



CITY OF BUENA VISTA CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING, PUBLIC HEARING, & EXECUTIVE SESSION

September 3, 2026 | 6:00 PM
Council Chambers – 2039 Sycamore Avenue

The Buena Vista City Council met for a Regular Council Meeting and Public Hearing on Thursday, September 3, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present:

Mayor Jesse Lineberry

Vice-Mayor Danny Staton

Amy Gilliam

Michelle Poluikis

William Kerr

Stephanie Noel-Branch

Ronald Cash - *arrived at 6:03 p.m.*

Members Absent:

None

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

Mayor Lineberry called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and Councilmember Kerr delivered the opening prayer.

ADG #2: APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

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

ADG #3: 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 Buena Vista City Council received public comment on the following matter:

Conditional Use Permit for construction of two (2) two-family dwellings, and reduction of minimum front setback of these two-family dwellings from 30' to 10', for Tax Map ID 47-1-1-27-1, 47-1-E---A, and 47-1-1-27-6 through 10, collectively known as the 600 block of Magnolia Avenue. This project also includes four single-family homes.

- Tom Roberts presented the request noting that this is a revised proposal replacing a previously approved 22-unit townhouse development that was determined to be infeasible due to the costs associated with stormwater management, roads, and utilities. Mr. Roberts explained that the current proposal consists of eight total housing units: four single-family homes fronting Magnolia Avenue and two duplexes located toward the rear of the property, on the Woodland Avenue side of the site. The duplexes will be oriented toward Magnolia Avenue but accessed from the improved alleyway due to the significant elevation change between Magnolia and Woodland. The alleyway will be paved and widened for two-way traffic, with parking provided for the duplexes. The single-family homes will have individual driveways and garages. No new vehicular access points will be created along Magnolia, and street parking will remain permitted on the opposite side of Magnolia.

City Manager Krystal Onaitis noted that the project would help address the City's need for more diversified housing and would add density in an area where it can be supported. Council discussed the proposed reduction in setback from 30 feet to 10 feet, with Mr. Roberts acknowledging that it is a significant change but explaining that the site's configuration and alley access make the reduced

setback appropriate. He also clarified that the single-family homes would be sold individually, while the two duplexes are currently planned to be rented.

Councilmember Cash asked about the existing gas line and overhead electric infrastructure serving the area. Mr. Roberts explained that the current grading plan does not require relocation of the gas line, although relocation could potentially make grading easier. The developer, Bryson Adams, stated that the proximity of the gas line to the proposed structures and foundation foots had been considered and was workable. Mr. Cash also raised concerns regarding the required horizontal and vertical clearances from the existing overhead electric line. Mr. Adams explained that the plan is to place the overhead utility underground through the development and that coordination with the utility provider was underway.

Ms. Onaitis clarified that Council was being asked to approve the project concept and that detailed utility coordination would occur as the project advances, including review of final plans and designs by the applicable utility providers. Councilmember Cash expressed support for the proposal and noted that he had previously supported the larger townhouse development. He encouraged the developer to identify and address utility issues early in the process to avoid they type of complications that prevented the previous project from moving forward.

- David Hall, 523 Magnolia Avenue, spoke regarding the proposed development and expressed concerns primarily about traffic and access to the site. Mr. Hall explained that his family has owned property in the area for many years and that the lots on the Woodland Avenue side have historically been used as open pasture. He expressed concerns about increased traffic in the alley between 6th and 5th Streets, noting that two existing homes currently use the alley and that vehicles sometimes travel through the alley at high speeds due to its narrow width. He stated that he has experienced vehicles exiting the alley at high speeds near his property.

Mr. Hall also noted that neighborhood children currently use the vacant Woodland Avenue lots for playing, sledding, and riding bikes, and that he maintains the lots by keeping them mowed. He questioned why the proposed development would not utilize the existing driveway/gravel road along the creek to provide access from Woodland rather than increasing traffic through the alley and 6th Street. He expressed further concern that 6th Street is difficult to access because of the hill and traffic on Magnolia and stated that residents already frequently use the alley to reach 5th Street rather than exiting onto Magnolia.

He clarified that he did not oppose the proposed housing development but wanted his concerns regarding traffic, alley use, and potential access from Woodland Avenue to be considered.

ADG #4: APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE JULY 28, 2026, INTERJURISDICTIONAL MEETING & THE AUGUST 20, 2026, REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to approve the minutes, Vice-Mayor Staton seconded, and the motion carried.

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

None.

ADG #6: REPORTS:

1. Mayor

Mayor Lineberry wished everyone a safe and enjoyable Labor Day weekend and encouraged the community to participate in the City's upcoming festivities. He reported attending a Southern Virginia University football community event with his family and congratulated the Fighting Blues on their victory over Rockbridge. He also noted the recently completed paving on Chestnut Avenue and thanked City staff and management for the investment in the area.

2. City Manager

Ms. Onaitis began her report by thanking the Mayor for allowing City offices to close early on Friday in coordination with the Governor's announcement regarding state office closures.

She reported that staff was heavily engaged in preparing for Labor Day, including the new food truck court at Glen Maury Park, the Virginia 250 Mobile Museum, and the City's time capsule activities. Staff is also working with Main Street on preparations for Mountain Days as it transitions to a multi-day event, including event-site security and coordination. The City is developing a more strategic approach to press releases and media outreach to highlight City progress and accomplishments.

Ms. Onaitis also reported that she has established regular meetings with the City's executive team, City Clerk, and City Attorney to improve coordination of agendas, legal matters, and Council business. Preparations are underway for the Council retreat and strategic planning sessions, with consultants from DecideSmart engaged to facilitate the process. The sessions are being considered for two Saturdays to separate strategic planning from the Council retreat. She also reported plans for a "Meet Your Manager" open house before an upcoming Council meeting to provide citizens, businesses, and community stakeholders an opportunity to meet with her.

Regarding financial processes, Ms. Onaitis said the City continues to work through the implementation of the new RDA financial system, including additional training and potential configuration adjustments. She is also developing a quarterly financial reporting format for Council and the public that would compare departmental or functional-area budgets with year-to-date expenditures and identify areas requiring additional attention.

She reported that Chestnut Avenue paving is substantially complete, with a few areas requiring additional work to address drainage at intersections. She also highlighted the permanent repair of the significant pothole near Munter's, noting that the contractor repaired the roadway sub-base several inches below the surface rather than simply applying a surface patch. The City is preparing to begin required VDOT inspections of qualifying bridges and culverts, with a professional engineer expected to conduct the inspections. She also plans to meet with senior VDOT leadership in the Staunton District.

Ms. Onaitis also highlighted several property and facility improvements, including the use of roadway millings to regrade the loop and access path at Laurel Park, improved landscaping and sidewalks around City Hall, and installation of guardrails at GMP to improve safety around areas where vehicles park near children and pavilion areas. She also reported that the Wheeler Tournament generated \$7,354 in camping fees, helping offset some operational costs associated with hosting the event.

For economic and community development, Ms. Onaitis reported that an MOU for the Community Garden is being developed and will be brought to Council for approval. She stated that the City intends to review and update existing leases involving City property to ensure appropriate provisions are included regarding alterations to City assets and applications for grants affecting City property. The City's economic development plan is also moving forward, with Timmons Group scheduled to conduct a site visit later in the month.

Under public safety, she shared the Police Department's upcoming SHIELD program. Chief Clements stated that the program will be a collaboration with the public schools, modeled after a Big Brothers Big Sisters-type program. The program is expected to involve approximately 6-10 high school students, with the goal of building positive decision-making and leadership skills through partnerships with VPAS and other community stakeholders. Chief Clements also noted that the Police Department increased its presence at local schools following the recent events in Waynesboro, with patrol officers positioned during morning drop-off and afternoon dismissal as a precaution. Mayor Lineberry thanked the officers for their additional work and dedication.

Ms. Onaitis also reported meeting with Davenport & Associates regarding the City's comprehensive financial review and school funding scenarios. A draft report is expected after Labor Day, with the final

report to include observations and recommendations regarding fund balance growth, funding strategies, and school funding scenarios. A joint meeting of City Council and School Board will be scheduled following completion of the report.

3. City Attorney

None.

4. Council Committees/Members

Mrs. Poluikis shared positive feedback regarding the transition of the middle school to the high school facility. She said the school year had gotten off to a particularly positive start and highlighted the recent pep rally where middle and high school students participated together, noting that the students appeared to be embracing the new arrangement.

On behalf of the Events Committee and Rockbridge 250, Mr. Cash thanked Ms. Onaitis and City staff for their work preparing for the Labor Day celebration and helping coordinate responsibilities. He reported that the Virginia 250 Mobile Museum would arrive Sunday and remain open to visitors throughout Monday until about 5:00 p.m. He asked Council members to consider volunteering for a two-hour shift to greet visitors and assist with the museum. Mr. Cash described the museum as an engaging exhibit highlighting America's Revolutionary beginnings and Virginia's role in the founding of the nation and said he would distribute a volunteer sign-up schedule to Council.

5. Department Heads/Constitutional Officers/Court Clerks

None.

6. Invited Community Organizations

Jen Carpenter – Main Street Buena Vista

Mrs. Carpenter reported on the recent Connect BV event downtown. Approximately 400 people attended, and one participating vendor reported its highest single-day sales ever. She noted that several businesses that are normally closed on Mondays made the effort to open specifically for the event. She also shared that the event provided an opportunity for local residents to welcome SVU students and their families during orientation. Local residents were able to reassure parents about the community's safety and welcoming atmosphere. The event continued late into the evening, with businesses remaining busy until after closing time. She emphasized the value of downtown events as opportunities for residents, students, families, and businesses to build community connections.

George & Donna Sullivan – The American Legion

Mr. Sullivan requested permission to install additional banners on City utility poles for the Banner Program that Council previously approved. He presented a map identifying proposed locations extending from the courthouse to Hardee's and along 29th Street toward Enderly Heights, with approximately 43 additional flags expected. He reported that the banner project has received positive community response and no negative feedback. He also described plans for an American Legion gathering where participating families will be invited to meet one another and view the completed banners. Mayor Lineberry asked Ms. Onaitis to continue coordinating with Mr. Sullivan regarding the project. Mr. Sullivan also volunteered to assist with remaining volunteer needs for the Mobile Museum.

ADG #7: PRESENTATIONS TO CITY COUNCIL & THE PUBLIC

Buena Vista Flood Risk Resilience Plan – Hunter Young

Hunter Young of Civil Consulting Group presented the Plan, noting that his firm has provided engineering services to the City for about 27 years. Mr. Young explained that while the City is protected from the Maury River by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers floodwall, there are significant flood risks from interior streams that drain approximately 8,000 acres through downtown, including Chalk Min Run, Indian Gap Run, Knolls

Run, and Pedlar Gap Run. He reviewed the extensive USDA/NRCS watershed study completed in 1999 following major flooding in the 1980s and early 1990s. That study analyzed historical flood damage, modeled flood events, identified drainage bottlenecks, and recommended infrastructure improvements.

Mr. Young explained that the City received a grant in 2025 to reevaluate the 1999 study and develop a current risk and resilience plan. The updated plan converted historical damage and construction estimates into 2025 dollars and focused on projects that could be realistically accomplished in the near term. Estimated damage from a five-year flood event is approximately \$4.5 million, while a 25-year event could result in approximately \$22 million in damage and a 100-year event about \$33-34 million. The original study's recommended improvements would cost an estimated \$21 million in today's dollars, although some projects would likely cost more.

Mr. Young reviewed recommendations from the original study, including construction of seven debris basins, approximately 220 feet of earthen berm, 500 feet of concrete floodwall, replacement of two railroad bridges and a railroad culvert, removal of a bridge, and about 5,500 feet of channel improvements. He noted that only two debris basins, the Rockbridge Avenue bridge replacement, and removal of one culvert have been completed. He emphasized that keeping debris, cobbles, and vegetation out of stream channels is one of the least expensive ways to improve flood resilience because accumulated material reduces the channels' capacity to carry water.

As near-term priorities, Mr. Young identified replacement of the Woodland Avenue culvert, restoration of the two existing debris basins, and deferred maintenance of stream channels, particularly around road crossings and culverts. The City has already received grant funding for the design of the Woodland Avenue culvert replacement, and construction funding could potentially be pursued through another grant. Restoration of the two existing debris basins was estimated at about \$40,000. He estimated that comprehensive stream-channel cleanup performed by a contractor could cost around \$1 million but noted that existing DCR grant funding may allow the City to pursue funding for temporary employees who could perform much of the work using City equipment at a significantly lower cost.

Longer-term recommendations include construction of additional debris basins, estimated at about \$4 million, additional bridge and channel improvements, and development of a formal debris management plan. Mr. Young recommended establishing procedures for debris removal and staging following a flood, identifying locations for debris storage, educating residents about debris management, and considering a prearranged contract with a disaster debris-removal company familiar with FEMA reimbursement requirements. He also recommended formalizing routine stream maintenance and inspection schedules, including annual visual inspections and more thorough inspections following major rainfall events.

Mr. Young emphasized the importance of coordinating with owners of bridges and culverts, including the railroad and VDOT, to ensure that all parties use consistent flood-flow calculations when designing or replacing infrastructure. He also recommended promoting citizen participation in the National Flood Insurance Program, evaluating the Community Rating System, mapping the City's stormwater infrastructure in GIS, developing flood models for the City's streams, and establishing clear legal responsibilities for maintenance of stream channels. He noted that the flood models developed for the 1999 study could not be located despite efforts to find them through NRCS and the original engineering firm, meaning future modeling may need to be recreated.

Mr. Young also identified the Community Flood Preparedness Fund (CFPPF) administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation as an important funding source, noting that the program can provide about 90% of project costs, with a typical 10% local match. Other potential funding sources discussed included stormwater fees and various FEMA hazard-mitigation programs.

During discussion, Councilmember Cash asked about potential impacts from timber sales or other activity in the George Washington and Jefferson National Forest within the City's drainage area. Mr. Young recommended communicating directly with the Forest Service and noted that the 1999 study had

examined potential impacts from deforestation caused by fire or other events, which could significantly increase runoff, mudslides, and debris entering the City.

Council discussed the difficulty of cleaning stream channels and culverts located on private property and the permitting requirements of the Army Corps of Engineers and other agencies. Mr. Young explained that the City can focus first on culverts and other areas where maintenance is needed and recommended obtaining permits that clearly establish the allowable scope and methods of maintenance. Ms. Onaitis noted that the permitting process can be rigorous and may take several months, but that the City could perform operational maintenance once the appropriate permits and strategy are established.

Council expressed support for moving forward with proactive flood mitigation. Vice-Mayor Staton emphasized the need to address overgrown streams and large trees that could obstruct waterways, while Councilmember Poluikis stressed the devastating impact flooding can have on residents and the importance of taking preventative action. Ms. Onaitis stated that the City would begin by developing a maintenance strategy for City-owned areas, determining the necessary permitting process, and identifying available resources and funding opportunities. She also recommended developing an inventory of areas previously modified or maintained by the City or other entities and incorporating that information into GIS, followed by formally codifying maintenance responsibilities. Councilmember Poluikis suggested that the City begin addressing areas it clearly owns while simultaneously developing the broader inventory and permitting process.

Ms. Onaitis stated that the City would begin developing the maintenance strategy and permitting process and would return to Council with updates. She also noted that the City's upcoming VDOT bridge and culvert inspections will provide additional information to help prioritize infrastructure needs and identify potential state funding opportunities. Councilmember Cash suggested pursuing permits that would allow the City to complete as much maintenance as possible over the permit period. Mr. Young offered to assist based on his experience with Army Corps permitting.

**A complete copy of the Flood Risk Resilience Plan is available in the City Manager's Office.*

ADG #8: CONSIDER APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, & COMMITTEES

Rockbridge Area Tourism Advisory Board

Ms. Kristina Ramsey has resigned from the Tourism Board. This appointment will begin immediately and will expire on December 31, 2026.

This seat must be filled by the City Manager or a member of the Economic Development Department.

Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to appoint City Manager Krystal Onaitis to the Regional Tourism Board. Councilmember Poluikis seconded the motion, and it carried.

Shenandoah Valley Partnership

Ms. Kristina Ramsey has resigned from the SVP Board. This appointment is for a three-year term beginning immediately and expiring on June 30, 2029.

This seat is typically filled by a member of the Economic Development Department.

Councilmember Noel-Branch made a motion to appoint Ally Haney to the SVP Board, seconded by Councilmember Poluikis, and carried by Council.

Buena Vista Tree Board

The Tree Board has selected two youth-member applicants for appointment to the Board as is requesting City Council confirmation of the appointments. These will both be for one-year terms beginning immediately and expiring on June 30, 2027.

Applicants: Ivy Talley and Zola Brookman

Councilmember Poluikis moved to appoint Ivy Talley and Zola Brookman to the Tree Board, with Councilmember Cash seconding. The motion was carried by Council.

Central Shenandoah EMS Council

Ms. Kathleen Beverley's term on the EMS Council expires on September 30, 2026. Ms. Beverley is willing to continue serving is reappointed. This will be for a three-year term expiring on September 30, 2029.

Councilmember Noel-Branch made a motion to reappoint Ms. Beverley to the EMS Council. Vice-Mayor Staton seconded the motion, and it carried.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

At this point, Vice-Mayor Staton made a motion to amend the agenda to add an Executive Session according to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(8) of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, for the purpose of consultation with legal counsel regarding legal advice associated with the upcoming referendum on sales tax. Councilmember Cash seconded the motion, and it carried.

NEW BUSINESS

ADG #9: RECOGNITION/COMMUNICATION FROM VISITORS – NEW BUSINESS ITEMS

None.

NB #1: CONSIDERATION OF AN APPROPRIATION RESOLUTION

Finance Director Steve Bolster presented the proposed appropriation resolution, which included appropriations for both the General Fund and School Fund. For the General Fund, he explained that certain grant programs follow the federal fiscal year, which runs October 1 through September 30. The Police Department had \$7,766 in unexpended FY2026 grant funds that the City is requesting to carry forward into FY2027, including \$4,023 from the Alcohol Enforcement Grant and \$3,743 from the Police Traffic Services Program. In addition, the Police Department was awarded new federal fiscal year grants totaling \$33,908, consisting of \$23,588 for Police Traffic Services and \$10,320 for the Alcohol Enforcement Grant. The combined General Fund appropriation request was \$41,674, to support traffic safety and impaired-driving enforcement, officer overtime, and related equipment expenses.

For the School Fund, Mr. Bolster reported \$105,664 in unexpended Targeted School Improvement Grant funds from FY2026 that the School Division requested to carry forward into FY2027. The School Division was also awarded \$204,674 through the Virginia Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, specifically to serve Enderly Heights Elementary School. The total School Fund appropriation request was \$310,339.

Mr. Bolster also noted that none of the proposed General Fund or School Fund appropriations require local tax support or a local match.

Ms. Burch 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, 2027**, from the UNAPPROPRIATED SURPLUS of the **GENERAL FUND** and expended as follows:

Federal FY2026 Carryover Grant and FY2027 New Grant Award: VA DMV Highway Safety Programs

10.3101.51400	DMV 402 Grant Overtime	\$23,407.00
10.3101.60350	DMV 402 Grant	<u>\$18,268.00</u>
Sub-total 1		\$41,675.00

Total General Fund Appropriation **\$41,675.00**

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, 2027**, from the UNAPPROPRIATED SURPLUS of the **SCHOOL FUND** and expended as follows:

School Fund – FY2026 Carryover Grant (Targeting School Improvement Grant) & FY2027 New Grant Award (21st Century Community Learning Centers – EHES)

19.6600.69130	School Expenses	<u>\$310,339.00</u>
Sub-total 1		\$310,339.00

Total School Fund Appropriation **\$310,339.00**

Approved: This 3rd day of September 2026.

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor

Attest:

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Councilmember Noel-Branch moved to approve the resolution, Vice-Mayor Staton seconded, and the motion carried.

NB #2: FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE FOR A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT IN THE 600 BLOCK OF MAGNOLIA AVENUE

Ms. Burch presented the following ordinance:

Conditional Use Permit
600 Block Magnolia Avenue, Tax Maps 47-1-1-27-1, 47-1-E---A, and 47-1-1-27-6 through 10

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, pursuant to Section 603.03-8 and 630.01-3 of the Land Development Regulations, a Conditional Use Permit shall be issued for construction of two two-family dwellings on the property, and the front setback requirement for the said two-family dwellings shall be reduced to ten feet, at the property known as the 600 block of Magnolia Avenue, Tax Maps 47-1-1-27-1, 47-1-E---A, and 47-1-1-27-6 through 10. This shall be in accordance with the staff report and site plan attached hereto as “Exhibit A”.

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

EXECUTIVE SESSION

According to Section 2.2-3711 (A)(8) of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, for the purpose of consultation with legal counsel regarding legal advice associated with the upcoming referendum on sales tax.

On motion by Vice-Mayor Staton, seconded by Councilmember Cash, and carried unanimously, City Council convened in an Executive Session at 7:37 p.m.

REGULAR SESSION

ADG #10: CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

On motion by Vice-Mayor Staton, seconded by Councilmember Kerr, and carried by Council, City Council reconvened in Regular Session at 7:53 p.m. 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 Gilliam ✓

Councilmember Kerr ✓

Councilmember Noel-Branch ✓

Councilmember Cash ✓

Vice-Mayor Staton ✓

Mayor Lineberry ✓

AYES – 7

NAYS – 0

Members absent during vote: None

Members absent during meeting: None

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:55 p.m.

Sarah M. Burch, Clerk of Council

Jesse D. Lineberry, Mayor