



CITY OF BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, PUBLIC HEARING, & EXECUTIVE SESSION

February 5, 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 Hearing, & Executive Session on Thursday, February 5, 2026, at 6:00 PM.

Members Present:

Mayor Jesse Lineberry

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton

Amy Gilliam

Michelle Poluikis

Stephanie Noel-Branch

Ronald Cash

Members Absent:

None

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

Mayor Lineberry called the meeting to order at 6:01 PM, and Councilmember Cash delivered the opening prayer.

ADG #2: BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Pursuant to Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2204 and the City of Buena Vista Land Development Regulations, the City Council received comment on a proposed Zoning Text Amendment:

Section 705: Home Occupations, for the purpose of updating policies related to home occupation businesses and clarifying text.

Mayor Lineberry opened the Public Hearing.

- Tom Roberts explained that staff had reviewed the current home occupation regulations due to ambiguities, inconsistencies with enforcement provisions and state law, and misalignment with longstanding permitted practices. The purpose of the amendment is to clarify language and better balance allowing home-based businesses while minimizing impacts on residential neighborhoods. He noted that approximately 100 active home occupations currently operate in the City, with some turnover year to year. Key elements of the proposed amendment include:
 - Allowing one non-resident employee, with required off-street parking
 - Limiting customer visits to appointment-only, with a maximum of three customers at one time and 12 per day.
 - Restricting deliveries to between 9:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. and prohibiting tractor-trailer deliveries.
 - Requiring off-street parking for business-use vehicles and limiting commercial vehicles.
 - Prohibiting outside storage of materials and equipment.
 - Allowing one minor sign on the premises.
 - Prohibiting certain listed business types.
 - Providing a special exception process through the Board of Zoning Appeals for applicants seeking relief from specific provisions.

Mr. Roberts also explained that enforcement would follow standard zoning violation procedures and that legally established existing home occupations would be considered lawful nonconforming uses and permitted to continue but not expand.

There was discussion regarding the customer limit, particularly for seasonal or short-term high-traffic activities. Mr. Roberts explained the intent of the 12-customer-per-day cap was to reduce neighborhood traffic impacts, while noting that businesses could seek off-site pickup arrangements or apply for a special exception. Council members discussed allowing flexibility for seasonal events, and Mr. Kearney confirmed that the special exception process provides a structured mechanism for such requests.

Council also discussed concerns about large commercial vehicles in residential neighborhoods. Mr. Roberts confirmed that tractor-trailer deliveries are expressly prohibited under the draft text. He advised against adding specific vehicle weight limits due to enforcement challenges.

- Johnna Gittemeier, 2647 Edgewood Road, stated that about a year and a half ago, an online auction and retail merchandise business relocated from a commercial warehouse location into her residential neighborhood. She expressed concerns that the business has increased traffic and created disruptions in the neighborhood, which she noted lacks sidewalks and presents safety concerns for pedestrians. Ms. Gittemeier stated her belief that the business does not meet the definition of a home occupation, asserting that it involves the sale of purchased retail merchandise rather than goods produced by the operator. She expressed concern that allowing such operations creates an unfair advantage over brick-and-mortar retail businesses in the City and could set a precedent for other retail businesses to relocate to residential areas. Mrs. Gittemeier added that she supports clarifying and strengthening the home occupation ordinance but questions how Council would address renewal of permits for businesses she believes do not comply with the intended definition of a home occupation. She asked Council to consider the impacts on neighborhoods and local retail businesses.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice-Mayor Staton moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilmember Noel-Branch, and carried by Council.

ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JANUARY 15, 2026, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

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

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

- Krista Carter, 3500 Locust Avenue, introduced herself as an applicant for the vacant City Council position. She stated she wanted to put a face to her application, expressed appreciation for being considered, and thanked Council for the opportunity.

ADG #6: REPORTS:

1. Mayor

Mayor Lineberry shared that he attended a USA BMX event, noting its positive impact on the community. He also stated that he attended the ribbon cutting for the Hope House Women's Shelter.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree reported on the Hope House project, noting the ribbon cutting ceremony that was held for the new women's shelter and office space. He stated that the project has been a collaborative community effort involving individuals and partners from Rockbridge, Lexington, and Buena Vista, with partial funding provided through opioid settlement funds. He highlighted the organization's work in

supporting recovery, workforce reentry, driver's license reinstatement, and family reunification, sharing that one individual is close to regaining custody of their children. He commended Rockbridge Recovery staff for their impact and noted the project is a significant and needed addition to the community.

He also reminded Council that headshots for the City's website will be taken on February 19 at 5:30 p.m. at City Hall prior to the next Council. He asked members to submit a brief biography to Sarah for inclusion on the City's upcoming new website, which is expected to launch soon.

Lastly, he announced that beginning next week, the City will post and begin accepting applications for the positions of Public Works Director and Parks and Recreation Director, with postings going live on Monday.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees/Members

School Facilities Committee

Mrs. Gilliam first commended Dr. Ault for developing a cost-effective proposal for a new middle school facility. The plan that was presented was to relocate the middle school to a newly constructed wing at the high school. She stated that the presentation was well done and noted that the School Board is seeking City Council's support. He added that staff are working to coordinate a joint School Board and City Council meeting to further discuss the proposal.

Mrs. Poluikis emphasized that the revised plan represents an estimated \$50 million savings compared to the previously proposed \$65 million project, and that the state would pitch in about 30% of the cost.

Mr. Tyree added that the current proposal is estimated at approximately \$15-17 million and would maintain separation between middle school and high school students while meeting program needs. He reiterated that approximately 30% of the total cost could be funded through the State's School Construction Fund, a competitive grant program for fiscally stressed localities, which Buena Vista qualifies for. He further explained that pending legislation in the General Assembly would authorize a 1% local option sales tax dedicated to school capital projects, subject to voter approval. The House has passed the legislation, and it is under consideration in the Senate. He added that this revenue source would distribute the cost broadly among residents, visitors, and others making purchases within the City, and could potentially generate sufficient revenue to cover the debt service for the project without increasing property taxes. He also stated that, in his opinion, this is the most fiscally responsible plan presented to date and positions the City to address school facility needs without placing undue burden on taxpayers.

There will be a joint meeting between the School Board and City Council on February 24th at 6:00 p.m.

Budget & Finance Committee

Mrs. Gillam reported that the Committee has begun work on developing the FY27 budget. She noted there is a lot of information to review and evaluate. She stated that funding requests currently exceed available revenues and emphasized that substantial work lies ahead as the Committee works to balance priorities and financial constraints.

Mr. Tyree also reported that, according to the Finance Director and Commissioner of the Revenue, the cigarette tax has generated about \$32,000 in revenue within the first month of the calendar year. He noted that projections indicate revenue may reach \$50,000 by the end of February, which matches

the six-month revenue estimate originally budgeted. He further reported that expenses associated with administering the tax were budgeted at \$5,000, but actual costs are currently tracking lower, at about \$2,800. Overall, revenues are meeting or exceeding expectations while expenses are coming in under budget.

Citizens Advisory Committee

Mrs. Noel-Branch announced that the Committee will hold its first meeting on February 17th at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. She encouraged residents to apply for membership and noted that application instructions are available through the City website or by contacting Sarah. She also invited those who may be uncertain about applying to attend the meeting to learn more about it. She emphasized the importance of broad demographic representation from across the City and offered to answer questions from interested citizens.

Mr. Cash added that the Citizens Advisory Committee presents an opportunity for the remaining Council applicants who don't get selected to contribute to the community and provide leadership through advisory service.

5. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Court Clerks

George Bains – Public Works

Mr. Bains began by explaining that Public Works consists of eight functional crews: streets; curb and gutter; refuse collection; mechanics; buildings and grounds; cemetery and leaf collection; wastewater treatment; and water and sewer distribution.

He detailed the department's response to the recent winter storms, noting that CDL-certified staff from multiple crews were reassigned to snow removal operations and worked 24-hour shifts to maintain passable roadways. Priority was given to public safety access for emergency vehicles, followed by major thoroughfares, numbered streets, and then avenues. Due to extended freezing temperatures and ice accumulation, heavy equipment such as backhoes and loaders was required to remove compacted snow and ice, significantly slowing operations. He commended staff for their dedication and round-the-clock efforts.

He reported that Public Works also assisted the school division during a major water leak at Enderly Heights Elementary, supported snow and ice removal at school facilities, and addressed ice damage at the Police Department building. Crews continue to support all City facilities, Glen Maury Park, and other operational needs.

Mr. Bains noted several ongoing and upcoming projects, including required floodwall maintenance items identified by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; bridge inspections for submission to the Federal Highway Administration; a completed flood resiliency study addressing stormwater runoff from surrounding mountains; and an upcoming street paving contract anticipated to begin in the spring. He also discussed efforts to reduce costs through bulk cold-patch purchases and implementation of new utility billing software, which is expected to run in parallel with the current system in March.

He highlighted concerns regarding the wastewater treatment plant, including aging infrastructure and a recent Notice of Violation from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality for ammonia discharge levels. He explained that while the City's discharge levels have remained consistent, DEQ recently lowered allowable limits under updated regulatory standards. Staff are working with engineering firms to explore corrective measures and avoid escalation to a consent order. He also reported emergency repairs to equipment failures at the plant over the Christmas holiday. Mr. Tyree clarified that the NOV stems from more stringent DEQ permit requirements rather than increased discharge levels by the City. He noted the changes are tied to broader Chesapeake Bay watershed regulatory requirements adopted by the General Assembly in prior years.

Mr. Bains concluded by outlining departmental goals, including improving customer service, documentation and follow-up procedures, cross-training staff as a unified Public Works team, enhancing communication, and prioritizing highly visible public concerns alongside daily operational and emergency responsibilities. He expressed appreciation for the dedication of Public Works staff and his commitment to continued improvement.

6. Invited Community Organizations

None.

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 sixth time it has appeared on the agenda.

As there were no applicants for this opening, it will be carried forward to the next meeting.

Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission

Mr. Tyson Cooper has resigned from the CSPDC. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on June 30, 2027. This is the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

This seat must be filled by a Council Member; typically the Mayor.

Councilmember Poluikis made a motion to appoint Mayor Lineberry to the CSPDC. Councilmember Noel-Branch seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS

NONE

NEW BUSINESS

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

None.

NB #1: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CITY CODE SECTION 705: HOME OCCUPATIONS

Ms. Burch presented the following Ordinance:

Zoning Text Amendment Section 705 Home Occupations

AN ORDINANCE to repeal and replace Section 705 of the Land Development Regulations of the Code of the City of Buena Vista, as amended, for the purpose of updating the Home Occupation regulations.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that after a duly called public hearing, in accordance with the general welfare of the citizens of Buena Vista and in accordance with good zoning practices, Section 705 is repealed and replaced in full as shown in the attached "Exhibit A."

This Ordinance shall be effective 30 days following adoption by City Council.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- According to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, for the purpose of discussing and/or interviewing potential candidates for employment as Interim City Manager.
- According to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, for the purpose of discussing and considering perspective candidates for appointment to fill a vacancy on Buena Vista City Council.

On motion by Councilmember Noel-Branch, seconded by Vice-Mayor Staton, and carried by Council, City Council convened in an Executive Session at 7:01 PM.

REGULAR SESSION

ADG #9: CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion by Vice-Mayor Staton, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis, and carried by Council, City Council reconvened in regular session at 8:03 PM with the following certification.

Certification of Executive Meeting

WHEREAS the Buena Vista City Council has convened in an Executive Meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of The Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS Section 2.1-344.1 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by the Buena Vista City Council that such Executive Meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Buena Vista City Council hereby certifies to the best of each member's knowledge that: (1) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the Executive Meeting to which this certification resolution applies; and (2) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the Executive Meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Buena Vista City Council.

VOTE:

Councilmember Poluikis ✓

Councilmember Noel-Branch ✓

Vice-Mayor Staton ✓

Councilmember Gilliam ✓

Councilmember Cash ✓

Mayor Lineberry ✓

AYES – 6

NAYS – 0

Members absent during vote: None

Members absent during meeting: None

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

NB #2: APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CITY MANAGER

Mr. Tyree noted that both he and Council had explored multiple options to ensure stability in the executive leadership of the City. He expressed appreciation for Council's thorough review of potential candidates and the background work they did in identifying the best option for the City, its residents, staff, and other stakeholders.

Councilmember Gilliam made a motion appoint Wayne Handley as Interim City Manager. Councilmember Cash seconded the motion, and Ms. Burch completed a roll call vote of Council as follows:

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

By a vote of 6-0, Wayne Handley was appointed Interim City Manager.

NB #3: APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

Ms. Burch announced that five applications had been received to fill the vacant City Council seat. The applicants, in order of receipt, are Krista Carter, Jacob Zimmerman, Frank Huffman, Stanley Coffey, and William Kerr.

Mr. Kearney added that all applicant information is public and available for review in the Clerk’s office, as required by law. He also clarified that the information must be available at least seven days prior to the appointment.

Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to table the appointment until the February 19, 2026 Council meeting. Councilmember Poluikis seconded the motion and it was carried by Council.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:09 PM.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor

