MINUTES OF THE MAY 26, 2026 CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

A REGULAR meeting of the Hopewell Council was held on Tuesday, May 26, 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 Rapole makes a motion to amend the agenda and move to the proclamations recognized in businesses in the Hopewell area for over 50 years to the first item in the city manager report. Vice Mayor Joyner seconds the motion

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

Closed Meeting

SUGGESTED MOTION: Councilor Daye makes 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, and Victoria St. revokable license); § 2.2-3711(A)(1) and (8), to discuss personnel matters (Police Department Personnel, Building Office Personnel, Healthy Families, School Board, ARB, and Salary Supplements); § 2.2-3711(A)(8), to consult with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters (Beacon Theater Board legal billing). Councilor Rapole seconds motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

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

Certification Under Virginia Code § 2.2-3712 (D): Were only public business matters (l) lawfully exempted from open-meeting requirements and (2) identified in the closed-meeting motion discussed in the closed meeting?

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

REPORT OF THE CITY MANAGER

City Manager Vincent Jones welcomed the Mayor, Vice Mayor Joyner, and members of City Council during his first official council meeting. He expressed his appreciation to Interim City Manager Michael Rogers and Deputy City Manager Stacey Jordan for their leadership and service during the transition period. Mr. Jones stated that he had already "hit the ground running" and was actively refining his 90-day plan for the city. As part of his initial efforts, he reported attending several regional meetings, including the Riverside Regional Jail Board meeting, the Crater Youth Care Commission meeting, where he will serve as Vice President, and the Civilian Military Council meeting with representatives from Fort Gregg-Adams. He explained that these meetings are helping him establish regional partnerships and become engaged in matters affecting the City of Hopewell. Mr. Jones also informed Council that he has been meeting with department directors and employees at their respective work locations to better understand City operations and build relationships with staff. During these visits, he has emphasized several key priorities that will guide the organization moving forward, including providing excellent customer service to residents, fostering mutual respect among employees, encouraging direct communication, and promoting collaboration across departments. He stated that these principles are intended to build upon the positive momentum already established by City Council and the City's leadership team. Before concluding his remarks, Mr. Jones advised Council and the public of a proposed Virginia American Water Company (VAWC) rate increase that would raise water rates by approximately 30 percent. He explained that residents could submit comments regarding the proposal to the Virginia State Corporation Commission by June 3 or register by that same date to participate in the public hearing scheduled for June 10. He noted that information regarding the proposal, including instructions for submitting comments online or by mail and details about the public hearing, had been made available on the City's website and social media platforms to ensure residents had multiple opportunities to participate in the public comment process. Following his report, Mr. Jones transitioned the meeting to the next agenda item, a resolution recognizing local businesses, and invited Mr. Kyle English to join him at the podium to present the item.

Proclamations Recognizing Businesses in Hopewell for 50+ Years – Kyle English, Business Retention and Expansion Specialist/External Relations Officer

Kyle English presented a special recognition honoring long-standing Hopewell businesses that have served the community for at least 50 years. He noted that while the list was not intended to be comprehensive, the 15 businesses being recognized have operated continuously within the City of Hopewell for a minimum of five decades. Mr. English stated that these businesses have persevered through changing economic conditions, celebrated milestones alongside the community, created employment opportunities, supported local families, and remained committed to the City throughout their many years of service. He emphasized that their longevity reflects not only strong business leadership but also the trust and lasting relationships they have built with generations of Hopewell residents. He further remarked that these businesses represent much more than commercial establishments, describing them as an important part of Hopewell's history, identity, and community fabric. On behalf of the city, he thanked each business for its continued investment in Hopewell and for the lasting contributions made to the local economy and the community.

Mr. English explained that representatives from each business would be recognized individually and invited to the front of the Council Chambers to receive a proclamation from the mayor. He advised that the recognitions would be presented in alphabetical order.

The first business recognized was the Bowling Center of Hopewell, established in 1955. Mr. English stated that the Bowling Center has remained a cherished community tradition and a valued member of Hopewell's business community for decades. Through league play, recreational activities, and family entertainment, the business has provided year-round enjoyment for generations of residents and visitors. He noted that the owner, Robert DeGolias, was unable to attend the meeting.

The second business recognized was Broadway Garage, established in 1958. Mr. English highlighted the business's long-standing reputation for providing quality automotive body work and mechanical repair services. He stated that for decades Broadway Garage has offered dependable automotive services that have helped keep vehicles operating safely, efficiently, and in excellent condition, making it a trusted resource for the Hopewell community.

Kyle English continued recognizing Hopewell's legacy businesses that have served the community for more than 50 years. He recognized Firestone Complete Auto Care for its 65 years of service in Hopewell, highlighting the business's longstanding commitment to providing trusted automotive services, including tire sales, oil changes, wheel alignments, and brake repairs. He noted that, supported by more than a century of industry experience, Firestone has remained dedicated to helping Hopewell residents keep their vehicles operating safely and reliably for generations. English acknowledged that no representatives from Firestone were able to attend the meeting to accept the recognition.

English then recognized Harlan Construction and invited Jake Harlan to the front to accept the recognition. He stated that for more than 60 years, Harlan Construction has proudly served the Hopewell community as a self-performing design-build general contractor known for its professionalism, integrity, and quality workmanship. He emphasized that, as a family-owned and operated business, the company has experienced steady growth while building lasting relationships with its customers and consistently striving to exceed expectations through its commitment to excellence and service to the community.

Kyle English recognized Hopewell Iron and Metal Company (MCO) as another of Hopewell's long-standing legacy businesses, noting the company's many years of service as a recycler and processor of both ferrous and non-ferrous materials. He highlighted MCO's important role in promoting environmental sustainability and responsible resource management within the community. English stated that the company has successfully combined industry expertise with a strong commitment to environmental stewardship while continuing to contribute to a cleaner, stronger, and more sustainable Hopewell. He also noted that no representatives from Hopewell Iron and Metal Company were able to attend the meeting to accept the recognition.

Kyle English recognized J.T. Morriss & Son Funeral Home as one of Hopewell's longstanding legacy businesses, noting that the funeral home has faithfully served the community since its founding in 1959. He described the business as a pillar of trust and compassion, emphasizing its longstanding commitment to supporting families during times of loss. English acknowledged the funeral home's dedication to providing comfort, care, and professional service while helping families find peace during some of life's most difficult moments. He also noted that members of the management team, including Evan Corell, Jonathan Terry, and Brandon Woody, were unable to attend the meeting to accept the recognition.

Kyle English next recognized J.W. Enoch, Inc. and invited Mr. Enoch to the front to accept the recognition. He noted that the company, originally established in 1920, has played a vital role in the growth and development of both Hopewell and Central Virginia for more than a century. English highlighted the company's extensive contributions across multiple industries, including building supplies, residential construction, manufacturing, and commercial and industrial general contracting. He emphasized that J.W. Enoch, Inc. has remained an integral part of Hopewell's business community through its continued commitment to providing high-quality turnkey construction services. Following the presentation and a photograph, English concluded by thanking Mr. Enoch and remarked that he was also a proud BMI supporter.

Kyle English recognized Radkey & Associates Insurance and invited Mr. Orion Radkey to the front to accept the recognition. He stated that the company, founded more than 50 years ago with a single office in Hopewell, has grown into one of the largest independent insurance agencies in Virginia while maintaining its strong commitment to serving the local community. English highlighted the agency's reputation for providing trusted guidance and personalized service, offering a wide range of insurance solutions for both individuals and businesses. He noted that through its dedication to customer service and comprehensive coverage options, Radkey & Associates continues to help protect families, businesses, and communities throughout the region.

Kyle English next recognized Randolph Market, describing it as a community favorite, and invited Chris Neal to the front to accept the recognition. He noted that since 1941, Randolph Market has been a beloved hometown grocery store and an important part of the Hopewell community. English highlighted the market's reputation for its exceptional butcher shop, fresh produce, friendly customer service, and commitment to providing quality products. He stated that Randolph Market has earned the loyalty of generations of residents while continuing to reflect the close-knit spirit and values of the Hopewell community. Following the presentation, a photograph was taken, and English thanked Mr. Neal for attending and accepting the recognition on behalf of the business.

Kyle English recognized Rose's Discount Store as one of Hopewell's longstanding legacy businesses, noting that the retailer has served the community since 1967. He stated that for generations, Rose's has provided affordable merchandise and everyday essentials to local residents, becoming a reliable and familiar shopping destination. English emphasized the company's continued commitment to offering value and convenience to Hopewell shoppers throughout its many years of service. He also noted that representatives from Rose's management were unable to attend the meeting to accept the recognition.

Kyle English recognized Rosa's Italian Restaurant and invited Mr. Johnny to the front to accept the recognition. He noted that the restaurant is celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026, marking five decades of serving the Hopewell community. English stated that Rosa's has proudly continued Mama Rose's tradition of authentic Old-World recipes and bold, classic Italian flavors. He highlighted the restaurant's commitment to quality and freshness, noting that it uses only the freshest ingredients without preservatives while personally overseeing every detail to ensure a welcoming atmosphere and memorable dining experience for its customers. After presenting the recognition, English expressed his appreciation for the restaurant, thanking the owners and commenting that he loved their food before thanking them for their many years of service to the community.

Kyle English recognized Sherwin-Williams as one of Hopewell's longstanding legacy businesses, noting that the company has operated in the city since 1957. He highlighted Sherwin-Williams' commitment to serving professional, commercial, industrial, and residential customers by providing industry-leading paints, coatings, and expert product knowledge. English stated that the company has remained a trusted local resource for innovative solutions and dependable service while contributing to the Hopewell community for nearly seven decades. He also noted that Robert Brown, the local manager, was unable to attend the meeting to accept the recognition.

Kyle English recognized Sly Plumbing as another of Hopewell's legacy businesses, noting that the locally owned and operated company has served the community since 1958 and has been providing reliable plumbing services for more than 60 years. He explained that Sly Plumbing is a full-service company offering plumbing, heating, cooling, and gas piping services for both repairs and new installations. English highlighted that the licensed and insured business serves residential, commercial, and industrial clients while delivering dependable service across all major brands. He also noted that the company is owned by Brad Crowder, who was unable to attend the meeting to accept the recognition.

Kyle English recognized Southern Auto & Cap Sales as one of Hopewell's long-established legacy businesses, noting that the company was founded in 1961. He stated that, built on the principles of trust, integrity, and respect, Southern Auto & Cap Sales has earned a strong reputation as a local provider of quality cars, trucks, and automotive accessories. English highlighted the company's commitment to delivering dependable service, competitive pricing, and customer satisfaction, emphasizing that these values have helped the business earn the loyalty and trust of the Hopewell community over many years. He also noted that the business is currently owned by Darrell Retta, who prefers not to receive public recognition and therefore was not in attendance.

Kyle English concluded the legacy business recognition ceremony by recognizing Truist Bank, noting that the financial institution has served the Hopewell community since 1973. He stated that Truist has been a longstanding financial partner to local individuals, families, and businesses by providing a wide range of banking and financial services. English emphasized the bank's continued commitment to relationship-driven customer service and investment in the local community, noting that Truist remains dedicated to helping Hopewell grow and thrive. He also acknowledged that the Hopewell branch is managed by Forrest Cleveland, who was unable to attend because he was out of town.

After the final recognition, English thanked the mayor and members of City Council for providing the opportunity to honor Hopewell's longstanding business community. He stated that the evening's recognitions were not intended to be comprehensive and expressed the City's hope to recognize additional legacy businesses in the coming months. English concluded by again thanking Council for the opportunity to celebrate the businesses whose decades of service have made lasting contributions to the Hopewell community.

April Financials – Stacey Jordan, Deputy City Manager

Stacey Jordan, Finance Director, presented the April Finance Committee Report, providing an overview of the City's financial performance through April across the Citywide, General Fund, Enterprise Fund, and School Fund. Jordan reported that citywide revenues were trending 2.59% ($14.3 million) higher in Fiscal Year 2026 compared to Fiscal Year 2025, while citywide expenses were trending 1.85% ($16.9 million) higher than the previous year. She reminded Council that the City's key revenue collection months are December, April, May, and June, with upcoming real estate and personal property tax collections expected to further impact revenues. She explained that the increase in revenues was primarily attributable to higher state revenues, increased Hopewell Water Renewal (HWR) capital billing and collections, and other operational revenues. The increase in expenses was largely due to the implementation of the City's classification and compensation study, along with increased school and enterprise capital expenditures. Jordan then reviewed the General Fund, reporting that revenues were trending 1.40% ($936,000) higher than the prior fiscal year, while expenditures were trending 0.3% ($2 million) higher. She stated that the increase in expenditures was primarily related to the class and compensation study implemented the previous year, while the increase in revenues reflected a modest rise in state revenue collections. Turning to the Enterprise Fund, Jordan reported significant year-over-year growth, with revenues trending 19.53% ($13.4 million) higher and expenditures trending 6.26% ($5.9 million) higher than Fiscal Year 2025. She explained that

Hopewell Water Renewal's revenue increase resulted from implementing upfront capital billing and improved billing practices. The increase in expenditures reflected ongoing work on major capital projects, including projects associated with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) consent order. She noted that Hopewell Water Renewal had spent approximately $6.8 million year-to-date on capital projects compared to $1.5 million during the same period in the previous fiscal year. During the discussion, a Council member asked whether the City had received the anticipated $250,000 Advance Virginia grant intended to support improvements at the wastewater treatment plant under the DEQ consent order. Jordan responded that the funds had not yet been received. She explained that City staff had a meeting scheduled with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) later that week to finalize the memorandum of agreement necessary to move the funding process forward. Jordan then reviewed the School Fund, reporting that revenues were trending 5.94% ($12.4 million) higher than the previous fiscal year, while expenditures were trending 3.71% ($19.7 million) higher. She explained that decreases in federal revenues were primarily related to the expiration of ESSER grant funding, while increased operational expenditures reflected the school division's Fiscal Year 2026 operations. She also noted that the city was awaiting approximately $1.3 million in third-quarter Head Start reimbursement funding. Jordan informed Council that the Citywide, General Fund, Enterprise Fund, and School Fund financials had all been projected through the end of the fiscal year. Based on those projections, the City anticipated finishing Fiscal Year 2026 with approximately $977,000 in citywide revenues exceeding expenditures and an estimated $1.3 million surplus in the General Fund, indicating a positive overall financial position heading into year-end. She concluded her report with updates on accounts payable, debt service, and the annual audit. Jordan reported that during April, the city processed 1,828 invoices totaling approximately $6.74 million. She advised Council that all debt payments remained current, with approximately $1.8 million in debt service remaining for the balance of the fiscal year. Looking ahead to the Fiscal Year 2026 audit, Jordan stated that City staff had begun year-end planning with external auditor David Foley, who was scheduled to begin on-site audit work in August. In response to a Council question regarding the timeline for completing the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), Jordan explained that while the City was targeting November 15 for completion, the official submission deadline remained December 15. She added that Mr. Foley had committed to making the City of Hopewell his highest priority during the upcoming audit cycle to help achieve an earlier completion date. No additional questions were raised, and the report concluded.

Stormwater Resiliency Program – Joshua Sementelli, Interim Director of Public Works, Stormwater and Engineering

Joshua Sementelli, Interim Deputy Director of Public Works and Engineering, presented an update on the City's Stormwater Resiliency Plan, outlining the City's efforts to strengthen its preparedness for flooding and other natural hazards while positioning Hopewell to qualify for future state resilience funding.

Sementelli explained that a resilience plan is intended to support the development of comprehensive local and regional strategies to address both current and future environmental challenges. He reminded Council that in 2022, the city adopted its own Stormwater Resiliency Plan, which identified short-, intermediate-, and long-term stormwater projects focused primarily on maintenance needs and localized flooding concerns. However, when the plan was submitted to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), it was not approved because it focused too heavily on maintenance projects, lacked specific implementation timelines, and did not place sufficient emphasis on nature-based stormwater solutions. He informed Council that in 2024, the Crater Planning District Commission (PDC) received funding through DCR to develop a Regional Resiliency Plan involving seven participating localities, including the City of Hopewell. Unlike the City's previous plan, the regional effort addresses a broader range of hazards beyond flooding, including extreme heat, tornadoes, severe wind events, and water quality concerns. Sementelli stated that City staff elected to participate in the regional initiative because, once approved by DCR and adopted by Council, the plan would make Hopewell eligible to pursue grant funding for implementation of identified resilience projects. Sementelli explained that the Crater PDC is partnering with Weston & Sampson to prepare the regional plan and that Hopewell staff serves on the regional steering committee to ensure the City's priorities are reflected throughout the planning process. He stated that the final plan will include a capacity needs assessment, climate vulnerability assessment, goals and objectives, and a prioritized list of resilience projects and strategies. He emphasized that the City's priorities remain in draft form and welcomed Council's input before they are finalized. Staff's current priorities include upgrading the City's aging and undersized stormwater infrastructure, retrofitting developed areas with modern stormwater controls, expanding green infrastructure and tree canopy, improving storm response readiness through enhanced equipment and coordination, increasing public education on flooding and storm preparedness, and identifying flood-prone critical facilities requiring drainage improvements or flood-proofing measures. He further outlined several draft implementation strategies designed to support those priorities. These include building local and regional capacity through additional staffing, training, and professional certifications; improving the City's readiness to pursue grant opportunities by monitoring grant cycles and continuing to utilize grant-writing services already under contract; strengthening local planning and policy by formally adopting the regional resiliency plan once complete; protecting critical infrastructure; and expanding public education and outreach related to flooding and stormwater management. Looking ahead, Sementelli said staff will continue assisting the Crater PDC with development of the regional plan, ensure Hopewell's identified projects align with the regional framework, gather Council feedback on priorities and strategies, and return with the final plan for formal Council consideration and adoption. During Council discussion, Mayor Partin asked when the regional resiliency plan would be presented for Council approval. Andrew, representing the Crater Planning District Commission, explained that the consultant, Weston & Sampson, was expected to deliver the final draft to the steering committee the following week. After steering committee review, the draft would be released for public comment before being presented to the PDC Commission for adoption, likely during its August or October meeting. Following Commission approval, the plan would be presented to each participating locality, including Hopewell, for review and adoption. Andrew indicated that Council could expect to consider the plan sometime in the September or October timeframe, with the goal of completing adoption before the end of the year so it could be accepted by FEMA and incorporated into the National Flood Insurance Program as required. Mayor Partin also requested that staff provide Council with an updated prioritized list of Hopewell's individual resilience projects, including projected implementation schedules identifying the anticipated fiscal years for each project. Sementelli agreed to provide that information. The mayor then asked City Manager Vincent Jones whether the city should consider creating a permanent grant writer position rather than relying solely on contracted grant-writing services. He noted that establishing such a position had been recommended in the City's Alvarez & Marsal Turnaround Stabilization Plan and suggested it could strengthen the City's ability to compete for additional grant funding while reducing reliance on local dollars. City Manager Jones responded that he and Finance Director Stacey Jordan had recently begun reviewing the City's existing grant-writing agreement and wanted additional time to evaluate whether maintaining the current contract or creating an in-house position would be the more effective approach. He agreed that pursuing additional grant funding was an important priority and stated that staff would continue evaluating the City's options.

ACFR Overview – Stacey Jordan, Deputy City Manager

Stacey Jordan, Finance Director, presented an overview of the City's Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) following its completion and submission. She explained that the purpose of the presentation was to help both City Council and the public better understand the contents of the ACFR, which covers the City's financial position for the period July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, and summarizes the City's financial condition as of the close of the fiscal year. Jordan began by reviewing the audit opinions issued by the City's external auditors. She explained that the city once again received an unmodified (clean) audit opinion, the highest level of assurance an independent auditor can provide. She noted that an unmodified opinion confirms the City's financial statements are fairly presented in accordance with Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) and contain no material misstatements, fraud, or misappropriation. Jordan emphasized that the city has now received an unmodified opinion on its ACFR for five consecutive years. She also reviewed the remaining possible audit opinions—qualified, adverse, and disclaimer—explaining that none of those opinions applied to any area of the City's Fiscal Year 2025 audit. Jordan then walked Council through the major components of the ACFR, beginning with the basic financial statements. She explained that the report contains government-wide financial statements, governmental fund statements, proprietary fund statements, and fiduciary fund statements. She described the Statement of Net Position as the City's balance sheet, providing a snapshot of the City's assets, liabilities, and net position at fiscal year-end. She reported that the City's net position totaled approximately $50.2 million, with unrestricted net position totaling approximately $17.2 million, while the remainder represented investments in capital assets. She explained that these statements identify the City's available assets, outstanding obligations to vendors and bondholders, and resources available to support future operations. Continuing her presentation, Jordan reviewed the Statement of Activities, which summarizes revenues and expenditures for both governmental and business-type activities. She identified the City's primary governmental revenue sources as property taxes, other local taxes, use of money and property, state revenues, charges for services, and federal revenues. She also reviewed the City's major expenditure categories, noting that public safety and education represented the largest functional areas of spending, followed by general government, judicial administration, public works, health and welfare, parks and recreation, community development, and debt service. Jordan next explained the City's governmental fund financial statements, describing the General Fund as the City's primary operating fund, alongside capital project funds and non-major funds. She reported that the General Fund balance totaled approximately $43.5 million, while capital projects reflected a negative balance associated with expenditures exceeding available assets during the reporting period. She then devoted significant time to explaining the City's fund balance classifications, noting that many questions from the public centered on understanding what the reported fund balance actually represents. She clarified that fund balance is not synonymous with cash and may include non-cash assets such as receivables. Jordan reviewed the five classifications of fund balance—no spendable, restricted, committed, assigned, and unassigned—and explained how expenditures are applied in order from restricted funds through unassigned funds. She also summarized recommendations from the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) and Moody's regarding appropriate reserve levels and reviewed the City's financial policies adopted by Council in 2024, including maintaining an unassigned General Fund balance equal to 20% of expenditures (approximately $10.9 million), a 5% Budget Stabilization Fund (approximately $2.7 million) for emergencies or revenue shortfalls, and a $3 million Debt Service and Capital Reserve to offset future capital projects and debt obligations. Jordan reported that the City's Fiscal Year 2025 unassigned General Fund balance totaled approximately $34.4 million. Reviewing the Statement of Revenues, Expenditures, and Changes in Fund Balance, Jordan reported that General Fund revenues exceeded expenditures by approximately $7.8 million, representing more than a 12% positive variance for the fiscal year. She then summarized the City's proprietary funds, which include Hopewell Water Renewal, sewer, solid waste, stormwater, and the Beacon Theatre, explaining that these enterprise operations are reported separately through statements of revenues, expenses, changes in net position, and cash flows. She noted that the proprietary fund cash flow statements help determine the City's ability to generate sufficient cash to meet future obligations and identify potential external financing needs. Jordan also reviewed the notes to the financial statements, highlighting that the City's total long-term obligations were approximately $86.2 million, including $21.8 million in general obligation bonds backed by the City's full faith and credit. She noted that approximately $2.3 million of those obligations were due within one year and explained that the City's long-term liabilities also include pension obligations, other post-employment benefits (OPEB), revenue bonds, landfill obligations, and school-related debt. She concluded by explaining the supplementary information contained in the ACFR, including budget-to-actual schedules, pension and OPEB information, non-major fund schedules, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, stormwater funds, cemetery perpetual care funds, and agency funds. Jordan also noted that the report includes historical tax collection data, allowing readers to review the City's real estate and other tax collection rates over time. During Council discussion, Vice Mayor Joynor asked when Council would receive the auditor's presentation, noting that the external auditor, David Foley, typically provides a formal audit report. Jordan responded that she would contact Mr. Foley to coordinate the presentation. Mayor Partin then commented that Council would have another opportunity at the conclusion of Fiscal Year 2026 to review the ACFR in detail with the completed report in hand. Jordan agreed, and no further questions were raised.

2025 Diagnostic Bond Rating – Stacey Jordan, Deputy City Manager

Jimmy Sanderson of Davenport & Company presented an update on the City's credit profile and debt position, focusing on how the City's Fiscal Year 2025 financial results affect its standing under Moody's rating methodology. At Council's request, Sanderson moved directly to the updated analysis rather than reviewing the introductory debt information. He explained that Moody's evaluates local governments through a scorecard that considers the economy, financial performance, institutional framework, and leverage, including debt and pension liabilities. Moody's may then adjust the numerical score through specific "notching" factors and other considerations that provide the agency with additional discretion when assigning a final credit rating. Sanderson reported that the city improved in two important areas during Fiscal Year 2025. The first improvement was in financial performance, primarily because of stronger liquidity reflected in the Fiscal Year 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report. The second improvement occurred in the leverage category, where the city moved into the AAA, or very strong, range. He explained that this change was largely attributable to a revised pension liability calculation and discount factor, which reduced the amount of the City's reported pension obligation compared with Fiscal Year 2024. As a result, the City's overall Moody's scorecard improved to approximately 2.7, which corresponds to an Aa2 rating and places the city near the stronger end of that rating category. Sanderson clarified that the scorecard did not include debt issued after the close of Fiscal Year 2025 or the additional borrowing currently being considered. However, Davenport performed a separate calculation that incorporated both the 2025 borrowing and the proposed new debt. That analysis increased the score only slightly, from approximately 2.7 to 2.83, leaving the city well within the Aa2 category. He described this as a positive indication that the additional borrowing was not expected to materially weaken the City's numerical rating position. Using a comparative "heat map," Sanderson showed how Hopewell's financial indicators compared with surrounding jurisdictions. He explained that green represented AAA-level performance, beige represented Aa-level performance, and pink represented A-level or lower performance. Hopewell's results generally fell within the green and beige categories, indicating performance at the Aa level or higher in many areas. He noted that certain economic measures are difficult for the City to influence in the short term but stated that the City's overall scorecard compared favorably with nearby localities. Sanderson also compared Hopewell's calculated score with Petersburg's, noting that Petersburg's scorecard also resulted in an Aa2 numerical score, while its assigned rating was higher due to adjustments made by Moody's. In response to a Council question, Sanderson explained that some rating adjustments are based on clearly defined factors contained in Moody's methodology, while other adjustments fall within the agency's broader "other considerations" category and are more subjective. He characterized that portion of the rating process as less transparent and said it gives the agency flexibility to move a rating above or below the scorecard result. Mayor Partin asked whether the City's approximately 14.5% improvement from Fiscal Year 2024 to Fiscal Year 2025, combined with the City's work to complete prior audits and obtain unmodified opinions, strengthened the case for maintaining the Aa2 rating. Sanderson responded that the improvements clearly supported the City's position. He stated that Davenport would emphasize that the City had corrected its prior audit issues, completed its audits, and established stronger financial procedures. However, he cautioned that the rating agencies may still want evidence that the city can consistently complete future audits on time. He praised Finance Director Stacey Jordan and City staff for their work and said Davenport's position would be that the City had "righted the ship" and put processes in place to sustain timely financial reporting. Before concluding, Sanderson informed Council that the city expected to close on the Fiscal Year 2026 school bond financing on June 10. Council confirmed that the financing related to the school bonds, and Sanderson indicated that the transaction was progressing well. Mayor Partin then asked City Manager Vincent Jones and Finance Director Stacey Jordan whether a date had been established for the bond reinstatement working group to reconvene. City Manager Jones responded that staff was still coordinating the meeting and would notify Council once a date was finalized.

Employee of the Quarter – Tabitha Martinez, Director of Recreation and Parks

Tabitha Martinez, Director of Parks and Recreation, appeared before City Council on behalf of the City's Vision Committee to recognize another outstanding employee through the City's Employee of the Quarter program. She welcomed Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council members and stated that the committee was once again honoring one of the City's exceptional employees. Martinez introduced the Vision Committee Chair, Patrice, to read the nomination and noted that the employee being recognized, James Jones, was present in the audience. She also invited Planning and Development Director Chris Ward to offer remarks following the presentation since Mr. Jones is a member of his department. Reading the nomination, Patrice announced that James Jones, the City's GIS Manager in the Planning and Development Department, had been selected as Employee of the Quarter. She noted that Jones had received two separate nominations from employees in different departments, demonstrating the significant impact he has across the organization. The nomination praised his exceptional expertise in geographic information systems (GIS), explaining that his work supports critical daily operations and plays an important role in advancing public safety. His efforts have improved street centerline mapping, address point accuracy, hydrant mapping, pre-incident planning tools, and numerous other mapping resources relied upon by first responders. The nomination emphasized that his attention to detail ensures mapping information remains accurate, current, and readily available, directly improving emergency response efficiency, operational readiness, and community safety.The nomination further highlighted Jones' collaborative approach, noting that he works effectively with every City department and possesses the ability to explain complex technical concepts in a way that makes GIS tools practical and accessible to non-technical users. His understanding of departmental operational needs and ability to translate them into effective GIS solutions has strengthened teamwork and improved coordination throughout the organization. Jones was also recognized for his leadership, proactive approach to identifying opportunities for improvement, and ability to successfully guide projects from initial concept through implementation. His work has modernized the City's mapping systems while enhancing emergency preparedness and response capabilities. Colleagues described him as dependable, positive, and consistently willing to go above and beyond to assist others while maintaining a high standard of quality. The nomination concluded by recognizing his professionalism, teamwork, leadership, and commitment to excellence before presenting him with the Employee of the Quarter Award. Following the presentation, Martinez invited Planning and Development Director Chris Ward to share remarks. Ward congratulated Jones on the well-deserved recognition, stating that from the moment Jones joined the department, he knew he would become an invaluable asset to both the department and the city. He praised Jones for working effectively with every department, requiring little oversight, taking initiative, and consistently demonstrating professionalism and leadership. Ward concluded by thanking Jones for his outstanding contributions and reaffirming that the recognition was well deserved.

Overview for the Creation of the South-Central Transportation Authority – Vincent Jones, City Manager

Jay Ellington, Executive Director of the Crater Planning District Commission (PDC), presented an update on the proposed South Central Virginia Transportation Authority, a regional initiative designed to provide local governments with greater control over transportation funding and project prioritization. Ellington welcomed newly appointed City Manager Vincent Jones and reminded Council that he had previously presented the proposal in January. He explained that he was visiting each participating locality again to provide additional information, answer questions, and build support before seeking enabling legislation from the Virginia General Assembly. Ellington began by reviewing the concept of regional transportation authority's already operating in other parts of Virginia, including Northern Virginia, Hampton Roads, and the Richmond region. He explained that the proposed South Central Virginia Transportation Authority would encompass a larger regional footprint extending across central and south-central Virginia. The primary objective of the authority would be to provide local control over transportation funding, allowing regional leaders to determine transportation priorities and invest directly in projects rather than relying solely on the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) funding process. He reminded Council that Hopewell had already adopted a resolution of support for the proposal earlier in the year and stated that four additional localities had also endorsed the concept. He noted that Halifax County had recently requested inclusion in the proposed authority after learning more about the initiative, demonstrating growing regional interest. Ellington also highlighted the authority's potential to support future regional transportation projects, including improvements related to high-speed passenger rail connecting Richmond and Raleigh, North Carolina. While emphasizing that rail represented only one possible investment area, he explained that the authority could provide an additional funding mechanism for public transit and other regional transportation initiatives as future opportunities arise. A significant portion of Ellington's presentation focused on the authority's proposed funding structure. He explained that the authority would receive revenues from existing state gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, along with an additional 0.7% regional sales tax, increasing the regional sales tax rate from 6.3% to 7.0%. He emphasized that the additional sales tax would amount to approximately seven cents per $10 of purchases while generating substantial transportation funding that would remain within the region. These revenues would provide a stable, locally controlled funding source capable of matching state transportation grants, accelerating project delivery, and advancing projects that might otherwise wait many years in VDOT's funding system. He cited recent regional projects that required 18 to 20 years to receive state funding and noted that locally controlled matching funds could significantly shorten those timelines. Using financial projections prepared with assistance from VDOT, Ellington outlined the anticipated distribution of transportation revenues generated within Hopewell. He estimated that the city would receive slightly more than $2 million annually in transportation funding. Under the proposed formula, approximately 55% of those revenues would be returned directly to Hopewell for local transportation projects, including street paving, asphalt overlay, sidewalks, trails, and other transportation improvements. Approximately 35% would be dedicated to regional transportation projects, with Hopewell's representative participating in decisions regarding the allocation of those funds, while the remaining 10% would support public transit initiatives coordinated throughout the region. Ellington then described the proposed governance structure for the authority. He explained that, unlike the Central Virginia Transportation Authority (CVTA) in the Richmond region, which allocates representation based on population, the proposed South Central Virginia Transportation Authority would operate under a "one jurisdiction, one vote" model. He stated that this approach reflects the Crater region's long history of successful regional cooperation and would ensure equal representation for every participating locality regardless of population size. He further explained that a participating locality or regional entity would serve as the authority's legal and fiscal entity to receive state revenues, while the Crater Planning District Commission would administer the authority's transportation programs. Ellington concluded by explaining that the authority would possess many of the same powers as other transportation authorities throughout Virginia, including the ability to issue debt, finance transportation projects, conduct long-range planning, maintain financial accountability through annual audits, and oversee regional transportation investments. He emphasized that the ultimate goal of the authority is to improve quality of life, support economic development, strengthen regional transportation connectivity, and ensure that the region has the resources necessary to keep pace with future growth. He informed Council that he intended to continue meeting with local governments throughout the region before introducing enabling legislation in the General Assembly. He expressed his hope of filing the legislation as early as possible in the legislative session to demonstrate the region's commitment to the initiative. No questions were raised by Council, and Mayor Partin thanked Ellington for his presentation.

ACTIONS RESULTING FROM CLOSED MEETING

PRAYER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Prayer by Reverend Blow, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, led by Mayor Partin

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice Mayor Joyner makes a motion to adopt an amended consent agenda to have C3 moved to the next city council meeting. Councilor Daye seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITIZENS

ROGER SANDERS - Roger Sanders thanked City staff, specifically City Manager Vincent Jones, Joshua Sementelli, and Finance Director Stacey Jordan, for addressing his earlier concerns regarding the roadway conditions in the King's Court neighborhood. He stated that the update provided during the street paving presentation confirmed exactly what he had been requesting, emphasizing that the quality of the previous work was not acceptable and that, considering the amount of money spent, the roadway repairs should be completed properly. Mayor Partin responded by asking staff to ensure that Mr. Sanders' contact information was available so that they could provide him with an update once Joshua Sementelli completed his review of the roadway conditions. Mr. Sanders identified the area of concern as Dunlop Street and Orange Street, noting that the pavement continues to deteriorate, with large potholes becoming worse as motorists attempt to drive around them and rainfall further damages the roadway. He expressed his hope that the city would complete paving improvements along the entire section of the roadway. Mayor Partin explained that the pavement assessment presented earlier in the meeting confirmed that the area was among those needing attention and that the data would help prioritize improvements sooner rather than later. Mr. Sanders again thanked Council and staff for listening to his concerns and reiterated his request that the roadway be repaired properly before conditions continue to worsen.

REGULAR BUSINESS

R-1 (Public Hearing) Right-of-way vacation request from PMT Investors LLC for a portion of an unimproved right-of-way adjacent to Parcels 067-0015 and 073-0515 – Chris Ward, Director of Planning and Development

Chris Ward, Planning and Development Director, presented the first public hearing for a request to vacate a portion of the public right-of-way on Maryville Avenue. He explained that PMT Investors, LLC had requested the vacation of approximately 1,089 square feet of an unimproved public right-of-way located between Parcels 0670015 and 0730515 in Ward 2, which is zoned R-3 Residential. Ward acknowledged that the request was somewhat complex and used maps to illustrate the proposal. He explained that the section proposed for vacation was shown in blue and currently separates two parcels owned by the applicant. He further noted that an unusual situation exists where a portion of an existing City street crosses private property rather than dedicated public right-of-way. To resolve this longstanding issue, the applicant had offered to dedicate the portion of private property containing the roadway to the City in exchange for the vacation of the unused right-of-way, effectively creating a land exchange that would properly align both the roadway and property boundaries. Ward displayed the proposed final property configuration, illustrating how the parcels would appear following the right-of-way vacation and roadway dedication. He advised Council that the request had been reviewed by the City's utility providers and relevant departments. Virginia American Water and Hopewell Water Renewal indicated they had no objection to the vacation; however, Water Renewal requested that a 10-foot easement be retained to protect an existing sewer line. Public Works supported the proposal and agreed to accept the roadway dedication, while Stormwater and the Fire Marshal also reported no concerns. Based on the departmental reviews, Ward recommended that City Council approve the request to vacate the unimproved right-of-way, require the 10-foot sewer easement, and accept the roadway dedication offered by the applicant, noting that the proposal would resolve a longstanding property and roadway alignment issue. Mayor Partin opened the required public hearing. Although no speakers had signed up in advance, one individual attempted to address Council after the hearing was opened. The mayor explained that, under Council's rules of procedure, speakers must register before the meeting and therefore could not be recognized at that time. Seeing no additional requests to speak, the public hearing was closed. Council had no questions for either staff or the applicant. A motion was made and seconded to approve the right-of-way vacation request submitted by PMT Investors, LLC for the unimproved portion of the public right-of-way adjacent to Parcels 0670015 and 0730515, subject to the recommended sewer easement and roadway dedication, as presented.

Vice Mayor Joyner makes a motion to approve the right-of-way vacation request from PMT Investors LLC for a portion of an unimproved right-of-way adjacent to Parcels 067-0015 and 073-0515, Councilor Ellis seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

R-2 City of Hopewell Schools Budget – Janel English, Director of Finance for Public Schools

Janel English representing Hopewell City Public Schools, delivered a detailed presentation to City Council expanding on the budget discussion held during the May 11 work session. She thanked Council for the opportunity to provide additional information and explained that the presentation was organized into five sections: an introduction to the school division's purpose and priorities, factors affecting budget development, the Fiscal Year 2027 budget process and proposal, recent accomplishments, and opportunities for strengthening the partnership between the School Board and City Council. Throughout the presentation, English emphasized the importance of improving communication, increasing collaboration, developing a deeper understanding of each organization's needs, and building a unified public commitment to the success of Hopewell's students. She also stressed the importance of supporting the transition of the division's incoming superintendent and creating additional opportunities for Council members to engage directly with the schools. English reviewed the School Board's strategic priorities, explaining that the budget is designed to align with the division's educational goals. Those priorities include improving accreditation across all schools, recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, delivering high-quality instruction, strengthening the balanced calendar model by expanding required remediation opportunities during intersession periods, continuing to modernize school facilities, maintaining competitive employee salaries and benefits, reducing student-to-teacher ratios, ensuring third-grade students achieve reading proficiency, expanding dual enrollment and associate degree opportunities, and continuing to grow the division's teacher pre-apprenticeship program that prepares Hopewell High School students to become future educators. She reiterated that the division's mission is to ensure students are seen, heard, loved, and equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to contribute positively to society and ultimately return to strengthen the Hopewell community. Turning to budget development, English outlined several major factors affecting the division's financial needs, including rising healthcare costs, staffing requirements to meet student needs, competitive employee compensation, enrollment trends, technology replacement needs, and deferred capital improvements. She emphasized that student demographics play a significant role in budgeting, noting that the division serves approximately 3,900 students across seven schools, with 82% identified as students of color and 78% classified as economically disadvantaged. She explained that research consistently shows higher levels of poverty require additional educational supports and specialized programming to address learning gaps and improve student outcomes. English also addressed enrollment trends, explaining that Hopewell's declining enrollment mirrors statewide and national patterns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and declining birth rates. She stated that projections from the Weldon Cooper Center indicate enrollment should stabilize around the 2028–2029 school year. Responding to previous Council discussions, she presented data showing that only a small number of students leave Hopewell Public Schools each year to attend local private schools, indicating that private school enrollment has not been a significant factor in the division's enrollment decline. She also reviewed the division's ongoing capital needs, highlighting the continuing priorities of replacing the HVAC system at Hopewell High School, repairing the roof at Carter G. Woodson Middle School, and resuming the school bus replacement schedule. English again thanked City Council for funding the high school's HVAC project, noting that the division had recently been spending as much as $10,000 per day to maintain the aging system before the project was approved. Reviewing staffing, English reported that the division had eliminated 142 positions, including 80 support staff positions, 54 teaching positions, and 8 administrative positions, over recent years as part of ongoing budget reductions. She explained that of the division's 694 employees, 389 positions are funded through the State's Standards of Quality (SOQ), 183 positions are locally funded, and 122 positions are supported through grants. She also reviewed current student-to-teacher ratios, noting that elementary class sizes generally range from 18 to 20 students per teacher, while secondary core academic classes average 19 to 21 students per teacher. Although those ratios remain favorable, she noted they have increased since 2015 as staffing reductions have occurred. English further discussed teacher recruitment and compensation, explaining that while Hopewell has remained competitive by utilizing state-funded salary increases, the division has limited flexibility to provide additional raises for locally funded positions without additional local support. English then transitioned to the Fiscal Year 2027 budget proposal. She explained that because the Virginia General Assembly had not yet adopted a final state budget, the school division developed its proposed budget using the Governor's budget as the most conservative funding scenario. She reviewed projected revenue sources, noting that the percentages of state, federal, and local funding remain relatively stable while grant revenues decline due to the expiration of several federal grants. She also reviewed expenditure categories, explaining that instructional spending decreases largely because expiring grant-funded positions cannot be continued. English reported that after meeting with City officials following the previous work session, the administration substantially reduced its original staffing request from approximately $1.3 million to $550,000 by identifying additional reductions. Even with those reductions, she explained that additional funding would still be needed to address increased insurance costs, Governor's School tuition, Chromebook replacement, a proposed 2% employee salary increase, maintenance needs, and the completion of the division's financial software implementation. She stated that, based on the Governor's proposed state budget, the division would receive approximately $2.6 million in additional state funding but still faced approximately $1.1 million in remaining budget reductions. She presented a prioritized list of potential cuts and concluded by explaining that the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget remains balanced while requesting level local funding from the city. Concluding the presentation, English highlighted numerous accomplishments achieved despite the division's financial challenges. She noted that Hopewell Public Schools has been recognized as one of

Virginia's "Schools of Innovation" for six consecutive years, continues expanding its teacher pre-apprenticeship program, and was the first school division in Virginia to implement a division-wide cell phone ban. She praised the stability of the division's leadership, noting that principals average 21 years of service and assistant principals average 11 years. English reported continued improvement in student achievement, increasing teacher retention from 79% to 91%, graduation rates at or above the state average, improving attendance trends, and positive teacher and parent survey results demonstrating strong confidence in the division's culture, student support, and academic standards. She also addressed several misconceptions about Hopewell Public Schools, explaining that the balanced calendar continues to meet its intended purpose by providing additional learning opportunities and student support, and that Hopewell actually employs fewer inexperienced and unlicensed teachers than the statewide average. English concluded by proposing a stronger ongoing partnership between the School Board and City Council through quarterly joint work sessions focused on topics such as student achievement, teacher recruitment and retention, budget development, and capital improvement planning. She emphasized that Hopewell's schools belong to the entire community and that their success is directly connected to the City's future growth and economic vitality. She thanked Council for its continued partnership and support, reaffirmed the division's commitment to collaboration and transparency, and closed by stating that the division's work will continue with "unwavering hope until all the children are well."

R-3 Resolution in Support of Southern Environmental Law Center's (SELC) Public Regarding AdvanSix's Draft DEQ Permit –
Anthony Bessette, City Attorney

Anthony Bessette, City Attorney, presented a resolution concerning AdvanSix Hopewell's request to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) for a significant modification to its Federal Clean Air Act operating permit, which has been in effect since June 2024. Bessette explained that the Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC) had intervened in the DEQ permitting process by submitting formal comments requesting that additional environmental studies be conducted and that DEQ hold a public hearing before taking further action on the permit modification request. He advised Council that the resolution before them would formally express the City's support for SELC's requests, urging DEQ to complete the requested studies and conduct a public hearing before considering issuance of the modified operating permit. Following the presentation, Mayor Partin thanked Bessette for working collaboratively with the Southern Environmental Law Center on the matter. He stated that it was important for the City of Hopewell to ensure its concerns and the concerns of its residents were heard during the permitting process. The mayor noted that many citizens had expressed concerns regarding the proposed permit modification and said he hoped DEQ would conduct an in-person public hearing to provide residents with an opportunity to ask questions, receive detailed information, and participate more fully in the review process. No additional questions were raised by Council before consideration of the resolution.

Councilor Daye makes motion to support the resolution in support of the southern environmental law center regarding advance six draft DEQ permit. Vice Mayor Joyner seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL	Mayor Partin-	Yes

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

Motion Passes 6-0

R-4 Resolution Amending the FY 2026 Budget to Fund an Operational Audit for the Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority – Stacey Jordan, Deputy City Manager

Stacey Jordan, Finance Director, presented a resolution to amend the Fiscal Year 2026 Budget to provide funding for an operational audit of the Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA). She explained that the total appropriation for the audit would be $397,000, with the funding coming from three existing sources within the City's budget. Specifically, $216,610 would be transferred from Unallocated Capital, $93,000 would come from the City's Contingency Account, and the remaining $87,390 would be appropriated from the Fund Balance Stabilization Account. Following the presentation, Mayor Partin asked if Council had any questions regarding the proposed funding sources for the audit. No questions or comments were raised by Council before consideration of the resolution.

Councilor Daye makes a motion to approve the resolution amending the FY 2026 Budget to fund an operational audit for the Hopewell Redevelopment housing authority. Vice Mayor Joyner seconds the motion.

ROLL CALL

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

Motion Passes 6-0

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

Sade' Allen

Sade' Allen, City Clerk

Johnny Partin, Mayor