



## City of Buena Vista City Council Regular Council Meeting

November 7, 2024, 6:00 PM  
Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular Council Meeting on Thursday, November 7, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

**Members Present:** Mayor Tyson Cooper  
Vice-Mayor Danny Staton Steve Webb  
Michelle Poluikis Todd Jones  
Melvin Henson Ronald Cash

**Members Absent:** None

### **ADG #1: CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE, & PRAYER**

Mayor Cooper called the meeting to order and delivered the opening prayer.

### **ADG #2: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Councilman Webb moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Vice-Mayor Staton, and carried by Council.

### **ADG #3: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE OCTOBER 17, 2024, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice-Mayor Staton, seconded by Councilman Henson, and carried by Council.

### **ADG #4: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS**

- Monica Palmer, 204 Hevener's Lane, is the property manager for the Hillside Mobile Home Community. She brought up some concerns that she and other residents have regarding the new development of an apartment building and laundromat. She stated that they have not heard anything from the owner about those plans and was wondering when they would. Mayor Cooper asked Mr. Tyree to follow up with Ms. Palmer about that.
- David Herring, 2631 Edgewood Road, thanked Mayor Cooper, Mr. Tyree, and Chief Handley for facilitating the Racey Acres neighborhood meeting to help them come to a resolution for his wife, Sheena Herring's, home business. He asked if things could just be left the way they are for now, making it contingent on the updates to the ordinance.

### **ADG #5: REPORTS**

#### **1. Mayor**

Mayor Cooper reported that he and Chief Handley had a meeting with a concerned citizen, and he thanked the Chief for the way he handled it. He also attended the Council retreat, Spooktacular, the 1 School 1 Book event, and the CSPDC 55th Anniversary. He also facilitated the Racey Acres neighborhood meeting. The conclusion coming out of that meeting was that

Council needs to tackle the ordinance for in-home businesses. Work has begun on that, and the hope is to have a new and updated ordinance proposed to Council in the next six to seven months.

Mayor Cooper then recognized Councilman Jones and thanked him for filling the vacancy we had on Council, for helping us this year, and for sharing his advice, wisdom, and experience with us. Mayor Cooper said he feels that Mr. Jones has helped [Council] make better decisions and he is grateful for him.

## **2. City Manager**

Mr. Tyree reported that the Town Square naming is still going on and they expect to keep that open until the end of November; they have received 27 entries so far.

He also provided an update on the website development; it is currently still behind schedule but will hopefully be up and running by the beginning of the year.

## **3. City Attorney**

None.

## **4. Council Committees / Members**

### **a. Budget & Finance**

They held a meeting on October 29<sup>th</sup> and discussed the budget schedule and process for FY 2026. Mr. Jones mentioned that Steve Bolster, the new finance director, has streamlined a lot of things and seems to have a good grasp on what our needs are.

### **b. Outdoor Spaces**

They will be having a meeting on November 9<sup>th</sup> to discuss some of the areas in the City that have been taken for granted. They will be visiting the Food Lion area, Longhollow area, and the area around the old Food Lion on 29<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **c. School Facilities**

The feasibility study is currently underway; they have looked at some of the facilities already.

Councilman Henson also mentioned that Parry McCluer High School received recognition from the state for academics and test scores. He also announced that Christmas in the Park will be on Sunday, December 8th.

## **5. Department Heads / Constitutional Officers / Court Clerks**

### **Tom Roberts – Community Development**

- The Route 60 Small Area Transportation Plan was completed over the summer. This was through our Growth and Accessibility Planning Technical Assistance award from VDOT in 2022. They looked at the area around Food Lion and the golf course to the bridge and how to make better connections with the focus on pedestrian connections. It's an important part of the city and people need to be able to walk from downtown up to that part of the city. There is also a lot of development underway up there right now and potential development in the future. This plan goes through the whole transportation network; vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle. The plan zeros in on proposing several options for improved pedestrian connections. One option is to connect by a pedestrian bridge in downtown that goes through the park and up to that area. The second option is an off-

road connection from Vista Links Drive, up past the 911 Center, then coming into the shopping center. The last option is actually a lane reduction of Route 60 going eastbound, which would be a much more significant project; this option would also open up some different possibilities for redoing that whole corridor in some interesting ways. This is an important plan to have that helps us as we move forward with growth in that area.

- The network wiring and new server room in City Hall will include new wiring for the internet and phones throughout City Hall and relocate the server room and IT office from the second floor to the basement. The purposes of this project are to empty the elevator shaft so that we can put an elevator in and to set the stage for voice over IP phones. That phone service will be cheaper in the long run and gives us more flexibility in terms of how to configure the phones and dialing. Also, our current phone system is past its lifespan and. About 75% of the new network wiring in the building; this means they've strung almost three miles of cable. This project is creating a larger server room downstairs and a larger IT office because where they are right now it is really cramped. The cost of the project is larger than initially thought because of the electrical and HVAC needs.
- The city received some concerns from residents about the road frontage on the Buena Vista Pentecostal Holiness project site and the proximity of the storm water retention pond to Forge Road and to the driveway behind Dollar General. Staff has reviewed the designs and reviewed the site along with VDOT engineers. Mr. Roberts met with the engineer and contractor and based on speeds and the design of the road, a guardrail is not warranted along Forge Road or along that driveway. We recognize that the site is different than before, the grading is different and there are some places where there is a steep slope down into the pond which is about 20 feet from the road. However, we do not believe that there is imminent danger with the way the site is currently and there are no violations of codes or design standards.
- SVU was awarded a \$10,000 grant from Allstate for student volunteers to work and do a project at the 34th Street playground. There will be more information to come on the details of the project.

## **6. Invited Community Organizations**

### **Brooke Dalton – Main Street Buena Vista**

- There was a fantastic turnout for Spooktacular. She said that everybody ran out of candy again this year. Main Street also helped supplement the businesses candy supply this year.
- MSBV received a grant from the Community Foundation which will be awarded on November 12th. That is going to be for a movie setup to do outdoor movies in Town Square. It will be a free service for the community and will hopefully bring the community together downtown, supporting businesses. It will include the speakers, screen, projector, and popcorn machine.
- They are preparing for the Christmas parade and tree lighting; they have a 15-foot tree on reserve. The tree lighting will begin promptly at 6:30 and the parade will begin at 7:00 on December 5th.
- Small Business Saturday is November 30th. They are doing a promotion for this from November 15th through December 20th called the Jolly Jackpot. When customers shop

downtown between those time frames they will receive a ticket to enter for the jackpot and those will be announced on December 23rd.

**ADG #7: CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES**

None.

**OLD BUSINESS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**NB #1: DISCUSSION OF SCHOOL RESOURCE OFFICER GRANT**

Chief Handley stated that he and Dr. Francis have been discussing the grants that are currently paying for the School Resource Officers. Our four SROs have their salary and benefits currently paid for by grants through the state; we are on the eighth year of a four-year grant on two of those positions. The decision has been made at the state level that if you are beyond the four years of the grant, those positions will no longer be funded. So, they are bringing this to Council's attention as we get ready to enter into budget season so that it is something that is on the radar that we can have more in depth conversations about. Chief stated that it is his intent to keep officers in all of the schools. We have four police officers that work really well in the schools right now. They feel that not just from a safety and security standpoint, but also from a community engagement standpoint, that having these officers in the schools is what's best for the school system and best for the community. Two of the SRO positions expire under the grant at the end of the 2025 school year, one expires in 2026, and the other in 2027, so those are on the radar and now we can look at what that will look like. He noted that he and Mr. Bolster have already started looking at what the end of the grant life will be and how we can address that.

Dr. Francis added that he definitely feels like safety and security is one of the top issues, but our SROs are more than just that, they are part of the school, and they know all the students. He feels that as we look down the road, we know these grants are coming to an end, so we really need to start looking at how to fund those and make sure that our students and staff are safe. The SROs prevent a lot of things and deal with things before they escalate, so he encourages Council to look at that funding and think long term because it looks like these grants are going to run out, and unless the state does something drastic then the localities are going to be required to pick up the cost. While it is a big cost, he feels that it is something that as we move forward is kind of an expectation and something we have to have.

Chief Handley stated that the Police Department is in full support of keeping those positions in schools and making sure that we're able to actively have a presence in the schools.

**NB #2: DISCUSSION OF SLIVERS OF LAND ADJACENT TO VISTA LINKS DRIVE**

Tom Roberts stated that these slivers of land are there because before Vista Links Drive was built in the early 2000s, there was Carter Farm Drive that served a few of these houses. That road went kind of straight and then we put in this little curve and then Carter Farm Drive no longer existed.

Separating Vista Links Drive from these residential parcels is an awkward stretch of land and a couple of the residents approached the city a few months back and asked if we would consider selling them this land. Staff looked at it and believe it is a reasonable request. The slivers are not buildable lots, and the transfer would relieve the city of some maintenance obligations because we mow the grass in this area right now. The one possible scenario that he could envision where the city would want this land is if we wanted to widen the right of way for Bista Links Drive. Right now it is a 50-foot right of way, and the existing pavement is 16-foot wide, so there is still a lot of space on either side for us to widen the travel way for us to put a sidewalk in. That is very hypothetical and unlikely, so staff would be comfortable transferring these parcel to these owners at no cost; ultimately, that is a City Council decision. If you price these slivers of land using the 75¢ per square foot, then the largest one ends up being around \$18,000, which he feels is a little high for what they would be getting.

Mr. Kearney added that this all came about when Glade Knight purchased the property and finally had the road surveyed. That is when it became apparent that these little pieces on the side of Vista Links were adjacent to these tracks that the city acquired when they bought that farm property up there. These are just some little “orphan tracks” that are sitting there next to these other parcels that really don’t do much.

Councilman Webb stated that he feels that the parcels should still be sold to the property owners because giving property away is a bad precedent to set and he will not agree to give this property away. He also noted that the larger parcel that would be about \$18,000 is almost a half-acre of land.

Councilman Cash asked why the property owners are interested in purchasing the parcels. Mr. Roberts stated that he thinks they just want to have a little more control over the yard and land, and to kind of complete the boundaries of their property up to the road.

Mr. Roberts noted that the only thing he’s asking from Council tonight would be their agreement to move forward with holding a public hearing with some additional proposals about pricing. Mayor Cooper asked, putting pricing aside, if there is any objection or concern with the city parting with these parcels; there were none. He advised Mr. Roberts to move forward with the public hearing and pricing proposals.

### **NB #3: APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION**

The City received a grant through the Circuit Court Clerk’s office from the Library of Virginia for back scanning records and indexing. They have appropriated the city \$25,575 to get this done, but we have not budgeted for this. So the resolution is so that we can accept those funds from the state. There are no matching fund requirements, so this is basically free state money to get this work done for their office. This will allow for all of those records to be digitized.

Mr. Tye read the following Resolution:

#### **Appropriation Resolution**

**BE IT RESOLVED** by the City Council of Buena Vista, Virginia, that the following appropriations are, and the same is hereby made, for the period ending **June 30, 2025**, from the UNAPPROPRIATED SURPLUS of the **GENERAL FUND** and expended as follows:

**Library of Virginia Back Scanning Project (Land & Will Records)**

00.2106.52450	Records/Indexing	<u>\$25,575.00</u>
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**Total General Fund Appropriation**

**\$25,575.00**

**Approved:** This 7<sup>th</sup> day of November 2024.

Attest:

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Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor

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Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Councilman Jones made a motion to **approve** the Resolution with Councilman Henson seconding. The motion was carried by Council.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

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Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor