

Minutes of a Special Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia, held in the Council Chambers, located at 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia on Wednesday, May 6, 2026 at 6:30 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; Jackie Mitchell, Bookkeeper

Town Attorney:

Those Absent: Lloyette Wynn

Special Called Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia for 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 6, 2026.

Pursuant to the authority vested in me as Mayor of the Town of Blackstone, I call a Special Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia, to be held in the Town Council Chambers, located at 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia at 6:30 p.m., Wednesday, May 6, 2026, for the purpose of considering the following:

1. *Closed Session – Treasurer Interview*
2. *Closed Session – Personnel – Administration*
3. *Open Session – Utility Bill Request*
4. *Open Session – TRC Performance & Escrow Agreement*
5. *Open Session – Budget Work Session*

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

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

CLOSED SESSION:

Virginia Code Section 2.2-3711-A

1/ Personnel – Treasurer Interviews & Admin

Councilman Page made a motion to go into Closed Session for (1) Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body. The motion was seconded by Councilman Nash.

Mayor Dickens asked all in favor or opposed:

VOTE:

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

Utility Bill Request – 505 College Road

Manager Vannoorbeeck said an individual at this address had a massive water leak.

Councilman Nash said the water portion is \$3,756.13. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that was just water, he had already waived the sewer portion to help out.

Councilman Miller asked if it was the person's fault. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it was on the property owner's side. He said his water line is under the power line, and the leak was between the meter and the house. He said the leak had been fixed.

Manager Vannoorbeeck asked to work with the resident and come up with a payment plan for the full amount.

Councilman Page said if we do this, people will question why they can't get a payment plan for electric.

Mayor Dickens asked if there was a way to recognize when something is out of whack. Council said no, not until the meter is read.

Council agreed to allow Manager Vannoorbeeck to work with the resident, and report back to Council.

TRC Performance & Escrow Agreement

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included tonight is a draft agreement between the Town and TRC. Both attorneys are still working on finalizing this.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he anticipates this project will include widening S. Main Street with curb and gutter, and TRC's portion would be \$200,000.00. He said this amount would be deposited in an escrow account with the Town's attorney, Spilman, Thomas & Battle. He said this agreement will provide the terms on releasing the funds, which is planned as a pro-rated share throughout the project.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said TRC still had not closed on the property.

Mayor Dickens asked who was TRC purchasing the property from. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, the Sanford Group and Blackrock Investments.

Councilman Page asked when the Town would be closing on the Airport property. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, the deadline is June 19, 2026.

Budget Work Session

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the proposed budget is \$23,441,261.00. He said the majority of this is construction projects.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there are no changes in rates for personal property, meals tax or lodging taxes. He said the base electric rate will increase by 3.8% per Dominion Power. He said this will include a 2% salary increase for all employees and a 7% increase in health insurance premiums.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said \$515,000.00 is included in the budget for the Dillard Crawley building, and is all grant. He said the annual paving which is VDOT reimbursed is for \$427,000.00 for secondary and primary roads.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he has included \$200,000.00 for the school building demolition, but was still working on this with maybe state assistance. He said with what is going on with Dillard Crawley, we could just as easily take the \$200,000.00 for parking improvements next to the railroad. He said people forget there are 60 spaces for parking a half a block away, but are not visible.

Councilman Allman suggested blocking off spaces for the police department, then repaint and provide signage for public parking.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said in the current budget there was \$60,000.00 for the three parking lots to be resurfaced.

Councilman Gormus asked about sidewalks. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that would fall under the annual paving of \$427,000.00. Councilman Gormus said the Town receives \$1.5 Million from the State. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we have to pay the street department from a third of that.

Councilman Gormus said he was proud of Blackstone, but would be more proud if the sidewalks on Main Street were better. Manager Vannoorbeeck said we need to get the trees downtown resolved. Councilman Allman said the allocated space in the sidewalks were too small and no liner was installed to prevent the roots. He added DBi was reevaluating the project now.

Councilman Page asked about widening College Avenue. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it is not included in the budget because we have not heard from VDOT on the TAP 21 grant. He said if the project is approved, it would not be available until the following fiscal year.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Police Department's IT Grant for \$320,000.00 was included in the budget. He said the S. Main Street widening for \$650,000.00 was included as part of Tractor Supply. He said this includes the \$200,000.00 from TRC, and \$450,000.00 was already set aside in a money market account.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Fire Department roof and floors are included at \$124,000.00. Councilman Nash suggested the flooring should be polished concrete; it should not be tile.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said for the anticipated Airport water project he included \$1.6 Million. He said we currently have \$800,000.00 on hand from payments from Pickett. He said this project would include a booster station and tank for the Airport. He said we have asked Congressman McGuire for money, and submitted today a \$500,000.00 request to the Virginia Economic Development Partnership.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included in the budget is a bus purchase for \$160,000.00, which is through federal and state funds. He said also included is Workforce Housing and the Town has \$465,000.00 on hand to do three new homes in the Lester Street area.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Weatherization was included in the budget, but was not funded this current fiscal year. He said the Town currently has \$125,000.00 set aside. Clerk Daniel clarified Weatherization is a pay back program. Councilman Gormus said there are needs out there.

Councilwoman Williams asked who decides who gets Weatherization funds. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, Mr. Earl Howerton, with Howerton Inspections. Councilman Nash said we need to have the biggest impact, to most amount of people, for the least amount of money.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the \$475,000.00 for reconductoring can be lowered appreciably because the bid received was for \$325,000.00. He said the revenue is there because it comes from the bank and we won't have to make payments until later, but the payments are included in the electric line item.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town has a loan with Citizens Bank, and we have been drawing it down starting with the SCADA System. He said currently we are only paying the interest on the drawdowns, but eventually there will be an end date and actual loan payments will have to be made. He said in the budget is \$110,000.00 for the loan payment.

Mayor Dickens asked what reconductoring meant. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, replacing wires and poles. Councilman Nash added, it is going from copper to aluminum lines, which keeps the power in the line longer, and these lines are stronger.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Raw Water Line project, there is \$1 Million included in the budget, which is just engineering. He said the total grant amount was \$1,350,000.00. He said this is all grant.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Forest Drive Engineering is \$420,000.00 and included in the budget. He said this would not have to be paid back immediately because there are loan funds being shown as revenue. He said loan payments would not begin until FY28.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the fuel adjustment went way up from \$0.01528 to \$0.03956. He said this will be \$1 Million more a year. Councilman Nash said on average it will be \$420.00 a year per household.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the fuel adjustment increase was explained to him by Mr. Dan Martin. He said this was for an under collection of fuel adjustments from last year. He said this is a six month charge, and can be reevaluated in six months. He added there was a slight increase in the SEPA rates.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said also included in the budget is \$155,000.00 for the Hodges Street waterline. He said this is based on the timing for the proposed development. He said this was included in the current budget, but a portion was used to repair the Armes ditch.

Councilman Page asked if there was anything included for potential boundary adjustments. Manager Vannoorbeeck said that would come from Professional Services.

Councilman Gormus said we have discussed merit increases, COLA, and this year we are looking at 2% raises. He said the only merits being discussed are for those that got certifications, there are four included. He asked how is this recognizing good performance, he believed if the average was 3%, then someone performing less might get 2%, and someone performing more might get 4%. Councilman Allman believed that was the original vision.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said 2% was the average, and some may get 3%. Councilman Nash believed the supervisors went through training on how to evaluate their employees. Mayor Dickens said it would be great if it was done properly, but there was a possibility it would be abused.

Councilman Page asked about the chart for manhole repairs, they do not include Main Street.

Councilman Nash asked for the minutes from the merit raise discussions last year.

Councilwoman Williams believed in this economy everyone should get a 2% cost of living. Councilman Page said if everything had been done to have merit raises, they should be considered, along with a 2% cost of living.

Councilman Miller said this has waited too late in the game for merit raises, and merit raises are unfair. He said some people would not be treated equal.

Account & Finance agreed to meet May 13th at 4:00 p.m. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he would present to the Committee a 4% increase for FY27 for the Jacks Branch trunk line.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Dickens declared this Special Called Meeting adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Lafayette Dickens MAYOR OF
THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA

June 15, 2026 APPROVED AND ADOPTED

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