



City of Buena Vista City Council Regular Council Meeting & Public Hearing

May 2, 2024, Immediately Following the PSA Meeting
Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The City Council for the City of Buena Vista met for a Regular Council Meeting & Public Hearing on Thursday, May 2, 2024, following a meeting of the Buena Vista PSA.

Members Present:

Mayor Tyson Cooper	
Vice-Mayor Danny Staton	Michelle Poluikis
Melvin Henson	Ronald Cash

Members Absent: Steve Webb & Todd Jones

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

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

ADG #2: BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Cooper opened the Public Hearing.

The City Council is considering adopting the following real estate tax rate and personal property tax rate for FY 2025:

Real Estate: \$1.27 per \$100.00 assessed valuation

Personal Property: \$5.85 per \$100.00 assessed valuation

- Charles Clemmer, Finance Director, explained that there are currently no tax rate changes proposed. We do have the reassessment coming up. The Commissioner says it is possible that we will have a new balanced rate for the next Council meeting, in which case we could choose to do that then. If we don't have that rate by that time, when we do get it, we can adjust the rate then. Basically we would have to adjust the rate in order to bring in the same amount of revenue; if we wanted to adjust the rate even lower, we would have to have a budget amendment and have a public hearing along with that.
- Nancy Sika, 2610 Edgewood Road, stated that she thinks the budget looks great and she is pleased with the library and school funding and the additional positions that are coming. However, she is disturbed by the fact that we have advertised the \$1.27 real estate rate with the possible 40% average increase in property values. She understands that there will be an adjustment but opined that it is hard for citizens to figure out how much this is going to cost them and agreeing with this budget without knowing those facts. She noted that she would be fine with adjusting it back to an even number or even if there were a small increase, but no citizen wants to hear that our rates could possibly go up 40%.
- Ada Branham, 2646 Edgewood Road, was in agreement with Ms. Sika's concerns regarding the tax rate. She feels that this is a burden on the citizens in December. She noted that it's hard to pay

taxes in December anyway with the holidays, but now we may double our taxes. She asked why we couldn't wait until after the reassessment is complete to go any further on this.

At this point, Mayor Cooper responded that we are required to adopt a budget 30 days before the fiscal year begins, so we have to have this budget adopted by the end of May whether or not the reassessment is done. He noted that we had hoped it would be done by now, but it's not. He further clarified Mr. Clemmer's report that if it can be finalized before the next Council meeting, we will change those rates; if it can't be, we will adjust them later through a budget amendment. He further explained that we are required by state law to equalize the tax rate, so we can't leave it at \$1.27 if our property values have gone up 40%. We would have to adjust that rate, which would come out to be roughly 92¢. Then if that is inadequate to operate the City, we would go through this process again to raise it. Even though we technically can't wait to approve the budget, that is why we also don't feel the need to wait for the reassessment to be completed to change that rate.

- Julie Goyette, Executive Director of the Rockbridge Regional Library, thanked Council for publicly announcing that they plan to fully fund the library's budget request. In doing that, we are adding value to the community. These funds will allow us to continue providing programs, classes, printing, and outreach services.

ADG #3: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE APRIL 18, 2024, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

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

ADG #5: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS

- Peder Weierholt, 2266 Pine Avenue, introduced himself and stated that he and his family moved here about a year and a half ago and they love the town and community. He owns a real estate title settlement company. He came to introduce himself since he has applied for the Economic Development Authority opening and he is excited about helping the town in that capacity.
- Brent Styler, 2104 Walnut Avenue, as chairman of the EDA stated that the EDA is a little amiss with Mr. Gowdy resigning, but they know that Mr. Weierholt is willing and able to fill that position. They also feel that he will fit well in the program that they have and hope to grow. He also mentioned that the Commonwealth's budget is still in the air; if they go one way, we get double electric bill, if they go the other way, we get normal electric bills. The only thing we can do about this is talk to the Governor's office or any of our representatives.

ADG #6: REPORTS

1. Mayor

None.

2. City Manager

Mr. Tyree mentioned an invitation to the Evening at the Paxton House event on Friday, May 17th at 6:00 PM.

The School Facilities Committee meeting is set for May 28th at 6:00 pm at the Ramsey Center. We will be sending out an agenda next week.

There are quite a few graduations coming up. SVU is tomorrow morning at 11:00 am in front of Main Hall. Everyone has been invited to VMI's graduation ceremonies; if anyone wants to attend, let Sarah know and she will RSVP for you. Parry McCluer graduates on May 24th at 7:00 pm at VMI's Cameron Hall. He congratulated all the graduates.

He shared a plaque that was presented to the City from Rockbridge Recovery and the Community Foundation in our efforts to support the Hope House project. We will place this in the lobby upstairs in City Hall.

The City Hall newsletter, the Buena Vista Beat, went out this week. He stated that we would love to hear their feedback, if there is anything that they would like to see changed or added.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees / Members

a. Budget & Finance

None.

b. Outdoor Spaces

Councilman Henson stated that he and Mr. Tyree are working on an agenda for their first meeting to be held on May 18th.

c. School Facilities

Mayor Cooper reminded everyone that they are planning to have their first meeting on May 28th at 6:00 p.m. at the Ramsey Center.

Councilman Henson mentioned that the Guy Carawan event has turned out a good crowd this year. RARO Day is this Saturday at Camden Field from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm. They will have lots of activities as well as fall sports registration.

He also made note that at 2374 Maple, someone is cutting brush and trees and putting them on the road; he asked who is responsible for picking that up. Mr. Tyree said that if a contractor is doing it, they are supposed to take it off.

He mentioned that we have something on the books about tall grass and he has noticed several places around town that are beyond the 12" rule. Mr. Tyree stated that Alan McMahan, the building official, is on vacation this week, but he has a list that he will start on as soon as he gets back.

5. Department Heads / Constitutional Officers / Court Clerks

None.

6. Invited Community Organizations

None.

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

Board of Zoning Appeals

Mrs. Jody Fix has resigned from the Board of Zoning Appeals following her appointment to the Economic Development Authority. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on December 31, 2026. This is the third time it has appeared on the agenda.

There were no applicants for this opening; it will be carried over to the next meeting.

Economic Development Authority

Mr. David Gowdy has resigned from the Economic Development Authority. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on January 31, 2027. This is the first time it has appeared on the agenda.

APPLICANT: Peder Weierholt

Councilman Henson made a motion to appoint Mr. Weierholt to the EDA. The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Staton and carried by Council.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

NB #1: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE TAX RATES FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

Ms. Burch read the following Ordinance:

**An Ordinance Establishing the Tax Rates for the
City of Buena Vista, Virginia for the Fiscal Year 2025**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that in accordance with Section 26-1 of the Code of the City of Buena Vista, there is hereby levied upon taxable real estate an effective tax rate of One Dollar and Twenty-Seven Cents (\$1.27) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) assessed valuation for the Fiscal year 2025, said levy to be based upon the value of such property as of July 1, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED that there is hereby levied upon personal property a tax rate of Five Dollars and Eighty-Five Cents (\$5.85) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) assessed valuation for the Calendar Year 2024, said levy to be based upon the value of such property as of January 1, 2024.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, that there is hereby levied upon all public service corporation real estate the sum of One Dollar and Twenty-Seven Cents (\$1.27) per One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00) assessed valuation for the Fiscal Year 2025, said levy to be based upon the value of such property as of July 1, 2024.

BE IT STILL FURTHER ORDAINED, that all other tax rates not expressly defined above shall remain the same until further action by Council.

NB #2: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE APPROVING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 MUNICIPAL BUDGET

Mayor Cooper read the following Ordinance:

**An Ordinance Approving the
Fiscal Year 2025 Municipal Budget**

WHEREAS the City Council, on May 2, 2024, held a public hearing on the proposed budget for the Fiscal Year 2025; and

WHEREAS the City Council, during a series of work sessions, has developed a balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2025.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, that the following budget be and the same is hereby adopted for fiscal planning purposes:

**CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA
FY 2025 PROPOSED MUNICIPAL BUDGET**

**GENERAL FUND REVENUE
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
General Property Taxes	\$7,104,820
Other Local Taxes	\$2,372,934
Permits, Privilege Fees	\$27,730
Fines & Forfeitures	\$45,300
Earnings from Investments	\$3,000
Charge for Services	\$796,500
Miscellaneous Revenue	\$259,333
Non-Categorical Aid from Virginia	\$676,719
Shared Expenses	\$1,218,982
Categorical Aid from Virginia	\$3,811,093
Categorical Aid Federal	\$194,543
TOTAL GENERAL FUND REVENUE	\$16,510,954

**GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
City Council	\$39,555
City Manager	\$306,305
City Attorney	\$70,000
Information Technology	\$157,700
Human Resources	\$82,282
Finance Director	\$205,395
Independent Auditor	\$85,821
Commissioner of the Revenue	\$235,478

Reassessment	\$33,000
Board of Equalization	\$3,000
City Treasurer	\$319,534
Insurance	\$74,250
Electoral Board	\$234,748
Circuit Court	\$6,234
General District Court	\$9,270
Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court	\$40,620
Clerk of the Circuit Court	\$287,223
City Sheriff	\$534,385
Commonwealth's Attorney	\$296,188
Criminal Justice Services	\$73,414
Police Department	\$2,328,913
Fire Department	\$163,500
Rescue Squad	\$160,903
Probation Officer	\$3,000
Magistrate	\$340
Medical Examiner	\$150
Economic Development	\$230,199
Planning	\$246,078
Administration & Engineering	\$287,275
Street Maintenance	\$1,148,015
Streetlights	\$73,000
Refuse Collection Department	\$517,382
Refuse Disposal	\$300,000
Maintenance of Building & Grounds	\$485,710
Cemetery Maintenance	\$41,418
General Tax Relief	\$80,000
Retiree Medical Plan	\$26,000
Central Dispatch	\$459,913
School Fund	\$2,408,493
Regional Jail	\$868,851
Transfers to Other Funds	\$431,649
Debt Service	\$230,964
Social Services	\$2,350,000
Non-Profit Agencies	\$574,799
TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENDITURES	\$16,510,954

**WATER REVENUE
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Charge for Services	\$1,455,851
TOTAL WATER FUND REVENUE	\$1,455,851

**WATER EXPENDITURES
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Water Administration	\$49,534
Water Maintenance	\$495,835
Water Production	\$300,191
Debt Service	\$610,291
TOTAL WATER FUND EXPENDITURES	\$1,455,851

**SEWER REVENUE
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Charge for Services	\$1,254,329
TOTAL SEWER FUND REVENUE	\$1,254,329

**SEWER EXPENDITURES
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Sewer Administration	\$48,534
Sewer Maintenance	\$373,321
Waste Water Treatment Plant	\$832,474
TOTAL SEWER FUND EXPENDITURES	\$1,254,329

**PARKS & RECREATION REVENUE
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Charge for Services & Misc. Revenue	\$344,125
Transfer from General Fund	\$407,337
TOTAL PARK FUND REVENUE	\$751,462

**PARKS & RECREATION EXPENDITURES
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Administration	\$241,023
Recreation Department	\$170,559
Activities Department	\$16,300
Maintenance of Parks & Campgrounds	\$265,791
Swimming Pool	\$57,789
TOTAL PARK FUND EXPENDITURES	\$751,462

**SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION REVENUE
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
City Funds	\$23,181
Interest Recovery	\$19,583
TOTAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCT REVENUE	\$42,764

**SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION EXPENDITURES
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Middle School Loan	\$42,764
TOTAL SCHOOL CONSTRUCT EXPENDITURES	\$42,764

**SENIOR CENTER FUND REVENUE
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
BV/Lex/Rockbridge County	\$8,500
TOTAL SENIOR CENTER REVENUE	\$8,500

**SENIOR CENTER FUND EXPENDITURES
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Utilities and Operation Costs	\$8,500
TOTAL SENIOR CENTER EXPENDITURES	\$8,500

**SCHOOL NUTRITION FUND REVENUE
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Nutrition Revenues	\$876,642
TOTAL SCHOOL NUTRITION REVENUE	\$876,642

**SCHOOL NUTRITION FUND EXPENDITURES
2024-2025**

<u>Item</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Nutrition Expenses	\$876,642
TOTAL SCHOOL NUTRITION EXPENDITURES	\$876,642

NB #3: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE OPERATION OF THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

Ms. Burch read the following Ordinance:

**An Ordinance Appropriating Funds for the
Operation of the City of Buena Vista for Fiscal Year 2025**

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BUENA VISTA, VIRGINIA, that in accordance with Section 4-1, Budgets and Appropriations, of the Charter of Buena Vista, funds to support the operations of the City for the Fiscal Year 2025 is hereby appropriated effective July 1, 2024 in the amount of \$20,900,501 and in accordance with the following provisions:

General Fund	\$16,510,954
Water Fund	\$1,455,850
Sewer Fund	\$1,254,329
Parks & Recreation Fund	\$751,462
School Construction Fund	\$42,764
Senior Center Fund	\$8,500
School Nutrition Fund	\$876,642
TOTAL FY 2025 BUDGET	\$20,900,501

NB #4: COMMUNITY FOUNDATION REQUEST FOR OPIOID FUNDS FOR HOPE HOUSE EXPENSES

Mr. Tyree explained that we have received \$19,352 in opioid funds and Lori Turner is requesting those funds for some of the expenses they have incurred at the Hope House. In the past, we have approved these requests. He reminded that opioid funds are settlement funds that we’ve received from opioid companies and those funds have to be used for new recovery projects with getting people off of drugs. Currently, this is the only new program in the region and with it being right here in Buena Vista, it makes sense for us to support it. He also noted that next year, there will be a second request from Josh Elrod regarding the drug court, which the state has renamed as recovery court (that will take effect in July). But currently this is the only project we have to give these funds to, and Commonwealth’s Attorney Josh Elrod is also supportive of approving this request for the Community Foundation and Hope House.

Councilman Henson said that since we have earmarked this in the past and know where it is going, he would make a motion to approve the request. Councilwoman Poluikis seconded the motion, and it was carried by Council.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Tyson T. Cooper, Mayor