



Town of Bladensburg Council Meeting July 13, 2026 Meeting Minutes July 13, 2026, 7:00 PM

4229 Edmonston RD, Bladensburg, MD 20710

1. Call To Order

Mayor Takisha James called the Town of Bladensburg Council Meeting to order on Monday, July 13, 2026, at 7:00 PM at 4229 Edmonston Road, Bladensburg, MD 20710.

2. Opening Prayer

The opening prayer was delivered by Council Member Kalisha Dixon.

3. Pledge Of Allegiance

Mayor James invited all those able to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance, which was led by Council Member Carrol McBryde.

4. Approval Of Agenda

Mayor James noted several amendments to the agenda prior to the vote: the addition of a Patriotic Committee presentation and updates from legislative representatives under Presentations; and the addition of Community Grants Allocations (Item B) and Council Discretionary Funds (Item C) under Financial Business.

Motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Council Member Dixon and seconded by Council Member McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Presentations

Patriotic Committee — Ms. Renee Green addressed the Council on behalf of the Patriotic Committee, offering thanks and recognition for the Town's July 4th fireworks celebration. She gave special acknowledgment to Ray Jeffries, who began planning the event in February, noting that the celebration marked the 250th anniversary of the country and drew an estimated 1,000 attendees despite temperatures exceeding 100 degrees. Ms. Green expressed gratitude to Mayor James, the Town Council, staff, police, fire department, public works, and code enforcement for their contributions to the event's success.

District 47 Legislative Representatives Vanessa Velas Romero, Chief of Staff for Senator Malcolm Augustine, and Helena, the Senator's newly introduced Community Liaison, briefly introduced themselves and offered the Senator's office as a resource to the Town. Gloria Albright, a representative from Delegate Diana Fennell's office, was also present. Vanessa affirmed the legislative office's commitment to collaborating with the Town on community

concerns. She also addressed the issue of ICE enforcement, echoing community members' concerns about eroding public trust, and relayed a recent example from Baltimore City where increased police presence helped de-escalate a situation involving ICE activity. Mayor James used the opportunity to outline the Town's position—acknowledging the limitations of a small municipal government in challenging federal authority—and requested continued legislative support and guidance on what legally permissible actions the Town can take. Mayor James noted that she had raised these concerns directly with Senator Augustine over a month prior and had also met with Governor Moore on the subject.

6. Approval Of Minutes

a. Approval Of June 8, 2026 Council Session Minutes

Motion to approve the June 8, 2026 Council Session Minutes was made by Council Member Trina Brown and seconded by Council Member McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

7. Public Comments

Town Supervisor of Code Enforcement Roger Rinehart presided over public comment. The following residents addressed the Council:

Ms. Susan McCutchen (Spring Road, Bladensburg) spoke about three primary concerns: the federal government's pressure on Maryland and other blue states regarding immigration enforcement; the importance of voter participation and awareness of efforts to suppress voting; and a lack of transparency from the Prince George's County Council regarding hyper-scale data center projects and planning board appointments.

Ms. Anna Greenstone (Bladensburg resident) returned to the podium to continue advocating for more concrete Town action regarding ICE operations in Bladensburg. She acknowledged and thanked the Town for its openness to dialogue and for including the issue on the September work session agenda, but urged action prior to that meeting. She asked for specific timelines on two items discussed in prior meetings: the development of a document outlining Bladensburg PD's existing policies related to ICE encounters, and the designation of a staff liaison for community immigration concerns. Ms. Greenstone cited disturbing national statistics, including that 52 people have died in ICE custody since January 2025—the highest rate in 10 years—as well as an escalating pattern of ICE intimidation toward community observers in Prince George's County.

Mr. Foster Geddes (Ward 1, Bladensburg) spoke about the contradiction between the Police Department's community trust-building initiatives and the perception created when ICE vehicles are seen parked in the Bladensburg PD lot or when officers are observed interacting casually with ICE agents. He argued that even passive actions—such as holding a door open for an agent—signal to vulnerable residents that the Town sides with ICE. He referenced the Maryland Community Trust Act and Prince George's County's Community Safe Spaces Act as legislative precedents and urged the Town to pass its own protective ordinance before those state-level laws potentially fall to federal legal challenges. He called on the Mayor and Council to take visible action that demonstrates support for all residents.

Mr. Steve Weitz (Tilden Road, Bladensburg) raised two concerns. First, he expressed worry about clogged and overgrown storm water drains throughout town, noting that unsecured gates and downed sections of fencing are allowing children and teens to access the drainage areas—a potential safety hazard. He noted the last major county clean-out occurred following the 2020 flood. Second, he commented on the agenda item regarding a take-home vehicle for the Mayor, suggesting the vehicle would be more secure if kept at the police station and urging that access be available to all council members on a sign-out basis.

Mr. Marilyn Cruz (Quincy Street, Ward 1) expressed his continued concern about ICE enforcement in and around Bladensburg. He praised the democratic structure that allows residents to organize and effect change at the municipal level, and pledged to continue advocating and collaborating with the Town on this issue regardless of challenges.

Mr. Walter James (Doris Court, Bladensburg) congratulated Mayor James on her elevation to Maryland Municipal League (MML) President, calling it a promotion not just for the Mayor but for the entire Town. He then expressed support for the resolution to provide the Mayor with a take-home vehicle, drawing on his 12 years of experience in that seat to note that immediate responsiveness is an unwritten but essential expectation of the mayoral role. He framed the vehicle not as a personal benefit but as a municipal resource enabling the Mayor to serve residents effectively at all times.

Vanessa Velas Romero from Senator Augustine's Office also addressed the Council during public comment. She spoke personally about the fear that immigration enforcement has created within the Hispanic community, noting that eroded trust in law enforcement makes residents reluctant to report even minor incidents such as domestic violence. She affirmed Senator Augustine's support for the Town's efforts and offered the example of how increased police presence near a food market in Baltimore helped move ICE vehicles out of the area.

8. Unfinished Business

There were no items under Unfinished Business.

9. Work Session Review

Town Administrator Brian Wood provided a summary of the 5:30 PM work session.

a. 52nd Ave Update

The SHA presentation was deferred to the September meeting. Administrator Wood noted the productive collaboration between SHA, Bladensburg Public Works, Code Enforcement, and the Police Department in cleaning and improving the 52nd Avenue corridor, which he described as now safe and significantly improved in appearance.

b. Port Town Bus Operations

The Council provided direction to Administrator Wood to work with Colmar Manor on developing a transition plan for the Town to formally take over all Port Towns bus operations. The plan will be brought back before the Council.

c. PALS Project

An overview of the PALS Project was presented, highlighting work completed in partnership with the University of Maryland. Renderings were shared with the Council, and next steps were identified, including posting a digital version of the renderings online.

d. Gloves Up Guns Down

Interim Chief Daniel Frishkorn provided an overview of the Gloves Up Guns Down initiative, which includes a week-long boxing camp scheduled for late July and a year-long mentorship program developed in collaboration with the county, other municipalities, and nonprofit partners.

e. Grant and Scholarship Program Discussion

A review of applicants for the Town's \$2,000 community grants was conducted. This was further addressed under the amended Financial Business agenda items later in the meeting.

f. PILOT Discussion

The Council received clarification on the Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) agreement that will be shared with Hamlet Woods as that development project is finalized and residents begin moving in.

10. New Business

a. Resolution amending the Personnel Manual regarding elected officials' access to Town vehicles

Administrator Wood presented two related items: a resolution amending the Personnel Manual to authorize mayoral and elected official vehicle use, and a companion motion directing the Town Administrator to make a dedicated municipal vehicle available to the Mayor. He clarified that the resolution had been amended that same morning to align with the Personnel Manual, such that reauthorization would occur through the annual budget process rather than requiring a separate annual action.

Council Member Blount expressed support for providing the Mayor with a vehicle, citing the breadth of the Mayor's responsibilities and travel demands. Council Member Dixon echoed this sentiment, noting the Mayor's extensive work on behalf of the Town and the personal expense of using a private vehicle. Mayor James clarified that this policy has existed since the tenure of former Mayor David Harrington and is tied to the office of Mayor—not to any individual—and that the vehicle is subject to recall if operational needs of staff departments require it.

Motion to direct the Town Administrator to authorize the provision of a dedicated municipal vehicle to the Mayor was made by Council Member Blount and seconded by Council Member Dixon. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion to approve the resolution amending the Personnel Manual regarding authorization for mayoral and elected official vehicle use was made by Council Member Dixon and seconded by Council Member Blount. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Resolution amending the Personnel Manual to establish a foreign language proficiency pay differential

Administrator Wood introduced Resolution 03-2027, establishing a bilingual pay differential policy for Town employees. The policy arose from concerns raised by staff at an all-hands meeting. Mayor James credited Commander Frishkorn with taking swift action to translate staff concerns into a formal proposal.

The policy requires employees to be certified through a third-party test and places them at a basic or advanced compensation tier based on demonstrated proficiency. Public Works Supervisor Purnell Hall sought clarification that the policy applies to all Town employees—not only police and dispatch—and confirmed that bilingual staff in public works who regularly interact with residents would also be eligible. Mayor James affirmed this, noting the benefit of staff being able to communicate with residents in their preferred language across all departments. The funding source was identified as traffic enforcement revenues within the Public Safety budget.

Motion to approve Resolution 03-2027 establishing a bilingual pay differential policy for Town employees was made by Council Member Brown and seconded by Council Member McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Resolution declaring surplus equipment and authorizing its disposal

Administrator Wood introduced Resolution 02-2027, authorizing the disposal of three surplus Bladensburg Police Department vehicles through a municipal auction vendor. Commander Frishkorn explained that two of the vehicles are nine years old with over 100,000 miles, and one is an eleven-year-old 2015 model. The cost of maintenance and repair on all three is no longer justified relative to the vehicles' value. Proceeds from the auction will be directed toward future vehicle purchases.

Motion to approve Resolution 02-2027 authorizing the disposition of three surplus police department vehicles through a municipal auction vendor was made by Council Member Blount and seconded by Council Member Brown. The motion carried unanimously.

d. Summer Recess (added by amendment)

Motion to approve summer recess for the month of August was made by Council Member Brown and seconded by Council Member McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

11. Financial Business

a. Resolution accepting the \$300,000 Municipal Town Hall grant award

Administrator Wood introduced Resolution 01-2026, authorizing execution of a State of Maryland Capital Projects Grant Agreement for the Bladensburg Municipal Center. He explained that the grant will fund continued design and development efforts for a new municipal center, will reimburse outlays already incurred by the Town, and will allow the project to advance through the Department of General Services. Mayor James thanked

Senator Augustine, Delegate Fennell, and the Neighborhood Design Center for their partnership in reaching this milestone.

Motion to approve Resolution 01-2026 authorizing the execution of the State of Maryland Capital Projects Grant Agreement for the Bladensburg Municipal Center was made by Council Member Blount and seconded by Council Member McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Community Grants Allocations (added by amendment)

Mayor James presented the FY 2026 community grant allocations, noting that the Town offers grants of \$2,000 per community organization and was authorizing up to six grants to close out the fiscal year. The Council reached consensus in the work session on the following six recipients: Carrol Carecen (immigrant community services), Anacostia Watershed Society, Eco City Farms, End Time Harvest Ministries, We Lead by Example, and Good Intentions Foundation.

Motion to approve the FY 2026 community grant allocations to the six identified organizations was made by Council Member McBryde and seconded by Council Member Brown. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Council Discretionary Funds (added by amendment)

Mayor James presented the FY 2026 council discretionary fund allocations of \$500 per council member. The following allocations were presented: Mayor James — Royalty Institute; Council Member Brown — Royalty Institute; Council Member McBryde — Eco City Farms; Council Member Blount — split between GATS (senior services) and End Time Harvest Ministries. Council Member Dixon indicated she had not yet made her selection and was given time to decide, with a note that her allocation could be approved retroactively at the September meeting to avoid any audit complications.

Motion to approve the council discretionary fund allocations as presented was made by Council Member Blount and seconded by Council Member McBryde. The motion carried unanimously.

12. Staff Reports

a. Treasurer

Administrator Wood reported on behalf of Treasurer Tinelli, who was absent due to fiscal year-end close-out work. He noted that a combined June/July financial report would be presented in August. The Town is on track to meet revenue projections and is expected to close the fiscal year in the black.

b. Public Safety and Code Enforcement

Chief Frishkorn reported that while the violent crime rate was up 33% compared to the prior period, he cautioned that the Town's small baseline numbers mean a change of three or four incidents produces a disproportionately large percentage shift. Year-to-date, violent crime remains down. Property crime is down 26% year-to-date, though theft from and attempted theft from vehicles remains a trend. A juvenile town resident has been identified

as responsible for several incidents. Chief Frishkorn noted that ongoing details and arrests are being made to address the trend.

Upcoming initiatives include: Coffee with a Cop at the library on July 16; Ice Cream with a Cop on July 17; the Gloves Up Guns Down boxing camp at the Salvation Army on Edmondson from July 21–31; and the ongoing Citizen Police Academy with approximately nine participants. The department is actively seeking to fill three officer positions and one dispatcher position. Two new patrol vehicles are expected within two weeks.

On the matter of stop sign cameras, Chief Frishkorn confirmed county approval and vendor contact, with three to four cameras to be installed at high-violation locations in the near future.

Chief Frishkorn also addressed the community's concerns regarding ICE directly. He spoke to his personal understanding of the fear within immigrant communities, drawing on lived experience, and was clear that the Bladensburg Police Department does not assist ICE in serving civil immigration or deportation orders. He explained that ICE's use of the Town's public parking lot does not constitute collaboration and that the department does not receive advance notice of ICE operations. He noted the department's duty to intervene if civil rights violations occur, and referenced the county's law prohibiting masked law enforcement—which the department has raised with ICE agents when observed. He also introduced the new immigration community liaison: Sergeant Ramirez of the Community Action Team, who is bilingual and available to residents with concerns.

c. Town Clerk

Reported jointly under the Town Administrator's report.

d. Public Works

Public Works Supervisor Purnell Hall reported on a productive month. Key activities included: clearing debris at the Bostwick House barn to facilitate an architectural inspection; assisting Code Enforcement with a half-day cleanup of the industrial area near the railroad tracks, collecting two truckloads of debris; installing replacement no-parking signs in the industrial area; repainting a crosswalk on a concrete surface using a new, more durable product (Seal Master) learned about through MML; and installing new, more durable benches at two locations—53rd and Indianapolis and on 58th Street near the Bladensburg condos. Supervisor Hall also recognized staff creativity in fabricating recycled sculptures as part of the America in Bloom beautification effort. He gave special recognition to the team's six-hour collaboration with SHA on the 52nd Avenue project, noting that no lunch break was taken during the effort. Mayor James commended the team for investing in that relationship, noting its long-term benefits for infrastructure prioritization.

e. Town Administrator

Administrator Wood highlighted several items. The America in Bloom judges are scheduled to visit July 20–21 for a two-day evaluation, with a robust itinerary developed to engage community, staff, and council. He noted the productive nature of the recent community meeting regarding ICE, describing it as honest and collaborative, and confirmed that an informational follow up is being finalized for social media and the Town website to help residents understand their rights and how to contact the police if they feel unsafe. A follow-up community meeting is planned for August. Looking ahead, Administrator Wood noted

that FY 2028 grant planning is already underway, with more details to be shared at the Council's retreat.

13. Mayor and Council Reports

a. Council Member Trina Brown – Ward 1

Council Member Brown thanked all residents who participated in the meeting and expressed appreciation for Town staff's year-round commitment and dedication, particularly in working through extreme heat. She noted her attendance at numerous Town activities and meetings throughout the year and reported that a community ward meeting had taken place the prior Saturday with productive follow-up items identified. She congratulated Mayor James on her MML presidency and wished all a safe summer.

b. Council Member Kalisha Dixon – Ward 1

Council Member Dixon congratulated Mayor James on her MML presidency and reported attending the following events and meetings: the MML Conference, a CRF meeting (which included an update on the rising Ebola outbreak), the County Executive and Municipal Mayors meeting, the Fourth of July celebration, the MML Committee Orientation (where she was appointed to the MML Engagement and Outreach Committee), a COG meeting, a community walk in her ward, and a meeting with Mayor James and Mr. Cruz regarding ICE concerns. She also thanked the Bladensburg Police Department, noting a recent car break-in at her home was responded to in under a minute.

c. Council Member Carrol McBryde – Ward 2

Council Member McBryde opened by thanking the Bladensburg Fire Department, specifically Chief Sumner, for responding promptly when she experienced heat exhaustion during the July 4th event. She reported attending the Police Cadets award ceremony and congratulated the participants. She also welcomed back Pastor Theodore Rouse, who has returned his church to the Word of God Church in Bladensburg, and noted attending a prayer breakfast at his invitation.

d. Council Member Marilyn Blount – Ward 2

Council Member Blount thanked officers for responding to an incident at the Emerson House building, while noting frustration with the courts' handling of the matter. She announced she would be researching the legal process surrounding squatters to bring information back to building managers and the Council. She reported finalizing arrangements for county department heads to come to Bladensburg to speak with seniors about accessing services, noting that PG County's senior services are inadequate. She also shared that she is nearing completion of her MML coursework ahead of graduation. She briefly addressed the ICE issue, encouraging residents to bring their concerns to the Council while acknowledging the complexity of the situation. She also mentioned an upcoming senior gathering in September being organized by Ray Jeffries.

e. Mayor Takisha James

Mayor James provided a written report and highlighted several key matters. She noted a June meeting of the Prince George's Gateway Development Authority, hosted in Bladensburg with Senator Augustine and Delegate Ivy present, and explained that while the

authority is codified similarly to other gateway communities, it has distinct differences in its level of decision-making authority compared to the authority in Baltimore. She stressed the importance of setting realistic expectations while pursuing state resources to revitalize inner-beltway communities.

On MML, Mayor James shared that her election to the presidency included a closed-door meeting with Governor Moore, during which she raised a range of issues including ICE enforcement. She underscored that midterm elections are the most powerful tool available for changing federal policy and encouraged residents to vote.

She highlighted the work of State Comptroller Brooke Lierman, noting that her reconstruction of the unclaimed property program has returned \$121 million to Maryland residents, and shared the resource website: [**www.claimitmd.gov**](http://www.claimitmd.gov).

Finally, Mayor James noted that she would be distributing a National League of Cities civility pledge—a code of conduct for how elected officials engage with one another—to council members for review, with a proposal to formally adopt it at the board retreat in Bladensburg as well as at the upcoming MML board retreat.

14. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Council Member Blount and seconded by Council Member Brown. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned. The next regular Council meeting will be held in September 2026.