

Minutes of a Continued Meeting of the Council of the Town of Blackstone, Virginia, held in the Council Chambers, located at 100 W. Elm Street, Blackstone, Virginia on Thursday, June 25, 2026 at 7:00 p.m.

There Were Present:

Mayor: Lafayette Dickens

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

Town Staff: Philip Vannoorbeeck, Town Manager; Jennifer Daniel, Town Clerk; Jackie Mitchell, Bookkeeper; Sam Murphy, Police Chief

Town Attorney:

Those Absent: Carolyn Williams, Lloyette Wynn

Mayor Dickens called this Continued Meeting from June 15, 2026, to order.

Adopt & Appropriate the FY27 Budget

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Public Hearing was held on June 15, 2026 for the FY27 Budget in the amount of \$23,191,834.00. He said this included the increase in electric base rate of 3.8%. He said the fuel adjustment increase went into effect in April. He said this also includes the 4% sewer increase.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the Town requested through the General Assembly, \$3 Million to help reduce the cost of the Raw Water Line, which is over \$9 Million. He said what we received so far looks favorable.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said included in the packet are the estimated June Dominion Power rates that have been forwarded to VMEA. He said the Town is only distribution, so disregard transmission. He said demand rates are 1% higher and energy rates are 11% higher than the January 2026 estimates. He said the January estimate is what is included in the FY27 Budget with a 3.8% increase.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the demand rates are 0.2% higher, and the energy rates are 9.9% lower than the current rates. He said we are currently paying \$24.05 kw/month, the estimate was \$23.82 from January, and the final number is \$24.09. He said this is higher than what we are paying now, but much higher than what the budget is built on.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the energy rates are per kWh, with the current rate being \$0.01833, the estimate from January was \$0.01491, and the actual is \$0.01651. He said this is higher than what the budget is reflecting.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the demand increase is roughly \$24,578.00 more than budgeted. He said the energy charge is roughly \$67,926.00 higher than budgeted. He said the difference is \$92,504.00 higher than budgeted.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said there is a 3.8% increase in the base rates for electric, and based on the rates just provided the number should be 6.7%.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said last year the Town received a credit from Dominion for \$77,000.00 and is still in a money market account. He proposed using this money to roughly cover the difference. He said next year we need to be cognizant that we are starting 3% in the hole. He added, hopefully the fuel adjustment will go down.

Councilman Page asked what the customer is charged. Manager Vannoorbeeck said everyone gets a base customer charge of \$9.17, and the first 800 kilowatt hours the Town charges \$0.11188 for residential.

Councilman Gormus clarified these are pass through, and not a profit for the Town's pockets.

Councilman Miller asked if the police salaries were now included. Manager Vannoorbeeck did not believe anything needed to be changed because it was only going to equate to \$5,000.00.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Dominion Power owes VMEA \$1.138 Million, not including interest. He said the Town of Blackstone is a 3.3% owner of VMEA, and this comes out to roughly \$32,000.00. He said this will come to the Town over July, August and September equally split. He said this is reflected on the Town's bill, there is no check. He said this is considered a True-Up.

Councilman Nash made a motion to approve the FY27 Budget in the amount of \$23,191,834.00. The motion was seconded by Councilman Miller.

Councilman Page said when we joined Council in 2023 the budget was \$18.9 Million, and he asked then why so high, and was told because of grants for the Armory. He said of these things are compounding and causing the government to go up. He said \$23.9 Million is extremely high for the Town of Blackstone. He said we have approved over \$800,000.00 in raises since coming into office.

Councilman Page said he would vote no against the budget because of the utility rate increases on sewer and no cuts. He said he would vote no on the budget, but would vote to appropriate. Councilman Nash agreed the budget was rising, but where do we make cuts. Councilman Page said we need to be mindful of all the things the Town is doing.

Councilman Allman asked why this wasn't discussed during the budget workshop. Councilman Page said he expressed his concerns with the sewer and utility rates.

Councilman Miller said he did not want to cut the Town employees. He said this year we are only giving them 2%, and inflation is up 7%. Councilman Page said he understood, but it has been \$800,000.00 over 4 years. He said we are now buying everything new; can we look into purchasing used equipment. He asked to just be mindful going forward.

Councilman Allman said to Councilman Page, he voted yes on everything he just mentioned. He said there were no suggestions for cuts given.

Councilman Page said during the budget talks it was said no sewer increase this year, but now at the end of the budget there is a 4% sewer increase. Councilman Gormus believed we were spending money in the right places, with sewer and water supply lines.

Councilman Allman said last year we could have gone along with the County's appraisals, but we didn't we did an equalization. He said we are paying for things with growth.

Councilman Page asked how much does the Town have in undesignated funds. Manager Vannoorbeeck replied, \$3.4 Million. He said he took \$600,000.00 for the purchase of the Airfield, and will hopefully put it back.

Councilman Page asked if we were using \$1 Million for collateral. Manager Vannoorbeeck said it was \$1.5 Million, but was still in the Reserves and still accessible. He added we did not ask for any additional taxpayer money for the Armory.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the level of service the average person of Blackstone gets is blue ribbon. He said there are things that can be cut, but he had never been successful in getting them cut.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Councilman Allman made a motion to appropriate the FY27 Budget. The motion was seconded by Councilman Gormus.

Mayor Dickens asked for a Roll Call Vote:

VOTE:

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

Political Signage

Manager Vannoorbeeck said Mayor Dickens approached him about political signs in the rights of way. He said he received some complaints about political verbiage on College Road that were vulgar, but are on private property.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he received an email that started with Councilman Page to Mr. Rodney Reynolds. Councilman Page clarified it was sent to the Department of Elections, and Mr. Reynolds received a copy of it.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said the complaint was not content or even the right of way. Councilman Page said the right of way was the issue. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the complaint he had was proper declaration of who paid for them.

Councilman Gormus said his name was on this paper, and sent for wrongdoing. He said that did not happen. Councilman Nash said his name was included as well for managing a property. Councilman Nash said he was fine to take all campaign signs down in the right of way, then you have to go to the individuals and ask for permission. He believed they were all trashy.

Councilman Gormus asked Councilman Page who texted him on May 2nd to make you aware of the trashy signs. Councilman Page said he was driving down Main Street. Councilman Gormus interrupted him and read to Councilman Page: he was driving down Main Street and seen Councilman Gormus fixing a sign back up. He said on Tuesdays and Wednesdays he works in Richmond. Councilman Page said then there's somebody who has a doppelganger out there, the person looked just like Councilman Gormus. Councilman Page said maybe he was mistaken.

Manager Vannoorbeeck read Section 14-4.0, Supplemental Sign Regulations: No person except a public officer or employee in performance of a public duty shall paste, paint, print, nail, tack, erect maintain or fasten any sign, pennant, outdoor advertising sign, billboard, or notice of any kind, or cause the same to be done, facing or visible to any public street or public open space, except as provided or in this ordinance.

Manager Vannoorbeeck said he does not fool with political signs at all, and they are scattered everywhere in the right of way. He said Mr. Reynolds weighed in and said the signs were vulgar, and reflected badly on the Town.

Manager Vannoorbeeck read from an email from Attorney Harf that said: since the signs are on Town property, in an ideal world they could be removed because they do not comply with the sign ordinance. He would refrain from that, first he could just put the signs on private property. You would be unable to remove the signs if they were on private property because we cannot restrict based on content. He said the signs are not obscene enough (talking about Councilman Page), to lose first amendment protection. He said Manager Vannoorbeeck told him on the phone that he would not normally remove political signs, despite being on Town property, except for content. He said it was probably not worth the headache or potential lawsuit to remove the signs.

Councilman Page said the complaint was there should not be signs in easements, and secondly the Town removed his signs from the easements during the last election. He said he stood at the podium and argued free speech. He said the Ordinance has only been enforced against Chris Page. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he doesn't randomly pick up signs, so what was the reason. Councilman Page said Manager Vannoorbeeck told him the signs were in the easement.

Councilman Allman said from the email to Mr. Reynolds, it says attached. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he intentionally didn't include the attachment of the signs. Councilman Allman asked if the signs in question were only the ones speaking against Councilman Page. Manager Vannoorbeeck said the ones he saw in the email, yes. Councilman Page said yes it had to do with signs in the rights of way without disclosures.

Councilman Gormus asked Councilman Page, after 3.5 years of being together on Council, did he think for a second if he was the person that put the signs up, that he wouldn't own it. Councilman Page believed after a recent conversation with Councilman Gormus; he would own it. He apologized if he was mistaken, if it was not Councilman Gormus, as he put in the complaint.

Councilman Gormus asked what value does it add, rather than contacting someone you think did wrong. Councilman Page said there is a process for these situations, and he went through the State process. Councilman Gormus said he likes the man process.

Councilman Nash said we do nothing, or take all signs down.

Councilman Gormus said if you recognize you are wrong for filing the complaint, you still let it proceed. Councilman Page said he could amend the complaint saying he may be mistaken about Councilman Gormus being the one setting up the sign.

Councilman Allman questioned the Registrar's response; it was only for content. Manager Vannoorbeeck said he was curious what the Registrar was doing about this.

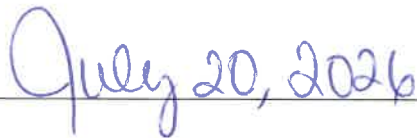
Councilman Nash asked why his name was in the complaint because he manages a property. Councilman Page said Councilman Nash is in and out of this property, and the sign has no disclaimer. Councilman Nash said the complaint is saying he did this, which is false.

Councilman Allman said he did not have any political signs up, but his opponent did, and did not think it would be good of him to vote to remove signs, when it would only remove someone running against him.

Councilman Nash said we need to look at all signs around Town being removed, after this election cycle. Council agreed to let the new Council in January 2027 work on this.

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Dickens declared this Continued Meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.


MAYOR OF THE
TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA


APPROVED AND ADOPTED


TOWN CLERK
OF THE TOWN OF BLACKSTONE, VIRGINIA