

**MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 20, 2026, CITY COUNCIL AND HRHA
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING**

A SPECIAL joint meeting of the Hopewell Council and the Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority was held on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

PRESENT:

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

SB-1 Appointment of Interim Ward 6 Councilor – Hopewell City Council

During the meeting, prior to moving into the joint business portion of the agenda, Council addressed a Special Business item concerning the appointment of an Interim Ward Six City Councilor. The presiding officer announced that this item would be taken up before proceeding with joint matters. A motion was then made to appoint Mr. Malik Wheat to serve as the Interim Ward Six City Councilor.

Vice Mayor Joyner makes a motion to approve the appointment of Malik Wheat as Interim Ward Six City Councilor. 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

SB-2 Council's Vision for the HRHA – Joint Business

During the discussion, Council emphasized the need for collaboration and open communication between the City and the Housing Authority, particularly regarding issues for which the Housing Authority may lack sufficient funding. Comparisons were made to the City's working relationship with the school system, suggesting a similar cooperative approach that would include joint planning, the development of an action plan, and the sharing of resources where appropriate. The Mayor and Council discussed the possibility of addressing operational concerns through the City's budget, including allocating funds for increased police presence and enhanced crime-prevention technology within housing communities. It was noted that such efforts would require ongoing dialogue and a strengthened partnership, as the Council expressed concern that historically the City Council and the Housing Authority have operated in separate silos, interacting primarily during times of crisis or during appointment and reappointment processes.

A newly appointed board member sought clarification regarding the extent to which City staff, including the City Manager and City Attorney, could assist the Housing Authority's CEO without violating HUD regulations. The member referenced prior guidance cautioning against regulatory conflicts. In response, Vice Chair clarified that his comments were intended solely to explain HUD regulations, not to discourage cooperation. The Chair of the Housing Authority, Brenda Pelham, introduced herself and expressed the Authority's willingness to embrace challenges and work collaboratively to improve conditions within the City. She then proposed amending the agenda to include a presentation by Ms. Wilson on planned mold remediation efforts, noting that the presentation would naturally lead to further discussion.

Questions were raised regarding whether citizens would be permitted to speak, as public comment on the matter was not originally included on the agenda. It was clarified that any such participation would require an amendment to the agenda, which could only be approved by the governing body. Following this clarification, Council members agreed

to amend the agenda, and the amendment was approved, allowing the meeting to proceed.

During the meeting, the Mayor Partin formally asked whether there was a motion to amend the agenda to include an additional item, described as SB 2.5 public comments. This request was made to ensure that public comments could be properly added to the agenda in accordance with procedural requirements before they were heard.

Following the proposal to amend the agenda, a clarification was requested regarding the nature of the amendment. It was confirmed that the amendment would allow for citizen communication, similar to public comment, with a three-minute time limit per speaker. Discussion followed regarding the appropriate timing for these comments within the meeting. It was suggested that the public comments be taken immediately, prior to discussion of mold remediation, the RFP, and security camera matters. Although the Housing Authority holds regular meetings where public comment is typically allowed, this session was identified as a special meeting. An additional perspective was offered, emphasizing that some attendees, including parents with children, were present, and allowing public comment earlier in the meeting would be more considerate. After discussion, consensus was reached to proceed with citizen comments at that time, and the body agreed to include the item as an SB 2.5 public comment on the agenda.

Vice Mayor Joyner makes a motion to amend the agenda to add SB 2.5 to allow public comments. 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

April Jones-Tyler, Resident

During the SB 2.5 public comment period, April Jones-Tyler, a resident of the Thomas Rolfe location, addressed the governing body regarding multiple unresolved maintenance, health, and administrative concerns within her housing unit. Ms. Jones reported ongoing water leaks from her bathroom into the kitchen, resulting in two large holes in the kitchen ceiling and an additional leak that has not been properly cut out or repaired. She stated that her bathroom ceiling shows signs of prolonged moisture exposure and expressed serious concern due to her mold allergy, noting that these conditions have not been addressed despite submitted work orders.

Ms. Jones-Tyler further detailed numerous outstanding maintenance issues, including an unsecured toilet, missing and damaged window screens, cracked and peeling paint, and windows in the living room and kitchen that do not open or remain open and appear to be improperly secured or boarded. She also stated that her unit failed inspection prior to her move-in and provided documentation to support this claim. Additional concerns included the failure to provide a mailbox key despite a submitted work order, grievances she filed that were rejected by the Housing Board, and maintenance staff entering her unit smelling of marijuana and engaging in conversation rather than completing repairs. She indicated that maintenance visits often lacked communication regarding the specific work being performed, resulting in no meaningful progress.

In addition to physical conditions, Ms. Jones-Tyler raised issues related to lease compliance and communication, stating that she had not been provided all required lease documentation. She also reported being denied a requested transfer, receiving no information regarding her project-based voucher, and experiencing what she described as poor and unfair overall treatment. Ms. Jones-Tyler submitted documentation to substantiate her claims and concluded her remarks within the allotted three-minute time limit.

Dorothy Flowers, Resident

During the SB 2.5 public comment period, Dorothy Flowers, a long-term public housing resident, addressed the governing body regarding extensive health, safety, and administrative issues related to her former housing units. Ms. Flowers explained that she previously lived at Piper Square, initially in Unit 1533B, where she reported falling down unsafe steps and sustaining injuries to her leg and hand while already disabled. As a result, she stated she was relocated to another unit. She further reported that mold infiltrated her apartment and personal furniture and that these conditions were never fully addressed by housing staff.

Ms. Flowers detailed serious ongoing health concerns, including cancer and recent medical complications such as coughing up blood and nosebleeds, which she associated with prolonged mold exposure. She stated that repairs promised in May were delayed until November and that, despite the work performed, mold issues remained unresolved. She referenced a 2019 lawsuit filed against the Housing Authority regarding mold conditions, asserting that remediation efforts have been inadequate for years. Ms. Flowers emphasized that residents deserve safe and healthy living environments and expressed concern that mold exposure has contributed to serious illnesses and deaths among other residents.

In addition to her personal experience, Ms. Flowers raised broader concerns about deteriorating conditions across multiple housing properties, including a lack of laundry facilities, aging underground infrastructure, and unresolved sewage and plumbing issues. She noted that she has lived in public housing since 1987, has consistently paid her rent on time, and has maintained her apartment in good condition. Ms. Flowers also questioned charges assessed after she moved out in December, stating that despite providing proper notice and paying her rent, she was informed she owed additional fees rather than receiving her security deposit. She requested that these charges be reviewed, stressing that residents should not be held financially responsible for issues beyond their control. She concluded by urging officials to take meaningful action to protect residents' rights and ensure dignified, safe living conditions.

Denise (last name withheld), Resident

During the SB 2.5 public comment period, Denise, a resident at Thomas Rolfe Court, addressed the governing body regarding severe and ongoing code violations in her apartment. She stated that she has repeatedly attempted to contact Ms. Wilson and the property manager to resolve these issues but has been unable to obtain assistance, noting that they are frequently unavailable due to meetings. Ms. Denise described her frustration with the lack of responsiveness and explained that the situation has escalated to the point that she sought assistance from Legal Aid and has retained an attorney.

Ms. Denise detailed serious safety and maintenance concerns in her unit, including a deteriorating bathroom floor that allows her foot to go through it while her grandson resides in the home. She also reported that water from her bathtub is leaking into the apartment below through the kitchen light fixture, creating a hazardous condition. She echoed the sentiments of prior speakers that no one should be forced to live in such conditions and stated that, despite her efforts to follow proper procedures, her concerns have gone unaddressed. Ms. Denise concluded by expressing deep frustration and a sense that tenant concerns are ignored, stating that tenants are the only ones who truly care about the conditions in public housing.

Wayne Parsons, Ward 1

During the SB 2.5 public comment period, Wayne Parsons addressed the governing body regarding the quality of maintenance work being performed in public housing. Referencing previous speakers, Mr. Parsons highlighted ongoing issues with repairs, noting that work is often substandard and fails to address the root causes of problems. He explained that maintenance personnel frequently perform superficial fixes, such as patching holes in ceilings without investigating underlying issues, which results in recurring problems for residents.

Mr. Parsons urged the Housing Authority and City Council to implement better oversight by carefully vetting the contractors and personnel assigned to maintenance tasks. He emphasized that residents are paying significant amounts for repairs but are not receiving work

that meets an acceptable standard. He recommended that qualified professionals be brought in to properly assess and resolve maintenance issues. Mr. Parsons also offered to provide references for contractors who perform high-quality work. No additional speakers came forward following his comments.

SB-3 Mold Remediation of HRHA Properties – Joint Business

During the meeting, the discussion shifted to mold remediation within the Hopewell Redevelopment and Housing Authority (HRHA), led by Ms. Lisa Wilson, Executive Director. Ms. Wilson opened by acknowledging the meeting's introductory nature but noted adjustments to allow discussion of HRHA operations. She expressed appreciation for the Council's support and emphasized HRHA's commitment to collaboration with the City on development and operational improvements. Before delving into details, she deferred to General Counsel Darius Davenport, who clarified the separation of powers between the City and the Housing Authority. He explained that, while HRHA operates as an independent public body under Virginia law, cooperation with the City is customary to achieve mutual goals, and Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) could outline supportive roles without transferring authority.

Council and Commissioners discussed the need for transparency and additional support due to ongoing operational challenges, especially for new Commissioners unfamiliar with HRHA programs. Davenport noted HRHA's efforts to stabilize systems and train Commissioners, particularly in light of transitions following retirements and leadership changes. Council members emphasized the historical and ongoing problems within HRHA, including complaints about maintenance issues, mismanagement, safety concerns, and past HUD investigations that resulted in financial settlements. They highlighted the importance of operational audits and objective third-party assessments to guide improvements.

Ms. Wilson then detailed the mold remediation initiative, funded by a \$5 million HUD Health-Related Hazard Grant awarded to HRHA in

2024—the only housing authority in Virginia to receive this allocation. The plan includes site-wide inspections of all units at Thomas Rolfe and Davisville, assessment and sampling of every room, remediation as necessary, and follow-up testing. Of the 256 units, 14 have been addressed to date, representing about 5% of the total, with a timeline to complete assessments within 60–90 days, depending on contractor capacity. She emphasized resident engagement and long-term prevention strategies to avoid recurrence and confirmed that HUD requires documentation and closeout procedures for all expenditures.

Council members inquired about transparency measures, requesting mapping or tracking of progress to reassure residents. Ms. Wilson affirmed this could be provided and acknowledged concerns about safety in communities with high crime rates, noting incidents in Davisville and other developments. She explained that damage from lightning had temporarily disrupted camera systems, delaying security improvements, but contractors are working to restore all cameras by January 31. Ms. Wilson confirmed that additional cameras will be installed in Thomas Rolfe and Piper Square to improve coverage.

Council members and Commissioners stressed that many residents continue to report unresolved mold and maintenance issues despite repeated complaints, highlighting gaps in operational effectiveness. Several members noted their ongoing involvement in responding to resident concerns and stressed the need for accountability, better communication, and timely action to ensure health, safety, and trust within HRHA communities. The discussion concluded with recognition of the challenges but reaffirmed the shared goal of improving housing conditions and operational performance.

SB-4 RFP for an Operational Audit and Remediation Plan – Joint Business

During the joint meeting, an extended discussion took place regarding the need for an operational assessment or audit of the Housing Authority to address longstanding operational deficiencies and rebuild public trust. Council members emphasized that a comprehensive

assessment could identify systemic issues, establish clear policies and procedures, and allow the Housing Authority to educate residents on improved, step-by-step processes. Reference was made to the City's prior turnaround and stabilization process conducted by Alvarez & Marsal, which resulted in significant improvements in financial controls, audit compliance, bond ratings, and credibility with state and federal partners. Council members expressed the belief that a similar independent operational review for HRHA could help "clean the slate," improve efficiency, and strengthen the Authority's ability to secure future funding and support economic development efforts.

Ms. Wilson acknowledged that she has a strategic plan, a five-year plan, and a timeline for HRHA operations, and stated that an operational assessment was already contemplated as part of her responsibilities as Executive Director. However, multiple commissioners raised concerns about delays and the lack of a defined timeline or written documentation, noting that discussions about an operational audit had occurred months earlier without visible progress. Questions were raised about when such an assessment would formally begin, and Ms. Wilson indicated she would follow up with a projected kickoff timeline. This led to further debate about whether the Board could take formal action, given the distinction between governance and operations.

Legal counsel clarified that direct involvement in operational management is outside the Board of Commissioners' authority and rests with the Executive Director; however, the Board retains authority over governance and policy. Counsel further explained that while the Board cannot form a committee to manage operations, it may direct the Executive Director to procure a third-party operational audit, which would be considered a policy-level action. Several members stressed the importance of placing this direction formally on the record to ensure transparency and accountability to the public.

Following clarification, a motion was made directing the HRHA Executive Director to procure an independent operational audit of the Housing Authority, comparable in scope to the City's prior Alvarez & Marsal assessment. The motion was made by Commissioner Mellon and seconded by Commissioner Fuller. After limited additional

discussion and confirmation that no subcommittee would be formed, a roll call vote was taken. The motion passed by a vote of six in favor and one opposed, formally directing the Executive Director to move forward with obtaining the operational audit.

SB-5 Cameras and Security of HRHA Properties – Joint Business

During the final item of business, the joint body discussed security concerns and the status of surveillance cameras at HRHA properties. The presiding officer invited additional questions following the earlier discussion, noting that camera functionality and public safety had been significant concerns for both commissioners and City Council members. Councilor Daye emphasized the urgency of restoring all security cameras by January 31, stressing that residents in Piper Square, Thomas Rolfe, and other housing communities have expressed fear due to ongoing criminal activity. Council members described situations in which elderly residents are afraid to leave their homes and parents are reluctant to allow their children outside. It was emphasized that cameras must remain fully operational at all times, with rapid-response and repair protocols in place following incidents such as lightning strikes, particularly as spring and summer approach when crime rates typically increase.

Questions were raised regarding the possibility of assigning dedicated police officers to housing authority properties, including whether public housing-specific patrols or residency programs existed, as seen in other jurisdictions. Police Chief Taylor responded that the City currently utilizes an off-duty management vendor through which HRHA may contract off-duty police officers for patrol services, an option that has been available for some time. She further explained that while officers have been informed of opportunities to live within HRHA properties, there has been no interest, and no state or federal grant funding is currently available to support such programs.

Council members expressed additional concern about what they characterized as a lack of urgency in addressing both security camera repairs and other major issues, including mold remediation. Members

noted that although strategic plans and timelines had been referenced, these materials had not been clearly shared or communicated with Council following prior joint meetings. Ms. Wilson clarified that a strategic plan had been included in the new commissioner orientation packets and offered to provide it again. While acknowledging the procedural requirements involved in insurance claims and contractor procurement following damage, Council members encouraged HRHA leadership to accelerate response timelines where possible to ensure resident safety.

The discussion concluded with closing remarks expressing optimism that the forthcoming operational assessment and audit would lead to improved efficiency, stronger accountability, and positive impacts on residents' quality of life and the City's broader revitalization efforts. The Chair of the Housing Authority thanked City Council and staff for the collaboration and expressed commitment to continued cooperation. With no further questions, motions to adjourn both the City Council and Housing Authority portions of the joint meeting were made and approved.

ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,



Bishelya Howard, City Clerk



Johnny Partin, Mayor