

The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on November 18, 2025 at the Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Samuel Parham called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/361361>

1. ROLL CALL:

Present:

Samuel Parham, Mayor -- Ward 3
Darrin Hill, Vice Mayor -- Ward 2
Marlow Jones, Councilor -- Ward 1
Charles Cuthbert, Jr., Councilor -- Ward 4
W. Howard Myers, Councilor -- Ward 5
Annette Smith-Lee, Councilor -- Ward 6
Arnold Westbrook, Jr., Councilor -- Ward 7

Absent:

Present from City Administration:

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

2. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:

A quorum was present.

3. PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL PROCLAMATIONS

- a. Recognition of 2025 UNCF Keeper of the Flame Award Honoree Wayne Crocker, Director of Library Services, Petersburg Public Library

Mayor Parham recognized Wayne Crocker, Director of Library Services for his achievement of being honored with the 2025 UNCF Keeper of the Flame Award.

4. PRESENTATIONS

- a. Overview of Crater District Area Agency on Aging Services

Renata Sharnick, Chief Executive Officer of the Crater District Area Agency on Aging, provided the overview. She stated that the Crater District Area Agency on Aging proudly serves older adults and caregivers throughout the Crater region, including Petersburg. As part of Virginia's statewide network of 25 area agencies on aging, their mission is simple and essential: to help older adults remain healthy, independent, and safely in their homes for as long as possible. They serve adults 60 years and older, caregivers, and adults with disabilities. Their services promote independence, safety, and dignity for Petersburg's aging population. As of today, Petersburg's senior population 60 and over numbers approximately 7,995 residents.

Ms. Sharnick reported that last year, they served 1,080 older adults. Petersburg is one of the largest service areas in their region, and the needs of its aging population are growing rapidly. In the last fiscal year, they provided directly to Petersburg seniors 12,190 home-delivered meals, 619 congregate meals, 1,580 one-way transportation trips, 101 hours of care coordination, 357 hours of legal aid, 1,559 hours

of socialization and recreation, and emergency financial assistance to 30 older adults with overdue bills. These numbers reflect the substantial and increasing need for nutritious meals, safe housing, transportation, and emergency support.

Ms. Sharnick explained that through federal, state, and local support, Crater offers a wide range of essential programs for Petersburg's older adults, including home-delivered meals, congregate meals, transportation services, case management, homemaker services, insurance counseling, nutrition counseling, disease prevention and health promotion classes, school care program, senior Medicare patrol, and emergency assistance. She said that they have also expanded their programming and introduced new services, including care coordination, which includes safety repairs, home modifications, rent assistance, and accessibility improvements, as well as a chore program, home repairs, maintenance, and household support, respite, and caregiver support programs.

Ms. Sharnick stated that supporting older adults at home is both compassionate and cost-effective. By preventing premature nursing home placement and reducing avoidable hospital visits, Crater services save the City and the Commonwealth thousands of dollars per person each year. Investing in aging services multiplies community benefits by improving health, strengthening families, stabilizing housing, and reducing emergency spending. While they receive federal and state funding, local support is critical, especially as needs continue to rise.

Ms. Sharnick explained that the more financial support they receive from the City of Petersburg, the more older adults they can serve, the more meals they can deliver, the more homes they can make safe, and the more families they can help remain stable. Petersburg is home to nearly 8,000 older adults, and their needs are growing, and they depend on the services they provide. Crater District remains committed to working closely with the City of Petersburg to ensure that older residents can age with dignity, independence, and the support they deserve. She thanked Council for their partnership and continued dedication to the older citizens of Petersburg.

Mayor Parham thanked Ms. Sharnick for the presentation and for all that the Crater District Area Agency on Aging did for Petersburg.

5. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION POSTED

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

6. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (TO INCLUDE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING):

a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- November 5, 2025 Closed Session
- November 5, 2025 City Council Work Session

b. Adoption of the 2026 Petersburg City Council Meeting Calendar

c. Adoption of the FY 2027 Budget Calendar

d. First Read and to Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Approve an Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Petersburg for the Purpose of Clarifying and Updating Regulations on Recreational Substance Retail Uses by Defining Vape Shop and Cigar Lounge Uses and Specifying Their Allowance in the City

- e. First Read and to Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 Grants Fund
- f. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Approve a Request by Rudalma Mata, on behalf of Ruth Investments, LLC, to Rezone Property at 318 Irving Street, Parcel ID 006050012 from the M-2, Heavy Industrial District to the R-3, Two-Family Residence District
- g. First Read and to Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing the City Manager to Execute the Purchase Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and I AM POWER to Purchase the City-Owned Properties at 35 and 17 Bank Street, Located in Petersburg, VA
- h. First Read and to Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 General Fund
- i. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Execute a Lease Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and Mama's House Too, LLC for Property Located at 595 Old Wagner Road, Suites C & D (Tax Parcel 083-010805)

Council Member Cuthbert asked for clarification that the budget calendar would not be adopted as part of this Consent Agenda; rather, it would only be added as an item for Council to discuss at their next meeting.

- j. March Altman, City Manager, confirmed that it would be an item under New Business at Council's next meeting. He said that additionally, he would request Council to remove Item 8.i. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Execute a Lease Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and Mama's House Too, LLC for Property Located at 595 Old Wagner Road, Suites C & D (Tax Parcel 083-010805) from the Consent Agenda as well.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda without Item 8i. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

7. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 Grants Fund

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that this item was a public hearing for consideration of an amendment to the Grants Fund. The City had received two new grants for the current fiscal year. He said that the first grant was the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), in the amount of \$74,890.91 to the Petersburg Fire Rescue and Emergency Services Department.

Mr. Cozier said that the local match for this grant was \$7,489, and the grant would be used for purchasing personal protective equipment (PPE) cleaning equipment. He said that the second grant was for the Petersburg Bureau of Police, which had received a Department of Justice COPS Grant in the amount of \$5,664,825, which would cover the cost of hiring 17 sworn police officers. The federal government would fund these costs for three years. The total amendment to the Grants Fund would therefore be approximately \$5.7 million.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the amendment to the FY26 Grants Fund. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

b. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 Petersburg City Public Schools Budget

City Manager Altman introduced the item. He explained that this request was to appropriate \$850,000 of the school construction grant that the school system received for the construction of Walnut Hill Elementary. There were no additional funds from the City required for this; it was simply a matter of budgeting and appropriating funds that the school system had previously received.

Mr. Cozier confirmed that was correct.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Matthias Greywoode, Chief Financial Officer for Petersburg City Public Schools,

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he noticed the elementary school was proposed to be built using the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act (PPEA) process. He asked if they had considered the design-bid-build approach instead.

Jovanim Martinez, Assistant Superintendent of Operations at Petersburg City Public Schools, answered that they currently were in the process of evaluating it through the PPEA process. They had received an unsolicited proposal through the PPEA process, so there was no bid and because of that it was just a design-build process.

Council Member Cuthbert said that his understanding was that the PPEA process could be more expensive than the design-bid-build process. This was because the lack of competitive bidding in the PPEA process did not allow for them to choose a less expensive option. He said that it may seem easier for the School Board to accept the first offer from a private entity because it was less work, but it may result in higher costs and a lack of transparency.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that an open, competitive bidding process would ensure transparency and cost-effectiveness. He reiterated his concern that PPEA was the wrong approach to construct this much-needed elementary school. He stated that they needed to table this item and have a joint meeting with the School Board to discuss it further in order to alleviate some of his concerns. He asked Mr. Martinez if he was wrong to have these concerns.

Mr. Martinez replied that the PPEA was a law enacted by the State of Virginia. He stated that there was transparency in the PPEA policy the School Board currently had, which allowed firms to submit unsolicited proposals. Once they did that, it opened it up for competitiveness. They had a 45-day window in which other competitive bids could be submitted, and that was the current stage they were at in the process. He clarified that the School Board had not moved forward with the specific proposal; they were

moving forward per the process they had in place. They currently had three proposals and a committee that would oversee the process, review the proposals, and make recommendations

Council Member Cuthbert asked why the School Board did not choose a design-bid-build approach.

Mr. Martinez said that it depended on a multitude of variables. They had a variety of delivery methods, and each had its pros and cons. They were currently evaluating the proposals as part of this current design-build process that was underway due to the unsolicited proposal. He noted that this could be a beneficial structure because the architect and builder would be working together rather than as two separate entities, which would be the case with design-bid-build.

Council Member Cuthbert said that his understanding was that the design-bid-build approach could be more cost-effective, and PPEA was typically more expensive. He recalled that they used the PPEA process for their new courthouse and the cost had risen considerably throughout the project. He said that even with the 45-day open bidding, the initial unsolicited proposal was ultimately chosen because they had the most experience with the proposal and had already established a warm relationship with the local government, so the other bidders were much less competitive. He reiterated that he thought Council should table this item and discuss all available options in a joint meeting with the School Board. He thought that design-bid-build was a feasible and preferable option.

Mr. Martinez noted that the impacts of tariffs would continue to escalate construction prices. If they chose to pursue the design-bid-build route, they would likely not be able to start construction for another year and a half or two years. Furthermore, PPEA has a financial component that they had already reviewed as part of the current process, and they were more on the beneficial side of design-build at present. He stated that this was a perfect opportunity to keep it moving and allow the process to work itself out. They had three proposals and a third-party steering committee that would assist in analysis of each proposal.

Mr. Martinez emphasized that this was a very transparent process without any closed-door meetings. He hoped Council would trust the School Division in handling the process and moving forward in constructing this elementary school. He stated that an additional factor was their School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP) Grant from the state, which had an expiration date. If they did not continue to make swift progress, they could risk losing that grant funding.

Council Member Cuthbert asked who the general contractor was for the initial proposal.

Mayor Parham called a point of order. He asked Council Member Cuthbert to stay on topic and only discuss the specific item of the amendment to the FY26 Petersburg City Public Schools Budget. He said that the details of the proposal was a conversation for another time.

Council Member Cuthbert reiterated that he would like to know who the general contractor was for the initial proposal.

Mr. Martinez replied that the contractor was Gilbane. He added that it was listed on the schools' website along with all other relevant information.

Council Member Jones expressed concern that there were many acronyms being referenced at the dais without definitions or explanations given to the public. He explained that the design-build process was meant for projects that needed to be delivered quickly, as the owner gave up control over the design and used the contracted architect rather than their own. He stated that the PPEA had funding available and capital available that was not in the public's budget, so it would not be taken from the community. He asked if Mr. Martinez could expand on what the PPEA would provide to the schools in this instance.

Mr. Martinez said that he would read the definition of the PPEA from the state's website. He stated that the Public-Private Education Facilities and Infrastructure Act was a Virginia law that enables public entities to form public-private partnerships for projects such as building, renovating, or equipping schools and other public facilities. It enables for the use of private sector expertise, funding, and risk to complete public projects more quickly, creatively, and cost-effectively. The Act allows for both solicited and unsolicited proposals from private entities.

Mr. Martinez explained that in simpler terms, once they entered into a contract on a design-build side, they were locked into a guaranteed maximum price (GMP). For example, if a project cost \$1,000, the GMP was \$1,000. If escalations occurred or they had change orders, the private entity was held to that amount. He said that Council Member Jones had accurately summarized the situation.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he understood the GMP was good in theory when evaluating proposals, but with their courthouse project they had been told initially there would be a maximum of \$70 million and it was now at \$80 million. There was no guarantee until they signed the contract for a specific dollar amount.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney said that to clarify, the standard process for localities was design-bid-build. It was exactly what the title implied: They receive a design, put it out to bid, and then a contractor bids to build it. Conversely, PPEA was a process where a private entity proposed a design and their bid for a specific project. He said that however, the project was then open to other bidders for a specified period, typically 45 days. He noted that the City extended their courthouse project to 90 days to ensure transparency and competition. He stated that the PPEA process may give the initial proposer an advantage, but considering that the designer and builder worked together, it also could result in a better project. However, as Council Member Cuthbert noted, that process may also come with a higher cost. He acknowledged that it was a trade-off, but that was about as simply as he could describe the process. He clarified that both processes were permitted under the Code of Virginia and both had their own requirements.

Council Member Jones acknowledged there was legitimate concern about the costs of the projects in the City starting off at one price and then escalating rapidly beyond the initial budget. He believed there was consensus on that point. However, the School Division was simply requesting an amendment to the Schools Budget.

Mayor Parham clarified that at present, they had funds set aside through the grant they received from the Commonwealth of Virginia. These funds were currently necessary for them to initiate the process.

Council Member Jones said that in response to Council Member Cuthbert's request, he did not believe they should table this item right now. He believed they needed to get the ball rolling and they could revisit it at a later juncture as things progressed.

Vice Mayor Hill noted that there was still opportunity for other bids to come in for this project at this early stage.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the amendment to the FY26 Petersburg City Public Schools Budget. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Mayor Parham thanked Mr. Martinez and Mr. Greywoode and said that Council looked forward to continuing these conversations.

- c. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend and Re-Adopt Chapter 106 of the City Code to Include Article XIII – Local Disposable Plastic Bag Tax

March Altman, City Manager, provided an overview of the item. He stated that this evening they were conducting a public hearing to consider the imposition of a tax for plastic bag usage in the City. Following a request from Council Member Westbrook, Council and staff had discussed this matter, and they were moving forward with the proposal of an amendment to City Code, which would allow the City to establish a tax for certain disposable plastic bags. The intent was to assist with litter reduction in public and private properties. The proposed amendment would be made to Chapter 106 of the City Code. After the public hearing, the Ordinance would become effective 95 days after Council's date of approval.

Mr. Altman stated that they would then need to work with the Virginia Tax Commissioner's Office to certify the Ordinance. The proposed tax would be a \$0.05 tax for each disposable plastic bag provided to consumers of tangible personal property, such as at grocery stores, convenience stores, drug stores, and other establishments. Staff was requesting this evening to conduct the public hearing to solicit public input, but staff would also like to request that Council table the matter once that was completed in order to have an opportunity to meet with the Commissioner of Revenue and discuss further the implementation of this Ordinance prior to bringing it back to Council's final consideration, which they anticipated would be in December.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Kenneth Lewis, 503 Mistletoe Street, stated that he would like to know what the operational benefit was in implementing this Ordinance. He asked what happened to the \$0.05 paid by the consumer and how it would be used to improve the waste management of plastic bags. He would appreciate an answer to that question, otherwise, he believed this issue should be tabled so they could explain to the public what the payment of \$0.05 additional cents would look like.

Julian Green, Jr. stated that his concern was centered around the current situation regarding the federal government's actions nationwide impact on local citizens trying to access basic necessities at the grocery store. He said that while it was possible that things may change in the future, he was concerned that the federal level would not make significant changes. As a result, they must be extremely vigilant. He said that rising water costs, increased lighting bills, and other costs of living needed to be considered.

Mr. Green stated that he wanted them to consider that people could not just carry everything in their hands when they bought things at the store. He said that they were already paying sanitation workers to properly dispose of waste, so he wanted them to be careful in terms of imposing these additional taxes and restrictions on citizens.

Anthony Williams stated that he would like to clarify that Code Section 106-503 references state code that specifically outlines the uses to which the revenues collected from this tax can be utilized. According to the state code, all revenue accruing to the City or County imposed under this tax shall be allocated for environmental cleanup, education programs aimed at reducing environmental waste, pollution mitigation, and providing reusable bags to recipients of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program. He said that it was worth noting that the tax was actually paid by the retailer, not directly by consumers.

Johnny Seku, 27 South Sycamore Street, said that he would ask that they consider how this tax would affect self-checkout lines.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, said that she had the same questions as Mr. Seku, and she appreciated Dr. Lewis's comments as well. She said that she had not read through the entirety of this item or the Ordinance, which she apologized for. She said that she thought that since this would have such a broad impact on all consumers, she thought maybe this should be tabled and circulated more throughout the community so people knew about it. She said that she certainly supported Council Member Westbrook's intention to improve the cleanliness of the City and be more environmentally friendly. She said that other states had more involved recycling programs and Virginia was not exactly at the forefront. She said that currently, this seemed too vague and there were a lot of variables.

Wendy Austin, High Street, said that she was thrilled to be in the City and involved, having worked in the community for 15 years and in the environmental sector. She commended Mr. Westbrook for his initiative in bringing this forward. She wholeheartedly agreed that the devil was in the details of the policy and implementation, and it was absolutely worth exploring further. She said that she also recognized the numerous benefits it would bring, as many communities had successfully implemented similar taxes on plastic bags, generating revenue and promoting good environmental stewardship. This could help educate the public on the impacts on their wildlife and the devastating effects of plastic ingestion on fish and wildlife.

Ms. Austin said that she firmly believed it was worth examining further and developing a policy and procedures that catered to their community members, who may face challenges in adapting to change. She was familiar with grants and funding opportunities, as well as the feasibility of implementing reusable bags in grocery stores. She would like to note that self-checkout systems often relied on self-honesty when the system asked questions about the number of bags used and whether they were bringing their own. She strongly supported this effort.

Kyle Haskett, 2936 Briarwood Road, said that he was a constituent of Council Member Westbrook. He understood the point of this tax was to improve the cleanliness of the City and reduce pollution, but he questioned whether this initiative would achieve that. He stated that it seemed the clearest solution was to stop using plastic entirely, as there were many other alternatives to plastic. He said that the costs of switching away from plastic should be borne by the businesses and not the citizens as well. He said that many other localities used cardboard and fabric instead of plastic, so options existed. He stated that ceasing the use of plastic would certainly clean up the City. He reiterated that the costs should be paid by the businesses and corporations producing and supplying the plastic instead of citizens paying at the register.

Sharon Johnson, 619 Summit Street, stated that she supported the initiative to take action regarding the issue of plastic bags. She noted that grocery shopping more than once or twice a week usually resulted in consumers having way too many plastic bags, and it was extremely wasteful. She agreed with the previous speaker that there were other alternatives to plastic, such as reusable or recyclable bags that cost as little as \$1. She reiterated that they should prioritize having paper and fabric bags available for consumers to use instead of focusing on taxing plastic bags. She noted that once there was an expectation for people to bring their own bags, it promoted responsible behavior and people would adapt.

Roselia Weaver-Roy, 2942 Homestead Drive, said that she was concerned that they already had higher food costs and real estate taxes, and this tax on bags just added to that burden. She said that the City's poverty rate was very high and the casino was supposed to be bringing in more revenue, yet they were discussing another tax. She said that she agreed that they needed to control the negative impact humans had on the environment, but they should consider another manner in which to achieve that.

Hadley Katzenbach, 301 South Jefferson Street, said that Aldi's was a very large chain of supermarkets. He said that before entering, everyone there was expected to bring their own bags. He said that while this was a tax, it was also an educational initiative to encourage people to bring their own bags. He said

that he been doing so for 20 years, so he did not understand the concern that this was imposing on people so much. He said that it was simply a matter of bringing one's own bags. He said that this was a win for everyone, and it also helped to keep their City clean, particularly since Petersburg was situated right on the river.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Council Member Westbrook said that he was a strong supporter of this initiative and wanted to reiterate that he was committed to its success. He said that he had written down a lot of the comments stated by the public, but he would refrain from comparing this to other Cities. He simply wanted Petersburg to be a progressive City, and he believed this was a step in that direction. He understood that some people may feel it was an imposition, but he did not believe so. He explained that the state law provided for instances where assistance was available, such as for SNAP recipients, who could receive bags provided to them.

Council Member Westbrook said that businesses would get \$0.01 of the \$0.05 to help them adjust to the new regulations. He noted that there was also a 95-day grace period, allowing for information and adjustment before the new regulations took effect. This would give the public time to understand the changes and their impact. He did not think this would be a drastic measure, but rather a necessary step toward improving their City. They needed to clean up their City, and he believed this could be a beneficial investment for their future.

Council Member Westbrook stated that he would like to direct revenues from this tax to be allocated specifically for improving and cleaning up their gateways, rather than being unallocated in the general budget. This would allow them to make a tangible impact and improve the appearance of their City, which was especially important as they anticipated increased visitors starting in 2026, whether for the casino or other reasons. He was open to discussing this further with anyone one-on-one, and he would be hosting a Ward meeting in January to continue the conversation.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to table this item for further discussion. Council Member Westbrook seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Council Member Westbrook said that to clarify to the public, nothing was set in stone with regards to this plastic bag tax Ordinance. They were looking to bring this item back in January, so he encouraged anyone with concerns to attend their January meetings to be part of this process.

- d. A Public Hearing for Carol Williams to Appeal a Decision Made by the Architectural Review Board that an Unapproved Shed in Front Yard of 214 South Adams Street in the Poplar Lawn Historic District Should Be Removed Until Its Permanent Location is Reviewed and Approved

Jared Crews, Acting Director of Planning and Community Development, provided a brief summary of the item. He stated that they this was a public hearing to address an appeal of a decision made by the Architectural Review Board (ARB). The appeal concerned a shed placed within a front yard at 214 South Adams Street. The question before Council was whether the decision of the Architectural Review Board should be reversed or upheld. If the decision was upheld, the applicant would be required to remove the shed from the front yard until they received approval on a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Mr. Crews provided background information on the case. The subject property was located at 214 South Adams Street, at the intersection of Adams and Tulip Alley. The shed was actually situated in the yard facing Tulip Alley, which was a public right-of-way. The original request to install a prefabricated shed in the property's rear yard had been submitted to the ARB in August. However, between the time the application was filed and the meeting was held, a shed had been placed in the side yard, which the City actually considered a front yard along Tulip Alley, a public right-of-way.

Mr. Crews explained that at the August meeting, the ARB had deferred action on the application, requesting additional information from the applicant on the permanent location of the shed. At the next meeting, the ARB had voted to deny the request based on the current placement of the shed and lack of information provided by the applicant. The design and dimensions of the shed had been deemed approvable, but the location of the shed had been deemed non-compliant with the Zoning Ordinance and the City's design guidelines.

Mr. Crews stated that the applicant had indicated that they would like to temporarily keep the shed where it currently was, with a proposed removal date of at least March, at which point she would bring updated plans to the ARB. From staff's perspective, allowing the shed to remain in its current location without enforcement of their Zoning Ordinance was a concern. The applicant had requested that the denial from the ARB be overturned.

Mr. Crews summarized that staff's perspective was that it violated their Ordinance in two ways. Firstly, the applicant did not have Architectural Review Board approval. Secondly, the shed would not be permitted in a front yard, regardless of whether it was located in a historic district or not. He said that Mr. Battiston from the ARB was also present to answer any questions and provide additional context on this case if necessary.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Joe Battiston, 1 South Sycamore Street, stated that if the ARB had been presented with a specific location for the placement of this shed, this item would not be before Council today. There was no plat to show where the shed would be, which was why it was denied. If the plat had been provided, the ARB would have been able to point to where it should be according to guidelines from the Department of Historic Resources, National Parks and Department of Interior. He requested Council to uphold the decision of the ARB. He stated that if the applicant needed a 30-day period to move the shed, that would be reasonable and allow enough time for her to return to the ARB and receive approval of the permanent location. He clarified that in no way was the ARB disapproving of the shed itself; it was just the location that was in violation of the Zoning Ordinance.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, recalled a previous City Council meeting during which they discussed a fence in this same historic district that was in violation of the Zoning Ordinance that applied to the entire City, not just the historic district. She understood that these regulations could infringe on the improvements people wanted to make to their properties, as she had dealt with it herself in Walnut Hill, but it was concerning when exceptions were frequently granted. She agreed with Mr. Crews that the location of the shed was a City-wide issue and Council needed to decide whether to uphold the Zoning Ordinance or keep making exceptions.

Hadley Katzenbach, 301 South Jefferson Street, said that he had attended the ARB meeting during which they reviewed this item, and he could confirm there was no clarity given. By the end of the discussion, everyone was shaking their heads in confusion about the information provided or lack thereof.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

Council Member Cuthbert asked why they had seen so many appeals of decisions from the ARB this year and last year. He acknowledged that Council typically would uphold the ARB's decisions and exceptions were rare. He asked if there was a fee for filing an appeal.

Mr. Crews replied no; there was no fee required for filing an appeal. He said that from his perspective, two years ago was when he and Ms. Siodmak had joined the Planning Department and had attempted to improve the process for filing paperwork in terms of notifying applicants of decisions as well as their options for appealing those decisions.

Council Member Jones stated that he believed one of the reasons they were receiving more appeals was because people were not feeling empowered to file appeals until recently, despite it being their right. He stated his support for the ARB in this instance; however, he wondered if the ARB had taken the applicant's letter into consideration. He explained that the applicant had detailed their personal hardships that impacted their ability to provide information in a timely manner. He asked if staff would have considered this letter in their decisions.

Mr. Crews clarified that the letter was received after the ARB's decision. However, he would note that the applicant had the ability to request temporary approval due to financial hardship but had not done so. He reiterated that this issue was not only violating the design guidelines, but also the City Zoning Ordinance.

Council Member Jones emphasized that educating the public on these regulations was crucial to prevent these violations from occurring. He asked staff to consider sending notices to the public that explained how structures were not allowed in front or side yards, as mentioned.

Mr. Crews said that he completely understood Council Member Jones' point and believed staff had been sincerely trying to put that into practice. He explained that in this case, they met with the applicant before she had filed any applications and thoroughly reviewed all of the rules as they related to installing the shed. He said that she filed the application, the item was put on the meeting agenda, and then the shed was put in the front yard before a decision had been made. He clarified that in this particular case, it was not an issue of the applicant not knowing.

Council Member Jones made a motion to uphold the decision made by the Architectural Review Board that an unapproved shed in the front yard of 214 South Adams Street should be removed until its permanent location is reviewed and approved. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

- e. A Public Hearing for Carol Williams to Appeal a Decision Made by the Architectural Review Board to Deny the Construction of Stairs and a Walkway for a Subterranean Entrance at 214 S. Adams Street in the Poplar Lawn Historic District

Jared Crews, Acting Director of Planning and Community Development, provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that this was a separate request filed for the same property, with a similar question of whether to reverse the decision of the ARB. He said that in this case, reversing the decision would mean approving the work that was requested and denied.

Mr. Crews provided background information on the case. He explained that at the ARB's August meeting, they reviewed of a Certificate of Appropriateness application to construct a walkway and entrance to an existing crawl space on the home. From his understanding, it would turn it into a more livable basement

area. The application provided a written description of the request, but lacked detailed information on materials, design, measurements, and the overall scope of work. As a result, the case was deferred in September and ultimately denied due to the lack of provided information.

Mr. Crews stated that in this instance, the applicants requested that the decision be overturned because the applicant was currently unable to provide the necessary detailed plans. From the view in Tulip Alley, one could see the existing entrance to the crawl space. He said that as best he could understand, the idea was to dig, create a stairwell, and establish a full-size entrance into this portion of the home. He summarized that the reason for denial from the ARB was the lack of information regarding the scope of the work, design, materials, and potential impact on the foundation and structural integrity of the home.

Mr. Crews further explained that there was no information from an engineer demonstrating that the work could be safely done without structural impact or visual impact to the historic home. He discussed this with the City Building Official, who shared the same concerns. The presence of load-bearing components, including the chimney, made the Board uncomfortable with approving the proposal without engineered design plans.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Michelle Murrills, 131 South Market Street, stated that she was a member of the ARB. She said that the ARB did not give a formal denial, although if they did not give a clear yes, it was a no by default. She stated that they did not have enough details to approve it, but she wanted to provide some clarity in response to Council Member Jones' and Cuthbert's questions about these appeals to ARB decisions. She explained that the City had many older homes being bought for low prices, quickly renovated, and flipped, but no one was explaining that they were in a historic district.

Ms. Murrills said that Ms. Williams did know that because she met with Planning staff ahead of her requests for this property. However, there was a lot that needed to be said. They also needed to realize the various details of historic districts, and the ARB had a meeting tomorrow night during which she would review the borders of these historic districts in addition to Old Town and Poplar Lawn. She stated that for this particular case, the ARB required more details and Ms. Williams provided none other than the general request.

Joe Battiston, 1 South Sycamore Street, stated that a job of this type would require permits from the City, and the ARB required that same information in order to give approval. The ARB had deferred this item to September, and the policies they followed stipulated that if the applicant was not present or did not provide the necessary information, then it automatically was declined. The applicant could then reapply and come before the ARB again to get the necessary approval of denial with the appropriate information submitted. He explained that they never received the information needed, which was the same as what the Code Compliance Department would require in order to understand what materials would be used. He requested Council to uphold the ARB's decision and ask the applicant to provide the proper information for the ARB to review and subsequently make a formal decision and allow Ms. Williams to move forward with her intended work on her home.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Council Member Jones asked if the ARB had a budget.

Mr. Battiston replied no; they had no budget.

Council Member Jones asked Mr. Crews and Mr. Battiston to consider some type of notification to distribute to homes as a proactive measure. He said that they could also post information on the City website.

Council Member Jones made a motion to uphold the decision of the Architectural Review Board to deny the construction of stairs and a walkway for a subterranean entrance at 214 South Adams Street. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

- f. A Public Hearing to Consider Amendment to Ordinance Sections 106-8 and 106-10 Personal Property Tax to Change Due Dates, and Section 110-115 Change the Due Date for Vehicle License Fee

Brittany Flowers, Master Commissioner of Revenue, provided a brief summary of the item. She stated that this was a request for Council to change the personal property due dates. Personal property was defined as an asset that was owned and not permanently attached to land or building, including moving assets such as cars, motorcycles, boats, trailers, tangible personal property owned by business owners, leased equipment, and machinery and tools.

Ms. Flowers explained that for the personal property, they received a weekly download from the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) that captured updates for people who moved into the City, moved out of the City, traded in a vehicle, or sold a vehicle. She said that prior to 2014, the City of Petersburg had one due date, June 10. Currently, they had two due dates, February 28 and June 10.

Ms. Flowers said that she was requesting that this be changed; therefore, the first six months would be due in the sixth month of the year, and the last six months would be due in December. She said that as a pro-rating locality, this meant the City would bill the vehicle from the time one moved to the City, from another pro-rating locality, or the time one purchased a new vehicle in the City. She had compared pro-rating and non-pro-rating peer localities, as well. She stated that since she joined the City as Commissioner of Revenue in 2019, they had gotten all assessments for over 30,000 vehicles between January 17 and January 23, except for 2022 when third-party delays caused them to be completed late on February 4.

Ms. Flowers further explained the current challenges the City experienced with the February due date. These included delays from third-party assessment companies returning mass filings, two federal holidays in January resulting in delays, and weather conditions in January affecting operations. These factors in the past had forced the City to use the Code of Virginia §58.1-3912 where bills are mailed out 14 days prior to the bill being due, which was not fair to taxpayers. Additionally, business license taxes were due on March 1, per Code of Virginia §58.1-3703.1.

Ms. Flowers summarized the benefits of the proposed change. The benefits included reducing the number of abatements for citizens trading or selling vehicles mid-year, allowing installment payments prior to due date to reduce penalties and interest, preventing the need of using Code of Virginia §58.1-3912, and simplifying the billing cycles for taxpayers and businesses.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Kenneth Lewis, 503 Mistletoe Street, stated that changing the date of the tax due dates would not change the fact that the City would receive the payments. He said that his preference would be for the City to

collect taxes in April and October. He said that he did not think it was appropriate for the due date to be near the holidays in December.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, said that her initial reaction to this change was the same as Dr. Lewis' concern. She said that she felt there were a lot of things due in December with this change, so waiting until February gave a bit of reprieve. She said that however, Ms. Flowers was looking out for the citizens as much as she could, and her past efforts demonstrated that. She said that based on Ms. Flowers' performance, she was inclined to support her request. She said that her only remaining question was regarding the effective date, so she would like to know when this change would be implemented.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Vice Mayor Hill asked Mr. Altman if this change would have budgetary impacts.

City Manager Altman said that from a budgetary perspective, he believed that they should be able to adopt this without issue. When considering the fiscal year, this approach aligned with their budgeting calendar. He said that this would not be implemented in the next couple of weeks, it would be adopted for next year.

Vice Mayor Hill asked how and when they would notify the public of this change.

City Manager Altman said that they would be doing education and outreach in the next year to prepare. He said that they had plenty of time to do so.

City Attorney Williams asked for Council to ensure that in the motion to approve the change that they specify the effective date.

He said that Mr. Councilman Cuthbert was about to leave the floor when Councilman Jones made a motion. He said that his questions had been addressed, and he appreciated the clarification.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to approve the amendment to Ordinance Sections 106-8 and 106-10 Personal Property Tax to change due dates, and Section 110-115 change the due date for Vehicle License Fee, effective July 1, 2026. Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

g. A Public Hearing to Vacate an Alley Between 223 and 227 Kentucky Avenue

March Altman, City Manager, provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that the applicant had requested to vacate an undeveloped portion of an alley between 223 and 227 Kentucky Avenue. The five additional feet requested would allow her to create a buildable lot. Currently, there was not enough road frontage to create a conforming lot, and the vacation would allow the lot to meet the Zoning requirements. There were no utilities in the alley and Public Works had recommended approval of the request to vacate.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Council Member Jones asked why this portion of the alley was not part of the property in the first place. He asked if it had some other type of use in the past.

City Manager Altman stated that this was an older alleyway that originally served as an access point to the back of the property, but with their modern Zoning Ordinance it was no longer necessary.

Council Member Jones asked if they had made sure there were no unintended consequences with adding this section to make it a buildable lot. He said that his main concern was stormwater flow in this area.

City Manager Altman as part of the building process, building codes required positive drainage to be implemented. He said that this meant that the builders would need to address the issue of water flow away from the foundation if a house was built on this parcel. They also could not impede the flow of a waterway or conveyance; therefore, they would need to address this through the building process, as part of obtaining the building permit.

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the request to vacate the alley between 223 and 227 Kentucky Avenue. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

- h. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing the City Manager to Execute the Purchase Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and Zebrina Meade for the Development of 746 Mount Airy Street; K&K Beginnings LLC for the Development of 110 Spruce Street; Entrusted Visions LLC and Fetko Properties LLC for the Development of 126 Kentucky Avenue, 704 and 706 Wesley Street; Skye is the Limit Residential Services LLC for the Development of 137 Franklin Street; Anthony Jackson for the Development of 724 Harding Street; and New Town Station LLC for the Development of 321 Witten Street

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that this was a consolidated item from the previous meeting. The packet materials had been reviewed and approved by the City Attorney and the City Manager. Presented to Council today were the consolidated cut sheets. All of these properties were being developed by local individuals who were offering 100% of the property value as desired, and they would all be building single-family housing.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing and the matter rested with Council.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to adopt the Ordinance Authorizing the City Manager to execute a Purchase Agreement toward the sale of a City-owned property to Zebrina Meade for the Development of 746 Mount Airy Street; K&K Beginnings LLC for the Development of 110 Spruce Street; Entrusted Visions LLC and Fetko Properties LLC for the Development of 126 Kentucky Avenue, 704 and 706 Wesley Street; Skye is the Limit Residential Services LLC for the Development of 137 Franklin Street; Anthony Jackson for the Development of 724 Harding Street; and New Town Station LLC for the Development of 321 Witten Street. Council Member Myers seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

8. PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD

Julian Green, Jr., 1625 Blair Road, stated that he wanted to inform Council that as the Co-Chair of the Board of Directors for the Peabody Academic Learning and Development Center (PALDC), they were engaging in a conversation about ensuring they would have someone attending every Council meeting to represent their organization. He emphasized that the entire campus of Peabody was of the utmost historic integrity and was essential to preserve and maintain. He stated that he wanted to embody the philosophy of John Lewis, who promoted engaging in "good trouble" in order to achieve change. He stated that they would stand up, speak up, and speak out for Peabody in order to effectively communicate how much the academic institution meant to the community. He asked Council to consider the motto, "do to others as you would have them do to you."

Kenneth Lewis, 503 Mistletoe Street, stated that he was speaking on behalf of the Peabody property. He said that he wanted to inform Council of the equine defecation desecration of the Peabody property. He explained that there was a local company that provided horse-drawn carriages for funeral processions, and they recently noticed that the company had brought their horse trailer to Peabody, allowing their horses to deposit their waste on the campus, and then dumped it into the Giles B. Cooke property.

Dr. Lewis stated that he believed this was a grave disrespect to a national registry site such as the Peabody campus. None of the Council Members would tolerate this at their own homes or in their neighborhoods. They would not want to see horse waste on their lawn or in their community. They did not want it in the colored neighborhoods of Halifax Street and Mistletoe Street. He urged Council to instruct the company to dispose of their horse waste elsewhere. He also requested that the Fire Department cease hosing down the building and find an alternative location for their training.

Dr. Lewis stated that furthermore, he requested for full disclosure of the events leading to the Virginia Department of Historic Resources' letter to the Timmons organization, instructing them how to tear down the entire Peabody complex. He said that they had a copy of that letter and were puzzled as to why they did not understand the significance of the Peabody campus. He stated that this was the oldest public high school for Black children in the United States, and it could be saved and repurposed.

Dr. Lewis stated that they had seen successful repurposing of other historic sites in the area, such as Carver High School in Chesterfield County, Southside High School in Dinwiddie, and Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Lynchburg. He said that when they Googled "oldest public Black high school," the result was not Paul Laurence Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., but rather Petersburg's own Peabody campus.

Dr. Lewis implored Council to stand with them and save this historic site, which was a testament to the literacy and education of African Americans 200 years ago, when their forefathers were forbidden to read and write due to Virginia's anti-literacy laws.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, suggested that Council consider inviting Dr. Lewis to present on the history of Peabody and its legacy as the oldest Black high school in the country. He had given several presentations in the past, and they were very worthwhile. She hoped he would be willing to do it again if Council would welcome him. She said that on another note, she wanted to discuss the piecemeal information provided to the public on some City projects.

Ms. Rudolph said that one example was the animal shelter. She recalled that the first proposal for the animal shelter included some COVID-19 emergency relief funding that would be used for the project, and then was in the Capital Improvement Plan, then the revenue-sharing plan from the casino. She said that it also was part of their earlier bond issuances for the courthouse, and now it the state was giving them money. She said that it was extremely difficult to track the progress and she just wanted to understand what had changed and why. She requested that Council provide some kind of guideline for these types of projects so the public could see how they progressed.

Kimberly Booker, 1501 West Washington Street and 210 Walnut Boulevard, said that she represented the workforce and job recruitment initiatives for Live Casino. She said that they had a very ambitious initiative to have 800 employees at the opening of the temporary casino by the last week of January. To date, they had hosted four different hiring events. She said that she was hoping that everyone in attendance today, as well as the elected officials, and those with families and social circles, would do them the great service of letting people know about the recruitment center located on West Washington Street.

Ms. Booker said that if they saw her after this event, she could share their recruitment card with a QR code, making it very easy for anyone interested to apply for positions that were up to date. In fact, last week, they had a three-day job fair at the recruitment center, and they were able to service approximately 400 applicants. Of those applicants, their statistics were looking very promising, with about 27% converting into employees.

Ms. Booker said that one of her main initiatives and passions was that the people of Petersburg take advantage of this opportunity. This was her third casino project that she had worked on, and she did not think the residents of Petersburg fully understood the benefits they could gain from this. However, the multiplier effect when a casino, hotel, and entertainment complex came to one's doorstep was truly phenomenal. The multiplier effect would outlive them all.

Ms. Booker stated that with that said, and having worked on the MGM project in Maryland, she was hoping and asking that each and every person in Petersburg make this a part of their circle, their conversations. She said that if they had any questions, she would like to let everyone know that they were in the process of putting together an informational hiring forum that would allow anyone to ask their questions, and also afford elected officials, community leaders, and business leaders to be in attendance, so that they could come together and make sure that the residents of Petersburg, the Tri-City area, and their impact area took advantage of this wonderful employment and wealth-building opportunity.

9. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE MAYOR OR OTHER MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

Council Member Cuthbert asked Mr. Van Voorhees to show the video of the aftermath of the Colonial Heights Police Department's decision to chase a speeding vehicle on South Adams Street, which apparently led to the vehicle entering the circle at the intersection of South Adams and Marshall. He said that anyone wishing to see the full video could contact him and he would send it to them.

Council Member Cuthbert explained that the pursuit had been initiated by the Colonial Heights Police Department, as they had identified a vehicle traveling at 70 miles an hour on the boulevard in Colonial Heights and had chased it into downtown Petersburg, crossing the intersection of Adams and East Washington, and continuing on South Adams until the eluding lead car reached Marshall Street.

Council Member Cuthbert said that he suspected that the car, which was a Tesla, had lost control when attempting to navigate around the intersection of Marshall and South Adams, crashed into a tree, burst into flames, catching the tree and house on fire. He said that police departments initiating pursuits outside of the City and chasing the speeding vehicle into Petersburg was a serious concern. He thought perhaps the police considered it a success because the vehicle ultimately came to a stop, but it came with a serious toll.

Council Member Cuthbert continued to report that he had sent the City Manager a table of past due taxes with a number of blanks, and he had also distributed a copy to all Council Members. He asked if it was feasible for staff to provide this information to the Council before the Council's meeting on January 21, 2026.

City Manager Altman replied yes; when he received it from Council Member Cuthbert today he then forwarded it to the Finance Department, who would forward it to their auditor to get that information.

Council Member Cuthbert said that would be great and he thought it would be very helpful. For the public's benefit, he would like to highlight the table he had sent to the City Manager, which had two columns. One column tracked taxes that were 90 days or more past due for Fiscal Year 2023-2024, including real estate taxes, personal property taxes, meals taxes, lodging taxes, and machinery and tools tax. He suspected that the total amount of past due taxes was substantial. To provide context, he would like to compare this data to the same information from the previous fiscal year, so they could see if there was an increase or decrease in past year taxes.

Council Member Cuthbert asked the City Manager if he could please bring a proposal to the Council regarding charging a fee for appealing the decision of the ARB to the December 9 meeting.

City Manager Altman replied that yes, staff could bring a proposal forward. He said that another option they had was to include it in the Zoning Ordinance, which was currently being rewritten. They could include it in that document and Council could approve it all at once, or they could do it earlier.

Council Member Jones announced that he would be kicking off his 2026 campaign for City Council today, and he invited anyone who wished to run against him for this seat to come forward and engage in the process alongside him. He stated that he was not here for satisfaction, which was a temporary feeling leading to temporary compromises that did little to address the root causes of their challenges. He emphasized that he was trying to build a community with the safety and tools for citizens to satisfy themselves with a voice and pathway to do so.

Council Member Jones stated that Council had been working together despite their differences and the City was now moving forward better than he had seen in his lifetime in Petersburg. He stated that the momentum of the City could not be stopped now, and he wanted to make sure that everyone got a piece of it and felt like they were part of the winning team, without anyone feeling left out. He added that he had been encouraged by his colleagues to start law school in 2026, so he wanted to thank everyone for their support. He additionally gave his thanks and appreciation to the Fire Department and Police Department for their incredibly quick responses. He gave his condolences regarding the death of a Department of Corrections officer who had recently been killed on the job. He asked everyone to please stay safe and spend time with their loved ones.

Council Member Westbrook stated that he would like to continue promoting the achievements at Petersburg High School. He said that their football team was set to host its second playoff game this weekend, and he encouraged everyone to come out and support them on Friday. The basketball team was ranked number six in the country, and the eyes were indeed on Petersburg for athletics. Furthermore, he would also like to highlight the school's speech and debate team, coached by Ms. Terri Smith.

Council Member Westbrook announced that they were hosting their third annual speech and debate tournament on December 13, and he urged everyone to come out and see over 75 Virginia high schools participating in this event. The tournament would be held at the high school, and the debate tournament would be held at Vernon Johns. It would take over the entire complex, and he encouraged everyone to support the students in the sport of exercising the mind and engaging in verbal discourse. He asked that anyone interested in judging the event please reach out.

Council Member Westbrook stated that he would like to address the concerns about speeding on Dupuy Road. He said that this issue had been ongoing, and he had gathered feedback from residents on Election Day. He said that he had met with Chief Miller and the City Manager, and they had been able to get stop signs installed at the corner of Pleasants Lane and Dupuy. However, the issue persisted, and many residents were still running through the stop signs. He urged residents of 7th Ward to be aware of the four-way stop at that intersection and to exercise caution. If necessary, they may consider installing rumble strips or speed bumps to slow down speeding in the area.

Council Member Westbrook stated that also, he would like to address the misinformation circulating about the animal shelter. He said that he had heard questions from the community asking why they decided to build an animal shelter over a homeless shelter. He clarified that the animal shelter was a state mandate, and they had been required to prioritize it to avoid being sued. If the public had concerns about the animal shelter being mandated while a homeless shelter was not, he encouraged everyone to take that conversation to the General Assembly and the Governor's Office.

Council Member Westbrook said that Ms. Rudolph had brought up concerns about the funding sources and allocations for the animal shelter, and he supported her on that point. However, he wanted to shed some light on the reason they were building the animal shelter in the first place. He noted that there was also a history of how homeless shelters had been used in the past in Petersburg, dumping people from other localities and depleting their local Social Services. It was a long story that could be discussed, and he would encourage anyone concerned about this to reach out to the City so they could provide more information.

Council Member Westbrook stated that they would love to agree or disagree on the issues, but that should focus on the facts so that everyone understood the true information and was not misled by misinformation, which he had noticed had become quite prevalent online. He said that on another note, leaf pickup for Ward 7 was approaching. He asked everyone to please rake their leaves to the corner of the yard as they needed to be removed from the drainage ditches to allow the vacuums to collect them. Their date for the 7th Ward was December 1 through December 5.

Council Member Westbrook stated that also, he wanted to continue exploring the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) tool usage across City departments. He would continue to advocate for this, just as he had with the plastic bag tax this year. He said that he would keep pushing for the City to stay ahead of the curve and utilize AI to improve their services. It was not something to be feared; it was a tool that can be used to their advantage. He said that it can make their lives better, not worse. He believed it was essential for everyone, from their seniors to their middle-aged citizens to the younger population, who often used AI without realizing it.

Council Member Westbrook urged everyone to look out for their seniors during the cold winter months, as winter could be a challenging time for them. He said that he wanted everyone to check in on their senior friends and family over the next three months. He stated that his last point was that he wanted to emphasize the importance of public forums. He explained that before social media and podcasts, citizens would gather in public spaces to discuss problems, share ideas, and shape decisions. Public conversation had been the foundation of their democracy since its inception. Throughout history, people had come together to discuss and resolve issues.

Council Member Westbrook emphasized that this was not just a right, but a fundamental aspect of their civic life. He said that as they moved forward, he encouraged everyone to participate in public forums and engage in open and respectful dialogue. He noted that this was true across the ancient world and continued into their modern society. He stated that coming to speak at their City Council meetings was not just their right to have freedom of speech, it was their contribution to a stronger, more connected Petersburg.

Council Member Westbrook said that he wanted to encourage the expression of positive feedback about the work they were doing as a Council and a City. He said that he was tired of seeing negative comments about Petersburg on Facebook, and he wanted to encourage the expression of positive feedback about the work they were doing as a Council and a City.

Council Member Myers expressed his deep gratitude for all the condolences regarding his father's passing. He said that he was grateful that many of them had taken the time to visit his family and offer their condolences. As he had mentioned earlier, he had moved to Petersburg 22 years ago, and they accepted

him as family, so he was especially thankful to have them there at his father's funeral. It was truly humbling to see how much support he had received.

Council Member Myers said that he would like to extend a special thank-you to Richard Harris, who had been instrumental in transforming their City. He would also like to recognize Steve Stinson, their Interim Works Director, and Delvonte Frenzley, their HR Director, Babette Hammond, and Maureen Smith-Scott, who had been doing a remarkable job in addressing their homeless situation. He would also like to give a shout-out to Chief Miller and Chief Christian, and he would like to acknowledge Jamie Fagan and Joanne Williams for their efforts in transforming downtown in Petersburg.

Council Member Smith-Lee announced that Ward 6 would be hosting a joint meeting with Ward 7 on January 13, 2026 at the Petersburg Public Library. She said that she hoped all was well with those who were on furlough and that they were doing okay after being away for 45 days. She said that she would also like to take a moment to pay her respects to her neighbor, Charlotte Ann Gould, who had been a part of their community since she was four years old. She said that she was sending her condolences to the Castell family. She said that she would also like to extend a shout-out to retired Colonel Joyce Jr., who was doing a phenomenal job as the ROTC instructor at Petersburg High School.

Council Member Smith-Lee said that she was a classmate of hers, having graduated in 1979, and she was so proud of the work she was doing. She said that she would also like to thank Larry Murphy for his continued support. She said that she would also like to thank Pat Hines for her efforts in getting the shelter up and running in Petersburg. If anyone was able to make a donation or offer assistance, please do so. She said that she would like to take a moment to reflect on the pride their City had always had in its schools and athletes.

She reported that the Petersburg Crimson Wave football team was heading to their semi-final playoffs against Hopewell Blue Devils. She noted that this was a prominent rivalry and a special moment for everyone to come together and support their student athletes. She asked everyone to bring noise, energy, and pride as they packed the stadium on Friday night to show what Wave pride really means. She congratulated the coaches, staff, football players, cheerleaders, and band members. She asked everyone to please come out and support the football team.

Vice Mayor Hill announced that the City would be hosting a business roundtable discussion on Monday, December 1, 2025, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 am, right here in the library. He said that they were inviting all businesses to attend, if possible. He knew that finding a good time could be challenging, and some people may have conflicting schedules. However, they would make sure to provide highlights of the discussion, and they would be covering topics such as downtown improvement, general City improvement, and initiatives from local businesses like Live Casino.

Vice Mayor Hill said that they would also be discussing potential branding for the City and various projects like curb appeal, beautification, parking, and transportation. Representatives from the Constitutional Offices, Brittany Flowers, Paul Mullins, the Mayor, the City Manager, Ms. Williams, and the Deputy City Manager, Mr. Miller, would be in attendance. He said that he believed this would be a very beneficial roundtable discussion, as many business owners may not be able to attend City Council meetings and the City wanted to engage their business community to see how they could work together and support each other.

Vice Mayor Hill thanked Ms. Williams and her team for the recent quarterly newsletter. They had several events coming up, including the Christmas parade. He encouraged everyone to attend, if possible. He would also like to give a shout-out to the Petersburg High School Crimson Wave, his alma mater, and the football team. He understood the magnitude of their efforts, and he wanted to show support. Finally, he would like to briefly mention Peabody. They were exploring ways to repurpose it, not because they had ignored its needs, but because they wanted to find a solution that benefited the entire community.

Vice Mayor Hill said that as Dr. Lewis mentioned, they would look into the company stationing their horse trailers there, as well. He appreciated the effort everyone had put into this work, and he encouraged everyone to continue to maintain a positive attitude. Their City was doing great things, and people were taking notice. They were being buzzed across the nation, not just in Virginia, but everywhere. It was hard to find a place where they were not being recognized for their achievements. They acknowledged that they had their challenges, but every locality faced that.

Vice Mayor Hill thanked the citizens who held them accountable and continued to support them. To those who were knowledgeable about the facts and were actively working on their behalf, he wanted to express his gratitude for their dedication. He wished them all a safe and happy holiday season, and he encouraged them to be kind to one another.

Mayor Parham wished everyone a very happy Thanksgiving. As the holiday season approached, he would like to express his gratitude to staff for producing their holiday newsletter, which had just been distributed to most of their mailboxes. This newsletter provided an easy way to stay informed about what was happening throughout the City. He said that he would also like to give a huge shout-out to Marquis Allen. They had the opportunity to visit Legends Park last week for the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the park's renovation. The park had never looked better in his lifetime, so it was evident that Mr. Allen and his staff, along with Public Works and Richard Harris, did an outstanding job in clearing away debris, trees, and overgrown vegetation, transforming the park into a spectacular space.

Mayor Parham also wanted to thank Mr. Harris and his team for their maintenance work throughout the City, which had resulted in noticeable improvements. Additionally, he would like to thank Mr. Fagan and noted that he the opportunity to meet Jamie's brother, Charles Fagan, at his Board of Visitors training. He also thanked Council Member Cuthbert for sharing that video of the car catching on fire. This incident had raised concerns that he would like to discuss with Chief Hoover regarding the safety of electric vehicles and the materials needed to combat fires.

Mayor Parham stated that specifically, he was concerned about the fire hazard posed by lithium-ion batteries and the need for more effective fire suppression methods. Furthermore, he would like to commend the Petersburg Police Department for their swift response to the incident at Petersburg High School. Captain Adams' quick action in stopping traffic and securing the perimeter was impressive, and he appreciated the efforts of the Petersburg Police Department in keeping the community safe. He would also like to thank the Petersburg Police Department for their traffic control and security at the football game with Hopewell this Friday night.

Mayor Parham stated that additionally, Vice Mayor Hill discussed the upcoming business roundtable. They were hosting a notable event in Petersburg called "Lead Virginia" on Friday, which promised to be exceptional. He had been given the opportunity to participate as a panelist to share his perspective on Petersburg and the significant turnaround that the Petersburg City Council had facilitated in rebuilding the City.

10. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

11. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT

a. Department of Finance Monthly Update

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, provided the update. He said that tonight, he would review the budget to actuals and briefly discuss the FY27 budget calendar. As of October 31, they had expended 33% of the

year, and if they looked at the bottom line, they were at 34% spend. He noted that Finance was still working on making some transfers into the budget that were previously approved, so this would be clarified and updated in the next report, so there was nothing to worry about in terms of the percent discrepancy.

Mr. Cozier stated that moving on to the other funds, they had Streets, Utilities, Stormwater, Dogwood, and Mass Transit. He stated that Dogwood operated independently, and this year, they had correctly included the debt service paid by the golf course, and they were still working to get that situated, and it would be rectified in the next report. Finally, he would like to present their proposed budget calendar, which was on the Consent Agenda for the next meeting. These dates were their initial proposal, and they would be refining them in the coming weeks. They would be hosting internal budget kickoff meetings with departments tomorrow and Thursday, followed by the distribution of agency instructions and templates.

Mr. Cozier stated that budgets would be due to Finance by January 2, and they would have meetings and recommendations with the City Manager by February. Departmental budget meetings would also take place in February, and they would have their first proposed budget in March. Council and community budget meetings would be held in March and April, followed by a public hearing and adoption in May.

12. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. Consideration of an Ordinance to Approve a Request by Chris Winslow of Winslow, McCurry & MacCormac, PLLC, on Behalf of SP-Thirteen Properties, LLC, for a Special Use Permit to Operate an Assisted Living Facility at 36 West Fillmore Street, Parcel ID 022360001, in the R-B Office-Apartment Zoning District

Jared Crews, Acting Director of Planning and Community Development, provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that when they last discussed this item, they held the public hearing in September with a significant number of individuals speaking about the request, both in favor and against, while others asked for more information. The Planning Commission had voted to table the request in order to consider potential alternatives to the conditions. The Planning Commission had held a special meeting on October 16 to discuss and take action on the request, considering additional conditions proposed by staff and a condition brought forward by the applicant. Ultimately, the Planning Commission determined that the use would be an adverse impact on the health, safety, and welfare of the community and recommended denial of the request with a vote of 4-2, with one abstention.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he intended to vote on this issue when the time was appropriate, and Virginia state law required that he disclose any potential conflict of interest. To eliminate any doubt, he was required to read a statement. He said that he was not doing this to take up the Council's time or to appear self-serving, but rather to comply with state law. He said that he had filed this letter with the Clerk of Council and would like to read it into the record as well. He read into the record a letter of disclosure, which he had previously read on October 19, 2025 and reiterated today, requesting it be entered into the minutes of the meeting and filed with the Clerk of Council, with his signature and date of November 19, 2025.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to adopt the recommendation of the Planning Commission and deny the application filed by SP-13 Properties for a special use permit at 36 West Fillmore Street. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

Council Member Jones stated that he had some pictures he would like to share regarding this item. First, he would like to acknowledge that he saw both sides of this issue. He explained that Council's role was to judge these types of requests based on Zoning laws rather than a credit agency or business partner to applicants. They must be cautious and ensure fear and unrelated past issues dictate their decisions

in a manner unfair or punitive. He stated that they could not use an applicant's lack of experience as a reason to deny a request, as that would prevent new businesses from ever being started.

Council Member Jones stated that additionally, they could not use past bankruptcy as a reason for denying a request, as it had no bearing on future decisions or investments. He stated that denying this at the Council level now would be a serious violation of trust and sending a message to any future developer that their investments were not safe in the City, even when following all the rules, which this applicant did. He questioned whether the perceived negative impact on public health, safety, and welfare that resulted in the recommendation of denial could not also be applied to many other buildings in this same neighborhood.

Council Member Jones stated that he did not think that the subject property was any worse than its neighboring vacant properties, and in fact, it looked better than some others. He asked why they were not talking about some of these other issues in relation to health, safety, and welfare. He reiterated that he understood both sides of the argument regarding this property, but he felt it was important to clarify that it was not a unique situation, and this property was not solely responsible for those conditions. He asked everyone to give the applicant a chance and allow them to invest in the City. He noted that the mistake with this application was the City's, not the applicant's.

Council Member Myers concurred with Council Member Jones' remarks. He stated that this applicant had been initially supported by their Planning staff to make the investment in this property, and it ultimately was the City's mistake with allowing it to move forward in the manner it did. He believed Council should act justly on this application.

Council Member Jones made a substitute motion to approve the request for a special use permit at 36 West Fillmore Street with conditions drafted by staff as submitted. Council Member Myers seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the substitute motion. The substitute motion failed on a roll call vote.

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

Mayor Parham called the vote on the original motion to deny the SUP.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that based on Council's action, he would like to request clarification on the direction Council would like him to take in the current litigation. He said that it appeared that the Council's position may be adverse to this action. He said that the Council had an appeal pending with the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) regarding the determination that the applicant had the right to continue their use. He said that he would like to ask the Council to consider a motion either to direct him to continue pursuing this appeal or to withdraw the City's appeal to the BZA's determination.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he thought they should discuss this matter in closed session because it was a matter of current litigation.

City Attorney Williams confirmed that it was a legitimate item for closed session.

Mayor Parham stated that they would add it to their closed session agenda.

- b. Consideration of an Ordinance to Approve an Amendment to the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Petersburg for the Purpose of Updating and Clarifying Sign and Advertising Regulations to Address Ongoing Complaints and Issues Pertaining to Certain Advertising Devices Throughout the City

City Manager Altman requested Council to remove this item from the agenda.

Mayor Parham confirmed that the item would be removed from tonight's agenda.

- c. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Execute a Development Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and Stepping Stones Properties LLC for Development of 10 N. Foley Street and 340 Mistletoe Street; Square Acre Property for the Development of 201 Virginia Avenue; Nuwave for the Development of 851 E. Bank Street, 1420 Ferndale Avenue, 1162 Hinton Street, 417 S. Jefferson Street, 921 Priam Street, 1150 Rome Street, and 201 Terrace Avenue; Anthony Jackson for the Development of 723 Harding Street; Underhill Row LLC for the Development of a portion of 117 Lafayette Street; Daniel Smith Real Estate LLC for the Development of 4, 6, 9, 12 Ross Court; and Acuna Properties LLC for the Development of 436 Byrne Street

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that this was another consolidated item from Council's previous meeting agenda. The subject items had been reviewed by the City Attorney and City Manager, and they had recommended approval. These were local developers building single-family homes in the City.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Execute a Development Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and Stepping Stones Properties LLC for Development of 10 N. Foley Street and 340 Mistletoe Street; Square Acre Property for the Development of 201 Virginia Avenue; Nuwave for the Development of 851 E. Bank Street, 1420 Ferndale Avenue, 1162 Hinton Street, 417 S. Jefferson Street, 921 Priam Street, 1150 Rome Street, and 201 Terrace Avenue; Anthony Jackson for the Development of 723 Harding Street; Underhill Row LLC for the Development of a portion of 117 Lafayette Street; Daniel Smith Real Estate LLC for the Development of 4, 6, 9, 12 Ross Court; and Acuna Properties LLC for the Development of 436 Byrne Street. Council Member Myers seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

- d. Consideration and Adoption of Resolution Appointing and Reappointing Members to Boards and Commissions: Crater Youth Care Commission; Petersburg Redevelopment Housing Authority; Petersburg Arts Council; Community Development Block Grant Advisory Board; Architectural Review Board; Greater Reach Community Services Board

March Altman, City Manager, requested Council's consideration for appointing Ms. Margo Hardy to serve alongside him on the Crater Youth Care Commission. She had been involved in the youth justice system, and her involvement aligned perfectly with their Commission's focus and he believed she would be an ideal fit for their work.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to appoint Ms. Margo Hardy to the Crater Youth Care Commission. Council Member Myers seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Mayor Parham stated that for the Petersburg Redevelopment Housing Authority, the Authority had requested reappointment of all existing members.

Council Member Myers made a motion to reappoint the current existing members on the Petersburg Redevelopment Housing Authority. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Council Member Myers stated that for the Petersburg Arts Council, the president-elect Demetria Harris had requested Council appoint Veronica Davidson and Wendell Jones.

Council Member Myers made a motion to appoint Veronica Davidson and Wendell Jones to the Petersburg Arts Council. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Mayor Parham stated that next was the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Board, for which there were several openings.

Council Member Myers made a motion to appoint Corey Wesson, Leonard Cury, Marcus Squires, Genevieve Lohr, Tonya Brown, and Bernard Harper to the CDBG Advisory Board. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that while he was not doubting anyone specifically, he wanted to ensure they were choosing people based on their skillsets and knowledge, rather than arbitrarily pulling names from a list. He said that recently, Council had overruled the CDBG Advisory Board's recommendations for some initiatives, so they needed to prioritize making a concerted effort to meet with their CDBG Advisory Board members and ensure they were all on the same page in terms of achieving this work.

The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Mayor Parham stated that the next appointments would be for the Architectural Review Board.

Council Member Myers made a motion to reappoint the current existing members to the Architectural Review Board. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

Mayor Parham said that next, they would make appointments to the Greater Reach Community Services Board.

Council Member Myers made a motion to reappoint the current existing members to the Greater Reach Community Services Board. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion. The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

13. NEW BUSINESS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

14. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT AND SPECIAL REPORTS

a. 2026 Legislative Agenda

March Altman, City Manager, stated that staff just had a last-minute discussion and change, so he would request that they bring this item back at Council's December meeting for approval. He apologized for the late notice but would appreciate it if Council would take up this item in December.

Mayor Parham confirmed they would take it up in December.

15. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK

Tangi Hill, City Clerk, stated that she had nothing to report this evening.

16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that he had nothing to report this evening.

17. ADJOURNMENT

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

The City Council adjourned at 8:42 p.m.

Adopted: 12/9/2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sam Parham", written over a horizontal line.

Mayor, Samuel Parham

ATTEST: 

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tangi R. Hill", written over a horizontal line.

City Clerk, Tangi R. Hill