



CITY OF BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING & PUBLIC HEARINGS

February 19, 2026 | 6:00 PM

Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular Council Meeting & Public Hearings on Thursday, February 19, 2026, at 6:00 PM.

Members Present:

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton
Amy Gilliam
Michelle Poluikis

Stephanie Noel-Branch
Ronald Cash

Members Absent:

Mayor Jesse Lineberry

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

Vice-Mayor Staton called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM, and Councilmember Cash delivered the opening prayer.

ADG #2: BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARINGS

Zoning Map Amendment – Tax Maps 34-1-2-57-3, 34-1-2-57-5, and 34-1-2-57-7 consisting of the property at 2056/2068 Chestnut Avenue to rezone from R3 Residential Limited to MU Mixed Use for the purpose of operating a hotel with up to 24 rooms.

City Attorney Brian Kearney advised Council that, due to publication and notice requirements, the public hearing for the zoning map amendment could not be held as scheduled. He stated that the public hearing and New Business Item #4 must be removed from the agenda. He instructed that, upon approval of the agenda, Council should do so with those two items removed. He noted that the public hearing is anticipated to be rescheduled for March 19th, subject to proper notice, and apologized to anyone who attended the meeting to speak on the matter.

Deed of gift and donation of 1,034 square feet of land to the Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Transportation, for the purpose of constructing pedestrian improvements at the intersection of 29th Street and Beech Avenue.

Vice-Mayor Staton opened the Public Hearing.

Tom Roberts began by apologizing to Council and the public for the earlier public hearing advertisement error.

Mr. Roberts presented the request, noting that although it's referenced as a "sale" of property, the request is for a donation of land necessary for a transportation improvement project. He explained that the project is funded through VDOT's Highway Safety Improvement Program, for which the City was awarded approximately \$1.4 million several years ago. The program focuses on systemic safety improvements, including pedestrian accessibility upgrades, flashing yellow turn arrows, ADA-compliant pedestrian facilities, and pedestrian countdown timers. The specific improvements for the City involve installation of sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian countdown signals at the intersection of 29th Street and Beech Avenue, at the Hardee's intersection. Currently, there are no pedestrian accommodations at that location. The proposed project would improve pedestrian access across 29th Street and Beech Avenue.

Mr. Roberts stated that VDOT is managing the project and is currently in the right-of-way acquisition phase. To proceed, VDOT must acquire in its name a small portion of land—approximately 1,034 square feet—located along Rockbridge Avenue. He noted that while the City owns and maintains its streets, portions of underlying right-of-way ownership are governed by state law, requiring formal conveyance to VDOT for project implementation. Approval of the deed of gift would allow the project to move forward.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to approve the agenda with amendments removing the Zoning Map Amendment public hearing and New Business Item #4. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Cash and carried by Council.

ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE FEBRUARY 5, 2026, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, PUBLIC HEARING, AND EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to approve the minutes was made by Councilmember Poluikis, seconded by Councilmember Gilliam, and carried by Council.

ADG #5: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS – NON-AGENDA ITEMS

- Brian Rowsey, 1607 Magnolia Avenue, addressed Council regarding his application for the Parks and Recreation Director position. He expressed strong interest and stated that he had recently met with the City Manager and Interim City Manager to discuss his background and vision for the park. Mr. Rowsey apologized for past actions and statements related to prior legal trouble. He stated that he did not intend to harm anyone and offered an apology to the community. He said he believes Glen Maury Park is the backbone of Buena Vista and feels it is currently underused and in poor condition. He stated that he has experience organizing concerts and large events that generate significant revenue. He said concerts, camping, fishing events, and other activities could bring in money for the City and benefit local businesses. He encouraged Council to focus more on revenue generation and asked for the opportunity to run the park, stating that he is confident that he could improve operations and increase income. He closed by asking Council to give him a chance to prove himself.

ADG #6: REPORTS:

1. Mayor

None.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree reported that the City will be receiving approximately \$2.3 million through the EPA Clean Water Act program, funded through a recently passed federal bill. He noted that additional information regarding timelines and receipt of funds is expected in the coming weeks. The City will have about two years to spend the funds in accordance with the federal budget cycle. Councilmember Cash asked whether this money could bring the WWTP back into compliance. Mr. Tyree stated that he and staff recently met with engineers and USDA representatives; the engineers have been tasked with developing a Phase I plan focused on using the \$2.3 million to achieve compliance. He noted that while the funding will not address all facility needs, the goal is to prioritize improvements that resolve current compliance concerns.

He reminded Council that the Budget & Finance Committee will meet Monday at 4:00 p.m. at City Hall, and the Joint School Board-City Council meeting will be held Tuesday at 6:00 p.m. at the Ramsey Center.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Interim City Manager

Interim City Manager Wayne Handley thanked Council for the opportunity to serve in the role. He noted that, following Council's approval at the last meeting, he began work in the City Manager's office that Friday and immediately began meeting with staff and reviewing ongoing projects.

He shared that he has had productive meetings with several Council members, citizens, and staff over the past week and a half. He emphasized that his focus during the interim period is to maintain stability, momentum, and forward progress on key City projects. These include the USDA-related initiatives, the wastewater treatment plant project, and the ongoing school renovation efforts.

He also attended the first Citizens Advisory Committee meeting and described it as a positive start with strong participation and good ideas. He expressed his belief that continued citizen engagement will be key to the committee's success and encouraged the public to attend future meetings to stay informed and involved.

5. Council Committees/Members

Citizens Advisory Committee

Mrs. Noel-Branch noted that they had a great first meeting and they anticipate that these meetings will be held monthly. There will be more information to come and we will be adding that information to our website.

Mr. Cash expressed appreciation to Mrs. Noel-Branch for organizing and launching the CA Committee, describing it as a strong step toward increasing community involvement. He said the concept of engagement is important, not only for citizens to share ideas, input, and feedback with Council, but also to stay informed about City initiatives. He added that, beyond engagement, he hopes to foster a sense of empowerment among residents—encouraging citizens to take ownership of Buena Vista in both small and large ways. He noted that community and civic pride can begin with simple actions and build into meaningful change when everyone contributes.

Cemetery Committee

Mr. Staton mentioned that the Committee will be getting together in the next few weeks, and they are looking for any members of the community that would like to be involved with the Cemetery Committee to get in touch with either himself, Mr. Cash, or Ms. Burch.

6. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Court Clerks

None.

7. Invited Community Organizations

Main Street Buena Vista

American Express Grants: Two local businesses in Buena Vista were awarded \$10,000 each through a national American Express grant program—a notable achievement given that only 400 grants were distributed nationally and 12 in Virginia.

Podcast Recognition: Main Street Buena Vista was recently highlighted on the Department of Housing and Community Development podcast. The episode is available on Spotify, and the organization has shared it on its social media channels.

Executive Director Retreat: Jen attended a three-day mandatory retreat in Luray with state representatives and the Federal Reserve Bank, along with other Virginia executive directors. She reported that it was informative, provided valuable learning opportunities, and fostered important networking connections. A full report will be shared at the next Business Solutions meeting scheduled for Tuesday at Asunder.

ADG #7: CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, & COMMITTEES

Board of Zoning Appeals

Ms. Jamie Green's term on the BZA expired on December 31, 2025. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on May 31, 2029. This is the seventh time it has appeared on the agenda.

Applicant: Leroy Wheeler

Councilmember Cash moved to appoint Mr. Wheeler to the BZA, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis, and carried by Council.

Rockbridge Regional Jail Commission

Mr. Jason Tyree has resigned from the Jail Commission. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on January 14, 2027. This is the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

This seat must be filled by a staff member; typically the City Manager.

On motion by Councilmember Gilliam, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis, and carried by Council, Wayne Handley was appointed to the Rockbridge Regional Jail Commission.

Rockbridge Regional Public Safety Communications Center Board

Mr. Jason Tyree has resigned from the PSCC Board. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on December 31, 2026. This is the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

This seat must be filled by a staff member; typically the City Manager.

On motion by Councilmember Poluikis, seconded by Councilmember Cash, and carried by Council, Wayne Handley was appointed to the Rockbridge Regional Public Safety Communications Center Board.

OLD BUSINESS

OB #1: APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

Councilmember Cash made a motion to appoint Mr. William Kerr to the vacant City Council seat with Councilmember Noel-Branch seconding. Ms. Burch completed a roll call vote of Council as follows:

Member	Present	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Councilmember Poluikis	X		X		
Councilmember Gilliam	X		X		
Councilmember Noel-Branch	X		X		
Councilmember Cash	X		X		
Vice-Mayor Staton	X		X		
Mayor Lineberry		X			

Mr. William Kerr was appointed to City Council by unanimous vote.

OB #2: SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CITY CODE SECTION 705: HOME OCCUPATIONS

Vice-Mayor Staton proposed that Council table this matter until the next meeting so that Mayor Lineberry and Mr. Kerr could take part in the discussion and vote.

On motion by Councilmember Cash, seconded by Councilmember Gilliam, and carried by Council, this matter was tabled until the March 5, 2026 Council meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

ADG #8: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS – NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

None.

NB #1: AUDIT PRESENTATION BY ROBINSON, FARMER, COX

Steve Bolster reported that the City's audit for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, is complete and has been submitted to the Virginia Auditor of Public Accounts. The audit has also been submitted to the Government Finance Officers Association for consideration under the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting program. The audit has been available on the City's website for public review for about two weeks. Mr. Bolster also thanked the City Manager's Office, Finance Department, Treasurer's Office, Commissioner of the Revenue, Human Resources, the City's accounting consultant, and Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates for their teamwork in completing the audit.

Sadie Bagoon presented the audit results and reported that the City received an unmodified (clean) opinion, meaning the financial statements are materially correct and prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. She also noted that the City received the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for FY2024, marking more than 20 consecutive years of recognition. Under government auditing standards:

- No material weaknesses or significant deficiencies were identified in internal controls.
- One instance of noncompliance was reported related to procurement procedures for the pool renovation project. The audit found that additional steps required for sole-source procurement—including public notice and Council approval—were not completed.

Regarding federal funds, the City underwent a required Single Audit due to the level of federal funding received. The major program tested was the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (ARPA). No material weaknesses or compliance findings were identified in federal grant testing.

Government-Wide Financial Highlights

- Total net position: \$14.7 million
- Increase in net position from FY24: approximately \$4 million
- Unrestricted net position: \$5.6 million (38%)
- Cash and cash equivalents: \$6.9 million (including \$404,000 restricted)

The increase in net position was largely due to the recognition of remaining ARPA funds, which were one-time revenues.

Governmental Funds (Budget-Based Reporting)

- Total governmental fund balance: \$4.8 million
- Increase from FY24: \$1.6 million
- General Fund unassigned balance: \$4.5 million
- Unassigned fund balance equals approximately 25% of General Fund expenditures

Mrs. Bagoon noted that many localities set a minimum fund balance policy between 15-20%, and dipping below roughly 12% can create cash flow concerns.

General Fund Budget vs. Actual

- Budgeted revenues: \$16.5 million
- Actual revenues: \$21 million (largely due to ARPA revenue recognition)

- Budgeted expenditures: \$18.5 million
- Actual expenditures: \$18.2 million

Education expenditures came in under budget due to additional state and federal grant revenue. Principal retirement was higher than budgeted due to debt refinancing timing. Capital outlay differences were largely due to accounting changes related to lease reporting requirements.

Tax Collection & Revenue Trends

- FY25 property tax levy: \$7.75 million
- Collected during levy year: \$7.29 million
- Collection rate: 94% (highest in 10 years)

Meals tax revenue increased approximately \$30,000. Property taxes increased slightly, while sales tax was slightly down compared to the prior year.

Water & Sewer (Enterprise Funds)

- Combined net position: \$2.1 million
- Net operating income: \$658,000 (includes \$395,000 in non-cash depreciation)
- Unrestricted cash: \$2.8 million

**A full copy of the audit can be found on the City's website and in the City Manager's office.*

NB #2: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION

Mr. Bolster presented the appropriation resolution for the School Fund to align the City's accounting records with actions taken by the Buena Vista School Board and to carry forward eligible FY25 funds into FY26. The school division recently received a Virginia Department of Education supplemental iTeach grant in the amount of \$9,690. These funds will be used for mini-grants to cover participation fees for the iTeach program and testing fees for teachers seeking endorsement/licensure. Additionally, a total of \$688,974 in carryover from FY25 is being requested for appropriation into FY26:

- \$97,128 – needed to meet the City's minimum required local match for school operations in FY26. This adjustment stems from an updated calculation received shortly before last year's budget adoption, which was not able to be addressed at that time.
- 555,153 – state funding that must be carried over and expended in FY26. If not appropriated and used this fiscal year, the funds would have to be returned to the Commonwealth.
- \$36,646 – local transfer to the School Facilities Fund. These funds are designated for capital improvements or facility-related purchases and are held until the school division is ready to execute its facilities plan. There is no deadline for expenditure.

Mr. Bolster noted that the appropriation is both informational and necessary to properly reflect these funds in the City's financial system. The Budget & Finance Committee reviewed the request at its meeting on the 5th and recommended approval.

Ms. Burch presented 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, 2026**, from the UNAPPROPRIATED SURPLUS of the **SCHOOL FUND** and expended as follows:

School Fund – New Grant Award (Supplemental iTeach Grant) & FY 2025 Carryover

19.6600.69130	School Expenses	<u>\$698,617.00</u>
Sub-total 1		\$698,617.00
Total School Fund Appropriation		\$698,617.00

Approved: This 19th day of February 2026.

Danny L. Staton, Vice-Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Councilmember Poluikis made a motion **approve** the resolution as presented with Councilmember Noel-Branch seconding. Ms. Burch completed a roll call vote of Council as follows:

Member	Present	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Councilmember Poluikis	X		X		
Councilmember Gilliam	X		X		
Councilmember Noel-Branch	X		X		
Councilmember Cash	X		X		
Vice-Mayor Staton	X		X		
Mayor Lineberry		X			

The resolution was unanimously **approved**.

NB #3: DISCUSSION & APPROVAL OF A DEED OF GIFT & DONATION OF LAND TO COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Councilmember Poluikis made a motion to authorize the transfer of 1,034 square feet to VDOT and to authorize Jason Tyree, City Manager, to sign whatever documentation is necessary. Councilmember Noel-Branch seconded the motion, and Ms. Burch completed a roll call vote of Council as follows:

Member	Present	Absent	Yes	No	Abstain
Councilmember Poluikis	X		X		
Councilmember Gilliam	X		X		
Councilmember Noel-Branch	X		X		
Councilmember Cash	X		X		
Vice-Mayor Staton	X		X		
Mayor Lineberry		X			

The transfer was unanimously **approved**.

~~NB #4: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE TO REZONE 2056/2068 CHESTNUT AVENUE FROM R3~~

This matter was tabled until March 19th.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:05 PM.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor