

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, July 20, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: Lafayette Dickens

Council Members: Wesley Gormus, Christopher Page, Carolyn Williams,
Nathaniel Miller, Eric Nash, Jake Allman

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel,
Town Clerk; Sam Murphy, Police Chief; Zac Beares, Fire
Chief; Chastiddy Bryant, Community Development
Specialist

Town Attorney: Julian Harf - Zoom

Those Absent: Lloyette Wynn

Mayor Dickens called the July Council Meeting to order.

Dr. Allen delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Dickens led the Pledge of Allegiance.

VISITORS:

Representatives – Nottoway Youth Recreation Association – Coach Pitch, Ponytails, Majors

Mrs. Amanda Atkinson said Nottoway has three teams going to the World Series, 2 boy's teams, and 1 girl's team. She said the boys have not been in 54 years. She said she was here tonight as a representative of the Nottoway Youth Recreation Association; she is the Vice President and the Softball Commissioner.

Mrs. Atkinson requested funds to offset the cost for travels for the families. She said the boys would be traveling to Mississippi and the girls are going to Winnabow, North Carolina.

Mayor Dickens said included in the packet is a letter from Timberlake District Youth, the Director of Umpires saying Nottoway had written the book on sportsmanship on both sides of the fence. Mayor Dickens said we are very proud of this group.

Councilman Miller made a motion that the Town provide \$500.00 a piece for all three teams. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Councilman Page asked what was provided in the past. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, \$1,000.00.

Mayor Dickens asked if we could do better.

Councilman Page made a secondary motion to provide \$1,000.00 a piece for all three teams. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

PUBLIC HEARINGS:

1. Section 26-26 - Burning

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWN OF BLACKSTONE

*The Blackstone Town Council shall conduct a Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m., July 20, 2026 in the Town Council Chambers, 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to consider amendments to the Blackstone Town Code. Specifically, to **Section 26-26, Burning of Wood, Brush or Other Material Prohibited and Section 26-27, Exceptions to Open Burning Prohibition.** The proposed amendments are available for review at the Blackstone Town Manager's Office, 100 W. Elm Street or by request to philipv@townofblackstoneva.com or (434) 292-7251. The public is invited to this Public Hearing to present comments or concerns regarding the proposed amendments. It is the Town's intention to comply with the ADA. Any person requiring physical or sensory accommodation should contact the Town Manager's Office no later than 5:00 p.m., July 15, 2026.*

Mayor Dickens opened the Public Hearing.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this change to the Ordinance is just adding the word "flammable".

Mayor Dickens closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Nash made a motion to adopt Ordinance Section 26-26 as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

2. Section 26-27 – Exceptions to Open Burning

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
TOWN OF BLACKSTONE

*The Blackstone Town Council shall conduct a Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m., July 20, 2026 in the Town Council Chambers, 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to consider amendments to the Blackstone Town Code. Specifically, to **Section 26-26, Burning of Wood, Brush or Other Material Prohibited and Section 26-27, Exceptions to Open Burning Prohibition**. The proposed amendments are available for review at the Blackstone Town Manager's Office, 100 W. Elm Street or by request to philipv@townofblackstoneva.com or (434) 292-7251. The public is invited to this Public Hearing to present comments or concerns regarding the proposed amendments. It is the Town's intention to comply with the ADA. Any person requiring physical or sensory accommodation should contact the Town Manager's Office no later than 5:00 p.m., July 15, 2026.*

Mayor Dickens opened the Public Hearing.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this does allow for open burning in approved fireplaces, fire pits or fire bowls.

Councilman Page said it must have an arrestor and be 15' from a structure, have a garden hose or fire extinguisher close by and be monitored by an adult. He said this allows for only burning propane, natural gas and clean, dry firewood.

Councilman Nash said sparks are not emitted from propane. Councilman Page most fire pits purchased from Walmart have the arrestor already on them. He said if it becomes a problem we can change it.

Mayor Dickens closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Page made a motion to adopt Ordinance Section 26-27 as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

3. Section 42-1 – Yard Sales

*NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
TOWN OF BLACKSTONE*

*The Blackstone Town Council shall conduct a Public Hearing at 7:00 p.m., July 20, 2026 in the Town Council Chambers, 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone. The purpose of the Public Hearing is to consider amendments to the Blackstone Town Code. Specifically, to **Section 42-1, Yard, Garage, or Back Yard Sales**. The proposed amendments are available for review at the Blackstone Town Manager's Office, 100 W. Elm Street or by request to philipv@townofblackstoneva.com or (434) 292-7251. The public is invited to this Public Hearing to present comments or concerns regarding the proposed amendments. It is the Town's intention to comply with the ADA. Any person requiring physical or sensory accommodation should contact the Town Manager's Office no later than 5:00 p.m., July 15, 2026.*

Mayor Dickens opened the Public Hearing.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the changes include limiting fees and caps yard sales to four.

Councilman Nash believed this was a non-enforceable ordinance.

Mayor Dickens closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Allman made a motion to adopt Ordinance Section 42-1 as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

MINUTES:

Councilman Nash made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented the minutes from the Continued Meetings on May 28, 2026 and June 25, 2026, the Special Called Meeting on July 13, 2026 and the Regular Council Meeting on June 15, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

VISITORS:

1. Mr. Roland Kooch – Davenport & Co – Raw Water Line

Mr. Kooch said the project is roughly \$9.4 Million for the raw water line replacement. He said the Town submitted an application to USDA and they have provided a funding commitment for \$9.9 Million. He said this includes \$9.4 Million for design and construction, and funded interest while to project is ongoing. He said this would give 1-2 years before the full debt service begins for the loan.

Mr. Kooch said the financial package also incorporates principal forgiveness from the Virginia Department of Health. He said with respect to the USDA loan, their policy requires the Town to undertake interim financing. He said once the project is done, the permanent loan from USDA takes over and pays off the interim financing. Mr. Kooch said the \$3 Million in VDH grant funding is not incorporated into these projections.

Mr. Kooch said based on the \$9.9 Million in projects, USDA would be funding about \$9.3 Million, and the difference is funded by the VDH grant. He said the interim financing would be in the form of an 18 month line of credit, closing in FY27, with interest only payments during construction for 2027 and 2028. He said once the project is completed it will be in a loan with USDA at 2.875% anticipated for FY29. He said then there will be about 40 years of level monthly payments, as well as Reserves the Town has to commit to.

Mr. Kooch said the Pro Forma is based on the 2027 budget and incorporates water utility revenues at roughly \$1,743,000.00. We said we are assuming no rate increases based on 2026 rates. He said allocable water expenses are at \$1,523,000.00. He said the forecasted expenses grow at 3.3% per year. He said right now there is \$558,000.00 in existing debt service for water utilities. He said operating expenses are factored in at 4% annually.

Mr. Kooch said in 2027 there is roughly \$165,000.00 of cash funded projects, assuming it will be \$75,000.00 per year of cash funded projects. He said we want to maintain a debt service coverage target of 1.25 times. He said that means for every \$1 of debt service we should have \$1.25 available after paying debt expenses.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have been operating on 180 days cash on hand. He said once we started this process, we have \$55,000.00 saved to date from the past six months. Mr. Kooch said based on \$1.7 Million Revenue Budget, with 200 days cash on hand would be just under \$1 Million. Councilman Nash said the goal would be \$955,000.00 for water and sewer.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town's total debt for water and sewer principal \$8,009,000.00. He said we have debt on the Sewer Consent Order in 2012, the project where the Town took the water tanks offline, the East End project and the Water Treatment Plant. Councilman Nash said the Army gave the Town the Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants, but we had to do renovations on them. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town was reimbursed for the Wastewater Plant. He said we borrowed \$7 Million for the Water Plant, and still have \$2 Million left to pay.

Councilman Page asked about the 180 days cash on hand, is that part of the Reserves. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it is. Councilman Page asked if this would be 180 days for water and 180 days for sewer. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes. Councilman Page said that takes \$1.5 Million of the Reserves and makes them dedicated. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, not dedicated, just reserved.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said in his Finance Plan it has 120 days of operating for the electric system, and 15% of the General Fund. He said the Reserves are too low. Mr. Kooch said 200 days are a minimum. He said a general average for water and sewer systems are 365 days. Manager Vannoorbeeck added this does not include depreciation.

Mr. Kooch said the Reserves allow you to keep operating. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town puts \$250,000.00 away annually.

Mr. Kooch said USDA is requiring additional Reserves associated with their loan funding. He said they want to make sure there is contingency for debt service, which is calculated to be roughly one year's payment. He said they allow the Town to fund 10% a year over ten years to build it up. He said the second item is the short lived asset reserve, which is a cash reserve for assets requiring replacement within 15 years. He said these reserves will start in FY29, after the completion of the project.

Mr. Kooch said in order to meet the goals for the \$9.4 Million, the estimated rate increases would begin in FY28 and FY29. He said in FY28 there will be a 25% rate increase, and in 2029 an additional 25%. He said this would allow the Town to afford the water revenues, capital cost and debt service.

Mayor Dickens asked if this was based on the Town's population. Mr. Kooch said this is based on current rates and volume. Councilman Nash said this is the worst case scenario. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he anticipated no less than \$3 Million.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked if the 25.3 incorporated a 4% escalator. Mr. Kooch replied yes, a 4% CPI escalator. He said if the costs escalate by 4% each year that is built in, if they don't escalate 4%, then you can take 8% off the top.

Councilman Allman asked about the 5,000 gallon a month. Mr. Kooch said that is a widely used standard metric per the EPA. He said they were trying to calculate apples to apples. Councilman Miller said the Town's standard is 3,000 gallons.

Mayor Dickens asked about the MHI (median household income) figure. Mr. Kooch said for Nottoway is 63,261. He said currently the annualized bill for water as a percentage of MHI is .76%. He said out of Town is 1.15%.

Councilman Page said the numbers say people in the area are not distressed, he disagreed.

Mr. Kooch said what the 25% rate increase for FY28 will be for 5,000 gallons is an increase of \$11.00 a month, and in FY29 it will be \$14.00 a month. He recommended a small increase each year so there is not a rate shock. He said in FY30 the only increase needed would be for inflationary rates.

Mr. Kooch said if the \$3 Million loan forgiveness is received, there would still be a 25% in FY28, but in FY29 it would only have to be 18%.

Mr. Kooch said for long term, he recommended a 5 year rate plan, which will help map out for pressures on the horizon.

Councilman Page asked Mr. Kooch if he looked at other water lines in the Town that are 80 years old also. He asked if these rates only accounted for the raw water line. Mr. Kooch replied, right, but that is where the engineering consultant comes into play. He said what they did is based on the next five years for the raw water line replacement. He said it helps to have coverage built in to afford projects in the future.

Councilman Page asked if it would be better to expand Town crews and invest in equipment to do the work ourselves. Manager Vannoorbeeck did not believe the Department of Health or USDA would reimburse with Town staff doing the work. Councilman Page believed rates could be reduced with the Town doing the work. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed that was an assumption, the Town has no equipment to do these projects. Mr. Kooch said adding staff and equipment would add to the budget.

Councilman Nash said years ago the Town received an offer from Aqua to purchase the whole system. He said if the system was sold, the Town would have no say in rates.

Councilman Page asked that we plan better.

2. Representatives – Nottoway Youth Recreation Association – Coach Pitch, Ponytails, Majors

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

3. Mr. Robert Thomas / Mrs. Lisa Johnson – Wine Festival

Mr. Thomas said this year will be the 11th Annual Wine Festival. He said this would be October 24, 2026. He said Mrs. Johnson would be the coordinator this year. He asked to waive the Banner Fee and Noise Ordinance. He asked to close High Street that day, and use of the Armory in case of inclement weather.

Councilman Nash made a motion to waive the Banner Fee, the Noise Ordinance, close High Street from Tavern to Dinwiddie Avenue, and use of the Armory. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Community Development Specialist Bryant said the Armory was available for this day.

Clerk Daniel clarified this would include the GatherGuard Insurance Policy.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

4. Mr. William Clarke

Mr. Clarke said he was not here campaigning or representing anyone. He said he moved to Blackstone when he was 11 years old. He said this Council and the upcoming Council will be the most important with all the upcoming projects.

Mr. Clarke said the disrespect is filtering down to all levels of government. He said citizens should expect leadership to have respect for one another. He said our Town is caught up in an evil cycle. He said this includes hateful signs and unprofessionalism of DBi, especially on Facebook. He said the leaders of DBi were disrespectful especially towards Mayor Dickens and Council. He said DBi has done wonderful things for Blackstone, however in his opinion, the current structure of DBi does not have a professional quality to take Blackstone to the future.

Mr. Clarke gave an example from a movie about a jazz player leaving the church. He said some of you are dancing with the devil and have brought it to Blackstone. He said if you have anything to say to him, come to him, so he doesn't have to get it from his regular sources.

Mr. Clarke wished everyone good luck with their campaigns, and asked they be respectful.

5. Ms. Mae Tucker

Ms. Tucker said sitting here tonight, she hoped Council didn't make a decision on the water rates we just heard about. She said 2/3 didn't even know what the man was talking about. She suggested Council talk to the gentleman because this is big money from the citizens.

Ms. Tucker said she had been asked to be on committees and had served on some. She said she did not live in the Town of Blackstone, but she is going to speak what needs to be said. She said she had been told that if her and Mr. Clarke are on committees, we are trouble makers. She said whoever said that, she was here tonight for you to tell her to her face, because it was a baldfaced lie. She said if she was a troublemaker, she makes good trouble.

Ms. Tucker asked that Juneteenth be back on Main Street next year. She said most don't understand what Juneteenth means to black people, and if you can't honor that for one day, then that shows you don't give a rat's tail about us and Juneteenth, that's our heritage and honor.

Ms. Tucker asked if people remembered when blacks couldn't use Armory. She said now it is a beautiful thing and being used beautifully. She said you call that progress, but if we are going to digress and not honor one day, then we as blacks shouldn't spend our money on Main Street.

Ms. Tucker asked Council to consider allowing Juneteenth back on Main Street. She said the first year they had 3,000 people come. She said she was big, black, beautiful and proud.

6. Mr. Carl Bassfield

Mr. Bassfield thanked Mr. Clarke and Ms. Tucker for everything they do.

Mr. Bassfield asked when was the last time a comprehensive or complete economic review was done on Blackstone. He asked because when making decisions for the budget, they should not be based on feelings, but facts.

Mr. Bassfield said he and two friends are now sharing a building at 123 S. Main Street and call it the Collective Exchange. He said DBi asked if they had their business license, and was wondering why they didn't come to him. He asked what conversation was had that led DBi to ask if they had a business license.

Mr. Bassfield said they would be providing mental health support services. He said they would have different programs that will be funded by grants.

Mr. Bassfield asked if a committee could look into annexing Sullivan Street Extension into Town limits. Councilman Page said now is a good time since we are already looking into boundary lines.

7. Mr. Greg Cromer

Mr. Cromer said he was an aerial photographer, on a mission to photograph every community in Virginia and beyond from an airplane. He showed a photo and provided his information for anyone interested in purchasing his photos. The picture he showed was a 20x28, and \$195.00 with the frame.

Mayor Dickens asked Mr. Cromer where he lived. Mr. Cromer replied, occasionally Winchester, Virginia.

8. Mr. Ronald Frisby

Mr. Frisby said taxes, 25% is a lot, and we already have to pay Nottoway. He said we have people that are barely making it. He asked Council to please be considerate. Manager Vannoorbeeck said discussed earlier was not taxes, it is just on the water bill.

9. Mr. David Randolph

Mr. Randolph asked what it would cost the residents to replace the laterals that are 80 years old. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town is now required to locate any lead or copper laterals. He said the Taylor Bottom project will include replacing water laterals.

Mayor Dickens asked Mr. Randolph where he lived. Mr. Randolph replied, College Avenue. Councilman Nash said there are new lines there.

FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:

Chief Beares said the radio project was set to go live in December, but ran into some issues with the towers, they have to be tested with full foliage. He said we are now looking at July 2027 for completion of the radio project.

Chief Beares said in regards to the NFPA flow test and hydrant testing, he met with Manager Vannoorbeeck, Andre Hicks and Ron Coleman on Friday. He said they had three hydrant issues in the past few weeks, where they couldn't remove the front caps when needed for recent fires. He said after speaking with Manager Vannoorbeeck, when they are being tested, they will try to get all three caps off and add some grease. He said he would have the junior members check the caps as well.

Chief Beares said they applied for a \$3,000.00 grant through Dominion to purchase new hoods, so that would allow 2 sets per person. He said last month's training was on the first 15 minutes of an incident. He said they received 16 units of blood in June. He said they had big fires recently one at Family Dollar and 1020 S. Main Street. He said Police Officer Marlow was first on scene at 1020 S. Main Street with an extinguisher and put the fire out before they got there.

Chief Beares said ladder and hose testing were complete, with 2 pieces of hose failing, which were run over in front of McDonalds during the Family Dollar fire.

Chief Beares said there would be a lunch tomorrow with Ft. Pickett's Manager for mutual aid in Town. He said Pickett has to have 4 people on Post at all times. He said the Food Truck Rodeo would be August 7th. He thanked the Town for starting to paint the bonnets on the hydrants showing the flow.

Chief Beares said next month he would be here to talk about Rescue 6. He said they currently have a 1999 Rescue Truck that is due to be replaced. He said the price tag was \$1.5 Million, and their committee was discussing their needs. He believed this would be a refurbished truck because the chassis was still good. He said they have great warranties with Pierce.

Councilman Nash said Mr. Lee Williams has been great with grants. Chief Beares said the County would be giving them \$100,000.00 a year towards this, and currently they have \$200,000.00 in their apparatus fund. He said by the time paperwork is signed it is 48 months until received. He said by that time they should have \$500,000.00.

Chief Beares said they would also want the Town to look into the USDA Grant for 55%, which would still be roughly \$500,000.00 being financed. He said they were working on finding ways to save with equipment.

Appropriation #1 – Fire Department = \$25,000

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is the portion the Town received in the last fiscal year. He said this was received from Nottoway County.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the appropriation as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Chief Beares said since this was brought up tonight, can they check into the USDA grant for 55%. Councilman Gormus asked if there was a match. Manager Vannoorbeeck said yes, 45%.

Mayor Dickens said this could be voted on next month.

PAYMENT OF BILLS:

ALREADY PAID:

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$566,246.01. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Councilman Nash asked about Amazon Capital Service, are the tables and chairs for the Armory a pass through. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it was 50% reimbursable from the Tobacco Commission.

Councilman Nash asked about the work at Schwartz Tavern. Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is the second part of the work. Councilman Nash asked if it was a different color. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied approximately the same color. He said we still owe 5% plus a Change Order on this project.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

TO BE PAID:

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve as presented; the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$791,016.18. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Councilman Gormus asked what is QEI, LLC. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, this is the company we purchased the new SCADA System from.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

APPROPRIATIONS:

Appropriation #1 – Fire Department = \$25,000

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Buildings, Property & Cemetery – 7-6-26 – there were no minutes

Architectural Interviews

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we did not have a quorum, but had people driving from out of Town, so he conducted the interviews. He said the first interview was conducted live, but they were all recorded.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is a general services agreement based on task orders. He said this would be a one year agreement, that can be continued up to three years. He recommended going with Reynolds Architects, which was previously HDH Architects.

Councilman Page asked if there was anything wrong with the other firms. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Solex had a lot of misspellings in their proposal, but we have used them before. He said Thompson-Litton was a large engineering firm, and more interested in our engineering services.

Councilman Nash made a motion to award architectural services to Reynolds Architects for a one year term. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Award Annual Concrete Bid

Manager Vannoorbeeck said bids were received on June 10, 2026, but were not presented last month, so he could talk to the lower bidders. He said included is a letter from Finley Asphalt declining to accept the award. He said it appeared Graham Concrete did their math wrong.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Councilman Page asked to make modifications to the specifications, so he would dumb it down for the eVA contractors. Council agreed the bidding was confusing. Councilman Page suggested adding x 1200 to the bid sheet.

Councilman Page asked how much was spent with S. Walker last year. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would have to find out.

Mr. Allen Queen said if two of the three made mistakes, shouldn't it be declined and rebid. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we would need a reason to reject S. Walker's bid. Mayor Dickens said S. Walker's bid is now public, and might be an issue.

Councilman Allman made a motion to award the annual concrete bid to S. Walker Construction in the amount of \$724,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Attorney Harf asked if Council was deciding the other two bids received were not responsive. He said this has to be done in order to not award to the lowest bid. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Finely withdrew their bid, and Graham Concrete, if you do the math, their bid is the highest.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

2. Taylor Bottom Phase I – Grant Application - Resolution

Manager Vannoorbeeck said last week we had an emergency, and had until last Monday to submit a Resolution for the Taylor Bottom project, which was not included with the application. He said Council authorized applying for the grant.

Councilman Allman made a motion to ratify the submission of the Taylor Bottom Phase I Resolution as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Manager Vannoorbeeck said a grant had been prepared for \$60,000.00 to SERCAP. He believed this would cover the water laterals, but Community Development Specialist Bryant would continue to pursue funds for the sewer laterals. He said this application was due July 7th, so we are asking for ratification.

Councilman Nash made a motion to ratify the submission of the SERCAP Application for Taylor Bottom for water laterals in the amount of \$60,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

3. DBi & Town of Blackstone Agreement

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this agreement expired in January 2026, and he and Attorney Harf wanted to wait until court proceedings were completed before discussing. He asked Council how they wanted to proceed.

Mayor Dickens referred this to the Employment & Police Committee.

Mr. William Clarke asked what would happen at the committee meeting. He said he wanted more details. He said the current structure of DBi is not professional enough to represent Blackstone. He suggested that when reviewing the contract that a requirement be board members must be a resident of Nottoway County. Councilman Allman said a majority of the board members are made up of local business owners.

Councilman Miller asked if DBi had a Board currently. Councilman Allman replied yes, we went through appointments last meeting. Councilman Miller said Council knows nothing about this appointment. He said people think DBi is a segregated organization, and they do what they want to do.

Councilman Miller said Council asked for a schedule of Downtown events, and twice it has happened that events were last minute. Councilman Allman said approval was not requested earlier because they did not have a band, and at the last minute found a band.

Councilman Miller said it appears we have two separate employees, one gets to do what they want, and the other employees have to go through a process.

Councilman Page suggested extending the agreement until September so there is time to create a document. He said then the Town is not continuing to give finances to a third party without an agreement. Councilwoman Williams disagreed; she wanted to review the contract before making any decisions.

Councilman Page believed there was a legality with funding DBi, and his recommendation would allow the Town to continue status quo. Attorney Harf believed if funds were being appropriated monthly, there is no legal issue with financing DBi. He said Council will want an agreement long term to memorialize the terms. Councilman Page disagreed, he did not think Attorney Harf took into account everything the Town donates without a contract.

Attorney Harf asked if this was in the budget. Council replied yes. Attorney Harf said then it has been appropriated.

4. Raw Water Line - Financing

Manager Vannoorbeeck said an application to the State needs to be submitted by August 7, 2026 in order to have access to grant funds. He said this would mirror the amount of money applied for with USDA in the amount of \$9,334,000.00.

Councilman Nash clarified this is just an application and does not commit the Town to going up on rates. Councilman Page asked if it committed the Town to taking the loan if awarded. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied no, you can ignore the problem or jump on the problem.

Councilwoman Williams made a motion to submit an application to the Virginia Department of Health in the amount of \$9,334,000.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

5. TAP 21 – College Avenue / Amelia Avenue

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Commonwealth Transportation Board approved both TAP 21 applications. He said included tonight are the agreements that would allow the Town to move forward. He said the local match would be \$430,000.00. He said the Town has 4 years to do both projects, but he had saved most of the money for these projects, depending on the bids for Tractor Supply. He said the first project would be on College Avenue, and then go to Amelia Avenue.

Councilman Page made a motion to authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to execute the TAP 21 Agreements as presented for the College Avenue and Amelia Avenue projects. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Councilman Nash said he had been one of the biggest proponents for this, but still stood by the fact there are cheaper alternatives. Manager Vannoorbeeck agreed, but Council declined previously. Councilman Nash said widening the shoulder with a curb barrier would solve the issue. Councilman Page agreed.

Councilman Page asked if VDOT funds could be used to widen the road. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it would have to be to VDOT standards. Councilman Nash said it would not add to lane miles.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we could do nothing. Councilman Nash said no, that is the worst thing we could do. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the previous idea was \$40,000.00, and would smear asphalt on the shoulder. Councilman Nash said smear did not sound good, he suggested also adding a curb with asphalt on the other side.

Councilwoman Williams said with the cost of the raw water line, we may need to look at these projects again, because the citizens have spoken about the increases coming. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the money to match will come from VDOT funds.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

6. DBi – Music on Main Events

Councilman Gormus made a motion to approve Music On Main Events by DBi as presented for August 19, 2026 and September 16, 2026 from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

7. Accounting Services

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked for authorization to solicit bids. He said we still don't have an audit for FY25. He said the process with Mr. Montoro has been too long.

Councilman Page asked if Mr. Montoro was over budget again. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, wildly over budget.

Councilman Page made a motion to authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck to solicit bids for accounting services. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash asked if this was an issue with training the new Treasurer. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Karen got all the training, and quit.

Councilman Nash asked about the new software. Councilman Page asked about online bill pay. Manager Vannoorbeeck said while doing the conversion for the Cloud, several things went down. He said the conversion includes staff reentering thousands of lines manually.

Councilman Page said we were told it would be done through a spreadsheet. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that is not what is happening. Councilman Page said he would contact RDA.

8. RGGI – Municipal Electric

Manager Vannoorbeeck said our Governor has gotten us back in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative. He said this will include a dramatic increase beginning in March to all rate payers in the State of Virginia. He said the Town will have to pay an extra \$539,865.00 to Dominion. He added whoever wrote the poorly drafted legislation excluded municipal utilities to be reimbursed. He suggested we contact legislature to try and get included for the credit reimbursement. Councilman Nash suggested the Mayor and Town Manager write a letter.

9. Trippin Billie’s Upcoming Events

Councilman Nash said he asked this be brought back in six months. He asked Chief Murphy if there had been any issues. Chief Murphy replied no.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the events as presented through October 31, 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

ON-GOING PROJECTS:

1. Dilapidated Buildings

Manager Vannoorbeeck said 819 Falls Street had been demolished. He said he and Clerk Daniel would be sending out three new blight letters for Pine Road, Irvin Street and Maben Avenue.

2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the large outstanding account had been paid in full. He said a new one had been added now.

3. Street Improvement Projects

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is \$400,000.00 in the budget for paving. He said the paving near the Post Office to Sixth Street could use some attention. He asked for authorization to solicit bids, but the work would not be done until the spring. Councilman Nash pointed out the settling at Church and Main near the manhole. Councilman Page believed this would fix the manholes on Main Street.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he had not decided on a tar and gravel project yet.

Councilman Page made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to solicit bids for S. Main Street. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex

Councilman Gormus asked Councilman Miller if he had any luck meeting with anyone on the football field. Councilman Miller said no, and he heard they may be playing at the school again this year. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he was waiting to hear back on where they want the scoreboard.

5. Dillard Crawley Building – 114 S. Main Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the sprinkler/fire alarm project will begin this week. He said we had to run electricity for the project. Mayor Dickens asked if there was any danger having electricity in the building. Manager Vannoorbeeck said yes if it were for lights and heating, but this is only to the fire sprinkler pump.

6. Weatherization

Councilman Miller asked if the Town was doing any weatherization projects right now. Community Development Specialist Bryant said she was working with USDA on their 504 Grant, which is for homeowners over 62 years old that qualify for home repairs for up to \$10,000.00, and anything over that becomes a grant/loan mix. She said Mr. Earl Howerton did an inspection on one home and was estimated at \$90,000.00. She said she spoke with someone from DHCD who advised on their Scattered Site CDBG funds for next year.

Councilman Nash asked at what point do we just go with the property owner's request. Community Development Specialist Bryant said that is why we have Mr. Howerton inspect before proceeding with items requested. She was hoping to use the Town's fund as gap money.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have \$140,000.00 set aside for Weatherization.

7. Workforce Housing

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included is a preliminary subdivision plat for the four lots at the corner of Harris, Lester and Patterson Streets.

He said the plan is to take down the existing one story building, and the asbestos has been rebid.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said to build a Workforce House is roughly \$125,000.00. He said he had to take the rezoning and subdivision plat to the Planning Commission first. He said when selling the houses, Council wanted to get their money back for the lots, so that will increase the price.

Councilman Miller said there has only been one person complain about this.

Councilwoman Williams asked how much the monthly payment would be for the houses. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied under \$1,000.00.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Traffic Calming – Tunstall Avenue

Clerk Daniel said the property owner contacted her about speeders in the area, and requested speed bumps. She said she explained the process to the property owner, and they got the signatures as required.

Councilman Nash asked what part of Tunstall Avenue, because a stop sign was recently installed. Councilman Page said the whole street was bad.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said if we follow the Policy, the next step is getting an engineering study. He said we bypassed that step on Luke and Falls Street.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would install 2 speed bumps between Merchant Street and Fort Street, and 2 more between Merchant Street and the old ballfield.

Councilwoman Williams suggested talking to the neighbors for the locations. Councilman Gormus said the engineering study would help with the locations.

Councilwoman Williams made a motion to install traffic calming devices on Tunstall Avenue. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

2. Arts & Crafts Requests – September 11th – 13th

Councilman Nash made a motion to allow use of the Armory for the dates presented for the Arts & Crafts Festival, waive the Noise Ordinance, allow the banner to be hung on Main Street and approve the street closures for High Street from Dinwiddie Avenue to Broad Street, Tavern Street from Inge Street to Harris Street. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

COMMITTEE REFERRALS:

Mayor Dickens referred the DBi Contract to Employment & Police.

Councilman Gormus reminded Council about backflow preventers being referred to Fire & Water.

Councilman Nash asked that signage at the baseball fields be referred to Parks & Recreation. He said this would be for State Champions. Mayor Dickens made the referral.

MAYORS MINUTE:

Mayor Dickens had nothing for the Mayors Minute.

POLICE REPORT:

Councilman Page said he had been getting messages about the Town's flock cameras. He said he would discuss further with Chief Murphy.

CITIZEN COMMENTS:

There were no citizen comments.

CLOSED SESSION:

Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711-A

3/ Acquisition or Disposition of Real Property – 114 S. Main Street

8/ Legal Matters – 114 S. Main Street

Councilman Nash made a motion to go into Closed Session for (3) Discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose, or of the disposition of publicly held real property, where discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body and (8) Consultation with legal counsel employed or retained by a public body regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash made a motion to certify that to the best of each member's knowledge only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements and only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened, were heard, discussed or considered in the meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

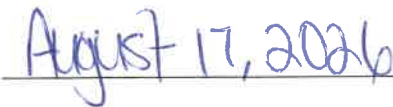
Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

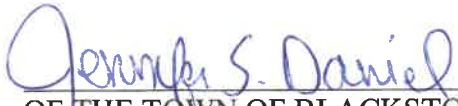
VOTE:

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

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Dickens adjourned this meeting at 10:46 p.m.

 MAYOR
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

 TOWN CLERK
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA