

The special meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on Tuesday, June 3, 2025 at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/344619>

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Darrin Hill, Vice Mayor – Ward 2
Charles Cuthbert, Jr., Councilor – Ward 4
W. Howard Myers, Councilor– Ward 5
Annette Smith-Lee, Councilor - Ward 6

Absent:

Marlow Jones, Councilor – Ward 1 (Late)
Samuel Parham, Mayor – Ward 3
Arnold Westbrook, Jr., Councilor – Ward 7

Present from City Administration:

City Manager John “March” Altman, Jr.
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams
City Clerk Tangi R. Hill

2. PRAYER:

Vice Mayor Hill led the Council meeting in prayer.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Parham led the Council and the citizens in the pledge of allegiance.

4. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:

A quorum was present.

5. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARING

- a. A Public Hearing for the Consideration of an ordinance to Appropriate Funding for the Sports Training Facility (Fieldhouse) at Petersburg High School in the Amount of \$300,000

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, stated that this item was to appropriate \$300,000, as stated, pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and the School Board, and the Stadium Enhancement Committee. The request was \$300,000, which would be drawn from the funds set aside for this purpose from Capital Improvements. He noted that this action would fulfill their full commitment of \$2.7 million, as outlined in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Vice Mayor Hill opened the public hearing.

Barbara Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, stated that she felt it was essential to explicitly state the confirmation of the City's contribution in a written resolution. She emphasized that someone other than the City must contribute to this project, considering it was intended to be a public-private partnership.

Seeing no other speakers, Vice Mayor Hill closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Council Member Smith-Lee made a motion to adopt the Ordinance to Appropriate Funding for the Sports Training Facility (Fieldhouse) at Petersburg High School in the Amount of \$300,000. Council Member Myers seconded the motion.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Cuthbert, Myers, Smith-Lee, and Hill; no: N/A; Abstain: n/a; Absent: Westbrook, Jones, Parham.

6. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. Consideration of the Approval of the Proposed City of Petersburg FY26 Operating Budget

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, stated that he presented this item for a public hearing at the last regular scheduled meeting, where it was tabled until this meeting. As a result, the budget was currently balanced at \$144,338,153 across all funds.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if there were any questions from Council Members at this time.

Council Member Cuthbert said that there was a \$3 million line item for a class and compensation study in the budget on page 77, currently listed as non-departmental. However, it was departmental, but they did not yet know how it would be divided among their departments. He stated that he was not prepared to support a budget that lacked transparency regarding this allocation. He expressed concern that this lack of description was not in the spirit of transparency.

Council Member Cuthbert said that he was concerned about how the \$3 million would be distributed among the Police, Fire Department, and other City departments. He said that at this point, Council did not have the answer to that, but it was important for them to know that in order to make these very important budgetary decisions. They had been discussing the need for this funding for a long time, and he completely agreed that they needed to attract and retain qualified City employees. He also did not necessarily have an issue with the \$3 million figure, but he could not adequately do his job as a Council Member if he did not know how that \$3 million was being distributed among their various departments.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if the City Manager could provide some context regarding that line item.

John Altman, City Manager, explained that they had taken a similar approach to last year's pay increase, placing it in a single line item in the budget. This allowed for adjustments to be made by the Council, such as reducing the percentage salary increase, without having to revisit the salary and benefits for each department individually. They did not allocate funds for salary and benefits in each departmental budget separately; instead, they held the item as a single line until the budget was adopted, and then distributed the funds accordingly.

City Manager Altman stated that they had the class and comp study as well as a request he would share with Council. He noted that they had not had individual meetings with employees to discuss what they potentially may be getting. He did not want to get too ahead of that, but he understood Council Member Cuthbert's concern. He reiterated that by placing the item in a single line, they could ensure that the funds were distributed according to the plan once the budget was adopted.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if Council Member Cuthbert would be supportive of City staff explaining the departmental needs and how the \$3 million would be used after the budget was adopted.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he felt that the Council and the public should have the opportunity to consider the allocation of the \$3 million.

Mr. Cozier clarified that the study would be shared with Council once it was finalized, so they would have the opportunity to review those recommendations.

Council Member Cuthbert asked why that was not done before Council was presented this item.

City Manager Altman explained that they knew the cost of the implementation of the program, which was provided in the budget. The City Administration wanted to have meetings with individual staff members before it became a public topic, which was why the \$3 million was considered departmental at this time. They would have the funding available before distributing it to their employees, which they would also provide to Council.

Council Member Cuthbert asked why that had not been done upfront.

City Manager Altman clarified that they must have Council's approval and the adopted budget before they could move forward with their meetings with staff.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that ultimately, they could not have meetings with department heads if the necessary funding was not in place. They could not inform department heads that they would receive a certain amount of money before Council approved or denied it.

City Manager Altman stated that he understood Council Member Cuthbert's position on the matter, and he respected the preference for having those details, but the majority of Council did not feel those details were necessary at this time in the process. As a result, they proceeded with the majority consensus of Council, which had been supportive of implementing the class and comp study recommendations to make their community more competitive with neighboring areas. If his approach was an overstep, he apologized to the Council for any inconvenience that may have caused.

Council Member Cuthbert asked why the proposal was not included in the budget on a department-by-department basis in the budget.

City Manager Altman replied that their initial focus was on funding the overall implementation, rather than individual departmental information.

Council Member Cuthbert asked how they would determine if a department was staying within its budget if the full departmental budget had not been presented to the Council beforehand.

City Manager Altman explained that when the Council adopted the budget, the allocated dollars would be distributed to the departments based on the plan's specifications for each individual employee. This included the adjustments for promotions to new grades and corresponding step increases within those grades. The goal was to ensure that each department received the necessary funding to implement the new pay plan and address compression, without exceeding their budget. By breaking down the numbers, they could provide the departments with the exact amount they needed, ensuring they stayed within budget and aligned with the plan.

Mr. Cozier explained that they were conducting a monthly budget-to-actual review, where they closely monitored the budget as it was implemented after the budget was adopted on July 1.

Council Member Myers made a motion to approve the Proposed City of Petersburg FY26 Operating Budget. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

Council Member Cuthbert made a substitute motion that they table this item until the City Manager provides information to Council and to the public about how the \$3 million would be allocated among the various departments.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he believed that this information was essential to understanding the total picture they were being asked to approve.

Council Member Jones apologized for being late to the conversation. He asked what the concern was regarding the \$3 million.

Vice Mayor Hill explained that the \$3 million was allocated as a single line item in the budget, which would be used to implement the recommendations from the comp and class study. It would be distributed among departments from that line item's amount. He said that Council Member Cuthbert had requested to see itemized breakdowns for how the money would be distributed to different departments.

Council Member Jones asked if this \$3 million would be providing raises to their employees.

City Manager Altman clarified that this item was meant to address issues of pay scale compression and adjusted salaries. The intent was to make their City employee salaries more competitive within the region to attract talent and retain employees with the updated pay scales. The \$3 million would accomplish that; the Council would adopt the budget and staff would distribute the funds accordingly to departments. He explained that Council Member Cuthbert wanted a breakdown of those funds prior to adoption. He confirmed that this item was part of the City's promise to address their employees' pay.

Council Member Jones noted that Council Member Cuthbert was the main proponent for adjusting their City employees' salaries to be more competitive. He asked the City Manager if they had the ability to itemize the funds once the total amount was approved, in order to ensure they prioritized giving raises to their lowest-paid employees rather than those making over \$100,000.

City Manager Altman explained that the class and comp study worked by placing the City on a pay scale, while also positioning individual employees within their respective grade and step. Their goal was to become more competitive. They were not yet on par with localities like Henrico and Chesterfield, but they were making progress and this plan would bring them closer to that level of competitiveness. Once the amount was adopted, they would then focus on addressing individual employees based on the study's findings, rather than the Administration's or Council's preferences. He reiterated that they would align employees' grades and steps according to the study's recommendations.

Council Member Jones asked if, once the allocation was approved, they would begin reviewing the individual departments and determining how to implement their respective salary increases.

City Manager Altman confirmed that yes, they would do so based on the study's results.

Council Member Jones expressed concern about all of their departments, but especially their Police, Fire, Social Services, and Parks and Recreation Departments. He emphasized that they must be fair across the board with compensating their employees. He said that he was supportive so long as they had the ability to adjust the allocations once it was approved.

City Manager Altman confirmed that they had the flexibility to adjust upwards; however, he did not believe they could reduce anyone's salaries as they were based on the current market.

However, if they found employees were working additional hours or duties had been combined, they always had the ability to provide adjustments in pay as a result of that.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if there was a second to Council Member Cuthbert's substitute motion. With no second, the substitute motion died and the original motion remained on the floor.

Vice Mayor Hill called the vote on the original motion to approve the Proposed City of Petersburg FY26 Operating Budget.

On a roll call vote, voting yes: Myers, Jones, Smith-Lee, and Hill; no: Cuthbert; Abstain: n/a; Absent: Jones.

Council Member Cuthbert expressed concern that he had questions that remained unanswered so he could not vote in support of the budget.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to adjourn. All members of the Council present voted in the affirmative. Meeting adjourned.

The City Council adjourned at 3:36 p.m.

Adopted: 07/01/2025

APPROVED:



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk