024 the Student Government at Southern Virginia University committed to reinvigorating the 34th Street Playground; and

WHEREAS in 2024 and 2025 the SVU Student Government competed and won a \$10,000 grant for the project, secured thousands of dollars of other material and financial donations and performed hundreds of hours of volunteer labor to repair and improve this park.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council for the City of Buena Vista, Virginia on behalf of the citizens of our community, that the Student Government of Southern Virginia University are hereby recognized and appreciated for their engagement and contribution to the residents of the City of Buena Vista.

Approved: This 18th day of September 2025

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

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

Councilmember Cash added that he lives in that neighborhood and wanted to thank the students who worked on the project for all the work they did, noting that the playground was not only shabby

looking, but also somewhat dangerous for children, and now it is much improved.

Two of the students who worked on the project, Taylor Staley and Cambria Miller, spoke about some of the things they learned through this project. Miss Staley shared SVU's slogan of "learn that life is service," which taught her that nothing is more valuable than setting aside her time and committing to serve the community, the children, and all the families around, and it was a pleasure to be able to serve the people here. She added that this whole project was about impact, and she feels that the bucket of blue paint on the play structure made just as much impact as anything else, so it taught her how far you can go with just a bucket of paint. Miss Miller added that this was her first community project and for her it was amazing to see the community's influence for the park and to see them come and help with the project. It helped her learn that community is important and let her put time aside and turn to service and she was very thankful for that.

ADG #6: REPORTS

1. Mayor

Mayor Cooper had the opportunity to represent the City at a Braver Angels discussion at VMI. The event brought together officials from Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge County to discuss economic development and economic activity.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree advised that he attended the recent Virginia Municipal League Legislative Committee meeting. VML is gearing up for their legislative priorities that will be sent to the General Assembly in 2026. One of the bills being recommended is for a 1% local sales tax option that localities could earmark specifically for school construction. Considering our current school construction needs, this is an important bill to continue to watch. There are a lot of other priorities including stormwater and housing. He will be attending the VML conference in October, so he asked Council to let him know how they feel about some of these things so that we can support or not support some of these priorities based on the City's needs and Council's vision for the City.

He attended the September 17th Virginia 250 event at VMI's Cameron Hall. They heard from Cheryl Wilson, the Executive Director of VA250, as well as an actor playing the part of George Washington.

We are planning to hold a joint regional meeting on October 30th. This will bring together Buena Vista, Lexington, and Rockbridge County to hear presentations and updates from the Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission, RARO, and DSS.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees / Members

a. Budget & Finance

They are holding a meeting on Tuesday, September 23rd at 3:30 pm.

b. Outdoor Spaces

They are planning to have the fifth and final tour in November; the exact date will be decided soon.

c. School Facilities

None.

Mr. Coffey addressed Mrs. Gilliam's concerns regarding winter camping at the park stating that he was under the impression that we do offer it. Mr. Tyree advised that yes, we do allow camping during the winter at the upper campground, but the lower campground is shut down due to risk of pipes freezing. Mayor Cooper asked Mr. Tyree to help Mrs. Gilliam get in contact with who she should be talking to if she'd like to reserve a site at the upper campground.

Mr. Coffey also mentioned that someone had reached out to him about events at Magnolia Square stating that after their recent event there (a church revival that they wanted to hold monthly) they were told that they couldn't have any more, so he questioned what the policy for that space is. Mr. Tyree advised that as long as they submit an event application and there are no other events going on, then there's no conflict. Kristina Ramsey added that she's not sure where that information came from because her office has not told anyone they couldn't have or continue to have an event. The only time an event would be denied is if another event is already happening. She also mentioned that the full policy is on the website, noting that the only difference with Magnolia Square is that it's a venue that is intended for events that are open to the public; it's not really intended for birthday parties, weddings, etc., but anything where the public would be able to come and participate is allowed in Magnolia Square.

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

Steve Bolster – Finance

- The Finance Department is currently coordinating on three separate fiscal years:
 - For FY 2025, we are working with our accounting consultants, Clearpoint CPAs, on the final fieldwork for the annual audit. This includes a checklist of 44 items they need in order to complete the FY 2025 financial statements, such as the Other Post-Employment Benefit report that is linked to health insurance for current and future retirees. The School Division received a 35-item checklist to finish as well. Documentation uploads are due by October 10th. The final fieldwork dates for Clearpoint are October 14-17, done remotely. Our external auditors, Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates are scheduled to complete their final fieldwork the week of November 3rd. The goal is to have the annual audit complete by the end of December and have RFC provide their audit presentation to Council in January 2026.
 - We are progressing towards the end of the first quarter of FY 2026. He and Mr. Tyree have quarterly budget reviews scheduled with Department Heads, Constitutional Officers, and Court Clerks in October. This is a new process to collectively discuss how each departmental budget is performing (i.e., budgets vs. actual) and review the plan for the next quarter and/or remainder of the year. These meetings will be a regular part of their schedules moving forward.
 - We began planning for the FY 2027 budget cycle in August. The Budget & Finance Committee met on August 26th to review the draft FY 2027 budget schedule; they will be reviewing the schedule at every B&F meeting to see how we're progressing. Some of the

key dates include:

- September 29 – forward FY 2027-2031 CIP worksheets to Department Heads
- October – CIP Q&A sessions with Department Heads
- October 30 – FY 2027-2031 CIP worksheets due
- December 19 – send out requests for FY 2027 operational budget estimates to departments and outside agencies
- January 30 – FY 2027 budget estimates due
- February 23-27 – FY 2027 internal budget meetings with Department Heads, Constitutional Officers, and Court Clerks
- March (TBD) – BVCPS School Board FY 2027 budget adoption meeting
- April 8 & 15 – advertise proposed FY 2027 budget and public hearing date
- April 16 – first reading of FY 2027 budget ordinance
- May 7 – second reading/adoption of FY 2027 budget ordinance

**All dates subject to change*

- Grant management will involve completing or supporting the July-September 2025 performance and drawdown reports by the October 15th due date. DCJS grants include SROs, SSOs, V-STOP, Byrne/JAG Law Enforcement Equipment, and Victim Witness.
- Assistant Finance Director, Brittany Strowbridge, is pursuing the Association of Government Accountants Certified Government Financial Management (CGFM) designation. The coursework involves passing three comprehensive exams; she passed exam 1 on August 1st. Earning the CGFM certification demonstrates competency in government accounting, auditing, financial reporting, internal controls, and budgeting at the local, state, and federal levels.

6. Invited Community Organizations

None.

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

Rockbridge Regional Library Board

Mr. Thomas Bell has resigned from the Library Board. This is for an unexpired term that will be effective immediately and will expire on June 30, 2026. This is the second time it has appeared on the agenda.

Applicant: Leece Bachman

Councilman Webb moved to appoint Mrs. Bachman to the Library Board.

Councilmember Coffey made a motion to table this appointment to the next meeting to see if we get any more applications instead of just taking the first one we get.

Councilmember Poluikis seconded the motion to appoint Mrs. Bachman.

There being no second on the motion to table, that motion died. Councilmember Coffey asked why we wouldn't want to wait to see if more people applied to get more people involved and noted that

at one time they waited at least two weeks to see if they got more applications. Councilmember Webb advised that this vacancy has been advertised for four weeks already and this is the first time we've got an application.

The motion to appoint Mrs. Bachman was carried by Council.

OLD BUSINESS

OB #1: SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TAX RELIEF FOR ELDERLY & DISABLED

There being no changes to the text, Councilmember Coffey moved to read the Ordinance by title, seconded by Councilmember Webb, and carried by Council.

Councilmember Poluikis mentioned that one thing she has noticed since being on Council is how fortunate we are to have the people we have [working in City Hall] that they brought this forward to make sure this is covered for our citizens, and it just shows the character and the integrity of this building and how much they look out for the community.

Councilman Webb made a motion to approve the Ordinance. Councilmember Coffey seconded the motion. Ms. Burch polled the Council as follows:

| Member | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|------------------------|---------|--------|-----|----|---------|
| Councilmember Henson | | 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 following Ordinance unanimously **approved**:

City Code Text Amendment Chapter 16, Article II, Division 2: Relief for the Elderly & Disabled

WHEREAS due to the changing economic conditions, it is in the best interest of the citizens of Buena Vista to increase the combined gross income limitations as contained within Chapter 16, Article II, Division 2: Relief for the Elderly and Disabled, of the Code of the City of Buena Vista, from its current \$30,000 amount to \$40,000 and to adjust the income scale accordingly.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED by the Council for the City of Buena Vista, Virginia, that as of the date hereon, Chapter 16, Article II, Division 2, Section 16-52 of the City Code is hereby amended so as to increase the gross combined income limitations from \$30,000 to \$40,000 and the income scale chart to read as follows:

| | | |
|-----------------|---|---------------|
| \$0-18,000 | - | 80% Reduction |
| \$18,001-25,000 | - | 60% Reduction |
| \$25,001-32,000 | - | 40% Reduction |
| \$32,001-40,000 | - | 20% Reduction |

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that except as modified herein, all other terms and conditions of Chapter 16, Article II, Division 2 of the City Code shall remain in full force and effect.

Due to the real estate tax tickets for which this change applies being processed, this Ordinance is to take effect immediately in order to reflect these changes for the upcoming real estate billing cycle and therefore this Ordinance is considered an Emergency Ordinance in accordance with the Buena Vista City Charter and will take effect immediately upon adoption.

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Date of Adoption

OB #2: SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR A SIGN AT 395 EAST 29TH STREET

Ms. Burch presented the following Ordinance for consideration:

**Conditional Use Permit
Sign at 395 East 29th Street**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF 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 706.10 of the Land Development Regulations, a Conditional Use Permit shall be issued for a freestanding sign whose area exceeds the specified maximum. The total area of each sign face shall be no more than 117 square feet, and the location shall be as shown on the attached site plan, "Exhibit A".

This Ordinance shall be effective 30 days following adoption by City Council.

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Date of Adoption

Councilman Webb made a motion to approve the Ordinance with Councilmember Coffey seconding. Ms. Burch polled the Council as follows:

| Member | Present | Absent | Yes | No | Abstain |
|------------------------|---------|--------|-----|----|---------|
| Councilmember Henson | | 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 Ordinance unanimously **approved**.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION

On July 7th, the VA OAA informed Mr. Tyree that Buena Vista was awarded a Cooperative Partnership grant award of \$486,949 to support the Hope House project. The City is serving as the fiscal agent on behalf of ourselves, Lexington, and Rockbridge County. There is no local funding match, but the OAA award includes an Individual Distribution of \$1,530 and Gold Standard Incentive of \$382 to be used as the City's pledged match. We received the total grant amount of \$488,861 on September 8th.

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 **OPIOID SETTLEMENT FUND** and expended as follows:

VA OAA Cooperative Partnership Grant Awards – Hope House Project

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 60.5157.68015 | Program Activities | <u>\$488,861.00</u> |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|

| | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Sub-total 1 | <u>\$488,861.00</u> |
|--------------------|----------------------------|

| | |
|---|----------------------------|
| Total Opioid Settlement Fund Appropriation | <u>\$488,861.00</u> |
|---|----------------------------|

Approved: This 18th day of September 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 | | | |
| 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 | | |

NB #3: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE TO ENACT A CIGARETTE TAX

Ms. Burch presented the following Ordinance:

Ordinance Enacting a Cigarette Tax

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Charter of the City of Buena Vista, the City hereby imposes a tax on all cigarettes sold in the City of Buena Vista in accordance with the terms and conditions of the provisions attached hereto as new Article XIV of Chapter 16 of the Code of the City of Buena Vista.

This Ordinance shall become effective thirty (30) days from the date hereon subject to the provision that the collection of taxes associated with this Ordinance shall begin on January 1, 2026.

Councilmember Webb offered that we have a potential of as much as \$100,000 in additional revenue for the City that has been approved by the General Assembly. He presented three packs of cigarettes that he purchased, one from Buena Vista and two from Rockbridge County. He noted that the pack from BV was only 18¢ cheaper than the ones from the County, so he can't believe anybody would drive from out in the County just to save 18¢. He also proposed earmarking some of this tax revenue (if passed) for RARO so our kids can benefit from it. Mr. Kearney advised that Council

cannot earmark general revenue to a specific purpose from one Council to another. The current Council can budget and appropriate it to be that way, but it's not something they could earmark permanently as future Councils may not want to continue.

The second reading will be held over to the October 16th meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor