

Minutes of a Regular Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia, held in the Council Chambers located at 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia, on Monday, January 26, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: Lafayette Dickens

Council Members: Wesley Gormus, Lloyette Wynn, Christopher Page,
Nathaniel Miller, Eric Nash, Jake Allman

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel,
Town Clerk; Devin Foster, Deputy Chief

Town Attorney: Attorney Jeremy Carroll - Zoom

Those Absent: Carolyn Williams

Mayor Dickens called the January Council Meeting to order.

Mayor Dickens delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Dickens led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC HEARING:

1. Rezoning Request – Blackstone Hotel Group, LLC

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWN OF BLACKSTONE

*The Blackstone Town Council shall conduct a Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m., January 26, 2026 in the Blackstone Town Council Chambers, 100 W. Elm Street. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to consider a request from **Blackstone Hotel Group, LLC** to conditionally rezone one parcel from the current POS, Public & Open Space district to the G-B, General Business district. The request, if approved would permit the renovation of an existing dwelling to be used as an event space. The rezoning request specifically applies to property known as Nottoway County Tax Map number 50A31-1-56-29AB01 and is also described as 711 W. Fourth Street. The Town Council may act on this request following the Public Hearing. Any individual desiring to address the Council should attend the Public Hearing at the above stated date and time.*

Mayor Dickens opened the Public Hearing.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this rezoning request is for a portion of property that was formerly VUMAC, and specific to the Gables property. He said they plan to use this building as an event center. He said the Planning Commission recommended approval with the following conditions:

1. The property may be used as an event center;
2. The property may be used as a hotel and restaurant;
3. The property may be used as a stand-alone restaurant;
4. The property may be used as a retail gift shop associated with the hotel;
5. All above activities shall be conducted within the footprint of the improvements existing as of January 26, 2026.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this would only apply to the Gables.

Mayor Dickens asked if there was anyone here to speak for or against the request. There were no comments, so Mayor Dickens closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the request from Blackstone Hotel Group, LLC to conditionally rezone Nottoway County Tax Map number 50A31-1-56-29AB01, 711 W. Fourth Street from Public & Open Space to General Business, with the following conditions: The property may be used as an event center; The property may be used as a hotel and restaurant; The property may be used as a stand-alone restaurant; The property may be used as a retail gift shop associated with the hotel; and All above activities shall be conducted within the footprint of the improvements existing as of January 26, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

MINUTES:

Councilman Miller made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on December 15, 2025. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

VISITORS:

Mrs. Kathy Cole – 211 Pleasant Drive

Mrs. Cole said she was here for the dogs, and started this venture 5 days ago. She said there are several tethered dogs in town, she had made numerous calls, left several messages with animal control and finally spoke with someone and was told there was not really anything they could do. Mrs. Cole said animal control told her they went by the 5 properties she reported on and they left a note or spoke to someone on the tether law. She said 5 days later the dogs are still tied up. She said she tried the Blackstone Police Department and was told they could not do anything.

Mrs. Cole said she left a not so nice message today with animal control, and Shelia did call her back at 6:00 p.m. Mrs. Cole said three of the dogs she reported are tied 24/7 and have been for years. She said it is illegal to have a dog tethered right now at 22 degrees in the State of Virginia. She said animal control told her they have no room for these dogs, so Mrs. Cole suggested every day these dogs are tethered below 32 degrees the owners should get ticketed. She explained the situations of the dogs. She said Shelia assured her all the dog owners would have tickets in the morning.

Mrs. Cole said Shelia would like Blackstone to have a no tether law, but Nottoway could not do it. Mrs. Cole said the Town of Blackstone can adopt a no tether law.

Councilman Page said when the Town updated the Animal Control Ordinance, the State Law was included. He said under Section 14-92 Cruelty to Animals, the weather temperatures over 85 and under 32 have been adopted. Mrs. Cole said you can have all the laws you want, but they have to be enforced.

Councilman Miller said he understood, he had the same problem in his area, and it is a shame. Councilman Page said he received a few calls about Academy Avenue, and he referred them to Blackstone Police Department because it is a Town Ordinance.

Mrs. Cole said she would like to have a no tether law in Town, which would help with barking dogs also. She said Shelia was all for it.

Councilman Page said a no tether law was proposed previously, but was not very popular. Councilman Allman said we can propose no tethering, but does not help if we don't have anywhere to take the dogs. Councilman Nash did not believe the new shelter would make that big of a difference.

Councilman Miller said after touring the new facility he did not think it would hold over 40 dogs. Mr. Billy Coleburn said the new shelter would be going from 10 to 16 dogs. Councilman Miller said we have more cats than dogs. Mrs. Cole said she was told the new shelter would have two kennels for small dogs.

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed Nottoway has declared the shelter to be no kill. He said dogs are being kept past the timeline trying to get them adopted. Mrs. Cole said that's when we look for rescues.

Councilman Page said according to the Town's Ordinance, this would be a Class 1 Misdemeanor, and asked does this mean it would be a Misdemeanor for every day the dogs are out there. Chief Murphy believed State Law is a Class 4. Councilman Page believed the Town could be tougher.

Chief Murphy said about being inspected by animal control, if they were going out there anyway, a summons should have been issued then, he did not know they needed to go behind animal control to do the same thing. Chief Murphy said he suggested to the officers they tell the owners to bring their dogs in, maybe fear would work.

Mayor Dickens suggested Mrs. Cole go to the Board of Supervisors with the tether request as well. Councilman Allman said we can try hitting them in their pocket books, but we need somewhere for the dogs to go, which means animal control needs to figure out how to get dogs out of the shelter.

Mrs. Luz Koptchak

Mrs. Koptchak said she was Mrs. Cole's neighbor. She believed we could make a difference, and the no tether law should be given another try. She did not believe anyone on Council who has a dog would let it be sitting outside right now. She believed citizens could make a difference. She said she was very resourceful with lots of people and can make things happen. She said if signatures are needed to make a difference, they can make it happen.

Mayor Dickens referred no tethering to the Health & Ordinance Committee.

Mr. Billy Coleburn – Brunswick Avenue

Mr. Coleburn commended Town forces during this storm.

Mr. Coleburn said everything Mrs. Cole said, there are too many people in Blackstone that have pets, he presumed you get a pet to love it. He said there are lots of people in Blackstone that do not show love to their pets.

Mr. Coleburn commended the Committee for the Armory; he loved what he had seen on pricing. He said Mr. Peanut Johnson was correct about basketball, this is a beautifully renovated building with basketball lines, there needs to be basketball goals in there. He said this was a promise made. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the ductwork installed does not permit the retractable basketball goals.

Councilman Nash said when portable goals were discussed, the ones being considered are like what is seen at a college basketball game. Mr. Coleburn said portable to him are like the ones on side streets in Blackstone. Councilman Allman said these would be professional basketball goals.

Mr. Coleburn did not see why if we can let people drink beer and wine in the Town Square 10' from traffic, why can't responsible grown-ups have wine, beer or whatever in the Armory. He said in 1996 the Rotary had a big New Year's function, and there was no place large enough in Town, so they had it at the Armory on Route 40, and alcohol was served with no incidents.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:

Mayor Dickens asked to move some items on the Agenda, New Business #1, Appropriations #1 and #4, and Unfinished Business #2. He said they all relate to the Fire Department.

Deputy Chief Foster said the annual election for officers was held last week, and he asked Council to appoint the following Slate of Officers: Zac Beares, Fire Chief; Devin Foster, Deputy Chief; Lee Williams, Assistant Chief; Timothy Immekus, 1st Captain; Dylan Jones, 2nd Captain; Daniel Falwell, 1st Lieutenant; Joseph McMillian, Sr., 2nd Lieutenant; Dion Tomer, Treasurer; and Eric Stiles, Secretary.

Councilman Nash made a motion to appoint the 2026 Fire Department Slate of Officers as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Deputy Chief Foster said some of the Radio System equipment has started coming in. He said we are waiting on approval of the \$30,000.00 grant to finish the Diesel Exhaust System. He said they were awarded the Virginia Forestry 50/50 grant which will be used to purchase new hose and wench equipment for the Brush Truck. He said they were awarded \$75,000.00 from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs for PPE. He said they hoped to get 5 sets of turnout gear with this grant.

Councilman Gormus asked if they still donated old turnout gear. Deputy Chief Foster said it depends on their inventory and if the out of date is still NFPA standard.

Deputy Chief Foster asked for authorization to hold Food Truck Rodeos at the Fire Station on March 20th, June 13th, August 7th and November 20th 2026. He said these were great events they held last year, the first one they brought in \$350.00 and the second was \$420.00.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Food Truck Rodeo dates as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Councilwoman Wynn asked how they choose the dates provided. Deputy Chief Foster said they were trying to break these up throughout the year and these were dates their partners were available.

Mayor Dickens asked if there was a method for collecting Meals Tax. Manager Vannoorbeeck said typically those involved already pay meals tax and have a business license. He added if there is someone new, a list needed to be provided to the Treasurer.

Deputy Chief Foster said Nottoway High School has a Fire Science Class, and their organization has 6 students enrolled, and when finished in June, they will have 3 certifications.

Deputy Chief Foster said they are working on a plan for Mutual Aid with Ft. Pickett. He also announced the years of service.

NEW BUSINESS:

#1 – VDFP – Grant Award – Personal Protective Equipment Grant

Councilman Nash made a motion to ratify Manager Vannoorbeeck’s signature for the acceptance of the PPE Grant award in the amount of \$75,222.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

APPROPRIATIONS:

Appropriation #1 – Fire Programs = \$75,222

Councilman Nash made a motion to appropriate grant funds from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs in the amount of \$75,222.00 for PPE. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

#2 – Purchase Order – Burn Building Water Line

Councilman Page made a motion to award the low bid to Consolidated Pipe in the amount of \$15,843.32 for materials to install a water line at the Burn Building. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

APPROPRIATIONS:

Appropriation #4 – Fire Department = \$31,686.64

Councilman Miller made a motion to appropriate funds to install a water line at the Burn Building in the amount of \$31,686.64. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

PAYMENT OF BILLS:

ALREADY PAID:

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$979,089.41. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

TO BE PAID:

Councilman Miller made a motion to approve as presented; the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$240,428.58. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Councilman Nash asked that Council be provided with a monthly breakdown of the Verizon Wireless bills. He said they vary each month, and he would like to see them for the past twelve months for the cell phones and chromebooks.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

APPROPRIATIONS:

1. *Appropriation #1 – Fire Programs = \$75,222*

This was approved earlier in the meeting.

2. *Appropriation #2 – Police Department = \$250,779*

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Police Department received \$250,779.00 from Department of Criminal Justice Services. He said this would be used for technology upgrades and more AI equipment.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

#1 - Dept. of Criminal Justice Grant

Councilman Allman made a motion to accept the grant in the amount of \$250,779.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Appropriation #2 – Police Department = \$250,779

Councilman Nash made a motion to appropriate the grant funds in the amount of \$250,779.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

3. Appropriation #3 – General Properties = \$40,000

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is for a grant application submitted for the Dillard Crawley Building for \$190,000.00 for lead based paint and asbestos abatement. He said we only received \$40,000.00 for asbestos abatement. He said we can apply later for additional monies if needed. He said this was received from the Brownfields Grant through the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this grant is dollar for dollar, and included two different activities the Town has done for the match, which one was purchasing the building for \$42,000.00. He said we also have a commitment of \$45,000.00 from the Town for architectural fees.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

#5 – Brownfield Grant – 114 S. Main Street – Dillard Crawley

Councilman Miller made a motion to accept the grant in the amount of \$40,000.00 and authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to execute any necessary documents. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Appropriation #3 – General Properties = \$40,000

Councilman Nash made a motion to appropriate the grant funds in the amount of \$40,000.00 from the Brownfields Grant for the Dillard Crawley Building. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

4. Appropriation #4 – Fire Department = 31,686.64

This was approved earlier in the meeting.

5. Appropriation #5 – General Fund & Water/Sewer Fund = \$175,259.68

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is for the Armes ditch. He said this will be paid by transferring from the Water/Sewer Fund to the General Fund. He said the Town is putting off the installation of a water line on Hodges Street. He said the cost of the ditch work is still \$87,000.00. He said the contractor has agreed to do work for the same price. He added Attorney Harf was comfortable with the procurement process.

Manager Vannoorbeeck confirmed Council was only agreeing to expend \$87,000.00 for this appropriation.

Councilman Page asked why it was being transferred from utilities and Hodges Street to Personal Property Cleanup and the General Fund. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Personal Property Cleanup is the line item that is used for ditch work. He said this is being transferred into the General Fund, then appropriated to expend.

Councilman Gormus made a motion to appropriate \$175,259.68 as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Nay
Councilman Allman	-	Nay

Councilman Nash did not agree with taking from a project that has been on the books for years.

The vote was 4-2. Councilman Page believed it was 2/3 vote of Council present. Councilman Allman said it is 2/3 vote of all Council, not Council present.

Councilman Miller suggested calling Councilwoman Williams for her vote.

Councilman Page made a motion to allow Councilwoman Williams to attend electronically. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

- Councilman Gormus - Aye
- Councilwoman Wynn - Aye
- Councilman Page - Aye
- Councilwoman Williams - Absent
- Councilman Miller - Aye
- Councilman Nash - Aye
- Councilman Allman - Aye

Attorney Carroll said if she answers the phone, the minutes need to reflect where she is calling from, and why she is not present. Councilman Nash said she is at work.

Mayor Dickens called Councilwoman Williams from Manager Vannoorbeeck’s cell phone.

Councilwoman Williams made a motion to appropriate \$175,259.68 as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

- Councilman Gormus - Aye
- Councilwoman Wynn - Aye
- Councilman Page - Aye
- Councilwoman Williams - Aye (phone vote)
- Councilman Miller - Aye
- Councilman Nash - Nay
- Councilman Allman - Nay

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Account & Finance – met 1-15-26 – minutes included in January’s Council Packet

Investments

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the money available from the money market account is \$1 Million, and would take our deposits from \$2.5 Million at Citizens Bank and increase to \$3.5 Million. He said we would also roll over \$1 Million, which is a CD that is maturing today. He said there is a \$5000,000.00 CD that has to roll over because it is collateral for a line of credit. He said there is a \$1 Million CD that is 12 months that will roll over for another 12 months, which is collateral for the electric reconductoring project. He said this left a 6 month CD, and \$1 Million, so \$2 Million will be put in a 6 month CD at 3.5%.

Councilman Allman made a motion to invest \$2 Million with Citizens Bank as presented, with the \$500,000.00 and the 12 month CD rolling over. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Councilman Page asked what the rate was for the money market account. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, 3.83%. Councilman Page said we will be losing some interest. Councilman Nash said there was going to be a rate decrease.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the investments will be one 6 month, one 3 month and one 12 months.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Capital Improvement Plan

This was not reported on.

Budget

Councilman Gormus said he would love not to wait until the drop dead deadline for approving the budget. He suggested the committee meet 2-3 times in March and April for anyone that wants to attend and understand it better. He suggested we approve the budget ad in April, and adopt and appropriate the budget in May.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we do not get the final Dominion rates until June. Councilman Allman said if we had the rates he would agree doing the budget earlier.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had received the projections this month and without fuel adjustment, it is looking like a 3.8% increase.

Buildings, Property & Cemetery – met 1-15-26 – minutes included in January’s Council Packet

Armory Application

Councilman Gormus said the committee went through the documents and discussed fees and costs. He said they talked about renting rooms, and asked how many are handicap accessible and not being used by the schools. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied none. Councilman Gormus suggested we just rent the gym.

Councilman Nash believed groups would want to rent the smaller rooms. Councilman Allman said if the schools are just using rooms 10 hours a week, he did not think it was reasonable to hold rooms hostage that citizens paid for.

Councilman Miller did not want things to turn up missing from the classrooms. Councilman Nash did not think anything should be left in the classrooms.

Councilman Gormus said there are still some things that need to be worked out, and tables and chairs are needed.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town applied for and received \$121,000.00 from the Tobacco Commission, which included equipment and supplies for hospitality. He believed this would pay for the install of the kitchen equipment, but it did not, so Town funds were used. He said tables and chairs and supplies are being purchased as cash is available, then we wait for drawdowns to be reimbursed.

Councilman Nash said he wants the hospitality group to do well, but this building is also for the citizens, so out of the \$27,000.00 that is left, why not purchase the basketball goals and tables and chairs. Manager Vannoorbeeck said basketball goals are not refundable, that is not part of the educational portion. Councilman Allman considered youth sports educational.

Councilman Gormus asked why citizens were not using the school’s gym for basketball. Councilman Miller said Blackstone Rec reserves them for basketball.

Councilman Nash said basketball goals are considered educational, co-curricular and development tools. Manager Vannoorbeeck said not to the Tobacco Commission.

Councilman Page said there are leagues that may want to use the Armory, according to the policy this would not allow that. Councilman Miller said for league ball, the schools would work better.

Councilman Page questioned alcohol in the Armory, he thought it was going to be allowed with rent and permission. Councilman Gormus believed it was different from the Town Square and a building. He said with this building being a community center, this is how it landed. He said he agreed with this, and was part of the application from Colonial Heights.

Councilman Allman said he would not be against alcohol with Council permission. He said this would allow well established community enterprises to host events, such as the Fire Department Christmas dinner. Councilman Nash asked where do we draw the line. Councilman Allman said that is why it would come to Council, for us to decide.

Manager Vannoorbeeck suggested he find out if using the rooms will be a problem with the schools.

Councilman Gormus said if this is going back to the committee, he clarified, we will discuss use of the rooms, and allowing alcohol with permission of Council, and the applicant be responsible for the TULIP Policy.

Insurance – met 1-20-26 – minutes included in January’s Council Packet

Insurance Supplement Presentation

Mr. Donald Gee and Ms. Donna Webb were present through Zoom.

Chairman Page said Mr. Gee and Ms. Webb presented to the Insurance Committee the Champion Cafeteria Plan, which is a supplemental insurance on top of what the Town already has. He said this would eliminate co-pays for regular doctor visits. He said this works by taking a deduction from employees pay pre-tax, which taxes the employee lower, then some money is put back, and their fee is taken, then the employee’s paycheck goes up. He said normally that money is sent to the Federal Government.

Mr. Donald Gee said this plan is not to replace the Town’s major medical plan, it does provide unlimited primary care, doctor and urgent care visits. He said it also provides 100% preventative care. He said 90% of full time employees realize a net increase in take home pay.

Ms. Webb said this is a cafeteria plan. She said the benefits offered; the employees would use the Champ Plan as opposed to the major medical. She said this is underwritten by First Health Providers, and owned by Aetna Insurance. She said the pre-tax deduction is not the cost to the employee, it is a part of the math equation that funds the plan. She said employee plus family get unlimited prescriptions at a zero co-pay.

Ms. Webb said this plan is all APP driven. She said they have a telehealth component that comes at no cost. She said they offer a vital tracking component, and unlimited virtual veterinary consultations for pets at no cost.

Ms. Webb discussed the taxes and how their cost is pre-taxed, and provides a larger net pay to the employee. She said the cost to the employee is \$190.00, which is the \$120.00 premium and \$70.00 for reserves.

Councilman Nash asked what it takes for the Town to offer this plan. He believed it took 5 employees who make over \$22,500.00. He asked what would be the cost to the Town, and what happens if 5 employees don't sign up. Ms. Webb said it does take 5 employees to offer this plan. She said because the employee deduction is taken as part of Sec 125, the Town no longer has to pay FICA Tax on the \$1,200.00. Councilman Page said the Town will pay \$44.00 per employee per pay period.

Ms. Webb said they send an ACH each month for \$234.00 per employee that enrolls.

Councilman Gormus asked if the Town would pay \$234.00 a month per employee. Ms. Webb said \$44.00 is realized by tax savings. Councilman Gormus added the \$190.00 covers the cost of the insurance. Councilman Page said that money would have been sent to the IRS, so a portion goes to the Champ Plan, and the remainder stays with the Town.

Councilman Allman said it appears they are using aggressive tax evasion strategies to provide supplemental health care. Councilman Page said they are basically reducing the Town's FICA Tax burden. Mr. Gee said evasion is a harsh word, it is pursuant to 125 of the internal revenue code, and has been there forever.

Councilman Page said they are wanting to know if Council is interested in pursuing this.

Clerk Daniel asked the monthly cost to the employee. It was said \$190.00 a month. Councilman Page said this would have been paid to the Federal Government.

Councilman Allman asked them to provide their Summary Plan Description and underwriting details for Attorney Harf's review. Ms. Webb said this is not an insurance plan it is a Section 125 Cafeteria Plan. She said Champion Health pays the providers.

Councilman Page said he had not received the legal opinion he requested. Mr. Gee said he sent it via email, and would resend.

Councilman Allman said he was not ready to move forward until we get the legal opinion.

Councilman Page made a motion to postpone this item until the February 23, 2026 Council Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Councilman Page said he would check with other municipalities that have joined before the next meeting.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Street & Light – met 1-22-26 – minutes included in January’s Council Packet

Ditches

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Clerk Daniel has provided a list of ditch requests since 2019. He said the committee asked him what ditches the Town could do, which shows on the list provided. He said the committee would like to proceed with some of the ditches Town staff can handle.

Councilman Gormus believed in the past, liability was a concern, and if that is the case, he suggested having a document signed. Manager Vannoorbeeck added an indemnity agreement. Councilman Gormus said the thought is not to let little things become big things.

Councilman Miller suggested during the committee meeting hiring some laborers to help with these projects. Manager Vannoorbeeck did not think that was needed, but maybe Council may want to address this in the budget.

Councilman Allman asked how much money was on this list. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the ones the Town can do are not hideously expensive. He said some would just include materials.

Councilman Nash said there is still a cost even though it is Town employees doing the work. Mayor Dickens asked if another column could be added for cost.

Councilman Gormus said Manager Vannoorbeeck would be getting estimates for contracted work, the cost the Town could do, and then the cost of staff salaries, which would be paid anyway. Councilman Nash asked who would handle Mr. Andre Hicks’ workload if he is cleaning ditches, he said it is still a cost.

Councilman Gormus said Manager Vannoorbeeck believed staff could do some of these. Councilman Nash agreed, but we still need to figure in the cost of the employee.

Councilman Allman said as an example, if we were filling out a grant application, for the in-kind, what would the Town put in that section. Councilman Gormus said then we should do that for all work going forward. He said the employees are getting paid anyway. He said if we find they don't have time to do the work, we can come back and regroup. He said this will be as time allows. He added contracted work would be prioritized by cost and need.

Councilman Gormus made a motion to move forward with ditch work that Town staff can do, and have Manager Vannoorbeeck provide cost estimates for the contracted work. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he preferred Council approval for private property ditches.

Councilman Gormus said going forward if there is work to be done on private property, it be brought to Council to determine if staff can do, or would need to be contracted out.

Councilman Nash believed material costs needed to be brought before Council.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Nay
Councilman Allman	-	Nay

Councilman Gormus said it is policy if materials are over \$10,000.00 it has to be approved by Council.

Councilman Page made a motion that anything in material over \$10,000.00 has to come to Council for approval.

Councilman Allman believed it was \$500.00 in the Charter. Attorney Carroll said the Charter states \$500.00. He did not believe salaries needed to be counted towards the \$500.00.

Councilman Page withdrew his motion.

Pickett Court Parking

Discussed later in the meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Dept. of Criminal Justice Grant

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

2. Purchase Order – Burn Building Water Line

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

3. Armes Ditch – Treescapes, Inc.

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

4. Black History Heroes Committee / Nomination Process

Mayor Dickens presented a list for the Black History Heroes Committee, Carolyn Williams, Barbara Briggins, Floyd Clay, Dr. Clarence Hawkes, Ruby Anderson-Potts and Tuanda Spradley. He said he had contacted them all.

Councilman Miller made a motion to accept the list as presented for the Black History Heroes Committee. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Clerk Daniel said Community Development Specialist Bryant will run the enclosed ad in the newspaper for four weeks.

5. Brownfield Grant – 114 S. Main Street – Dillard Crawley

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

6. RFP Request – 114 S. Main Street – Dillard Crawley

Councilman Page made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to solicit bids for repairs to the fire alarm and fire sprinkler systems in the Dillard Crawley Building. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Manager Vannoorbeeck said now that we know what grant funds we have, he was ready to request proposals from private developers. He said the Town's responsibility was to acquire the building and structurally secure it. He said we need to find someone to put up the match for the \$475,000.00.

Councilman Miller made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to issue an RFP for the restoration and development of the Dillard Crawley Building. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

7. Fort Avenue Sewer Line – Request for Sealed Bid

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town has been approved by DEQ for a low interest loan. He said this project would be at the intersection of Fort and S. West Avenue, into the parking lot at Shiloh Baptist Church, then tie into an existing manhole.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is an old cast iron line, and bricks are collapsing in the manhole. He said there is consistent discharge in the manhole. He said DEQ has approved the Town going forward with this project, and will still take several months to do the bidding. He said he was still trying to get the VRA loan closed.

Councilman Nash asked if the Shiloh ditch could get taken care of during this project. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had to get permission from the Railroad, and would make the request.

Councilman Miller made a motion to authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to solicit bids for the Fort Avenue Sewer Line project. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

8. Award Bid – SCADA Upgrade

Manager Vannoorbeeck said sealed bids were opened on January 6, 2026 for the new SCADA System. He said there was only one bid received from QEI, Inc. in the amount of \$175,487.00. He said Progressive Engineering negotiated with QEI and reduced the amount to \$136,488.00. He said Progressive Engineering is recommending award.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said when putting together the budget for the \$1 Million, he earmarked \$150,000.00 for this portion.

Councilman Page made a motion to award the new SCADA Upgrade to QEI, Inc. in the amount of \$136,488.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Councilman Nash asked what the Town paid Progressive Engineering to negotiate the reduction in price. Manager Vannoorbeeck said their total fees for the reconductoring project is \$45,000.00.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

9. Award Bid – Schwartz Tavern Renovations

Manager Vannoorbeeck said sealed bids were opened on January 6, 2026, with four bids received. He said the lowest bid was from Modulus, LLC in the amount of \$108,361.59. He said the Architect has met with Modulus, and recommended award. He said this includes inside and outside Schwartz Tavern. He said this is mostly water damage on the inside and outside, and includes painting. He said the money is set aside.

Councilman Gormus made a motion to enter into agreement with Modulus, LLC in the amount of \$108,361.59, for the specified work at Schwartz Tavern. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

10. Award Audit RFP

Manager Vannoorbeeck said last month the one proposal received was from Robinson, Farmer, Cox was presented to Council. He said their fee schedule was included. He said the FY25 Audit is \$34,500.00, and the audits for FY26 – FY28 would be on a 3% CPI escalator.

Councilman Nash made a motion to engage Robinson, Farmer, Cox as the Town's auditors per the RFP issued for one year in the amount of \$35,535.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

11. Boundary Adjustments – Work Session

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Nottoway County has agreed to sell 183 acres adjacent to Ft. Pickett to the Ward Burton Foundation, who has stated they do not intend to place a conservation easement on this property. He said he had been informed that the owners of the Gomez property have pursued a conservation easement.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is not great news for the Town, and not in the Town’s best interest.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked that Council hold a Work Session to discuss boundary adjustments and what Council wants to do. He would advocate that the 67 acres on the south side of Route 40 with water and sewer access be discussed.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he has received a letter from Mr. Eric Paul requesting to be boundary adjusted.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town can stand up and say this is not compliant with the Town’s Comprehensive Plan.

Mayor Dickens continued this meeting to Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. to discuss boundary adjustments.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he heard back from both property owners on W. Entrance Road and Hungarytown Road, and both are agreeable to paying \$3,500.00 for legal fees.

Councilman Page asked Manager Vannoorbeeck to provide mapping for these discussions. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would have B&B Consultants provide a map. He said every property being proposed has water/sewer access.

12. Nottoway County – Airport – Purchase Agreement Extension

Councilman Nash made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to extend the due diligence period on the Airport land purchase by 90 days. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the County had not finished the zoning yet.

Councilman Page asked if there was anything that could delay this agreement after the zoning is done. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we should have a preliminary engineering report by the end of February. He said this would provide cost, elements of what needs to be done, and red flags, if any.

Councilman Page said if the delay is on Nottoway, why is this counting towards the Town's time. Manager Vannoorbeeck said if more time is needed, then both parties have to agree.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

13. Capital Improvement Plan Adoption

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Planning Commission recommended approval. He said this is a wish list. He said during the budget process we pick a few items and try to come up with a funding plan. He said the Town is not mandated to do anything. He said this Plan helps with grant applications.

Councilman Gormus made a motion to adopt the Capital Improvement Plan as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

Councilman Gormus said we did discuss the Capital Improvement Plan for the upcoming fiscal year in the Finance Meeting.

ON-GOING PROJECTS:

1. Dilapidated Buildings

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed 819 Falls Street had not been served yet.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said 915 Falls Street was still moving forward.

2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

There was nothing to report.

3. Street Improvement Projects

There was nothing to report.

4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he received the asbestos inspection for the LCCDC Building, it contains asbestos floors. He said he would be putting together the solicitation for bids.

Mayor Dickens asked about the TAP 21 applications. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Commonwealth Transportation Board meets quarterly, and hoped to hear in the spring.

Councilman Miller asked to have a Ward Meeting to let citizens know about possible Workforce Housing in the area. He asked Clerk Daniel to set this up.

Councilman Gormus believed more space was needed in Town Hall. He suggested building an office where the old school buildings are located. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he did not think something needed to be built, what we are talking about is tearing down two buildings, but there will still be two big buildings left. He said the Town will still own 8,000 square feet of buildings.

Clerk Daniel clarified Manager Vannoorbeeck would be bidding asbestos abatement for the stand alone building and the LCCDC Building.

5. Taylor Bottom Block Grant

There was nothing to report.

6. Armory

There was nothing to report.

7. Weatherization

There was nothing to report.

8. Workforce Housing

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town had closed on three houses on Tavern Street. He said since then, the Town now has \$465,000.00 from the original \$630,000.00 in Workforce Housing grant funds. He said six homes have been built with this program.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. VDFP – Grant Award – Personal Protective Equipment Grant

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

2. Virginia Utility Protection Service – Membership Agreement

Councilman Nash made a motion to authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to execute the Virginia Utility Protection Service Membership Agreement. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Manager Vannoorbeeck believed the Town pays \$1.50 per Miss Utility Ticket.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

3. Comprehensive Plan – Commonwealth Regional Council

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Comprehensive Plan was last updated in 2020. He said this is a five year document. He said CRC has not charged the Town for services in the past because we are part of Nottoway County. He said if there is a cost, he would come back to Council.

Councilman Miller made a motion to allow Town staff to work with Commonwealth Regional Council on the Comprehensive Plan. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

4. Committee Assignments

Mayor Dickens said he talked to Council about the committee assignments.

Councilman Allman made a motion to ratify the committee assignments as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

5. 1308 S. Main Street – Trash Fee Request

Mayor Dickens said a resident spoke with Clerk Daniel, and is requesting his trash fee be removed from his utility bill. Clerk Daniel said the citizen claimed his trash days fell on holidays a lot, and used a dumpster some times.

Councilman Nash said with full disclosure, this was one of his rental properties. He said some of the residents use the dumpster at the Event Center and Deco Den, but he was not in agreement with the request.

There was no motion needed for no action.

PICKETT COURT PARKING:

Councilman Gormus said Pickett Court parking was not discussed earlier in the meeting during committee reports.

Councilman Gormus said Manager Vannoorbeeck will be looking into pricing for residents to park in their rear yards for the inside loop of Pickett Court.

Councilman Page said he received a few calls about speeding on the inside alley, to avoid the speed bumps. He said he tried to get through Pickett Court the other day and could not.

Councilman Nash asked if the Town owned the alley. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed the Town may have an easement because it was originally platted for utilities. He said the outer area was determined not to be an alley, he found a petition from the 60s to allow the Town to pick up trash through there.

6. Personal Property Write Offs

Councilman Miller made a motion to write off the Personal Property list as presented in the amount of \$78.42. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

Councilman Gormus	-	Aye
Councilwoman Wynn	-	Aye
Councilman Page	-	Aye
Councilwoman Williams	-	Absent
Councilman Miller	-	Aye
Councilman Nash	-	Aye
Councilman Allman	-	Aye

COMMITTEE REFERRALS:

Mayor Dickens referred tethering to the Health & Ordinance Committee.

Mayor Dickens said the Armory Policy was referred back to the Buildings, Property & Cemetery Committee.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Employment & Police wants to meet to discuss merit raises. Clerk Daniel said she sent to Council what HR had discussed.

MAYORS MINUTE:

Mayor Dickens said although it is frigid outside, things are about to heat up with the budget cycle and beyond. He said he was excited to hand three different homeowners keys. He said let's stay focused and continue to deliver. He said February is Black History Month, and for him that holds a lot of significance.

Mayor Dickens said we only get to walk this path once, so let's make it count. He said Council is doing good work whether they know it or not. He said personally he intended to build on the solid foundation already in place.

Mayor Dickens said he was always available, and hoped there would be an office for the Mayor at some point. He said he would be reaching out to Council for their goals.

POLICE REPORT:

There was nothing reported.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

Mr. Michael Bagley gave kudos to the Town, he appreciated them.

Mayor Dickens continued this meeting to Wednesday, February 18, 2026 at 6:30 p.m. for the Boundary Adjustment Work Session.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Dickens adjourned this meeting at 10:02 p.m.

Cafayette Dickens MAYOR
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

February 23, 2026 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

Jennifer S. Daniel TOWN CLERK
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA