

MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 18, 2025, CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

A SPECIAL meeting of the Hopewell Council was held on Tuesday, November 18, 2025, at 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

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

Councilor Daye makes a motion to amend the agenda to remove regular business item R-1. Vice Mayor Joyner 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 go into 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, unsolicited offer on city owned real estate); § 2.2-3711(A)(1), to discuss and consider personnel matters, including board and commission appointments (HRHA, KHB); § 2.2-3711(A)(6), to discuss the investment of public funds where bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of the City would be adversely affected (HPS roof repairs); and § 2.2-3711(A)(8) (Kevin Randesi ARB appeal).

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

Vice Mayor Joyner makes a motion to reconvene to open meeting. Councilor Rapole seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

Vice Mayor Joyner-	Yes
Councilor Harris-	Absent
Mayor Partin-	Yes
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:

John B. Partin, Mayor
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

The City Council meeting opened with thanks to all attendees and an

acknowledgment of the full agenda ahead. The session began with the Report of the City Manager, who provided updates on several major recruitment processes. First, he informed Council that the search for a new Hopewell Water Renewal Director is progressing. A report from the recruitment consultant is expected on December 2 or 3, following a full day spent reviewing the first round of applicants to narrow the pool down to three to five candidates for interviews. The goal is to make an appointment during the first week of January. The City Manager also addressed the ongoing search for a new City Manager, noting that he had sent Council members information from the recruiter outlining their responsibilities in the process. Interviews with the consultant for each Council member are scheduled for December 3, and Council was asked to make themselves available. According to the consultant's projected timeline, if the schedule is followed, the appointment of a new City Manager is expected to occur during the first week of March.

October Financials FY 2026 – Stacey Jordan, Deputy City Manager

The Deputy City Manager delivered the October Fiscal Year 2026 financial report, addressing citywide revenues, expenditures, and fund performance. She stated that overall revenues for October were trending 0.97%—or \$2 million—lower than in FY25, largely due to delays in federal grant reimbursements for the schools, especially related to the Head Start program. The schools are still transitioning from their old system to MUNI, causing reporting issues that have slowed the submission of reimbursement requests. Citywide expenses, however, were trending 1%—or \$2.2 million—higher than the previous year. She highlighted key revenue due dates for the City of Hopewell occurring in December, February, May, and June, noting that the Treasurer's Office is currently collecting the second half of real estate taxes due December 5.

In the General Fund, revenues for October were trending 0.86%—or approximately \$449,000—lower than FY25, while expenses were trending 0.37%—or \$202,000—higher. The increase in expenses is

primarily attributed to the annual class and compensation study adjustments implemented last fiscal year. Moving to the Enterprise Fund, she reported that revenues were trending 5.33%—or \$2.4 million—higher than last year due to the City now billing capital costs upfront rather than waiting until year-end. She added that the City is still awaiting \$3.5 million in reimbursements from industry partners for capital expenditures the City covered. Enterprise Fund expenses were trending 4.2%—or \$1.9 million—higher, reflecting the same shift to timely capital billing.

The report then shifted to the Schools, where revenues were trending 6.5%—or \$4.1 million—lower than FY25, again mainly due to delays in Head Start reimbursement and the end of ESSER grant funding. Expenses for the Schools were trending 0.59% higher—\$59,000. The Deputy City Manager confirmed that, despite federal revenue delays, Head Start funds are expected to resume in January, and the schools do not currently need to adjust their budget. She also provided an update on accounts payable, reporting that 1,100 invoices totaling over \$5.8 million were processed in October. Debt service remains on schedule, with the FY24 ACFR expected to be completed by December 31 and the FY25 ACFR by March 31, 2026, with no delays anticipated.

During the follow-up discussion, she confirmed that the City closed on a related grant on the 19th and would be closing on \$15 million in bonds the following day. She explained that the bond expenditure list had been submitted to bond counsel, and that all funds must be used strictly for the capital projects approved by Council in the ordinance and resolution—such as roofing and HVAC—rather than for operational expenses. She clarified that the bond funds cannot be used freely and must follow the specific capital purposes previously authorized. The report concluded with no further questions.

Police Safety Report – Gregory Taylor, Chief of Police

The Police Chief presented the November crime statistics to the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and City Council, noting that the report was significantly

shorter than the previous months. He stated that violent crime was up slightly by 5%, with robberies being the primary contributing factor. These robberies were described as individual and random acts, with no identified pattern or group responsible. In contrast, property crime had decreased by 31%, leading to an overall 25% reduction in major crime for the month. The Chief then provided a comparison of crime levels from 2022—prior to the adoption of new technology—to 2025. He highlighted a 24% decrease in violent crime and a 27% decrease in property crime over that period, attributing these improvements to technology upgrades and initiatives such as Operation Ceasefire and Real Time Intelligence programs.

The Chief next discussed opiate overdoses, reporting totals of three fatal and 31 non-fatal incidents for a combined total of 34, which remains lower than previous years. He noted that verified shots-fired incidents were nearly identical to 2024, with 49 so far in 2025 compared to 50 in 2024. He informed Council that the department continues working with Flock and has received a quote for gunshot detection sensors, which will be reviewed with the City Manager and Deputy City Manager. He then summarized Neighborhood Watch activity, noting no changes, and moved into hiring and recruitment efforts. The recruitment team attended job fairs at Randolph-Macon College and Virginia Career Works. Five recruits are scheduled to start the police academy in January and graduate in July 2027; five applicants remain in background checks for police positions, and five emergency communications operator applicants are also in background review. Currently, six police positions remain open, including three unfunded positions that will open on January 1, 2026. The next academy begins January 5, and the department hopes to have more recruits ready by then.

He also reported that community policing ward assignments remained unchanged. Community engagement efforts in November included collecting food items for James House, planning the first Business Resource Meeting on December 9 at the Water Cup Restaurant, and collaborating with Recover Hope, a human-trafficking agency, on

fundraising efforts for a safe house, pending prize donations from business partners. On traffic and technology updates, the Chief explained that a traffic study for potential school-zone speed cameras near Broadway Baptist Church is underway, with the West End Christian School slated for the next study. He confirmed again that he received the quote for deploying gun-detection technology in the city.

During Council questions, the Vice Mayor asked for clarification on the rise in robberies and whether any patterns had been identified. The Chief said crime analysis showed no pattern or specific group, reinforcing that the incidents were random. The Vice Mayor also asked about current staffing levels; the Chief reported a total of nine vacancies, which he noted was a significant improvement from previous years. When asked about the timeline for establishing a dedicated traffic division—something the department currently lacks—the Chief said such an initiative would be gradual, likely requiring increased staffing and prioritizing the formation of a crime suppression unit first. Realistically, he estimated a traffic unit might be feasible in 2026 or 2027. The report concluded with thanks from Council members.

Actions Resulting from the Closed Meeting

Councilor Rapole makes a motion to appoint Stephanie Dayberry to the Keep Hopewell Beautiful Board and Shar'ah Fuller to the Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority Board. Vice Mayor Joyner 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 directing the City Manager to prepare and issue a letter endorsing the school division's application to the Virginia Board of Education's School Construction Assistance Program. The motion specified that the letter should be issued in substantially the same form as the draft presented to City Council. This step was intended to demonstrate the City's backing of the school system's efforts to secure state funding for construction-related needs. 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

Prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States by Mayor Partin.

Vice Mayor Joyner makes a motion to adopt the consent agenda. Councilor Daye 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

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.

Laura Greenwood, Ward 6

During the public comment period, the first speaker was Ms. Laura Greenwood of Ward Six. She began by expressing appreciation for the work and presentation quality of the Director of Economic Development, Charles Bennett, noting her professional background as a retired commercial artist and promoter who has prepared similar presentations for high-level military institutions. Despite her respect for his efforts, Ms. Greenwood emphasized the need for a more realistic approach to economic development, stating that Hopewell is primarily an industrial city rather than a tourist destination. She noted that many small business owners struggle due to limited local customer engagement and existing tax burdens, and she urged Mr. Bennett to focus more on strategies that draw local residents into downtown activities and proposed projects.

Ms. Greenwood expressed specific concerns about the marina project, explaining that while residents she has spoken with support the pavilion component, they do not favor the proposed restaurant. She encouraged Mr. Bennett to study successful models from nearby marinas—namely the Colonial Heights marina and the Jamestown marina in James City County—to understand how they generate revenue and attract participation. She questioned why the department remains financially in

the red while continuing to receive additional funding from City Council, arguing that efforts should first prioritize making the department financially self-sustaining. She stressed the importance of increasing community involvement in event planning and suggested that events similar to those held at other marinas—such as music events, winter festivals, chili cook-offs, and other seasonal activities—could be produced at reasonable cost and generate meaningful profits.

Ms. Greenwood concluded by calling for renewed engagement between the department and the public, especially ahead of the upcoming season. She offered her assistance free of charge and stated that boat-slip holders and other community members would also likely contribute to planning efforts. She referenced her prior experience organizing major events, including the Yorktown Bicentennial celebration, before the Mayor thanked her and closed her speaking time.

David Edwards, Ward 1

The next speaker, Mr. David Edwards, addressed the City Council regarding challenges he is experiencing with two properties he owns at 320 and 322 Maryland Avenue. He described ongoing issues with a neighboring property, including an unmaintained backyard and residents living in vehicles on the street with multiple animals, which he reported to the police but was told no action could be taken. Mr. Edwards expressed frustration that boats and other vehicles are allowed to park anywhere in the city if licensed, adding to his concern about the neighborhood's appearance and safety. He noted that he had received a special exception from the Council for the two houses, with \$500,000 invested, and stated that he intended to sell them but feels embarrassed and concerned about putting them on the market due to the condition of neighboring properties. He asked for guidance on who to contact for assistance, specifically regarding code violations and property maintenance issues.

In response, a City official directed Mr. Edwards to work with Ms. Davis in the Code Enforcement and Planning Development office, along with her supervisor, Mr. Ward, to address the problems. The official also mentioned a new Public Nuisance Ordinance that could be used if the issues persist. Mr. Edwards further raised safety concerns about the individuals living in cars across from West End School, noting the potential risk to children playing nearby. The official confirmed that Code Enforcement would be the appropriate office to address these matters. Following this, the next scheduled speaker, Deborah Edwards, chose to defer her comments to her husband.

Russell Batten, Ward 6

The next public commenter, Mr. Russell Baton, spoke about issues at the local cemetery, particularly regarding maintenance around his father's grave. He explained that the area is overgrown with grass and weeds, and despite multiple visits and complaints to city offices, no action has been taken. Mr. Baton offered to personally weed around his father's grave if necessary, but expressed frustration that the problem persists despite his efforts to address it through city channels. In response, a City official directed him to coordinate with a staff member in the third row, who oversees cemetery maintenance and manages the city's grass-cutting contracts. The official assured Mr. Baton that this staff member could address his concerns and ensure proper upkeep of the cemetery. Mr. Rogers also acknowledged the issue and confirmed it would be noted for follow-up. The matter concluded with the official thanking Mr. Baton for his comments.

Sha'rah Fuller, Ward 5

The next individual scheduled to speak was Sha'rah Fuller. Upon being called, she indicated that she had no comments to make at the meeting, stating simply "no" when asked to speak. The Mayor acknowledged her

response and moved on to the next item on the agenda, concluding her participation in the public comment portion.

Mark Burroughs, Ward 3

Mr. Mark Burroughs, a resident of Ward Three, addressed the City Council during the public comment period. He began by acknowledging the recent election results and noted that some outcomes were favorable to citizens while others were not. Speaking from his perspective as a conservative and constitutionalist, Mr. Burroughs expressed concern for the future of both the City of Hopewell and the state of Virginia. He referenced measures taken in other jurisdictions, such as sanctuary city policies, as examples of local governments acting to protect citizens' rights in anticipation of broader legal challenges.

Mr. Burroughs urged City Council members to recognize that they represent the voices of their constituents rather than their own personal opinions. He emphasized that elected officials have a duty to vigorously defend citizens' rights, including freedoms of speech, religion, and the Second Amendment, particularly as state-level pressures and potential legal battles may seek to limit these rights. He encouraged the Council to be mindful of their responsibilities as representatives and to approach these potential challenges with determination and dedication. He concluded by thanking the Council for their attention and expressing hope that they would take seriously the duty to protect constituent rights.

Darlene Thompson, Ward 6

Ms. Darlene Thompson, representing Ward Six, addressed the City Council during the public comment period, expressing strong concerns about city spending and perceived lack of responsiveness to citizens' priorities. She criticized the Council for authorizing expenditures she

considered excessive, including a \$17,000 retreat and trips to Tampa, Florida, for the City Manager and Deputy City Manager, funded by taxpayers. She highlighted repeated proposals brought forward by the Economic Development Director, Charles Bennett, regarding marina projects, noting substantial spending approvals, and contrasted that with constituents' requests, such as leaf collection, which she claimed had been repeatedly ignored.

Ms. Thompson also raised concerns about city revenues from marina slip fees and real estate sales, stating that the management or use of those funds benefits certain officials rather than the public. She expressed frustration over the lack of attention to taxpayer concerns, including rising sewer rates and other city fees, while criticizing the City Manager's role as largely delegatory despite a high salary. She emphasized that constituents' voices are not being heard and warned that with upcoming elections, citizens will hold elected officials accountable for current actions. She concluded by urging transparency, responsiveness, and that Council members not act as if they are serving the public if they continue to ignore constituent concerns.

Kevin Randesi, Ward 1

Mr. Kevin Randesi, a commercial property owner in the vicinity of the City Council meeting, addressed the Council with general comments regarding homeownership and the city's management of vacant land. He noted that the City of Hopewell owns a significant amount of undeveloped property that is off the tax rolls and generates no revenue. Mr. Randesi emphasized that, despite frequent complaints about the city's financial struggles and limited tax revenue, these unused city-owned lands represent a missed opportunity for development and revenue generation.

He expressed concern about the high percentage of renters in the city—approximately 60%—and observed that surrounding counties are benefiting financially by purchasing rental properties in Hopewell,

effectively diverting wealth away from the city. Mr. Randesi suggested that the city explore partnerships with organizations such as Partnership for Housing Affordability or Project Homes to develop this vacant land for homeownership. He argued that such initiatives would allow residents to build personal wealth, increase city tax revenue, and strengthen the local economy, rather than continue to benefit absentee landlords. He concluded by urging the Council to consider these opportunities to promote sustainable homeownership within the city.

Mayor Partin addressed the Council to clarify and correct statements made during the citizen comment period. The official noted that, contrary to a prior comment, the City of Hopewell does have an active leaf collection program. This program allows residents to have their leaves collected for a nominal fee, with discounts available for senior citizens. Citizens were encouraged to consult the city's website for accurate information regarding this service.

The Mayor also responded to criticisms regarding city spending, emphasizing that the current City Council has invested significantly in capital improvements, facility maintenance, infrastructure, street paving, and utility system upgrades, more than any council in the past twelve years. Specific projects highlighted included extensive neighborhood street repaving, community center improvements, stormwater drainage enhancements to prevent sinkholes and property damage, and upgrades to sewer infrastructure, including work on two to three of the city's twenty-plus pump stations. Citizens were encouraged to review the list of funded projects and anticipate their completion, which is expected to enhance the overall quality of life in the community.

Regular Business

R-2 Codification of Recreation and Parks Fees Public Hearing -

Tabitha Martinez, Director of Recreation and Parks

Ms. Martinez addressed the City Council regarding the proposed codification of Recreation and Parks fees for the 2026 and 2027 fiscal years, noting that the fee schedule had previously been approved and advertised twice as required. She highlighted that the only new additions were general administrative fees, including a return check fee, chargeback recovery fee for debit and credit card transactions, and a rental cancellation fee. These fees are intended to recoup costs incurred by the city and are consistent with common practices in similar municipal programs.

Ms. Martinez invited questions from the Council, but none were raised. The public hearing was then opened, and no members of the audience signed up or chose to speak on the proposed fees. Following the hearing, the Council moved to approve the codification of the Parks and Recreation fees as presented, and the motion was made by Vice Mayor Joyner and seconded by Councilor Ellis.

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

R-3 Conditional Use Permit of 3400 Oaklawn Boulevard, and 405 North 3 ½ Street Public Hearing - Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

Mr. Ward presented two conditional use permit (CUP) applications to the City Council, noting that both would be addressed under a single public hearing. The first application concerned 3,400 Oaklawn Boulevard, a quarter-acre property in Ward Seven owned by A and K Enterprises. The applicant requested to use the property as a single-family dwelling, despite its current zoning as B-4 Corridor Development and its future land use designation as Corridor Commercial. The property had transitioned to commercial use in 2021

and previously operated as a sign shop. Staff recommended denial of the request, citing the city's comprehensive plan promoting commercial use along this corridor and noting that the Planning Commission had voted 4-0 to deny the application. Representatives of the applicant spoke, acknowledging the city's commercial designation but highlighting that the majority of buildings on the block remained residential. They requested approval to maintain residential use until a business tenant could be identified. Council asked clarifying questions regarding prior tenants and residential use on the property.

The second application involved constructing a new single-family dwelling at 405 North Three and a Half Avenue in Ward One, on a narrow 30-foot-wide parcel zoned R-4 Residential Office High Density. The applicant, Henry K Properties, LLC, proposed a two-story, 1,400-square-foot, three-bedroom home with vinyl siding, meeting setback requirements despite the lot's narrow width. Staff recommended approval with standard conditions, including eave requirements, a 20% tree canopy, brick or stone foundation, and adherence to the presented plans. The Planning Commission had also recommended approval, with an additional condition requiring the structure be set back to allow a front-yard driveway for two vehicles, given the lack of alley access.

No members of the public provided comment during the hearing. Mr. Ward noted that the first reading had taken place and that the council could approve the CUPs with a five-member vote or continue them to a second reading at the next meeting. Council opted to schedule a second hearing for both applications.

R-4 Kevin Randesi ARB Appeal, 206 North Second Street Public Hearing - Kelly Davis, Deputy Director of Planning and Development

Ms. Davis presented an appeal before City Council regarding a decision made by the Architectural Review Board (ARB) for the property at 206 North Second Street. The appeal concerned façade changes and the proposed painting of the building. She provided an overview of the ARB, explaining its role under Virginia Code and the City of Hopewell's Historic Preservation Ordinance to review exterior changes

in historic districts, and noted the city's recent designation as a Certified Local Government in December 2024, which obligates adherence to state and federal historic preservation standards. The property in question, a 1916 general office building in the B-1 downtown district, had a previous application to paint both the brick and stucco portions blue, which raised concerns about moisture entrapment and deterioration of historic brick. The applicant revised the request to paint only the stucco portion green and white, which the ARB approved by a 5-2 vote. Davis explained that painting historic brick is generally discouraged due to long-term preservation concerns, the irreversibility of the process, and differences in older versus modern brick composition. She emphasized that the ARB and city staff provide guidance to ensure compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's standards, and that deviations could jeopardize the city's Certified Local Government status and eligibility for historic preservation grants. Council members asked clarifying questions regarding the ARB's decision, the differences between historic and modern brick, and possible exceptions for paint types, noting that the building is currently non-contributing to the historic district. The presentation concluded with an acknowledgment of ARB members in attendance, and the council then opened the public hearing, with a few residents who had signed up to speak.

Kevin Randesi, Ward 1

The public hearing was opened with Kevin Randesi, the applicant, speaking on his appeal of the Architectural Review Board's (ARB) decision regarding the painting of his building at 206 North Second Street. Randesi expressed concerns that Ms. Davis, in her presentation, appeared to advocate for the ARB's position rather than serving solely as a neutral liaison. He based his appeal on three main points: inconsistent standards, conflict of interest, and the appearance of preconceived bias within the B-1 district. To support his argument of inconsistent standards, Randesi cited other cases in which the ARB had

approved painting previously unpainted brick at 425 East Broadway and 115 South Main Street, asserting that his denial constituted selective enforcement. Regarding conflict of interest, he noted that the ARB chair, Mr. Hughes, owns a downtown building with painted brick, raising concerns about impartiality in voting on Randesi's application. Randesi also contended that the ARB exhibited bias by effectively deciding against his application before he participated, noting that he had not been notified of the July meeting regarding his initial application and only learned of it via a phone call from Ms. Davis weeks later. During his testimony, time management was addressed, as Randesi was informed that he would have additional time to continue responding after questions from the council. The hearing continued with the council prepared to ask questions.

Laura Greenwood, Ward 6

During the public hearing, Ms. Laura Greenwood addressed the council regarding the proposed painting of historic brick. She explained the differences between older and newer bricks, emphasizing that older bricks are more prone to decay due to their composition and mortar, while newer bricks, fired at higher temperatures, are more durable. Greenwood disputed earlier testimony suggesting that brick "breathes" and asserted that bricks are hard and do not absorb moisture in a harmful way when properly sealed. She recommended using specialized sealant paint, noting that products available commercially, such as a \$50 per can sealant with an eight-year lifespan, can protect the brick from moisture damage, effectively preserving it rather than harming it. Greenwood also emphasized that imposing overly strict restrictions on exterior modifications could discourage businesses from investing in the area, advocating for a balance between historic preservation and economic development. Her remarks concluded with a clarification that appropriate paint can preserve the structural integrity of brick while supporting business activity in the city.

Ed Houser, Ward 5

Mr. Ed Houser from Ward Five spoke during the public hearing regarding the appeal of the Architectural Review Board (ARB) decision. He recounted attending a prior ARB meeting with Mr. Randesi and observed what he considered inconsistent enforcement of standards. He noted that one application was denied simply because the board disapproved of the color, while another board member admitted to having painted his own brick building. Houser also cited a situation where a business owner received approval for a sign and was told she could paint her building to match, despite it being a brick structure, highlighting perceived selective enforcement. He argued that these inconsistencies are unfair and likened them to the adage, "If you return right, you gotta turn left," suggesting that the city's decision-making process lacks consistency. Houser emphasized the need for equitable application of rules for all property owners.

Mark Burroughs, Ward 3

Mr. Mark Burroughs, representing Ward Three, spoke during the public hearing regarding the Architectural Review Board (ARB) appeal. Burroughs prefaced his comments by acknowledging his lack of technical expertise in brickwork, describing himself as a "brick trucker" rather than a brickmaker or builder. He shared that he and his wife chose to move to Hopewell because it was one of the few communities in the region without strict homeowners' associations, allowing residents to enjoy their property freely. Burroughs expressed frustration that residents must seek approval from the ARB or City Council to make changes to their property, viewing it as "groveling" before authorities under the guise of historic preservation or protection. He criticized the city for prioritizing Certified Local Government status and grant opportunities over the interests of its citizens, arguing that such designations impose limitations on residents. Burroughs emphasized that there are modern, breathable paints suitable for historic brick buildings, countering concerns raised earlier by Ms. Davis.

regarding lime washes. He also highlighted the inconsistency of ARB focus, noting that many city buildings are in poor repair, yet more attention is given to regulating improvements on private properties. Burroughs concluded by advocating for proactive maintenance and aesthetic improvements, asserting that a painted building is preferable to one deteriorating unchecked, and emphasized the need for the city to balance preservation requirements with practical support for property owners. Following his remarks, the public hearing was closed.

The City Council then addressed the motion to remand the Architectural Review Board (ARB) appeal. Vice Mayor Joyner made the motion, which was seconded by Councilor Ellis. After a brief period for discussion with no additional comments, a roll call vote was conducted. With the majority in favor, the motion to remand the appeal back to the ARB was approved. Following this, the Council moved on to item R-5. Ms. Davis was tasked with explaining the procedural steps to the next speaker, confirming that the appeal would be sent back to the ARB for rehearing and further consideration.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 4-2

R-5 Crater District Area Agency on Aging Information Introduction- Renata Shamick, Chief Executive Officer

Miss Shamick was not in attendance.

R-6 Bank Street Fire Lane Update - Monique Robertson, Deputy Director of Public Works

Monique Robertson, Director of Public Works, provided an update to the City Council regarding the implementation of fire lanes on Bank Street and James Street. She reminded the Council that in April 2025, the Fire Marshal presented a proposal for fire lanes on Bank Street, which was approved by Council. The current plan involves painting fire lanes on Bank Street and James Street, with yellow curb markings and “No Parking – Fire Lane” signs meeting MUTCD standards. The installation on Bank Street will eliminate approximately 10 parking spaces, but an additional 24 on-street spaces within walking distance have been identified to mitigate the impact. Robertson clarified that no fire lanes are planned for Maplewood Street as part of this project, noting that it would be considered a separate initiative. She confirmed that Public Works would handle both the signage and the painting, and that the work could begin immediately. Vice Mayor Joyner, who had requested the item be removed from the consent agenda for clarification, confirmed understanding of the plan, emphasizing that fire safety was the primary concern, given prior issues accessing the area with fire equipment. The update concluded with no further questions from Council, and the item was acknowledged as ready to proceed.

R-7 Battery Energy Storage System Facility - Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

During the meeting, staff presented a 2232 Review concerning a proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility at 105 Winston Churchill Drive. The review is required under §15.2-2232 of the Virginia Code when a public utility facility not specifically included in the City’s Comprehensive Plan is proposed. The Planning Commission must determine whether the project is in “substantial accord” with the Plan. The proposed development, located on M-2 intensive industrially zoned property, would be situated on two sides of the existing ARM Global recycling facility, though it would operate independently. Developers previously obtained a zoning confirmation letter in 2021 establishing the use as by-right, requiring no conditional

use permit. The project includes 28 Tesla lithium-ion battery units across approximately 5.5 acres. Staff reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and noted that it supports reliable utilities, advanced infrastructure, and compatible land uses in existing industrial districts. The facility would connect to the regional energy grid and assist during periods of high electrical demand.

Staff reported that the proposal meets all development standards—including buffering, fencing, and screening—and does not encroach on residential or environmentally sensitive areas. Planning staff recommended that the project's location, character, and extent align with the expectations of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission reached the same conclusion with a 4-0 vote on November 6, following a public hearing where no comments were received. Council was informed that their responsibility was either to affirm the Planning Commission's determination or to override it.

Council members raised safety concerns related to lithium-ion battery fires. Staff and Fire Chief Rupert explained that although risks exist, the proposed facility is designed with robust safety features. Each battery unit contains built-in, outward-facing fire suppression, and the developer has already provided a draft Emergency Operations Plan for review. Hopewell Fire Department will receive specialized training for this facility. The Fire Chief compared the proposal to a large battery facility fire in California earlier in the year, clarifying that the California site was far larger, used an outdated warehouse-style design, and had a failed suppression system—circumstances that differ significantly from the compartmentalized, modern design proposed for Hopewell. He also addressed concerns about toxic smoke, noting EPA findings from the California incident showed no harm to public health. The Chief expressed confidence that, while a fire in a single unit would be a loss for the operator, it could be contained without danger to the community. The developer will also maintain a decommissioning fund—approximately \$700,000—reevaluated every five years, ensuring proper cleanup or removal if the facility ever becomes defunct.

After discussion, a motion was made for City Council to approve the City Administration's determination that the proposed Battery Energy Storage System facility is in substantial accord with the Comprehensive Plan. The motion was made by Vice Mayor Joyner and seconded by Mayor Partin.

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

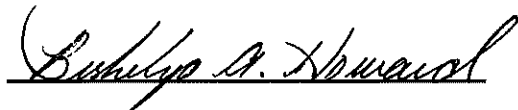
R-8 Information on Rebate of Machine and Tools Tax for certain businesses located in the Enterprise Zone- Charles Bennett, Director of Economic Development

During the meeting, Mr. Bennett addressed the Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council to present his formal recommendation regarding the City's Machine and Tools Tax Rebate Program, which is scheduled to sunset on December 31 of this year. He emphasized that no action was being requested at this meeting; instead, his goal was to outline the proposed changes and prepare for a public hearing on December 9, when Council will vote on an ordinance amendment. Mr. Bennett reviewed the current structure of the machine and tools tax—set at \$3.10 per \$100 with assessments based on 25% of original capital cost—and explained that the existing rebate program issues manufacturers a 30% rebate each year for three years on qualifying new equipment. Although the program expires this year, the City still faces three years of outstanding rebate payouts extending through 2028. To align the rebate program with the City's Enterprise Zone timeline, which has been renewed through December 31, 2029, he proposed shifting from the current three-year, 90% total rebate structure to a single-year payment equal to 80% of the rebate. This change would allow the City to eliminate long-term financial liabilities associated with rolling multi-year rebates,

significantly reduce administrative burdens across departments, and enable the City to realize full tax revenue two years sooner. Mr. Bennett further explained that when considering present-value calculations, an 80% one-year rebate is effectively equivalent to the current 90% rebate spread over three years, resulting in benefits for both industry—through improved cash flow—and the City. He then reviewed the draft ordinance language, noting updates that extend the program through 2029, distinguish between equipment eligible under the old and new rebate systems, and shift qualifying purchases after January 1, 2026, to the single-year rebate model. One industry partner has already responded positively to the proposed changes, and he reminded Council that the Hopewell Manufacturers Association had been briefed earlier in the year. With no questions from Council, Mr. Bennett stated he will publish the required public notice and return on December 9 for Council's decision. At the conclusion of the session, the presiding official formally ended the proceedings by announcing that all business for the evening had been completed. With no further items to address, the official declared the meeting adjourned, bringing the night's discussions and actions to a close.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,



Bishelya Howard, City Clerk



Johnny Partin, Mayor