



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

September 4, 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 Hearings, and Executive Session on Thursday, September 4, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Tyson Cooper

Michelle Poluikis

Steve Webb

Melvin Henson

Stanley Coffey

Ronald Cash

Members Absent: Vice-Mayor Danny Staton

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

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

ADG #2: BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARINGS

Public Hearing #1: Conditional Use Permit for a sign at 395 E. 29th Street, former Foxtrot shopping center, Tax Map ID 19-2-6--B and 19-1-6-56-11A.

Mayor Cooper opened the Public Hearing.

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

Public Hearing #2: Conditional Use Permit, and Right of Way Abandonment application for portions of Blocks 22, 25, 30, and 31 of Section 5. The site is generally bounded by 28th Street, 27th Street, Magnolia Avenue, and University Hill Drive, and includes the following properties:

a. 27-1-5-22-B	d. 27-2-5-25-22	g. 27-2-5-31-6
b. 27-1-5-25-6	e. 27-2-5-3-4	h. 27-2-5-31-7A
c. 27-2-5-25-14	f. 27-2-5-31-5	i. 27-2-5-30-13

The project consists of demolition of existing structures and construction of a new 218,000 sf residence hall for Southern Virginia University. The Conditional Use Permit is for a single large building exceeding 25,000 sf (see Sec. 506), and the project proposes abandonment of approximately two acres of existing City streets and alleys.

Mayor Cooper opened the Public Hearing.

- Jesse Lineberry, 2525 Racey Drive, first commended the improved quality of trash pickup recently. He also spoke on the need for an emergency response plan for and communication with neighboring fire departments regarding emergency response for this new building.
- Corey Bachman, 162 West 28th Street, expressed opposition to the dorm proposal as his property abuts SVU's property. His concerns were about the scale of the project, community and neighborhood impact (noise, debris, property values, traffic), speed of the planning

process, and lack of direct communication from SVU. Mr. Bachman noted that his wife runs a business out of their home and homeschools their children. As such, he feels that this would drastically negatively affect their everyday lives and routines of his wife and her business and his children and their education. He urged Council to reconsider the project and encouraged SVU to consider alternative locations and/or plans.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE AUGUST 21, 2025, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

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

ADG #5: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Ada Branham, 2646 Edgewood Road, followed up and asked for an update on her prior complaint regarding the cables and wires that were down in Racey Acres, noting that it had been several weeks and nothing had been done.

ADG #6: REPORTS

1. Mayor

Mayor Cooper mentioned how phenomenal Labor Day was, and that we've gotten a lot of positive media coverage over the last several days around the region. He represented the City at the recent CSPDC meeting and attended the Connect BV event last weekend.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree advised that staff is currently working on a draft revision to the home occupation code, and it will be ready for Council's review in the coming months.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees / Members

a. Budget & Finance

Mrs. Poluikis reported that Steve Bolster has prepared a draft schedule for budget meetings with the Committee as well as the Department Heads, and she believes that it is going to be helpful in keeping Council informed.

b. Outdoor Spaces

The Committee toured properties from 29th to 15th Streets and assessed development and revenue potential for vacant lots. Mr. Henson noted that they reviewed a lot of City history during this tour. They plan to evaluate possible uses and encouraging creative thinking. The next tour will cover 15th Street to the southern City limits.

c. School Facilities

None.

Mr. Henson also mentioned that the American Legion is 250 years old.

5. Department Heads / Constitutional Officers / Court Clerks

Wayne Handley – Police Department

- Crime and calls for service are down compared to this time last year. They are receiving more administrative than criminal calls.
- They are aggressively enforcing traffic laws. They are not ticketing for minor infractions (102 mph over the speed limit), the threshold is actually set at about 12-15 mph over the limit.
- The Department is currently accredited by the Virginia Law Enforcement Professional Standards Commission, and they are preparing for the full reaccreditation process in 2026, which requires a comprehensive review of their policies. They are actively working on that now as it takes a lot of time to pour through all of those policies.
- They are still moving along with the Certified Crime Prevention Community Program, which Officer Josh Guttman is spearheading. They are currently working on establishing the Buena Vista Community Safety Council which will serve as an advisory board, strengthening department and community connections.
- They currently only have one vacancy at the PD and have multiple qualified people interested.
- Chief Handley has been working with the local universities to develop an unpaid internship program for all City departments. He currently has an internship planned for two SVU students at the Police Department that will begin this fall. The goal of these internships is for the students to ultimately present their projects to Council and/or at other public forums as a way for them to get experience in public speaking and presentation.

6. Invited Community Organizations

Jen Carpenter – Main Street Buena Vista

- Connect BV – This is the third year, so they expanded to a three-event series. The first event (last weekend) turned out to be massive, with some shops reporting 185-200 new visitors. The next two Connect BV events are on September 13th and 27th.
- Mountain Day – They currently have over 120 vendors signed up and registration is still open for another two and a half weeks. They have also expanded the area by one block. It is scheduled for October 11th this year.
- Spooktacular – Downtown trick-or-treating on Halloween.
- Virginia Main Street newsletter and blog – MSBV was highlighted, and of the five photos they used, three were of Buena Vista.

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 first time it has appeared on the agenda.

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

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION

Mr. Bolster advised that there are projects that were approved for funding in FY 2025 that will continue towards completion in FY 2026. The large majority of these projects have funding that's either grant or other external sources, so the request is for Council to consider appropriating the funds to complete these projects.

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:

Deeds of Trust, Chancery, & Law Order Books Project - Library of Virginia Grant

10.2106.52450	Records/Indexing	<u>\$19,990.00</u>
---------------	------------------	--------------------

Sub-total 1	<u>\$19,990.00</u>
--------------------	---------------------------

Total General Fund Appropriation	<u>\$19,990.00</u>
---	---------------------------

Approved: This 4th 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		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		

The Resolution was unanimously **approved**.

NB #2: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE AMENDING TAX RELIEF FOR ELDERLY & DISABLED

Ms. Burch presented the following Ordinance:

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.

Ashton Beverley, Commissioner of the Revenue, reported that currently the household income limit is \$30,000, and with the increased Social Security, higher Medicare costs, and cost-of-living increases, she felt it necessary to increase the income limit to \$40,000. Amy Hudson, Treasurer, was in agreement with the income limit increase as there are a lot of citizens that would benefit from it. The budget impact of increasing the limit is unknown until they go through the process; the estimated tax relief is included in the budget, but the amount it may increase/decrease is unknown. There were 92 applicants last year, but some of those may not be here any longer, some new ones may have moved here, or others that may have qualified last year, but not this year, or vice versa. So by raising the maximum amount we are protecting some of the folks who always benefited from this relief as well as possibly helping some that may not have qualified before.

NB #3: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR A SIGN AT 395 EAST 29TH STREET

Tractor Supply through Reese Real Estate Partners is redeveloping the Foxtrot shopping center, and they are requesting a Conditional Use Permit for a sign that exceeds the maximum size allowed in our sign code which is 60 square feet; the one proposed is 117 square feet. Mr. Roberts noted that it would be about 15 square feet larger than the existing sign. He also noted that the Planning Commission did vote unanimously to recommend approval of this proposal.

Ms. Burch presented the following Ordinance:

**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.

NB #4: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR A SINGLE LARGE BUILDING EXCEEDING 25,000 SQUARE FEET

SVU is proposing a 218,000, 600-bed residence hall, which will involve demolishing some existing buildings that are on the site. Mr. Roberts noted that in the Institutional zone, the threshold for a single large building is 25,000, so this proposal requires a Conditional Use Permit; otherwise, this project is by right within the Institutional zone. He also mentioned that the Planning Commission did vote to approve the Certificates of Appropriateness for the demolition of the existing buildings and for the new building. The Code says that "large structures are not forbidden by this document, but they require more rigorous review and approval process in order to protect the neighborhood," so that special consideration will be given to very large buildings. City staff believes that this will be beneficial to the community as a whole. We have many single SVU students that are living in houses around the City, and this should pull some of those students out of those houses and bring them up on the campus. We've identified in multiple studies that housing is a need in our region, so this will add to the overall housing supply. The Planning Commission also pointed out that this is a single project that is concentrated and fairly dense. Staff is completing the site review which is mostly complete with two items still needing to be completed. The first is an improved pedestrian connection down to 28th Street. Currently there is a dirt towpath, so they have added [to the site plan] a new stairway that will go down from the new dormitory site to 28th Street. The other site plan review item is parking. The project will create a net gain of about 13 parking spaces. What Mr. Roberts is working on with SVU is developing a parking plan to understand what the real inventory of parking spaces on campus that are owned by SVU and existing off street lots, as well as available on street parking, and taking into consideration how many students actually have vehicles.

Councilmember Webb questioned why we were holding the first reading when all of the details hadn't been worked out yet. Mr. Roberts explained that staff has the final sign off on site plan review, and as part of that are considerations of adequate parking, adequate landscape screening, pedestrian

circulation, and various technical things to ensure the plan meets the regulations we have on the books. The CUP is a discretionary review, and can include considerations of a variety of factors, such as parking. So, options to move forward are that Council could approve this and allow staff to continue working with Parkway and SVU to sort out exactly how they're going to provide the adequate parking, or if Council wishes to put some specific conditions on the CUP related to parking or some other aspect of the project, they can do that. Councilmember Webb noted that he felt that it would make sense to table this for 30 days until everything is ironed out.

Councilmember Poluikis added that 600 beds to 113 parking spaces just doesn't add up. Mr. Roberts replied that they are looking at parking on campus holistically because they are adding parking spaces at The Fields, there is also parking at the Ranch Golf Club, and other parking spaces on campus. Councilmember Poluikis noted concerns about this potentially coming back to bite them if they do treat this as the first reading with it not being complete, adding that for her, this is a horribly inadequate parking situation, and the thought of young women having to park blocks away and walking late at night doesn't sit well with her.

Councilmember Webb made a motion to table the first reading for 30 days, also offering to assist Mr. Roberts and SVU with figuring out the parking situation. Councilmember Coffey seconded the motion. Mr. Kearney asked if Council would be comfortable with tabling for two weeks if that gave Mr. Roberts enough time to work out these details. Mr. Roberts stated that he felt he could work in either time frame to come up with a plan. Councilmember Webb stated that he wants to give them the time to get it figured out and bring it back [to Council], and that will give Council time to study it a little bit. He also made note that he is not trying to hinder the project and is in support of the dorms but wants to make sure all of the details are worked out first.

Mayor Cooper proposed that instead of an exact 30 days, they table the first reading until the October 2nd meeting. Councilmember Webb amended the motion to table the first reading until the October 2, 2025 meeting. Councilmember Coffey seconded the motion, and it was carried by Council.

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

The total of all of the areas to be abandoned is about 2 acres (89,668 square feet), which works out to be \$67,251 based on the standard pricing of 75¢ per square foot. The City would retain a perpetual easement for all utilities.

Councilmember Henson noted some concerns regarding trash pick-up and right-of-way usage for those residents who live on 27th Street; Mr. Roberts stated that those two properties would retain an access easement.

Mayor Cooper asked if we would be needing any of these streets/alleys in the future where we would ever want it back. Mr. Roberts noted that that was something the Planning Commission looked at, and it's pretty much all SVU's campus.

Councilmember Cash questioned if there is an anticipated strain on the City's water and sewer systems that would have to be upgraded to handle the needs for the new site. Civil Engineer Gavin Whorley with Perkins and Morrison stated that he has met with Corey Henson with Public Works to talk about the water and sewer capacity. Mr. Henson recommended they do flow testing, and it does have adequate flow for domestic, but not from a fire protection standpoint. So the project is installing a fire pump system that will pressurize the building for fire protection purposes. The design teams

also met with the Fire Department to discuss any concerns they had as well. There are no anticipated costs for the City to upgrade as all needs will be met within the scope of the project by the University.

Following some additional discussion regarding parking and enforcement, Councilmember Webb made a motion to table the first reading of the ROW Abandonment to the October 2, 2025 meeting, with Councilmember Coffey seconding, and it was carried by Council.

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 Webb, seconded by Councilmember Coffey, and carried by Council, the City Council convened in an Executive Session.

REGULAR SESSION

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

AYES – 6 NAYS – 0

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING VOTE: Vice-Mayor Staton

MEMBERS ABSENT DURING MEETING: Vice-Mayor Staton

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor