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, August 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: Lafayette Dickens

Council Members: Wesley Gormus, Lloyette Wynn, Christopher Page,

Carolyn Williams, Eric Nash, Jake Allman

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel,

Town Clerk; Sam Murphy, Police Chief; Zac Beares, Fire

Chief; Karen Morris, Treasurer; Chastiddy Bryant,

Community Development Specialist

Town Attorney: Attorney Harf - Zoom

Those Absent: Nathaniel Miller

Mayor Dickens called the August Council Meeting to order.

Reverend Steve Snodgrass delivered the Invocation.

Mayor Dickens led the Pledge of Allegiance.

# **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

1. Blighted Property – 819 Falls Street

# NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWN OF BLACKSTONE

The Blackstone Town Council shall hold a Public Hearing on August 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Blackstone Town Council Chambers, 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia. The Town Council will consider an ordinance declaring 819 Falls Street, Blackstone, Va. 23824 also designated as Nottoway County Tax Identification Numbers 50A25-1-13-4 & 5 to be blighted and a public nuisance along with the Town Manager's recommended blight abatement plan. The content of this ordinance is more fully described by the Town of Blackstone's Spot Blight Abatement Policy and Virginia Code Section 36-49.1:1. Town Council shall receive the Town Manager's recommendation and public comment regarding this ordinance during the Public Hearing. The Town Council may approve this ordinance following this public hearing. Any individual desiring to address the Town Council should attend the public hearing at the above stated date and time. All workpapers verifying such facts are available for the public to review and requests for information should be directed to the Blackstone Town Manager at philipv@townofblackstoneva.com or (434) 292-7251. It is the intention of the Town to comply with the ADA. Persons requiring physical or sensory accommodations should contact the Town Manager's office no later than 5:00 p.m., August 13, 2025.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there has already been a Public Hearing held for this property, but Attorney Harf asked that we send notification to the property owners. He said staff sent certified and regular mail letters to the property owner about this Public Hearing.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this Public Hearing was to formally declare 819 Falls Street blighted and his recommendation is to demolish the structure. He said the owner is Affordable Remodeling, but they have not responded to any correspondence. He said he talked to the owner once on the phone.

Mayor Dickens opened the Public Hearing and 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 authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to pursue and sign any documents necessary to demolish the structure, and adopt the Ordinance as presented.

Councilman Nash asked if a lien would be placed on the property. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied yes.

The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Clerk Daniel said she received the certified letter back, saying address was vacant.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

## VOTE:

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

# 2. Blighted Property - 915 Falls Street

# NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TOWN OF BLACKSTONE

The Blackstone Town Council shall hold a Public Hearing on August 18, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. in the Blackstone Town Council Chambers, 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia. The Town Council will consider an ordinance declaring 915 Falls Street, Blackstone, Va. 23824 also designated as Nottoway County Tax Identification Numbers 50A24-3-12-5 & 6 to be blighted and a public nuisance along with the Town Manager's recommended blight abatement plan. The content of this ordinance is more fully described by the Town of Blackstone's Spot Blight Abatement Policy and Virginia Code Section 36-49.1:1. Town Council shall receive the Town Manager's recommendation and public comment regarding this ordinance during the Public Hearing. The Town Council may approve this ordinance following this public hearing. Any individual desiring to address the Town Council should attend the public hearing at the above stated date and time. All workpapers verifying such facts are available for the public to review and requests for information should be directed to the Blackstone Town Manager at philipv@townofblackstoneva.com or (434) 292-7251. It is the intention of the Town to comply with the ADA. Persons requiring physical or sensory accommodations should contact the Town Manager's office no later than 5:00 p.m., August 13, 2025.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said some of the property owners were here tonight. He said we have not been able to get all the property owners to execute the necessary documents. He said the notification was sent certified and regular mail to all the property owners.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said if all the property owners would sign an indemnity agreement, then we would not need to go to court.

Mayor Dickens opened the Public Hearing and asked if there was anyone here to speak for or against the request.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the names shown as owners are Wanda Birdsong, Robert Birdsong, Robin Birdsong, Cathy Birdsong Walton, and Trisha Thompson. Those present tonight were Cathy Birdson Walton, Robin Birdsong and Trisha Thompson, who is the daughter of Elaine.

Ms. Robin Birdsong said she had her sister's Will, but it had not been read. She said more names needed to be added as property owners because two are now deceased.

Ms. Trisha Thompson said her mother passed and everything went to her and her sister, who has since passed.

Ms. Cathy Birdsong Walton said she is an heir, and had been taking care of the property over 30 years. She said she lives beside 915 Falls Street, and was in agreement to demolish the house.

Councilman Page asked if the property would go through probate. Ms. Walton did not know.

Ms. Trisha Thompson was in agreement to demolish the structure, but Ms. Robin Birdsong was not. Ms. Robin Birdsong said two others not listed as owners are not in agreement either.

Councilman Page asked Ms. Robin Birdsong if she wanted to fix the property. Ms. Robin Birdsong replied no, she wanted to sell it.

Councilman Page asked what was wrong with the property, he could not see anything by the picture. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the foundation is rotten.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said if not everyone was in agreement to demolish the structure, then the next step is to declare the property blighted, and maybe all property owners would agree to sign eventually. He said the Town did not want to take the property, but there would be a lien placed on the property for the demolition.

Ms. Robin Birdsong asked what happens if they get somebody to tear it down. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we prefer that.

Attorney Harf said unless the Town was planning to take the property by eminent domain, then a court order would not be needed to make repairs. He said the goal was to have a mutually agreeable plan where the property owners take action. Manager Vannoorbeeck said to enter the property, we have to get a court order.

Mayor Dickens closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Page questioned the blight, he said if he can't see it, how can he vote on it. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the blight was dramatic.

Councilman Page made a motion to give the family 60 days to work out the issues, and sign the indemnity agreement.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have been working on this for a year now, he asked not to make that motion. He suggested Council take the vote, then continue to work with the family.

Mayor Dickens said there was no second so that motion failed.

Councilwoman Williams made a motion to adopt the Ordinance as presented for 915 Falls Street, and continue to work with the property owners. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

## VOTE:

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

# 3. Taylor Bottom Improvements – Phase I

#### NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby issued that Blackstone Town Council will convene a public hearing at the town office on August 18, 2025, at 7 P.M., for the Community Development Block Grant proposal for Taylor's Bottom Improvement-Phase I. This hearing is a requisite step for securing funding from the Department of Housing and Community Development and other funding entities. This public hearing will discuss the proposed housing rehabilitation project and drainage system in the area referenced above. All residents, interested parties, governmental agencies, and organizations are invited to provide their insights and comments. Maps, drawings, and other relevant documents will be available for public viewing upon request from the Town Clerk. Individuals interested in the project's design, location, construction, and housing are encouraged to attend and voice their opinions. Written statements may be submitted either before or during the hearing. Please be advised: For projects necessitating a Finding of No Significant Impact Statement, the National Environmental Policy Act mandates a 30-day notice for noncontroversial projects and a 45day notice for controversial projects. For projects that qualify for a categorical exclusion environmental statement, the department may mandate a public hearing, with advertisement timing needing to align with state law. Comments and grievances can be submitted in writing to the Town of Blackstone at 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, VA 23824, or by phone at (434) 292-7251 until August 17, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. If you plan to attend and have any special needs requirements, please call the number listed above.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Earl Howerton and Southside Outreach have gone into the neighborhood, specific to Carver Street and their estimate is \$1,380.000.00 in housing improvements. He said the Town was eligible for \$1,250,000.00, so the Town has to put some money in. He said there is \$120,000.00 in Weatherization Funds, but we won't know anything until the next budget cycle. He said the Town did not have the \$130,000.00, but the demolition would be in-kind, and the County may waive some tipping fees.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we expect to build one Workforce home, not to exceed \$200,000.00, and the Town has that money.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have talked about electrical upgrades, with Taylor Bottom being one of the areas. He said with these improvements, we would use half in this phase and half in the second phase of the Taylor Bottom project. He said the Town would apply to SERCAP for \$60,000.00, and the Town paying \$20,000.00, hopefully in-kind, for the water and sewer lateral lines to all the houses.

Community Development Specialist Bryant said the application for this project was due on August 26, 2025.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we discussed drainage improvements, but that will have to be next year. He said DHCD recommended applying for housing this year, and drainage next year.

Councilman Gormus asked how many houses were included in the housing rehab. Community Development Specialist Bryant said the entire area is 63 homes. She said on Carver Street this will help 21 homes, and those that have signed up and qualified include, 8 rehabs, 2 substantial, and 3 rentals. Manager Vannoorbeeck said substantial is being torn down and rebuilt.

Councilwoman Wynn asked what happens to those that will have their homes demolished and rebuilt. Community Development Specialist Bryant said CDBG allows money to be set aside for those being displaced, but we try to have them use family members.

Clerk Daniel asked if \$1.3 Million was for all the homes. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that is just for Carver Street.

Mayor Dickens closed the Public Hearing.

Councilman Page made a motion to adopt the Resolution as presented, and authorize the execution of documents needed. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilwoman Wynn made a motion to apply for \$60,000.00 in grant funds from SERCAP. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

## 4. Mobile Food Trucks

# Town of Blackstone Public Hearing Notice

The Town Council of the Town of Blackstone will hold a public hearing on August 18, 2025 at 7:00 P.M., or as soon thereafter it may be held, at the Blackstone Town Council Chambers, 100 West Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia 23824. The purpose of the public hearing is to accept public comments on a proposed ordinance which would regulate the placement and operation of Mobile Food Trucks within the Town of Blackstone. Questions or comments may be directed to the Blackstone Town Manager at philipv@townofblackstoneva.com or 292-7251. Interested persons may appear at the aforementioned time and place to present their views. Accommodations for disabled persons can be made with the Office of the Town Manager by calling (434) 292-7251 at least five (5) days prior to the hearing date. A full copy of the proposed ordinance is at the Town Manager's Office.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included is an Ordinance prepared and reviewed by Attorney Harf in regards to the placement and use of mobile food trucks. He said they are currently allowed with certain permitting in business locations, aside from the Historic Business District and not on Town owned property.

Councilman Allman asked if there was anything included for insurance requirements. Attorney Harf said there are no insurance requirements included, but he did not know if there were insurance requirements.

Councilman Gormus asked about the \$50.00 permit fee. He said if they are a business doing business in Town, why wouldn't they be treated like others, and pay for a business license each year. Councilman Nash said maybe this is considering they might only be doing business once or twice a year, so the fee would be less paying for a business license. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the minimum business license fee is \$10.00.

Councilman Allman said he mimicked what larger localities were doing. He said the \$50.00 fee is meant to be annually.

Manager Vannoorbeeck pointed out Section 2A, if a food truck business has a business license in another locality, they are exempt from the Town for two years per the State Code. Councilman Gormus asked who keeps up with the two years.

Councilman Gormus asked about Section 6D, who will be enforcing this. Manager Vannoorbeeck said himself or his designee.

Clerk Daniel suggested Meals Tax be included in the Ordinance, it is not included in this Ordinance. Manager Vannoorbeeck said Meals Tax do have to apply.

Councilman Gormus asked why food trucks were not allowed in the Historic Business District. He asked if it would take away from funding or themes for DBi. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed they did not want food trucks to park in front of restaurants. Councilman Allman said it was common to keep food trucks from downtown areas, to keep the historic feel.

Councilman Gormus asked if some areas could be designated in the Historic Business District, that would not effect restaurants. Councilman Allman said the way the Ordinance is written, they can have food trucks with permission from Council.

Councilman Gormus asked how Special Event was defined in Section 4E. Councilman Allman said if Council does not think it is a special event, Council can say no.

Councilman Page said Section 4C says "food trucks operating at private events must have written consent from the property owner", do they still have to get permission from the Town. Councilman Allman replied no, just consent from the property owner.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said it appears Council has the authority to approve food trucks in the Historic Business District and on Town owned property. He suggested using the General Business or Specialized Business Zoning as designated vending areas. He said there may be a problem when it comes to churches. He added Tin Can Coffee had been at Dr. Prater's office, which is Residential-Business.

Councilman Page asked if this should be handled through zoning or this Ordinance. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed the Ordinance should reference the zoning. Councilman Page said because that would make it more restrictive, we would have to have another public hearing.

Councilwoman Williams asked how do we know if food trucks are asking property owners for permission and if they are paying Meals Tax. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we may not know, he would have to check.

Councilman Allman said the way it is now, if someone wanted a food truck in a residential area, with permission from a property owner, is that allowed. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, he would not permit it right now.

Attorney Harf asked what is the intent of designated areas. He said the way he understood it was it could be done if in that designated zone, if that is not the intent, we need to make that clear.

Councilman Page said it could be made less restrictive downtown, with no food truck vendor operating within 150' of a brick and mortar restaurant. Councilman Allman said it already says that.

Councilman Allman asked about the designated areas, which are designated by Council, can we designate the General Business District and not have another Public Hearing. Attorney Harf said as long as it is clear in the motion, then yes.

Councilman Nash suggested adding churches.

# Councilman Allman made a motion to approve the Ordinance as presented.

Councilman Page said as a point of procedure, the Public Hearing was never opened.

Mayor Dickens asked if there was anyone here to speak on food trucks, there were no comments so the Public Hearing was closed.

Attorney Harf asked to add to Section 5A, Virginia Law.

Councilman Allman amended his motion to include adding to the Ordinance, Section 5A, Virginia Law, Section 2D, the fee is annually, making the enforcement by the Town Manager or his designee.

Clerk Daniel asked about Meals Tax. Councilman Allman believed that would be covered with Virginia Law.

## The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Councilman Gormus said the only limitation in the Ordinance was the Historic Business District. Councilman Allman said his second motion will include locations. Attorney Harf suggested the motion include the Town Manager keeping a list of designated areas authorized by Council. He said this will allow areas to be changed without another Ordinance, and allow vendors to know the areas.

Councilman Page said this was discussed previously where people have a Use by Right, and the Town is prohibiting it. He asked how rights can be taken away without the zoning process. Attorney Harf said with historic business districts, they are zoned to maintain the historic nature of the property. He said the historic business district is a zoning district.

Councilman Allman said we are trying to make our Town be more food truck friendly, while maintaining the historical characteristics and charm of our downtown area. He said we want to protect the brick and mortar restaurants that have made significant investments within a fixed location. He believed this Ordinance was doing this.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

Councilman Allman made a motion that the Town Manager keep a designated list of permitted areas for food trucks, that include General Business, Specialized Business, Residential Business, Churches, and excludes the Historic Business District. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

## **MINUTES:**

Councilman Nash made a motion to dispense with reading and approve as presented minutes from the Regular Council Meeting on July 21, 2025, and the Special Called Meetings on July 25, 2025 and August 6, 2025. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

## **VISITORS:**

1. <u>Dr. Ivan Turnipseed – VSU / Chef Radelle Reese – VSU – Ms. Felicia Cosby – VUU / Ms.</u> Shane Roberts-Peyton – Southern Kitchen

Dr. Turnipseed said he was the Interim Chair for the Department of Hospitality Management at Virginia State University. He said he was about three weeks in as this role. He said his Dean in the College of Agriculture has come after him. He said we have wonderful colleagues, such as Chef Reese, who was in attendance.

Chef Reese said she had been part of the process in helping create a wonderful hospitality training facility for the community. She said we want to help people learn about hospitality.

Dr. Turnipseed said their plan is for continuing education courses with certifications. He said formal certifications have to go through the State. He said the two focuses are health and nutrition integration. He believed they may have a functional food lab at least one day a week with foods that are healthy. He said there also may be wellness classes. He said they planned to pick at least one day a week to have something regular. He said they were looking at starting after the holiday in January, but are still having conversations.

Dr. Turnipseed said he looked forward to partnering with Virginia Union University.

Chef Reese said VSU is big into community outreach. She said they offer a farm with over 400 acres that students and the community have access to. She said this helps the community grow their land.

Councilman Allman asked how much utilization would VSU use during the week at the Armory. Dr. Turnipseed said once a week for functional foods. He said it depended on the community for the wellness. He said potentially there could be a wellness room, meditation space for use by the community every day of the week. He said he was currently looking for a chef.

Councilman Page asked about affordable classes. Dr. Turnipseed said the vast majority of their students pay a small portion of education, many nothing at all. He said there are all kinds of scholarships and opportunities. He said they have online programs, and that helps to not pay for housing and food.

Dr. Turnipseed said hospitality at VSU encompasses, hotels and lodging, food and beverage, travel and tourism, recreation and leisure and meetings and events.

Ms. Shane Roberts-Peyton said certifications are the way to go. She said we are trying to bring tourism to Blackstone. She said certification programs have to be short, we can have them ready in eight weeks. She said in her world, people are starting at \$20-\$24 an hour for a line cook, and executive chefs make \$100,000.00. She said her restaurant; Southern Kitchen was known nationwide. She said Virginia Union University was brining her in for the synergy.

Ms. Roberts-Peyton said she we will make the Armory exciting with food tours, food halls and celebrity chefs.

Ms. Felicia Cosby said VUU is offering micro-credentials. She said she was the Dean of Virginia Union University Technical College. She said they were very excited to partner with Blackstone.

Ms. Cosby said VUU is marrying skill based competence with liberal arts. She said we want to get people certified and get them working. She said we want to make it affordable. She said this is not just about educating, but also about economic development. She said they create multiple pathways for economic and social mobility for students. She gave kudos to Blackstone for having this foresight.

Councilwoman Williams asked how someone can enroll in this program. Ms. Cosby said they would start in January, but their marketing push would begin in November. She hoped to come back to Council in October with more detail to start pushing for students to come to the Armory. She said for their first class they were thinking no more than 20. She said they would be using pop ups and labs. She said this would allow Blackstone to make money.

Ms. Cosby said the first phase would be Mondays through Wednesdays, micro-credentialing. She said the second phase would probably be the fall of 2026 for certificates. She said these students would not be doing a four year degree, this is a certificate. She said the first phase is non-credit bearing, so there is no financial aid, but there are other opportunities. She said the second phase is credit bearing and financial aid is available.

Ms. Roberts-Peyton said with certification someone can walk into any restaurant and get a job.

Councilwoman Williams asked what the hours would be for the eight week training. Ms. Roberts-Peyton replied 2-3 hours a day. Ms. Cosby added they want to do afternoons and evenings.

Mayor Dickens asked how VUU's program would interact with VSU. Ms. Cosby said they were coming with the plan for certifications, and the plan may be changing for VSU, but they would work together be sure there is no duplication. She said VSU was talking about wellness, and VUU is not talking about this, they will be doing culinary and hospitality.

Councilman Allman believed Council envisioned people having events in the Armory. He asked if VUU's program would be able to integrate with a workplace banquet for example. Ms. Cosby replied yes, that would be the lab portion. Ms. Roberts-Peyton said the students would run that for the event.

Councilman Allman said the Town will need help on costs, and how would the lab students be charged for the guests. Ms. Roberts-Peyton said the customer would pay for the food, but having students run the event would be cheaper.

Councilman Allman said the Town will need help with a fee schedule. Ms. Roberts-Peyton said that would be part of the lab, they can provide costs.

# 2. Mr. Robert Thomas – Annual Wine Festival

Mr. Thomas said he is in charge of the Wine Festival, this will be the tenth year, and his last year doing it. He said the festival would be Saturday, October 25, 2025 from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Mr. Thomas asked to waive the Banner Fee, waiving the Noise Ordinance until 6:00 p.m. He asked to close High Street. He asked to use the Armory if there is inclement weather.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the requests for the Wine Festival on Saturday, October 25, 2025 from 12:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

Councilwoman Williams asked if the Armory had been turned over to the Town officially. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied no, but would have a temporary Certificate of Occupancy by Arts and Crafts.

# **FIRE CHIEF'S REPORT:**

Chief Beares said the Diesel Exhaust project is about to come to a close. He said Town staff was installing adapters for the exhaust tips.

Chief Beares said Crewe, Burkeville and Blackstone did training this month. He said the Blood Drive would be September 16, 2025 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Fire Station. He said the Boot Drive would be September 13, 2025.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Boot Drive locations for the Fire Department on September 13, 2025, and use of the portable calming devices. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Chief Beares said three of the four passed their EVOC class, with the fourth retesting next month. He said they would be parking cars for the Rodeo on August 23, 2025. He said hose and ladder testing started today, and should be complete by Wednesday.

Chief Beares announced the annual service dates for members.

Councilman Page made a motion to move Unfinished Business items #5 and #6 as the next agenda items. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

# 6. Award Bid – Fire Training Grounds – Fire Training Prop

Mr. Lee Williams said this will be funded through the Department of Fire Programs with 100% grant for \$50,000.00. He said the low bid was from Symtech Fire, LLC in the amount of \$49,993.00. He said this bid process went through eVA and the Town's Procurement Policy.

Mr. Williams said he reviewed the bids, and determined the low bid met the specifications.

Councilman Nash made a motion to award the Fire Training Prop bid to Symtech Fire, LLC in the amount of \$49,993.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Councilman Page asked about the extra options from Symtech. Manager Vannoorbeeck said they were provided by the contractor; the Town did not request the options. Mr. Williams said that was not part of the bid package.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

#### 5. Nottoway Radio Communications Tower

Mr. Jimmy Falwell said in reference to the tower in the Police Station parking lot, we previously came to Council with a three legged metal tower. He said the pricing was \$125,000.00, so he has talked to Mr. Dan Martin and Manager Vannoorbeeck, and would now like to order a 60' Class 3 telephone pole, which is like the one at Wrigglesworth. He said this would include the same fencing, bollards and concrete. He said this pole would only be \$1,200.00.

Councilman Gormus made a motion to approve the telephone pole request at \$1,200.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Councilman Page said this pole is higher than recently approved. He said his concern was there would be nothing around it. Mr. Falwell said it will still have the privacy fencing. Manager Vannoorbeeck said a good portion of the pole would be in the ground 10'.

Mr. Falwell said an update on the radio system; it is a \$6.4 Million project. He hoped with budget cuts; it would be closer to \$5 Million. He said the radios for all the vehicles have been ordered.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

### **PAYMENT OF BILLS:**

#### *ALREADY PAID:*

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the bills that have already been paid in the amount of \$1,068,276.84. The motion was seconded by Councilman Page.

Councilman Nash said this includes \$220,000.00 to Stoker Construction for the Armory, and \$291,000.00 to VMEA. He asked what \$337,000.00 to VML was for. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, a bond on the Water Treatment Plant. He added there was a check for \$63,000.00 for Workforce Housing.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

## TO BE PAID:

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve as presented; the bills not yet paid in the amount of \$355,116.88. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

#### **APPROPRIATIONS:**

Appropriation #1 - Administration = \$42,500.00

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this was for the purchase of the Dillard Crawley Building, which was not included in the budget. He said \$42,500.00 was the appraised price, which the Town had on hand from the sale of the Town Shop.

Councilman Nash asked if the grant money could be used for the purchase. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied no. Councilman Nash asked that the Town recoup the \$42,500.00 with the sale of the building.

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

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

## Appropriation #2 – Taylor Bottom = \$38,101.00

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town received a Planning Grant for \$60,000.00, but this is the amount received in this fiscal year.

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

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

## Appropriation #3 - Various = \$2,000.00

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town and Police Department received grant funds from Walmart. He said \$1,000.00 was for the Chamber fireworks, which has been paid and will now go to the Police Department.

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

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

There were no Committee Meetings to report on.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

## 1. Electric Reconductoring Financing

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included in the packet is a revised Term Sheet from Citizens Bank. He said the terms had been extended 30 days. He said at the last Council Meeting there were questions about borrowing the money from ourselves. He said he asked Mr. Taylor Quicke with the Citizens Bank to confirm a date of September 1<sup>st</sup> and add there would be no pre-payment penalty.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the new BESS System through VMEA will be providing the revenues to pay this loan. He said the scope of this reconductoring project is \$1 Million.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mr. Roland Kootch recommended the financing option so it could be paid off early, and not use the Reserve Fund.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked Council to accept the proposal from Citizens Bank to borrow \$1 Million, with a one year interest only until construction is completed. He said a good portion of this would go into Taylor Bottom.

Councilman Page made a motion to accept Citizen Bank's proposal to borrow up to \$1 Million, with an interest rate of 4.50%, which is 1% over the CD rate, and authorize Manager Vannoorbeeck and Mayor Dickens to execute any documents.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this particular CD being used as collateral will mature around February 1, 2026, so if the interest rate drops the borrowing rate will drop to 1% over the yield.

Councilman Page amended his motion to include any fluctuating interest rate per the yield. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Councilman Gormus asked if the Town was expecting to do all the cabling work this fiscal year. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it may fall into two years. Councilman Gormus believed a large portion was going down Tenth Street. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the highest portion was in Eppington Forest. He said he would talk with Mr. Robert Thomas for the best way to bid it out.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town was already starting their process, as we are doing the poles and crossarms. He said the Town is only bidding out the cabling.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

## 2. Airport Property

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he went to the Board of Supervisors Meeting on Thursday and they authorized the County Administrator to enter into the purchase agreement included in the packet. He said the Purchase Agreement was prepared by Attorney Harf. He said the County's Attorney made some changes, and he did not like the reversion clause which allows the County to purchase the property back, it did not include the terms or purchase price. He said the County wants to avoid another Nottoway Commons. He said Attorney Harf provided language that if the sale of the property to another business or if the Town makes infrastructure improvements to the property their reversion clause is extinguished.

Councilman Nash said the Town is not purchasing this property to sit there. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed someone would be on that property within 12 months after closing.

Councilman Page made a motion authorizing Manager Vannoorbeeck to execute the Purchase Agreement with the changes agreed upon by both parties. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Councilman Page said the purchase price is \$9,000.00 per acre. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the final price will be determined by a survey.

Councilman Allman said there was still work to be done to determine what is usable based on the runway. Manager Vannoorbeeck said a corner of the property is impacted by the horizontal take off zone and limits the height to 68'.

Councilman Page asked if the zoning could be done in a reasonable time. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Planning Commission will meet Tuesday, but believed it could be done within the six months.

Councilman Page amended his motion to \$9,000.00 an acre, at an estimated \$651,000.00, and anything above that will need extra approval. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

# 3. 114 S. Main Street - Dillard Crawley Building

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this building was awarded a \$475,000.00 grant, specific to fire sprinklers, fire alarms and a new roof. He said architectural/engineering services cannot be covered with the grant funds.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is still \$38,000.00 left from the sale of the Town Shop. He said he would like to enter into agreement with HDH Architects, who were hired under a general service architectural agreement.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked for authorization to execute the proposal included for \$45,000.00 to include structure, roof, fire alarm and fire sprinkler system. He said asbestos and lead based paint have already been tested, with an appreciable amount of lead based paint found.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said at a later date we will apply for DEQ grant funds for asbestos and lead based paint removal.

Councilman Page asked Councilman Allman if DBi could help with the facade work. Councilman Allman did not think there was anything in current funding, but he would check other sources.

Councilwoman Wynn made a motion to authorize execution of the proposal with HDH Architecture in the amount of \$45,000.00 for architectural services for the sprinkler system, fire alarms and roof at the Dillard Crawley Building. A portion of these services will be paid for with funds from the sale of the Town Shop in the amount of \$38,000.00, with the balance to be appropriated later. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

# 4. Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) – Raw Water Line

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town was turned down for these grant funds for \$400,000.00. He said we still have a Southern Crescent application through DHCD pending for \$500,000.00.

# 5. Nottoway Radio Communications Tower

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

# 6. Award Bid - Fire Training Grounds - Fire Training Prop

This was discussed earlier in the meeting.

# 7. Town Square Request – Fall Fest – 10-25-25

Councilman Allman made a motion to waive the Noise Ordinance for the Fall Fest event in the Town Square on October 25, 2025 from 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Councilman Gormus pointed out this was the same day as the Wine Festival.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

## VOTE:

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

Clerk Daniel said vendors were still not confirmed. Councilman Page said to bring this back to Council for approval.

## **ON-GOING PROJECTS:**

# 1. Dilapidated Buildings

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have started the process with a very helpful family at 500 Doswell Street.

## 2. Meals Tax / Lodging Tax

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there were five additional delinquent meals tax. He said a business on N. Main Street had paid in full. He said the fourth business on the list paid in full today. He said the third business on S. Main Street recently paid \$8,000.00 and now only owes \$3,200.00.

Councilman Nash asked if we had a contact yet. Manager Vannoorbeeck said no, but a check just showed up in the mail.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the business at the bottom; this was their first time being late.

# 3. Street Improvement Projects

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Whitehurst Paving expects to start tar and gravel on August 25, 2025.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said all documents for the repaving on S. Main Street have been executed and their start date is expected to be September 22, 2025.

Councilman Nash asked how long this project would take. Manager Vannoorbeeck said about a week.

# 4. Wrigglesworth Sports Complex

Manager Vannoorbeeck said at Council's desk are the cost estimates for the football field, and he will provide to the Gators.

Councilman Page said for the record, \$293,852.52. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that is attributed to just football, and does not include sidewalks.

Mayor Dickens asked if a copy had been provided to Ms. Wilson. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would, but wanted to provide to Council first.

## 5. Taylor Bottom Block Grant

There was nothing to report.

## 6. Armory

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we will be in the building for Arts and Crafts, but may be a temporary Certificate of Occupancy. He said internet should be installed next week. He said this runs the elevator and fire alarms.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Nottoway County's Building Official had resigned and would be taking a position in Halifax.

Councilman Gormus asked if there would be a Grand Opening. Manager Vannoorbeeck believed there would be something, but he did not know when.

#### 7. Weatherization

There was nothing to report.

# 8. Workforce Housing

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the three houses are being completed, and photos are included.

# **NEW BUSINESS:**

## 1. Garbage Fee – 212 N. Main Street

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is a request from Peggy Sue's Diner. He said she has two units with two separate meters, and is asking to have one of the trash collection fees waived from her monthly bill. He said this had been done for other businesses.

Mayor Dickens believed this was a fair request.

Councilman Gormus made a motion to waive one garbage fee from 212 N. Main Street monthly, starting now. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Wynn.

Council did not agree to back date any payments already made.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

# 2. Electronic Participation Policy

Manager Vannoorbeeck said this Policy has to be adopted annually.

Councilman Page made a motion to adopt the Electronic Participation Policy as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Allman.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

#### 3. Award Bid – Annual Concrete

Manager Vannoorbeeck said we received two bids, one from S. Walker and another on eVA. He said if all the work is done, S. Walker was at \$715,300.00, and Horizon Builders was at \$265,070.00.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he asked Horizon Builders if they would build concrete driveways for \$395.00, the contractor withdrew his bid.

Councilman Nash said this contractor gets a mark on his eVA account when withdrawing. He said the Town needs to make it known. Manager Vannoorbeeck said this is usually handled with a bid bond, but we did not request one for this bid.

Councilman Nash made a motion to award the annual concrete bid to S. Walker Construction in the amount of \$715,300.00. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

#### VOTE:

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

Councilman Nash asked about unit prices from last year. Clerk Daniel said she would send them to Council.

# 4. Food Truck Request

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Courier Record is requesting food trucks be allowed on their property on October 8, 2025 from 6:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for "Craving Caffeine and the Courier Record". He said this is for National Newspaper Week.

Councilman Allman made a motion to approve the request as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

## 5. Flock Safety – Blackstone Police Department

Manager Vannoorbeeck said a set of drawings are included in the packet that show the locations of flock cameras. He believed in layman's terms, this would be license plate readers. He said the six locations are being requested on the Town's rights of way.

Chief Murphy said he would like to put these cameras at the entrances and exits of Town. He gave an example of a stolen vehicle; they can enter the license plate number and find out which direction the vehicle goes. He said these cameras would work with a multitude of crimes.

Chief Murphy said he received a call today from Councilman Page about policy. He said the company provided a policy to use to govern the rules. He said using these cameras you have to input a report number and provide justification.

Councilman Page asked what if another agency needed to use this information. Chief Murphy said we have an agreement with every agency in the State, and they have to follow the same rules Blackstone does. He said if an agency makes a general request, we provide them access. He said if there are problems, we can deny access.

Mayor Dickens said this will record everyone's license plate every day, all day, at every entrance and exit. Chief Murphy said not every entrance and exit; they do not have that many cameras. He said this would cover the most popular entrances and exits.

Mayor Dickens asked if there was any possibility of abuse. Chief Murphy said this would be only for officers, and is an online system. He said he can review who has used the system and the reason why.

Councilwoman Williams suggested doing quarterly audits. She asked who decided on the locations of the cameras. Chief Murphy replied, he did.

Mayor Dickens said the Police Department received a grant for these cameras for all but \$5,000.00. Chief Murphy said this was originally supposed to be done in last year's budget, but has been a long process. He said last year they were unsuccessful getting a grant, but this year they received \$10,000.00 towards the cameras. He said the Police Department purchased five and received one for free.

Councilwoman Williams asked if there was a fee to use this system. Chief Murphy replied yes, annually.

Councilman Allman made a motion to approve using the Town's rights of way as presented, for the Flock Camera Safety System. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

## 6. Armory Use – Arts & Crafts

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Blackstone Chamber is requesting use of the Armory for Arts & Crafts, closing Main to Tavern, Tavern to Harris, and Harris from Broad to Dinwiddie Avenue. He said they are also requesting to waive the Noise Ordinance from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

The Arts & Crafts Festival will be September 13th and 14th 2025.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the Arts & Crafts requests as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilwoman Williams.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

## VOTE:

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

# 7. Black History Heroes Committee

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked if the Mayor wanted to nominate names for this committee.

Mayor Dickens asked if this committee could make selections.

Councilman Page made a motion to postpone this committee appointment until the Mayor brings back to Council. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

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

## 8. Blackstone Tourism Committee

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included in the packet is an email from the DBi Director, Mrs. Sallie Glenn, requesting \$5,000.00 from Council for the Blackstone Tourism Committee.

Councilman Nash said he was on this committee, and this is not a DBi request. He said we are in the infant stages to find ways to drive tourism to Blackstone. He said there is a VA250 Grant coming up, so the \$5,000.00 is there in case it is needed. He said they were not saying they would spend \$5,000.00.

Councilman Page believed the request was to have a line item for the Tourism Committee. He did not think a check would be cut to the Committee, it would just be funds available if needed.

Councilwoman Williams asked who was on the committee.

Clerk Daniel said she would send the committee members to Council, per the list Mayor Dickens provided her.

Councilman Allman made a motion to create a line item of \$5,000.00, and appropriate for the Tourism Committee. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Councilman Allman asked if there was enough in Council Discretionary to move to this line item. Manager Vannoorbeeck said there was a Council Discretionary Fund, but was not sure if there was enough to fund this.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

#### VOTE:

-	Aye
-	Aye
-	Absent
-	Aye
	- - - -

## 9. Armory Reservation Guide/Policies

Council agreed to discuss this at a separate meeting.

#### **COMMITTEE REFERRALS:**

There were no referrals.

## **MAYORS MINUTE:**

Mayor Dickens thanked the Armory Group for hammering out the guidelines for usage of the building. He said the Armory Group has officially passed the baton to the Town, so we will take it from here.

Mayor Dickens said as the Town's Chief Cheerleader, let's take a moment to consider the road ahead while the sun is still shining bright. He asked that when problems arise, we address them. He asked that we get a handle on the bank reconciliations.

Mayor Dickens asked that we develop a plan for the Armory so it will be another jewel in the crown for Blackstone.

Mayor Dickens said the Town took a proactive step in acquiring the Dillard Crawley Building and receiving grant funds to make it stable.

Mayor Dickens said Workforce Housing was worthwhile initiatives.

Mayor Dickens said the road ahead holds promise for creating an Aviation Industrial Park, by expanding the Allan C. Perkinson Airport.

Mayor Dickens said these things will not only grow Blackstone, but Nottoway County. He said we go farther by partnering with Nottoway County, not competing with them.

#### **POLICE REPORT:**

There was nothing reported.

#### **CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

Mr. Michael Bagley said he disagreed with food trucks on Main Street, except for special occasions. He said the parking lot in front of Ace Hardware, nor Mitchell's parking lot was mentioned. He said maybe Mr. Green would allow food trucks in his area. Councilman Nash said the Ace Parking Lot is Town owned.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Dickens adjourned this meeting at 9:56 p.m.

Of Office Clens MAYOR
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

September 15, 2025 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

TOWN CLERK OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA