

MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 13, 2026 CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

A SPECIAL meeting of the Hopewell Council was held on Tuesday, January 13, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

John B. Partin, Mayor
Rita Joyner, Vice Mayor
Michael Harris, Councilor
Ronnie Ellis, Councilor
Susan Daye, Councilor
Lovena Rapole, Councilor

Councilor Daye makes a motion to allow Mayor Partin to attend remotely.
Councilor Ellis seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Abstain
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

Councilor Daye makes a motion to go into a closed meeting under Va. Code § 2.2-3711(A)(3), (8), and (29), to discuss the acquisition or disposition of real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body, the award of a public contract where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the City's bargaining position, and to consult with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters (real estate contract discussions, support agreement with EDA); § 2.2-3711(A)(1), to discuss personnel matters including appointments (school board, Ward 6 council, HRHA) and § 2.2-3711(A)(29) (health insurance contract update). Councilor Ellis seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes

Mayor Partin-	Yes
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 6-0

Councilor Daye makes a motion to reconvene the open meeting. Councilor Rapole seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

CERTIFICATION PURSUANT TO VIRGINIA CODE §2.2-3712 (D): Were only public business matters (1) lawfully exempted from open-meeting requirements and (2) identified in the closed-meeting motion discussed in the closed meeting?

PRESENT:

Rita Joyner, Vice Mayor
 Michael Harris, Councilor
 Ronnie Ellis, Councilor
 Susan Daye, Councilor
 Lovena Rapole, Councilor

REGULAR MEETING

City Manager's Report - Michael Rogers, Interim City Manager

During the report to the City Manager, several key updates were provided. It was noted that the City is nearing the selection of a new Director for Hopewell Water Renewal. An offer has been extended, and staff anticipates making a public announcement and formally

introducing the new director at the next meeting. Regarding the Public Works Director position, the search remains ongoing, as several finalists accepted other employment before the City could proceed; therefore, the recruitment process is being extended. An update was also shared on the City Manager recruitment, with the recruiter reporting strong interest in the position and indicating that a clearer picture of the candidate pool is expected by the following Friday. Additionally, a joint meeting between the City Council and the Hopewell Housing Redevelopment Agency is scheduled for the 20th of the month, with several discussion items already identified by the Council. It was also noted that later in the meeting, the Police Chief would present the monthly crime report, followed by the Deputy City Manager's financial report.

November Financials FY 2026 – Stacey Jordan, Deputy City Manager

The Deputy City Manager, Ms. Jordan, presented the November financial report, noting that December second-quarter financials, January financials, and the FY 2024 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) would be presented at the next Council meeting. The City is currently operating in Fiscal Year 2025, with November citywide revenues trending 1.16% (\$2.4 million) higher in FY 2026 compared to FY 2025, while expenses were trending 1.63% (\$3.5 million) higher. Key revenue collection periods were highlighted, including December for real estate taxes and February for personal property taxes. The increase in expenses was attributed primarily to annual salary adjustments from the classification and compensation study and benefit increases approved in the prior year.

For the General Fund, November revenues were trending 1.71% (\$798,000) higher in FY 2026 compared to FY 2025, with expenses trending 2.26% (\$24,000) higher, again largely due to annual compensation adjustments. Enterprise Fund revenues were trending significantly higher at 9.57% (\$4.6 million) over the prior fiscal year,

with expenses trending 3.9% (\$1.77 million) higher. The revenue increase was attributed to time-on-time billing and capital billing, while higher expenses were related to ongoing capital projects, operational needs, and maintenance activity at the Hopewell Water Renewal facility.

School revenues were reported as trending 2.96% (\$1.7 million) lower in FY 2026 compared to FY 2025, while expenses were trending slightly higher at 1.87% (\$1.9 thousand). The revenue decrease was attributed to delays in federal reimbursements, including ESSER grant funds and the Head Start program. It was noted that reimbursement requests for Head Start are still pending submission. Accounts payable activity for November included the payment of 1,888 invoices totaling \$6.8 million. Debt service payments for November were completed on time, leaving a remaining debt service budget of \$3.2 million, with all City debt current.

During Council discussion, questions were raised regarding the anticipated timeline for submission of the School Division's reimbursement requests. Ms. Jordan indicated she would follow up with staff, noting that the School Division has experienced a backlog due to work on the ACFR and the transition to the Munis financial system, though payroll processing is now fully operational within that system. Additional discussion addressed staffing capacity within the School Division's finance department, with Ms. Jordan stating that, in her opinion, existing staffing levels are insufficient. While the City has provided an additional position to support the School Division's finance operations, it was unclear whether a permanent hire has been made. The presentation concluded with no further questions from the Council.

Crime Summary Report – Gregory Taylor, Chief of Police

Chief Taylor presented the December crime summary to City Council, providing a comparison of crime statistics for 2024 and 2025. He

reported that total violent crime increased slightly from 84 incidents in 2024 to 88 in 2025, a 5% increase driven primarily by robberies, which rose from 4 in 2024 to 13 in 2025. In contrast, property crime decreased significantly, from 453 incidents in 2024 to 310 in 2025, a reduction of 143 incidents, or 32%. Overall, total major crime decreased from 537 incidents in 2024 to 398 in 2025, representing a 26% reduction citywide.

Chief Taylor also reviewed suspected opiate overdose data, reporting three fatal and 31 non-fatal overdoses in 2025, for a total of 34 incidents. He noted that this represents the lowest number of overdose incidents in a five-year comparison. When asked about the contributing factors to this decline, Chief Taylor attributed the improvement to a combination of federal, state, and local enforcement efforts.

Additionally, he reported a decrease in verified shots-fired incidents, from 58 during the comparable period in 2024 to 51 in 2025.

Neighborhood Watch meeting locations, dates, and times remain unchanged.

An update on staffing and recruitment was also provided. Chief Taylor reported that seven recruits are currently in the police academy and are considered hired; however, the Police Department still has seven remaining vacancies to fill. Four recent academy graduates have begun the Field Training Officer (FTO) program. He also noted that two police applicants and one emergency communications applicant are currently in the background investigation phase. Community engagement efforts during December included participation in two “Shop with a Cop” events, one in Colonial Heights and another at Walmart on December 20, which were well received by participating children and families. The department also held its first Business Resource Meeting on December 9 at The Water Cup, in collaboration with Recovery Hope, which included a raffle and was described as productive.

Chief Taylor concluded with updates on traffic studies and technology initiatives. He stated that traffic study results for the Broadway Baptist

Church and West Broadway area have been received and will be presented at the next City Council meeting, while the traffic study for West End Christian School remains pending. In response to Council questions regarding grant funding for new technology, Chief Taylor explained that the department is pursuing grant opportunities, including a potential earmark under review following a recent Zoom meeting with Senator Kaine's office. A determination on the earmark is expected in mid-January, and in the meantime, the department is working with the City Manager and Deputy City Manager to explore alternative funding options. The presentation concluded with no further questions from the Council.

Actions Resulting from the Closed Meeting

No actions resulted from the closed meeting.

Prayer by Reverend Tucker, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States by Vice Mayor Joyner.

Councilor Daye makes a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Councilor Ellis seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 6-0

During the Communications from Citizens portion of the City Council meeting, the Clerk read the standard statement outlining the procedures and guidelines for citizen participation. The statement explained that this segment, limited to a total of 30 minutes, occurs at each regular

council meeting. Citizens wishing to address the Council must approach the microphone, state their name, and, if they reside in Hopewell, provide their ward number. Each speaker is allotted up to three minutes to speak. The statement also emphasized that individuals may not speak on items scheduled for a public hearing and that all remarks must be directed to the Council as a body, rather than to individual members. Additionally, it was noted that personal, abusive, or slanderous statements, or behavior inciting disorderly conduct, are prohibited and may result in the individual being barred from future participation and removed from the chambers.

Mark Burroughs, Ward 3

During the public comment period, Mr. Burroughs expressed strong disappointment with the attendance of City Council members at the memorial service for Mrs. Stokes, a former coworker, City Council Member, and community civil servant. He noted seeing on social media that only one Council member attended the service and emphasized that, regardless of personal disagreements with Mrs. Stokes, she deserved respect for her service and dedication to the city's betterment. He criticized those who did not attend, stating that failure to show such basic respect reflects poorly on their authority and suitability to hold office.

Mr. Burroughs then addressed broader concerns about the structure of City Council representation in Hopewell, advocating for the elimination of the ward system. He suggested that Council members should represent the entire city rather than just individual wards, arguing that all members should be elected citywide to ensure accountability to all citizens. He offered support to anyone interested in pursuing this change and encouraged communication, noting their willingness to discuss the matter further. He concluded by recognizing and thanking the single Council member who did attend Mrs. Stokes' memorial service, expressing appreciation for their respect and commitment.

Laura Greenwood, Ward 6

Laura Greenwood, a resident of Ward Six, addressed City Council regarding a longstanding safety and infrastructure concern on Courthouse Road, Arlington, and Barry Street, specifically near the Five Forks area. She expressed frustration that funds allocated over four years ago for the installation of a crosswalk, sidewalks, and addressing speed safety in the area have not yet been utilized. Greenwood emphasized that she has previously reached out to Council members via email and cited past efforts by officials, including Johnny Hardin, noting that other areas such as the high school in Mannion Hill had received improvements, while this area remains unsafe.

She highlighted the dangers of the road, noting that vehicles often speed and overtake on the narrow two-lane roadway, leaving no safe space for pedestrians. Greenwood stressed that this issue disproportionately affects low-income residents and voiced concern for both local neighbors and visitors needing safe access. She urged Council to ensure at least one continuous sidewalk from S and N down to Berry Street and all the way to the nearby hotels, emphasizing the risk of serious injury or fatalities if the project remains incomplete. Greenwood requested clarity on the status and utilization of the allocated funds and asked to be contacted with updates, representing both her concerns and those of her neighbors.

Ed Houser, Ward 5

Ed Hauser, a resident of Ward Five, addressed the City Council to express concern over the absence of a Council meeting in the previous month. He noted that, according to city code, the Council is required to hold at least one meeting each month. While acknowledging that inclement weather may have impacted scheduling in December, Hauser emphasized that there was still sufficient time to hold a meeting before the month's end. He stressed that, even if no official business was required, the meeting should still have occurred to allow citizens to speak. Hauser requested that the City Manager and Council provide a clear explanation for the missed meeting at the next scheduled session,

questioning how residents can maintain trust in the Council if they fail to adhere to established codes and procedures.

Wayne Parsons, Ward 1

Wayne Parsons, a resident of Ward One, addressed the City Council with several concerns. He stated that he does not believe it is appropriate for the Council to recommend individuals to fill vacancies, and instead suggested that such positions be filled through a special election by the residents of the respective ward. Parsons also raised issues regarding city property maintenance and homeowner responsibilities, citing the need to obtain and pay for a permit to install a fence in his backyard to prevent his dogs from disturbing feral cats, particularly when adjacent city-owned properties are overgrown and poorly maintained. He emphasized that property maintenance standards should be applied fairly and consistently across the city.

Additionally, Parsons criticized the city's overall maintenance, noting inadequate street and storm drain cleaning despite the availability of Public Works equipment, including two sweeper trucks, two leaf-vacuum trucks, and a third sweeper machine. He highlighted staffing challenges, suggesting that if there are insufficient qualified operators, the city should consider hiring additional personnel. Parsons recommended that Council inquire with the City Manager about current conditions at Public Works, including findings from recent surveys, and ensure that those findings are communicated to the public to increase transparency.

Larry McClung

Larry McClung addressed the City Council during public comment to express concern regarding a recent notice he received indicating that retiree reimbursement benefits would be discontinued. Although he is no longer a Hopewell resident, Mr. McClung explained that he is a retired City of Hopewell employee who accepted early retirement in 2006 under an offer from then-City Manager Donna Lights. He stated that the offer guaranteed reimbursement for insurance costs as long as

he remained on his wife's health insurance, which influenced his decision to retire at age 52 rather than continue working until age 65. Mr. McClung emphasized that this decision ultimately resulted in significant cost savings for the City, estimating savings of more than one million dollars over the years he would have otherwise remained employed.

Mr. McClung expressed disappointment and concern that the reimbursement benefit, which he believed to be guaranteed, is now being eliminated. He stated that the benefit was a key factor in his decision to retire early after completing 30 years of service with the state, and that removing it now is unfair to retirees who dedicated their careers to serving the City. He urged Council to reconsider or adjust the decision, emphasizing his pride in his work at the wastewater plant and noting that the facility was not in the condition it is today when he was employed there. He concluded by thanking the Council for the opportunity to speak.

Vannette Taylor, Ward 2

Vannette Taylor, a Ward Two resident, addressed City Council during public comment to speak about what she described as growing division and "bickering" between citizens and Council members, particularly surrounding public criticism related to the funeral of Mrs. Stokes. Ms. Taylor stated that she was personally contacted by a member of Mrs. Stokes' family regarding difficulties covering burial expenses and was asked to reach out to Council members for assistance. She emphasized that, contrary to public accusations, many Council members privately donated to ensure Mrs. Stokes received a proper burial, even though those actions were not publicly known.

Ms. Taylor urged residents to avoid judging Council members for not attending the funeral without first understanding their personal circumstances. She shared her own experience as the mother of a homicide victim, explaining that attending funerals can be emotionally unbearable for some individuals due to past trauma. She stated that people should ask questions and seek understanding rather than point

fingers, noting that some who criticized Council attendance had not contributed financially to the burial efforts.

She further emphasized the importance of working constructively with elected officials, even when there are disagreements, noting that Council members were chosen by voters and that change should come through elections rather than constant public attacks. Ms. Taylor also addressed accusations of racism against certain Council members, stating that some individuals who had been labeled negatively were the same people who responded and provided assistance when she sought help for issues in her ward.

Ms. Taylor called for unity, stressing that the City belongs to all residents and that progress requires working together rather than focusing on division. She expressed appreciation for the Hopewell Police Department, sharing that her personal experience following her son's murder gave her a deeper understanding of the challenges officers face and the work they do to solve crimes. She concluded by acknowledging positive efforts in police recruitment and thanking the Council for their time and service.

Darlene Thompson, Ward 6

Darlene Thompson, a Ward Six resident, addressed City Council during public comment to express frustration over what she described as a lack of response to her repeated concerns about leaf pickup and overall city cleanliness. She stated that she first raised the issue in November and advocated for a ward-by-ward leaf pickup and cleanup program, but feels her concerns have gone unanswered.

Ms. Thompson explained that while residents are told they can request leaf pickup, this service requires payment unless the resident qualifies as a senior. She questioned why the City is not making better use of existing resources, including street sweepers and leaf-collection equipment, and noted that she rarely sees City crews working in most neighborhoods, particularly during the winter months. She expressed

concern that cleanup efforts appear concentrated in limited areas of the City, leaving other wards neglected.

She further questioned the effectiveness of beautification efforts, referencing initiatives such as “Keep Hopewell Beautiful,” and stated that visible conditions throughout the City do not reflect those goals. Ms. Thompson emphasized that residents should not have to repeatedly come before Council to raise the same issues and feel ignored, stressing that citizens’ voices deserve to be heard.

Ms. Thompson also raised broader concerns about City finances, stating that she perceives a lack of transparency in how funds are allocated and spent. She expressed frustration with the pace and presentation of financial reports, stating that they are delivered too quickly for residents to follow or understand. She referenced past calls for greater financial transparency and reminded Council that elected officials have a responsibility to the public to clearly explain how taxpayer money is being used.

She concluded by stating that while she understands Council must make difficult decisions, she believes Council members need to be more engaged and present to better understand ongoing issues and how City business is conducted. Following her remarks, Council indicated that staff is reviewing the recommendation related to retiree benefits and that a full report will be provided at the next Council meeting.

Before the next speaker was called, Vice Mayor Joyner asked the City Manager whether it would be appropriate to inform the public that the City is reviewing and potentially revising the recommendation related to retiree benefits. The City Manager responded affirmatively and stated that a full report on the matter will be presented at the next City Council meeting.

Iris Walker, Ward 4

Iris Walker, Ward Four, addressed concerns regarding the condition of streets throughout the City of Hopewell. She stated that she has

observed an increase in potholes and patchwork repairs and asked what system or process Public Works uses to assess and track street conditions. She expressed particular concern about West Broadway, noting that the bike lane configuration is confusing and potentially dangerous for both residents and drivers. Ms. Walker questioned the effectiveness and value of the bike lanes, citing limited usage, and asked when the roadway would be repaired or redesigned. She further inquired about funding allocations for street maintenance and whether records exist indicating when streets were last fully paved. Ms. Walker emphasized that many streets, including Danville Street, City Point, and 21st Avenue, are in poor condition and that temporary patching is insufficient. She urged the City to pursue complete street repairs and described the current conditions as shameful for the City.

Regular Business

R-1 Consideration of appointments of candidates for Ward 6-

Anthony Bessette, City Attorney

Under Regular Business, Item R-1, Consideration of Appointments and Candidates for Ward Six, the City Attorney explained that Councilor Stokes passed away on December 23, leaving the Ward Six seat vacant. He outlined the applicable provisions of the Hopewell City Charter, Article III, and Title 24.2 of the Virginia Code. Under the Charter, vacancies are to be filled by the remaining members of City Council within 30 days, with the appointment lasting through the end of the calendar year, December 31, 2026.

He further stated that a special election is required to fill the remainder of the term. A writ of election has been issued by the Circuit Court, and the special election will be held on November 3, 2026, concurrent with the next regular general election. Voters in Ward Six will elect a council member to serve the remaining two years of the term.

The City Attorney noted that the Council is required to appoint an interim council member for the balance of the current calendar year. He

also explained that the names and resumes of candidates for the appointment have been published as required by statute. Seven days from this meeting, at the beginning of the Special Joint Meeting with the Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority, City Council will vote on one of the nominees prior to convening the joint session.

The City Attorney concluded by offering to answer any questions from the Council. No questions were raised, and he was thanked for the explanation.

R-2 School HVAC Funding Update - R.T. Taylor and Jimmy Sanderson

Mr. R.T. Taylor of Cruz and Associates provided City Council with an update regarding the financing options being evaluated for the School HVAC project. Mr. Taylor noted that Mr. Jimmy Sanderson of Davenport & Company was unable to attend due to a conflict. Mr. Taylor reminded Council that Cruz and Associates served on the financing side of the City's recent projects and confirmed that the City successfully closed on the General Obligation (GO) bond financing on November 19, 2025. He stated that the purpose of the presentation was informational and intended to update the Council on ongoing discussions with the School Board, including a recent appearance at a School Board meeting where productive conversations took place.

Mr. Taylor explained that multiple financing options are being evaluated, similar to the approach used for the City's prior financings. These options include issuing bonds through a public sale to access public markets, which may offer lower interest rates, as well as pursuing bank financing through direct loans or private placement. He highlighted a key distinction from prior City financings, noting that while the City previously used its General Obligation pledge—backed by the full faith and credit of the City and supported by tax revenues—the HVAC project may alternatively be financed through an appropriation-backed structure. This option would involve an annual commitment to budget debt service and would be secured by collateral,

such as the HVAC equipment itself or another substitute form of collateral identified by the City or the School Division.

Mr. Taylor further discussed the importance of considering the City's legal debt limit under Virginia law, which caps general obligation debt at ten percent of the City's assessed real estate values. He explained that issuing additional GO bonds for school equipment could further reduce the City's remaining legal debt capacity, potentially limiting future City projects. For this reason, staff and advisors are carefully evaluating non-GO financing structures that would preserve the City's long-term borrowing flexibility while still meeting the schools' needs.

Mr. Taylor advised that all viable financing options are being reviewed, including interest rate impacts, and that staff will return to both City Council and the School Board with a recommended course of action once evaluations are complete. He anticipated that a formal recommendation would be presented in late winter or early spring, likely in the February or March timeframe, pending continued coordination with City staff and school officials. Council had no questions at this time, and the update was received.

Larry Dolsey, Ward 4

Mr. Larry Dolsey, a resident of Ward Four, addressed City Council regarding concerns with the Hopewell Public School system, specifically the continued use of the balanced (year-round) school calendar. Mr. Dolsey explained that he has reviewed academic data since the implementation of the balanced calendar in 2021 and stated that, in his view, the school system has consistently underperformed during this period. He asserted that student scores remain well below state standards across all levels—elementary, middle, and high school—and expressed concern that the City has not seriously reconsidered returning to a traditional school calendar model. Mr. Dolsey noted that Hopewell is the only locality in the surrounding area to implement the balanced calendar across all schools and suggested that other jurisdictions have not followed this model due to Hopewell's poor results.

Mr. Dolsey further referenced recent state school performance data released under Governor Glenn Youngkin, stating that Hopewell ranked at or near the bottom across multiple evaluation categories. He emphasized that these outcomes indicate the City is failing its students and urged Council to recognize the seriousness of the issue. He shared that families are increasingly choosing to relocate or enroll their children in neighboring jurisdictions such as Chesterfield, Henrico, and Petersburg due to concerns about Hopewell's school performance. Drawing on his personal experience as a retired military service member and long-time resident, Mr. Dolsey stated that one of the primary reasons he chose Hopewell was its formerly strong school system, which he described as once meeting or exceeding state standards.

Mr. Dolsey expressed disappointment that the school system has continued to decline for five consecutive years without corrective action. He referenced past statements by Dr. Hackney, who had expressed confidence that the balanced calendar would succeed and not be allowed to fail, contrasting those assurances with the current academic outcomes. Mr. Dolsey urged City leadership to take a comprehensive look at the issue, including potential leadership changes if necessary, and to work collaboratively with school officials to correct the course. He concluded by stating that, for the sake of current and future students—including his own grandchild—serious consideration should be given to returning to a traditional school calendar beginning with the 2026–2027 school year, emphasizing that the community wants the best possible educational outcomes for its children.

R-3 Sewer Rate Increase Ordinance Public Hearing - Stacey Jordan,
Deputy City Manager

Deputy City Manager Stacy Jordan addressed City Council regarding the proposed sewer rate increase for Ward Three, providing context for the recommendation and detailing the City's ongoing infrastructure challenges. Jordan explained that Hopewell's sewer system faces aging

infrastructure, significant capital improvement needs, and the effects of high inflation, with insufficient revenues to cover necessary projects. The last sewer rate increase occurred in 2017, and costs have continued to rise while revenues have remained stagnant. The City currently operates approximately 19 pump stations, some of which will be addressed through recently secured general obligation (GEO) bonds, though extensive improvements remain necessary across the system.

The proposed rate increase would raise the average monthly sewer bill by \$5.20, increasing the typical bill from approximately \$13.14 to \$18.47. Jordan emphasized that the additional revenue would be allocated exclusively for capital and infrastructure improvements, not salaries or benefits. She highlighted that, despite the increase, Hopewell's rates remain among the lowest compared to similar Virginia localities such as Colonial Heights and Petersburg. Jordan also noted that the population of Hopewell is smaller than these counterparts, yet rates have historically been lower.

Council members inquired about the anticipated revenue generated from the increase and its annual impact on residents. Jordan clarified that the monthly increase translates to less than \$10 per month for most customers, and she offered to provide detailed annual revenue projections at a future meeting. Following the presentation, the Vice Mayor confirmed that the next step would be to open a public hearing for citizens to comment on the proposed rate adjustment.

This discussion underscored the City's need to balance fiscal responsibility with necessary investment in critical utility infrastructure while keeping sewer rates competitive with those of surrounding communities.

Mark Burroughs, Ward 3

Mark Burroughs addressed the City Council regarding the proposed sewer rate increase and broader fiscal concerns in Hopewell. He openly admitted he is not financially knowledgeable, but expressed frustration that for years, citizens have been paying taxes and fees while city funds

have allegedly been misappropriated or mismanaged. Burroughs criticized repeated requests for small incremental increases—\$5 here, \$5 there—through sewer, stormwater, trash fees, and property taxes, noting that while these amounts seem minor individually, they accumulate and burden residents.

He referenced past promises to repair the sewer system, school HVAC systems, and other infrastructure, questioning why additional funding is continually needed despite previous bonds, including a \$15 million bond intended for school HVAC repairs. Burroughs argued that these repeated expenditures suggest mismanagement and inefficiency. He urged the Council to prioritize essential projects, stop wasting money on salary increases and other non-essential expenses, and focus on the core responsibilities for which they were elected. He concluded by emphasizing that continued financial strain on residents could have serious consequences for the community.

This comment highlighted strong citizen concern over transparency, fiscal responsibility, and accountability in city governance, tying personal frustration to broader structural issues.

Laura Greenwood, Ward 6

Laura Greenwood addressed the City Council regarding the proposed utility increase and related financial concerns. She supported Mark Burroughs' previous comments, highlighting the financial strain on residents from multiple small increases in sewer, trash, and other municipal fees. Greenwood provided a detailed breakdown of Hopewell's population, residential homes, household units, and current utility rates, emphasizing the cumulative financial impact on taxpayers. She criticized the city's decision to outsource utility billing to a vendor in Texas, arguing that the city already employs sufficient staff to perform the billing in-house and that outsourcing unnecessarily diverts taxpayer money while contractors' profit.

Greenwood also sought clarification regarding a \$15 million bond and whether it applied to HVAC projects for the school system or city

buildings, learning that the bond was strictly for city facility HVAC work, separate from school projects. She expressed frustration that elected officials and city employees receive infrastructure and equipment improvements that average residents cannot afford, stating that municipal investments should reflect citizen priorities. Greenwood concluded by stressing the importance of transparency, urging the city to manage finances responsibly, prioritize essential services, and keep citizens informed.

This comment underscored a female citizen's concern for fiscal accountability, transparency, and equitable use of city resources.

Ed Houser, Ward 5

Mr. Houser addressed the City Council regarding the proposed utility rate increases, largely echoing the concerns previously expressed by Mark Burroughs. He emphasized the disproportionate impact even modest increases, such as \$5, can have on residents living at or below the poverty line. Houser highlighted his experience working with local organizations assisting those facing food insecurity, noting that the need for such services has grown over the years, in part due to perceived mismanagement of city finances.

He criticized what he called "nickel and dime" practices, urging the Council to cut unnecessary expenditures and prioritize essential services over discretionary spending. Houser stressed that raising utility fees, property taxes, or other municipal charges directly affects residents struggling to cover basic needs, including food, medications, mortgage payments, and insurance, which have all risen in recent years. He called for more responsible budgeting and a careful evaluation of spending priorities to avoid placing additional burdens on financially vulnerable citizens. His comments reflected a male citizen's concern for social equity, fiscal responsibility, and protecting low- and moderate-income residents from further financial strain.

Darlene Thompson, Ward 6

Darlene Thompson addressed the Council with concerns about fiscal mismanagement and excessive spending by city leadership. She stated that, despite claims of budget shortfalls in previous years, the city had received substantial funding—approximately \$7.1 million annually over the past three years—but much of it was allegedly misused. Thompson highlighted specific expenditures, including salary increases and additional staffing for the City Manager, City Attorney, and other officials, which she described as reckless. She criticized the rapid spending following budget approvals and the pattern of granting large sums to outside groups while residents face rising taxes and utility rates. Thompson urged citizens to attend City Council meetings to stay informed and stressed the importance of knowing how officials manage public funds before voting for their reelection. Her remarks reflected a female resident’s frustration with perceived inequities in financial decisions and the ongoing burden on taxpayers. The public hearing was closed.

Councilor Ellis makes a motion to approve the proposed ordinance amending Chapter 31 of the Hopewell City Code of Ordinances as presented. Councilor Daye seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

R-4 Lamb Center for Arts and Healing Resolution for Tax Exemption Public Hearing – Anthony Bessette, City Attorney

During the meeting, Mr. Bassett introduced a resolution concerning a request from the Lamb Center for Arts and Healing for a real estate tax exemption and explained that, under Virginia Code § 58.1-3651, certain

nonprofit entities may be granted tax-exempt status by council action if the property is used exclusively for religious, charitable, cultural, or similar qualifying purposes. He stated that the Lamb Center's property is being used for arts and healing purposes and is therefore eligible for consideration, and noted that Eliza Lamb, along with staff, was present to answer any questions. The Vice Mayor opened the public hearing, but no members of the public signed up to speak, and the hearing was subsequently closed. A motion was made and seconded to grant the ordinance exempting the Lamb Center for Arts and Healing from real estate taxes. During council discussion, questions were raised regarding the property's prior tax payments, with figures from previous years cited and clarification provided that the annual tax burden was approximately \$2,100-\$2,200, particularly after significant improvements to the building. One council member expressed concern about the fiscal impact of granting the exemption, noting that real estate tax revenues had recently been relied upon to fund public safety pay raises and that reducing the tax base could negatively affect future budgeting. After the discussion concluded, a roll call vote was taken on the first reading: Councilors Harris, Daye, Rapole, and Vice Mayor Joyner voted in favor, while Councilor Ellis voted against. Because the ordinance was on first reading and required five affirmative votes to pass, it did not pass at this meeting and was scheduled to return for consideration at the next council meeting.

Councilor Rapole makes a motion to approve the proposed ordinance to exempt the Lamb Center for Arts and Healing from real estate tax. Councilor Harris seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	No
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Failed 4-1

R-5 Treasurer's Salary Supplement Public Hearing – Anthony Bessette, City Attorney

The council held a public hearing on an ordinance establishing a supplemental salary structure for the City Treasurer. Mr. Bessette explained that in April of the previous year, the City advertised that it would offer supplemental compensation to the Hopewell Treasurer if certain professional qualifications were achieved, and the purpose of the ordinance was simply to formalize and honor that advertised commitment. He emphasized that the current Treasurer does not presently meet any of the qualifying criteria, so adoption of the ordinance would have no immediate financial impact on the City. Council members clarified for the record that the Treasurer was not requesting a raise and that the ordinance was tied solely to the recruitment advertisement issued last April, which was intended to attract highly qualified candidates to the position. Council discussion focused on the importance of having a qualified Treasurer for the City's financial health and noted that the supplements were designed as incentives, not guaranteed increases.

Further discussion addressed the question of why there are no formal qualification requirements for the office of Treasurer beyond being elected by the citizens. It was explained that, under the Virginia Constitution and state law, constitutional offices generally do not require specific professional qualifications, except for the Commonwealth's Attorney, who must hold a law degree. Staff clarified that this lack of required qualifications is a statewide standard and that the City's charter does not have the authority to impose eligibility requirements for running for the office. However, the City may incentivize professional credentials through supplemental compensation. It was further explained that if the current Treasurer were to obtain any of the qualifications outlined in the ordinance—those previously advertised—he would then become eligible for the corresponding salary supplement. With no further questions, the council proceeded with the public hearing.

During public comment, Ed Houser of Ward 5 addressed the council regarding the qualifications of the current Treasurer. He stated that he had spoken at length with Jason prior to his decision to run for the office and had specifically asked what qualifications he possessed to serve as Treasurer. According to Mr. Houser, Jason indicated that his relevant experience included helping a company transition from manual, pencil-and-paper bookkeeping to QuickBooks. Mr. Houser further relayed that when he asked what Jason planned to do if elected, Jason responded that he intended to take finance-related classes to better understand the responsibilities of the position. Mr. Houser concluded by expressing concern that this level of experience and planned on-the-job learning reflected the current situation for the City of Hopewell's Treasurer.

Laura Greenwood, Ward 6

During public comment, Laura Greenwood addressed the council to seek clarification on the proposed salary supplement ordinance for the City Treasurer. She explained that she researched the term "salary supplement" and understood it to mean additional compensation paid beyond regular salary, often used as an incentive. Based on the earlier explanation, she asked whether the intent of the ordinance was to enable or incentivize the current Treasurer to obtain additional education or qualifications in order to better perform the duties of the office. In response, staff clarified that the ordinance does not provide payments in advance or fund education, but instead establishes a permanent policy allowing for supplemental compensation only after a Treasurer—current or future—has obtained specific qualifying credentials. It was emphasized that the supplement would apply beyond the current term and would only be awarded once the required qualification, such as a CPA license, is achieved, at which point the Treasurer would become eligible for additional pay beyond the existing base salary.

Ms. Greenwood raised additional questions after referencing definitions she had found regarding salary supplements, including language related to temporary benefits, but staff clarified that those provisions were not part of the ordinance under consideration and appeared to be from a

different state statute, possibly Delaware. Council reiterated that the ordinance before them simply authorizes the City to supplement the state-provided salary of the Hopewell Treasurer upon attainment of defined qualifications. Ms. Greenwood then restated her understanding that the supplement would function similarly to career development incentives used in other City departments, such as the Fire and Police Departments, where employees receive increased compensation after completing training or earning certifications. She expressed appreciation for the discussion and the opportunity to better understand the ordinance's intent. For additional context, staff noted that the City has long supplemented the salary of other constitutional officers, including the Commonwealth's Attorney, and Ms. Greenwood acknowledged that clarification.

Mark Burroughs, Ward 3

During public comment, Mr. Burroughs addressed the council to express his views on the proposed salary supplement for the City Treasurer. He stated that he supports paying a fair wage to qualified professionals who provide valuable services to the community, but objected to what he described as changing the terms under which an official was elected. He emphasized that the Treasurer was elected by the citizens of Hopewell at a specific pay rate based on the qualifications presented at the time of the election, and argued that altering compensation mid-term undermines those expectations. Mr. Burroughs contended that simply obtaining additional education or meeting baseline requirements to perform the job does not, in his view, justify a pay increase, asserting instead that compensation should reflect demonstrated excellence, superior performance, and results over time. He suggested that any additional qualifications or certifications should be presented to voters at the next election, and that increased compensation should only be considered after reelection, when the public has had the opportunity to evaluate and approve the Treasurer's enhanced credentials and performance. Mr. Burroughs concluded by thanking the retired Hopewell police officers in attendance for their service to both the community and the country.

After confirming that no additional speakers wished to comment, Vice Mayor Joyner formally closed the public hearing so the council could proceed with discussion. Councilor Harris expressed support for the proposed salary supplement ordinance, stating that it was intended to benefit the City by encouraging individuals with strong financial and accounting qualifications to seek the office of Treasurer. The councilor noted that, because the position is elected, citizens may choose a candidate regardless of professional background, which can discourage qualified individuals from running. The incentive, he explained, could help attract candidates with advanced education, such as bachelor's or master's degrees in accounting, which require significant personal financial investment. He emphasized that the cost of obtaining such degrees far exceeds the value of the proposed supplement, and expressed hope that the ordinance would motivate more educated residents to participate in local government and help move the City forward.

Councilor Daye echoed these sentiments, clarifying that because the City cannot legally impose qualification requirements for the Treasurer's office, the ordinance serves as a way to incentivize higher qualifications without mandating them. She stated that the supplement was designed to encourage candidates with credentials such as a bachelor's degree or CPA to run for office and, for the current Treasurer, to pursue additional education at personal expense in order to improve performance and become eligible for increased compensation. She contrasted this with situations where officeholders make no effort to advance their skills and remain at their initial level throughout their term. She emphasized that the goal of the ordinance is to promote a more informed and educated Treasurer in the City's best interest. Vice Mayor Joyner concluded the discussion by concurring with these views and reiterating that the ordinance was intended solely as an incentive, agreeing with the rationale presented.

Vice Mayor Joyner asked whether there was a motion to approve the ordinance providing for a supplemental salary for the Hopewell City Treasurer under certain qualifying circumstances. A motion to approve

the ordinance was made and was subsequently seconded, formally placing the matter before the council for consideration and action.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

R-6 Retiree Health Benefit Update – Stacey Jordan, Deputy City Manager

During the meeting, Stacey Jordan provided an update on retiree health insurance benefits. She explained that the City had previously determined the retiree health insurance reimbursement would be phased out over a two-year period beginning in fiscal year 2027, and that the fiscal year 2026 budget was developed to include full funding for these benefits through the end of that fiscal year in anticipation of the phase-out. Following recent discussions and in alignment with the council’s priorities, Ms. Jordan stated that the council now wishes to reinstate the retiree health insurance reimbursement benefits beginning in fiscal year 2027 and to continue them thereafter. This direction was described as reflecting the council’s ongoing commitment to supporting City retirees and recognizing their years of dedicated service. As a result, the upcoming budget development process will incorporate full funding to sustain these benefits beyond fiscal year 2026. Council members expressed appreciation for the update and thanked Ms. Jordan for the presentation.

R-7 Resolution in Support of Establishing a South-Central Transportation Authority – Anthony Bessette, City Attorney

Council moved on to Item R-7, a resolution in support of the establishment of the South-Central Transportation Authority. Anthony provided background, explaining that the resolution originated from a request by the Transportation Committee of the Crater Planning District Commission (CPDC). He stated that the CPDC recommends creating a regional transportation authority covering the same geographic area as the commission, noting that such an authority could help attract additional transportation improvement projects to the region and ultimately enhance transportation infrastructure within Hopewell. He added that other localities, including Prince George County, have already expressed support for the initiative and that a bill is expected to be introduced in the General Assembly to consider the formal creation of the authority.

A representative, Mr. Ellington, addressed the council and provided further context. He referenced handout materials distributed to council members, including talking points and a spreadsheet outlining existing transportation authorities in Virginia, as well as the proposed authority for the region. He emphasized the region's role as a logistics hub, noting the high volume of movement on local roadways and the ongoing need for infrastructure improvements. Mr. Ellington explained that revenue sources and the allocation of funds between regional and local projects had not yet been finalized, and that amendments to the proposed legislation would be brought forward as discussions continue. He noted that while the bill may not advance during the 2026 legislative session, it could be considered in 2027, and emphasized that coordination among all 11 participating jurisdictions is ongoing to ensure equitable benefits and shared responsibility for funding future transportation improvements.

During the discussion, a council member asked how many localities would be included in the proposed authority. Mr. Ellington responded that 11 jurisdictions within the Crater Planning District would participate, clarifying that Chesterfield and Charles City counties are part of the Central Virginia Transportation Authority and therefore could not be included. He added that discussions have taken place with

Brunswick and Mecklenburg counties to potentially extend coordination along the Route 85 corridor to the state line. With no further questions, the council thanked Mr. Ellington for his presentation. A motion was then made to support the creation of the South-Central Transportation Authority, formally placing the resolution before the council for action.

Councilor Rapole made a motion to formally support the establishment of the authority, and a second was offered, officially placing the resolution before the council for consideration and action.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

R-8 Conditional Use Permit request from Juanterria Browne of Kidz with Goals Unlimited LLC to operate a private school on Parcel #080-0921, also identified as 247 E. Cawson St. in the B-1 Downtown Central Business District Public Hearing – Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

During the meeting, Chris Ward presented a conditional use permit (CUP) request from Juanterria Brown of Kidz With Goals Unlimited LLC to operate a private school on parcel number 0800921, located at 247 East Cawson Street in Ward One. Chris Ward explained that Ms. Brown is also the property owner and currently operates a children's daycare at this location, with prior experience running a daycare at 333 East Hurst Street. The property is zoned B-1 and situated in the downtown area, directly across from Freeman Point and near the City Library. He noted that, under the city's future land use map, the property is designated as Downtown Commercial Mixed Use, and that staff determined the proposed private school would have nominal impacts similar to those of the existing daycare. It was clarified that this

is not a nonconforming property or use, but a conditional use permit is required under the B-1 zoning ordinance for a school use.

Chris Ward reported that no public comments had been received either in writing or at the Planning Commission public hearing. He stated that the Planning Commission held its hearing on November 6th and unanimously recommended approval of the CUP by a 5-0 vote. Based on alignment with the comprehensive plan and the minimal anticipated impacts, staff also recommended approval. The public hearing was formally opened, and with no attendees signed up to speak, it was subsequently closed. Ms. Brown was present at the meeting and available to answer questions, though none were raised. Council was then positioned to consider approval of the conditional use permit.

Councilor Rapole made a motion to approve the conditional use permit as presented. Councilor Daye seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

R-9 Conditional Use Permit request from Trek Properties LLC to construct a single-family dwelling on non-conforming lot, Parcel #075-0120, located on Maryville Ave. in the R-3 Residential High Density District. Public Hearing –
Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

During the meeting, Chris Ward presented the second land-use public hearing of the evening, which concerned a conditional-use permit request to construct a single-family dwelling on a nonconforming lot. He explained that the request was submitted by Trek Properties, LLC, with Mr. Die Powell listed as the property owner, for parcel number 075012 located on Maryville Avenue in Ward Two. The property is zoned R-3, which requires a minimum lot width of 50 feet and a

minimum area of 5,000 square feet. While the parcel meets the width requirement, it is nonconforming in size at approximately 3,870 square feet. The applicant proposes to build a two-story, three-bedroom, two-bath single-family home totaling approximately 1,440 square feet. Chris Ward noted that the proposed dwelling would be larger than the average home in the immediate neighborhood, which is approximately 1,020 square feet, and that the design includes vinyl siding consistent with surrounding homes and meets all required R-3 setbacks.

Chris Ward stated that staff recommends approval of the conditional use permit subject to standard conditions, including a minimum of 12-inch eaves on all roof edges, a minimum 20 percent tree canopy, an approved driveway surface, brick or stone foundation treatment on all four sides, foundation plantings along the front of the home, and construction in substantial conformance with the submitted plans. He reported that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on November 6 and voted unanimously, 5-0, to recommend approval. No public comments had been received prior to the council meeting. The applicant and a representative, Mr. Genoa, were present and available to answer questions. The public hearing was formally opened, and with no individuals wishing to speak, it was closed. Council discussion briefly addressed procedural and voting requirements, including the need for a sufficient number of council members present to meet the five-vote threshold for approval on first reading before proceeding to the next agenda item.

Councilor Daye made a motion to approve the conditional use permit as presented. Councilor Ellis seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

R-10 Zoning Enforcement Amendment to Article XX Violation Penalty Ordinance Public Hearing - Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

During the meeting, Chris Ward presented a request to amend the zoning ordinance regarding zoning enforcement. He explained that the proposed amendment would modify Article 20 of the zoning ordinance, which addresses violations and penalties, to add civil penalties as an enforcement option. The applicant for the amendment is the City of Hopewell, and the request was initiated at the direction of the City Attorney in coordination with staff from the Planning and Zoning Department. The amendment would apply citywide and is intended to supplement the existing enforcement framework, which currently relies solely on criminal penalties for zoning violations. Chris Ward noted that under the current ordinance, individuals found guilty of zoning violations could face criminal records, a harsh outcome in many cases.

The proposed amendment would allow the City to impose civil penalties, such as fines, providing a more efficient, flexible, and equitable method of achieving compliance. Criminal prosecution would remain available for cases that warrant it, but it would no longer be the City's only enforcement tool. Staff expressed support for the amendment, emphasizing that civil penalties would offer a less punitive approach while still encouraging the timely correction of zoning deficiencies. Chris Ward reported that the Planning Commission initiated the amendment at its October 2 meeting and held a public hearing on November 6, at which time it voted unanimously, 5-0, to recommend approval. No public comments had been received to date. Council members expressed general support for the amendment, describing it as a positive and reasonable improvement. The public hearing was opened and, with no speakers wishing to comment, was closed. Council then discussed procedural considerations regarding approval on first reading, including the need for five affirmative votes.

Councilor Daye made a motion to approve the amendment as presented. Councilor Ellis seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner- Yes

Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

R-11 Conditional Use Permit Request from A&K Enterprises LLC to utilize Parcel #089-1395, located at 3400 Oaklawn Blvd., as a single-family dwelling in the B-4 Corridor Development District (second reading) - Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

During the meeting, Chris Ward presented the second reading of a conditional use permit (CUP) request for the property located at 3,400 Oaklawn Boulevard, identified as Parcel 0891395. The applicant is A&K Enterprises, and the property is located in Ward Seven and zoned B-4. The request seeks approval to use the property as a single-family dwelling. Chris Ward summarized the application, noting that the property was originally constructed and historically used as a residence. He explained that a conditional use permit had been approved several years ago to allow residential occupancy to continue only until the existing tenant vacated, at which time the property was intended to transition to commercial use. Staff’s recommendation remains consistent with that earlier decision.

Chris Ward reported that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on October 2 and voted unanimously, 4–0, to recommend denial of the request. He explained that both staff and the Planning Commission based their recommendation on the City’s Comprehensive Plan, which generally envisions the Oaklawn Boulevard corridor transitioning from residential to commercial use over time, even though the plan does not provide clear or definitive guidance for this specific section of the corridor. He acknowledged that the corridor presents unique challenges, including narrow and shallow lots, adjacent residential zoning, limited parking, and difficulty assembling parcels for viable commercial development. Despite these challenges, staff stated that their obligation is to follow the Comprehensive Plan and

maintain consistency, which led to the continued recommendation for denial.

Council discussed the history of the property, including its prior commercial use as a sign shop and the zoning ordinance requirement that once a property in the B-4 district transitions to commercial use, a conditional use permit is required to revert back to residential use. Staff clarified that a previous owner rented the property for residential use without first obtaining a CUP, and at that time staff recommended allowing the existing tenant to remain to avoid displacement, with the condition that the property convert to commercial use once vacated. Council also discussed the likelihood that, if residential use were not allowed, the property could remain vacant due to limited commercial development pressure in the City and higher demand for residential uses. Some council members expressed concern about prolonged vacancy and noted that the structure is a well-maintained and attractive brick dwelling that appears well suited for residential use. While acknowledging the Planning Commission's recommendation and the complexities of the corridor, at least one council member stated support for approving the conditional use permit, emphasizing practical considerations and the current market realities. The discussion concluded with the Vice Mayor calling for a motion to approve or deny the request.

Councilor Rapole made a motion to approve the request. Councilor Ellis seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	Yes

Motion Passes 5-0

R-12 Conditional Use Permit Request from Kenri Kade Properties LLC to construct a single-family dwelling on non-conforming lot, Parcel #0011-0875,

located at 405 N. 3-1/2. (second reading) - Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

Chris Ward presented Item R-12, a second reading of a conditional use permit request for the construction of a single-family dwelling on a non-conforming lot located at 405 North Three and a Half Avenue, identified as Parcel 0110875. The applicant is Ken K Properties, and the property is located in Ward One, immediately adjacent to Three and a Half Street Park, within the R-O-4 zoning district. Chris Ward reminded Council that a public hearing had already been held on the request and therefore focused his remarks on a summary rather than a full presentation.

He explained that the parcel is part of a former rooming house property, with this specific lot representing the southern portion where a structure had previously been removed. The applicant proposes to construct a two-story, single-family dwelling consisting of three bedrooms and one and a half bathrooms, totaling approximately 1,400 square feet. The proposed structure is long and narrow in design, meets all required setbacks, and is slightly smaller than the average home in the surrounding neighborhood. The house would be finished with vinyl siding, which is consistent with nearby residences. Chris Ward noted that no public comments were received during either of the public hearings.

Staff recommended approval subject to standard conditions; however, the Planning Commission added an additional condition requiring the structure to be set back further from the street to accommodate a two-car, side-by-side driveway in the front yard. Chris Ward explained that the lot is not wide enough to accommodate a driveway under typical conditions, there is no rear alley access, and providing off-street parking would require pushing the house back beyond the normal setback. He expressed concern that this added condition could negatively impact the aesthetics of the streetscape and disrupt the established alignment of homes along the block. Council members discussed the issue and noted that many homes in the area rely on on-street parking, which is readily available, and that requiring a front driveway could be inconsistent with the neighborhood's character.

Following the discussion, the Council acknowledged that this was the second reading and that the public hearing had already been closed. A motion was made to approve the conditional use permit with staff's recommended conditions only, specifically excluding the Planning Commission's added requirement for a front driveway and allowing the property to rely on on-street parking. The motion was seconded, reflecting Council's preference to maintain the existing streetscape and alignment of neighboring homes while permitting the residential development to move forward.

Councilor Daye made a motion to approve the request. Councilor Ellis seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Yes
Mayor Partin-	Absent
Councilor Ellis-	Yes
Councilor Daye-	Yes
Councilor Rapole-	No

Motion Failed 4-1

R-13 Ordinance Amending Article II, Section 34-30 (Chapter 34): Rebate of Machinery and Tools tax of the Hopewell City Code – Charles Bennett, Director of Economic Development

The City Council conducted the public hearing and second reading for the Machine and Tools Tax Rebate Program applicable to the Enterprise Zone. The program, which provides tax incentives to manufacturers within the city, was reviewed and updated after discussions with the Deputy City Manager, Director of Finance, and Commissioner of Revenue to ensure the numbers were accurate and the structure was efficient. The modification reduces the current three-year, 90% rebate to a single-year, 80% rebate for new qualifying investments, while projects completed by January 1 retain the original three-year 90% rebate schedule. This adjustment is intended to accelerate manufacturers' return on investment, reduce administrative complexity,

and phase out the program concurrently with the Enterprise Zone in 2029.

Charles Bennett emphasized the program's importance in maintaining Hopewell's competitiveness, noting that local manufacturers are global companies with multiple sites. Because Hopewell has a higher machine and tool tax rate than surrounding jurisdictions like Henrico and Chesterfield, the rebate program helps incentivize new investments, particularly in the city. The rebate applies only to qualifying new investments and excludes items such as pollution-control equipment, ensuring the city benefits from taxable investment while providing manufacturers with meaningful incentives. The program has historically generated significant revenue since its inception in 2005 and continues to attract real investment. The Council received no public comments at the hearing, and the ordinance prepared by the City Attorney reflects these updates. The presentation concluded with confirmation that the changes represent a "win-win" for both the city and participating manufacturers, allowing for a streamlined, front-loaded rebate while maintaining long-term benefits for Hopewell.

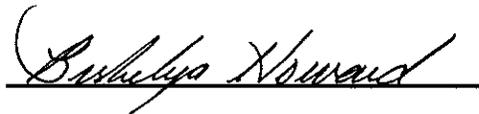
Ed Houser, Ward 5

During the meeting, Mr. Houser addressed the City Council with strong remarks regarding the role of industry in Hopewell. He emphasized that the city was historically built and sustained by industry, which once provided significant financial support to the community. However, he noted that today, much of the revenue generated by industrial activity flows out of the city and no longer directly benefits local residents. Mr. Houser expressed frustration that residents receive little to no tax relief on personal property, despite facing increasing taxes and rising costs, while industries can treat tax payments as write-offs. He argued that industries are as much a part of the community as the residents and that, given the current economic pressures on citizens, industrial taxes should also be increased to fairly contribute to the city's support. His statement concluded with a call for equitable tax responsibility between residents and industry.

During the meeting, a brief discussion took place regarding a proposal under consideration. Charles noted that he had received input from the Commissioner of Revenue suggesting that further discussion was needed before any final action. Stacey had shared information from Nelson that supported the need for additional review. Council members agreed that it would be prudent to delay voting on the matter to allow another conversation with the Commissioner of Revenue. It was clarified that no new public hearing advertisement was required, as this session served as the public hearing and was already scheduled as the third reading. With consensus reached on postponing the vote, the Council moved to adjourn the meeting. A motion to adjourn was called, all members present voted in favor, and the meeting was officially concluded.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,



Bishelya Howard, City Clerk



Johnny Partin, Mayor