

The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on January 20, 2026 at Petersburg Public Library. Samuel Parham called the meeting to order at 5:11 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/372614>

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. PRAYER

Vice Mayor Hill led the Council meeting in prayer.

4. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

5. DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM

A quorum was present.

6. PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL PROCLAMATIONS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

7. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION POSTED

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

8. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA (TO INCLUDE MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS):

a. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s):

- January 6, 2026 City Council Closed Session Minutes

- January 6, 2026 City Council Work Session Minutes

Council Member Myers made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. 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, Smith-Lee, Hill, and Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

9. PRESENTATIONS

- a. Presentation of the 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) – David Foley, Robinson Farmer & Cox

David Foley, Partner with Robinson Farmer & Cox Associates presented the results of the City's 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). He first provided a brief overview of the audit process they followed for the City. The audit consists of three main components: an audit of the City's financial statements to ensure they are prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles; a review of the City's internal controls over its financial reporting, in accordance with government auditing standards, including testing these controls to ensure they are operating as intended; and finally a federal compliance review to ensure the City is complying with federal grant program requirements.

Mr. Foley said that as part of the ACFR, they issued a comprehensive report that includes three separate reports. The first report is their independent auditor's report, which includes their opinion on the City's financial statements. He stated that they had issued an unmodified opinion, which meant the City's financial statements had been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. The other two reports were located in the back of the report.

Mr. Foley then highlighted a few items in the financial statements. He said that the balance sheet reporting assets, liabilities, and fund balance for the various governmental funds, including the General Fund. At the end of the fiscal year, the City had \$79.5 million in assets in the General Fund, compared to \$15 million in liabilities and deferred inflows. The total fund balance for the City's General Fund was \$65.4 million. The fund balance was then further broken down into non-spendable, restricted, committed, and unassigned categories. At the end of the fiscal year, the City's unassigned fund balance was \$59.4 million, an increase of \$8.5 million from the previous fiscal year.

Mr. Foley also highlighted the statement of revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance for the City's governmental funds. This statement showed the revenues, expenditures, and changes in fund balance for the various governmental funds. The first column on this statement was the General Fund, which had total revenues of \$106.6 million, total expenditures of \$95.4 million, and transfers out to other funds of \$2.5 million. The net change in fund balance for the General Fund was \$8.6 million.

Mr. Foley said that the other two reports provided in the audit were included in the back of the ACFR, the first of which was the City's internal control over financial reporting. They had seen significant improvement from last year, with the City reducing the number of material weaknesses from 11 to four. The second report was for compliance with major federal grant programs. They found no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses in the City's compliance with its major federal grant programs, and no items of noncompliance were noted during the audit. He stated that the details for these reports were included in the provided document.

Mayor Parham thanked Mr. Foley for the presentation and thanked the Finance team for working to reduce the findings from the previous year. He asked the City Manager what they could do to fix the issues with water and sewer customer deposits and utility billing reconciliation, as mentioned in the audit. He asked if they had a plan to address those issues.

March Altman, City Manager, said that he first wanted to thank their Finance team, Commissioner of Revenue, and Treasurer for their hard work. He said that they had set an ambitious goal of eliminating all 11 issues within one year, and he believed achieving seven of those 11 and reducing them to four was a significant accomplishment. He said that staff was currently developing a plan for the upcoming year to address any and all remaining issues, so he hoped that by the time Mr. Foley gave this report next year, they would have no findings.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if the plan to address the findings could be presented to Council and the public once it was formulated.

City Manager Altman replied yes, they could certainly present that to Council. He said that he believed staff could provide that to Council during their March work session.

Council Member Cuthbert thanked Mr. Foley for his presentation and for all of the help he had given to the City. He asked what direction their past due accounts receivable were going, and what was the size of them. He said that the City's largest revenue stream was real estate tax revenue, so he was wondering what the current amount of past due real estate taxes was and how it compared to last year.

Mr. Foley stated that property taxes receivable were down this year compared to the previous year. He said that the total amount of property taxes outstanding was \$ 11.3 million, which included both real estate and personal property.

City Manager Altman added that their Chief Financial Officer, Mr. Glaster, was working with his Finance team to break down the number, and they could bring back those details at the March meeting as well.

Council Member Cuthbert said that he would greatly appreciate that, and he believed his colleagues on Council and the public would appreciate it as well. He stated that they must balance the budget, and it was important that they continue to reduce the taxes past due. He asked the City Manager to present a plan to reduce the past due taxes further than they were currently and what they were 12 months ago. He stated that he wanted to ensure they were doing everything possible to move in the right direction and provide services to the public at the lowest cost they could.

b. Potential Refunding Opportunity – Davenport

David Rose, Senior Vice President and Manager of Public Finance with Davenport & Company, provided a brief update regarding a potential refunding opportunity to Council. He stated that they were seeking Council's guidance on moving forward with attaining a lower interest rate on borrowed funds and assembling the necessary elements, and he would show them a schedule later. He noted that the City's strong credit ratings were partly due to their excellent unassigned fund balance, which was money earning interest, ultimately helping keep the City's tax rate down. It was not sitting idle, as it was being used to support the General Fund and helped improve their credit rating over the past six or seven years.

Mr. Rose stated that keeping this in mind, they were proposing a refunding opportunity. The outstanding debt was \$5.5 million, with interest rates ranging from 3% to 5%. The important thing was that it was now callable, allowing them to exchange it without penalty due to federal tax law. The key point was that they could now call this debt and see if they could exchange it for lower interest rates. He recommended a

dual-track process, where they would apply to the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA), and they would also explore direct bank loans.

Mr. Rose stated that if it met the necessary criteria, they would recommend moving forward. If it did not meet the criteria, the City Council would not be at risk financially; there was no downside. He explained that to give a sense of the market, a \$5.4 million bond with an average interest rate of 4.3% had a fixed rate of 3.7%, resulting in approximately \$300,000 in net savings. This represented a present value savings of nearly 5%, which was above the industry standard of 3%. He reiterated that if they could secure a fixed rate of 3.7%, they would recommend moving forward, but if the rate was below 3%, they would recommend holding off and reevaluating at a later time.

Mr. Rose noted that importantly, they would have some known results from the banks and fixed rate results from the banks. If they decided to explore the VRA approach, they would require a certain minimum in order to move forward. They wanted to ensure that the marketplace provided them the best possible outcome for the City. He said that this was not a formal action before the Board, but rather an informal request. He said that they would submit a request to banks as early as tomorrow, an application to VRA by February 6, and they expected to receive responses from the banks by February 10.

Mr. Rose said that Council would have a meeting on February 17, during which either himself or Roland Kooch would present the results. He reiterated that if they moved forward, they would then look for actions, but there would be no public hearing required as they were not issuing new debt. They were simply replacing existing debt with a higher interest rate by switching to a lower interest rate. He said that if they did not pursue an option with the banks, they could consider the bond sale with VRA at the end of April. If that met their requirements, they would finalize the agreement with the VRA on or about May 12.

Mayor Parham asked if 3.7% was the lowest interest rate they could seek, or if 3.5% would be possible.

Mr. Rose replied that the outcome would ultimately be determined by the marketplace. He said that today was not a good day in that regard, so rates were heading in the other direction. He said that they would see what happened in the course of the next few weeks. He stated that the overall marketplace was the result of different banks bidding against each other, and Davenport would review the bids and recommend the best course of action to Council.

City Manager Altman said that staff's request to Council was to allow them to explore the potential of finding a lower interest rate as suggested by Mr. Rose and Davenport. He said that from an administrative perspective, they would like to move forward.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to authorize the City Manager and Davenport to move forward with the refunding opportunity. 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.

Mr. Rose said that he would like to note one more thing. He said that if rates went higher than anticipated, they always had the ability to come back and they would not lose that opportunity.

10. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, provided a brief summary of the item. He stated that this item was a request from Schools to carry forward unspent encumbrances from the previous fiscal year. They were requesting to amend their budget to carry forward those amounts, totaling \$2,977,123.61.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, said that she had a question regarding the carry forward funds. She said that she believed that these funds were originally intended to be used for capital projects in the schools. She said that she was unsure if this provision was still in effect or if it had been eliminated as a result of the fieldhouse deal that was previously approved. She said that it was clear that appropriating these funds for the schools was essential, but she would like to understand how this aligned with the process that was established several years ago.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that he believed the Resolution Ms. Rudolph was referring to had been rescinded a year or two ago. He said that there had been discussion among Council about requiring the City to report on the nine categories of expenditures as a requirement for carryover. He said that although a decision had not been made on this yet, he was hoping that someone from the School Board or the Schools would be present to provide this information to the Council, but he did not think any of those representatives were present.

Mayor Parham asked if there was discussion from Council on this item.

Council Member Jones stated that he did not understand why this amount went unspent, considering the many identified needs in the school system. He stated that he wanted to ensure this \$2.9 million was spent on infrastructure throughout the school system, rather than continue to be carried forward.

City Manager Altman stated that the only way they could assure the funding was spent on infrastructure would be to ask the School Division to present a list of what the funds would be used for. He stated that under state statute, year-end funds are supposed to be returned to the City and the City could reappropriate it as they see fit. He said that the School Division had the ability to request those funds to be carried forward, which was what was being asked tonight. He stated that Council had the option to table the matter and ask the Schools to provide a list of what they are going to use the funds for, which they could present at Council's February meeting.

Council Member Jones made a motion to table the item until the second February Council meeting, in order to allow the School Division to provide Council with a list of projects the School Division would spend the funds on. Council Member Cuthbert seconded the motion.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that he thought this was an example of why they needed categorical funding. He stated that while it was not a major issue to have \$2.9 million as a carryover, they should consider how to more effectively budget in the future.

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 Grants Fund

Mr. Cozier provided a brief summary of the item. He stated that they had a few grants coming into the City, all of them fully funded with no match required. Specifically, they had two grants from the Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services for the Petersburg Bureau of Police., a grant from the Virginia Department of Social Services for the Petersburg Department of Social Services, a grant from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs for Petersburg Fire Rescue and Emergency Services, and a donation for Blandford Church and Museum. The total amount of grants and the donation was \$989,643.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Council Member Jones asked if the grants were federal grants.

City Manager Altman replied no; they were grants from state organizations, and the donation was a private donation to the Blandford Church and Museum.

Garry Cozier reiterated that they were all from state agencies.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Ordinance to amend the FY26 Grants Fund and receive the grants and donation. 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.

- c. A Public Hearing for Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the Intention of the Petersburg City Council to Authorize the Issuance of Not to Exceed \$21,462,462 Principal Amount of General Obligation Water and Sewer Revenue Bonds for the Purpose of Financing Improvements to the City's Public Sewer Systems Facilities – Virginia Resources Authority Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund

City Manager Altman introduced the item. He stated that Mr. Siegel and Mr. Rose, were present this evening. He explained that as part of their previous discussions regarding the VRA loan, they had included this loan as a component when they moved forward with the loan and the associated rate increases for water and sewer. He said that the loan amount was approximately \$21.4 million, with a total of 1% interest. They planned to use these funds to further improve the Poor Creek water and wastewater systems.

Daniel Siegal, Attorney with Sands Anderson, stated that the Resolution before Council had been commented on by the Virginia Resources Authority Council. It outlined the total amount of \$21,462,462, with \$20,440,400 being the loan at a 1% interest rate. There was also a principal forgiveness loan, which was essentially a grant of approximately \$1,022,000. He said that therefore, the total borrowing amount was \$20 million, while the actual amount borrowed was \$21 million. This was a combination of a general obligation bond and a revenue bond.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to adopt the Resolution as presented. 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.

- d. 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

Mayor Parham stated that this item had been removed from tonight's agenda. He said that it would be returning to the EDA for further consideration.

- e. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Authorize the Execution of a Deed of Easement at 3101 Johnson Road

City Manager Altman provided a brief summary of the item. He stated that this evening Council had for their consideration the request to authorize himself to execute an easement agreement for 3101 Johnson Road. He explained that this easement was necessary to provide power to the sports training facility currently under construction on Johnson Road. He said that without it, they would not be able to deliver permanent power. He said that they would like to request Council's authorization and approval to execute the easement for 3101 Johnson Road.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing. Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Ordinance to authorize the execution of a Deed of Easement at 3101 Johnson Road. 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.

11. PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD

Ajani Sekou, 27 South Sycamore Street, invited the City Council members to the February 13 grand opening of the Gateway Arts Center at 27 South Sycamore Street. He stated that the ribbon-cutting was to officially open the new 10,000-square-foot arts center, which was a significant addition to their City, and he hoped to see everyone there. He then explained an allegorical comparison of the City government and the layers of Hell in Dante Alighieri's *Inferno*. He expressed grave concern that the City was not working together with its citizens; instead it prioritized outside interests that promised easy financial gain and avoided comprehensively solving Petersburg's longstanding issues. He asked Council to remember that they worked for the people, not their position.

Patty Hurst, 1733 South Sycamore Street, said that she was joined by Claudette Stewart to state that they were both proud to be alumna of Peabody High School, which was the first and oldest Black public high school in the nation. She said that the Peabody School was more than just a building; it represented over 100 years of people experiencing faith, love, and hope, using education to rise above segregation and produce leaders of integrity and a vision for the City and their lives abroad. She noted the many distinguished and influential figures who attended the school throughout its history.

Claudette Stewart, 1151 Wilcox Street, stated that their faith was that City Council would save, renew, restore, and preserve the complex through custodial ownership of the Peabody Academic Learning and Development Center Incorporated (PALDC), for the benefit of their children, citizens, and the region. She said that she could imagine how Council felt when Richmond rejected the casino opportunity and the casino returned as an option for Petersburg. She said that the joy Council experienced when they knew that this opportunity and its potential benefits could put Petersburg back on the map and allow them to make a positive impact on their people, communities, and the things they had envisioned for the City. She said that this was

how they felt now about the building and complex, if it were given back to them. She said that the possibilities they could create for their citizens, children, and the future were limitless.

Mayor Parham said that he would call Ms. Stewart's time, but Ms. Hurst had another three minutes if she would like to speak further.

Ms. Hurst said that as the new federal administration attempted to erase their nation's history, she prayed that they would have the courage to do what was right. She hoped that they could restore the Peabody High School complex and the historic site, which represented the social and cultural transformation that had taken place in the City and would continue to shape the lives of those who lived there and visited. She said that she believed that they had a crucial role to play in this process. Although they may not fully understand the significance of this site, she wanted to share with them why it was so important. She said that Council members may not have experienced the segregation and inequality that had been faced in the past, but she wanted to emphasize that many people experienced it and had risen above those challenges.

Ms. Hurst said that even during the transition of legally forced integration, they were able to go through it smoothly because in school they had been taught to be strong, to have faith, and to overcome adversity. The school represented more than just a building; it represented the people who had built the City during that time, who had worked hard to make it prosperous, and who had paved the way for future generations. Ms. Hurst stated that when they looked at the building, they were looking at the lives of those who had come before them, who had struggled and persevered to create the City they knew today. The fact that they had a Black mayor like Hermanze Fauntleroy, was a testament to the progress that had been made and the reason why the current Council members were sitting where they were today. If they could restore the historic site, it would be a powerful reminder of the City's rich history and the strength and faith that had brought them to where they were today. It would take courage and determination to make this happen, but she believed that it was possible. It would require the commitment of their community, and it would not be easy. However, she was confident that they could do it.

Ninfa Amador Hernandez stated that she is the daughter of two immigrant homeowners and taxpayers at Augusta Avenue. She said that she wished she could provide her full address tonight, but she did not feel comfortable doing so as an immigrant and as a Latina during this time, and that was why she was there today. She stated that as a graduate of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School, a political science major, and a public policy professional, she said that she took the time to be there because she could not stay home, not knowing what the City Council or the local government here in Petersburg was doing to protect their immigrant homeowners, business leaders, and community as a whole from the rogue federal attacks of the paramilitary force known as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

Ms. Hernandez said that as they all knew, and as they all saw last week, just a block from here, this had exacerbated the need for her to know what the public could count on the Council to do during these times. She said that currently, they were seeing immigrant families being abused cruelly by a system fueled by hate, driven by a racially motivated and quota-based immigration system of deportations, not anything logical. She said that they did not have to look too far, like she said, outside of their own City limits to see what was happening here in their own City. She said that they may see the cases of Renee Good in Minnesota, and other cases across the country, but after the kidnapping of her own family member as he traveled to a job site in Minnesota, because of his job as a Class A contractor, she wanted to ask Council what they were doing to protect their own local citizens.

Ms. Hernandez said that this was a man who had worked tirelessly with her mother to raise their family here in Petersburg. She said that he was abducted by unmarked vehicles, masked individuals, without any reason, warrant, or cause. She said that he was no longer on U.S. soil, and they had been unable to reach him over the past 12 days without knowing his whereabouts. She said that this story was not unique, and she was sure that there were many other families in their City who had witnessed this. She said that as a result of this

personal pain and her commitment to her community, she was here to ask the Council: What had they done to investigate the kidnapping of the individuals at Union Street and Washington Street, near the transit station.

Ms. Hernandez said that she needed to ask Council what measures they were taking to protect individuals in Petersburg, ensuring they knew their rights and were protected from warrantless visits. She said that without proper judicial warrants, ICE had no right to be in City limits. She asked what Council was saying to the immigrant community that the City was looking out for their best interests. She asked what resources they were committing as Council members to use to share information on how to protect everyone, as an increase in law enforcement presence was not beneficial to anyone, and particularly, the rise of these rogue paramilitary forces posed a danger to everyone, regardless of immigration status.

Ms. Hernandez said that it was especially concerning for their Black and Latino communities in Petersburg. She said that as they had recently celebrated Martin Luther King Day, she would like to leave them with a quote that had stuck with her since she read it a month ago: "The ultimate measure of a person is not where they stand in moments of comfort and convenience, but where they stand in moments of challenge and controversy." She asked Council: Where will they stand with their communities right now?

Dr. Kenneth Lewis, 503 Mistletoe Street, said that he was speaking to Council today for two reasons. Firstly, he would publicly state that he had always had reservations about the casino. He said that he trusted that it would be more than the current appearance suggested. Secondly, he was concerned that the television advertisements were misleading. He said they made it look like Las Vegas-style slot machines at Exit 48 on Interstate 95; however, the advertisement did not mention Petersburg. He said that he found this peculiar, as the casino was being promoted as a Petersburg attraction, yet the advertisements did not explicitly state that.

Dr. Lewis said that furthermore, he continued to be concerned about the Peabody High School Campus. He said that he did not understand why the building's condition was not being addressed by the City. He said that before the Washington Street high school became the Governor's School, that building was in such a state of decay that it was uninhabitable even by pigeons. In fact, it was only saved and restored by someone who recognized its historical significance. In contrast, the Fox Elementary School in Richmond, Virginia, was rebuilt after being destroyed by fire. He said that today, it appeared in pristine condition. He failed to see why the same level of care was not being shown to the oldest public Black high school in the United States, right here in the City of Petersburg.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, said that she had heard some very interesting comments tonight and she hoped Council was taking them to heart. She said that the young lady who spoke about ICE made a point that she would like to build upon. She stated that she thought it was essential to be cautious about the federal gifts that were coming to Petersburg. Recently, they had learned about the "Make Petersburg Healthy Again" initiative, which was federally funded and brought a deputy secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) and former Governor Youngkin to the City.

Ms. Rudolph stated that the current President only got about 13% of the total votes cast in Petersburg during the last presidential election, so he was not a very popular figure. She said that associating these programs with the infamous MAGA movement resulted in a very negative connotation. She said that attaching the current federal administration to programs launched in Petersburg to help people with their health and the environment meant that they would be depressing participation. She expressed serious concern that Petersburg may be targeted and used as an example for the Trump administration's agenda.

Leila Thompson, 623 Gilliam Street, stated that her mother owns and operates Cindy's Gift Shop in downtown Petersburg at 235 North Sycamore Street in Ward 4. She said that she actually came to today's meeting to talk about the I AM POWER development. Mr. Rainier was present, and she would have greatly appreciated

the opportunity to speak with him and ask him questions about such a significant development that would likely play a major role in Old Town and a crucial piece of real estate. She said that she would like to see the City approach this project in a different manner.

Ms. Thompson said that she would like to see requests for proposals for this project. Ideally, she said that she would like to see an experienced developer with a proven track record and extensive development portfolio. She said that she would be interested in seeing what they propose for this project, and she would appreciate feedback from the public, as well as collaboration with the Council on such a large project in Old Town.

Ms. Thompson said that she had a question for the City Manager, which was when construction would begin on the repairs at Bank Street. She said that there was a line item and a CFPF grant for Bank Street, which expired on June 30 of this year, worth \$4.6 million. She wondered if this grant was related to the construction and repair of Bank Street and if they had a timeline for when construction would start. She believed that attention to their infrastructure was crucial when considering large-scale developments in Old Town. She would greatly appreciate knowing when construction on Bank Street would begin.

Dolly Holmes, 244 Grove Avenue, said that she had been a Petersburg resident for over 20 years and had witnessed many groups offering advice to the City. She said that she was somewhat involved with one such group in 2007, which consisted of architects, landscape architects, urban designers, and economic development professionals. They spent four days meeting with residents and presented a document of their recommendations to the City. She said that she would like to share a portion of it, particularly in relation to the I AM POWER proposal.

Ms. Holmes said that what she would read was specifically from the recommendations for that neighborhood in the City. She read from the report that pedestrian scale and orientation against the quirky character of this sub-district created an environment that was highly conducive to arts and entertainment, which should be cherished and preserved. Infill development should be compatible in scale and character with this environment. No building in this or any other district should obstruct regional views of Lady Justice on the courthouse tower. The vista of Lady Justice from Cockade Alley at East Old Street should be preserved as a way of visually connecting the downtown's public spaces and landmarks. Ms. Holmes said that design standards were very important, and she believed it was essential that all stakeholders work together to achieve signature architecture that adhered to these guidelines. She said that she found it intriguing that so many groups had offered recommendations, yet she had seen little evidence that any of them were followed. There was another group about five years ago, which she recalled meeting in this very room.

Ms. Holmes said that instead of implementing the recommendations, the City was now accepting proposals from individuals who would absolutely undermine these guidelines and did not respond to any of the previous requests from the City's population. She thought it was essential for the City to revisit the good advice that had been received over the years.

Kevin Newby, 418 Clinton Street, said that this was the first City Council meeting he had attended and was enjoying it so far. He said that he had heard a lot of passionate comments from people who truly cared about this City. He thought that Council needed to listen to these comments and take them into account as they continued their work. He said that there were a lot of desperate buildings and also a lot of construction happening; however, he thought the new houses detracted from the potential beauty and cost savings of rehabilitating the old houses that were already here. He expressed concern that these new houses would price people out of the neighborhoods, especially considering the extremely low area median income (AMI) in the City. He noted that his veterans' disability pay and social security gave him more income than the average income in Petersburg. He hoped that wages would increase in the near future so that the community could thrive. He asked Council to please care about their constituents who placed such trust in them.

Teresa Brown, 923 Oakmont Drive, stated that she had been told years ago that the rainwater they paid for would help their community, but year after year, the water got higher and higher. She said that the trenches that had been dug were ineffective and flooding continued to be a major problem. She asked Council what they were going to do about this issue.

Pam Newton, 203 North Jefferson Street, said that she had recently moved there in March. She said that she had a lengthy list of things she wanted to address, but she would focus on two key points. She said that she had noticed a significant amount of discontent among the citizens of this City. She said that it appeared that Council Members often disregarded input from their constituents. She said that when input was provided, promises were frequently made but not kept. She said that she had conducted research and was surprised to find that this City did not have a directly elected mayor, which was unusual for her. She said that she had seen several attempts by constituents to change this system, which was apparently a model followed by some Cities in Virginia.

Ms. Newton said that she assumed this would only be effective if the Council was managing the city well. As a newcomer, she had only been there since March, and she was witnessing significant discontent. She said that she had been reading negative comments and seeing a history of broken promises. The citizens' concerns often went unaddressed, and unwanted changes were implemented. She said that she was about to discuss the I AM POWER development, but it had been tabled. She said that she had recently left Richmond due to the many new developments that detracted from the character and community of the City, and she was concerned that Petersburg would experience the same fate, which was reminiscent of how cold and soulless Northern Virginia looked. She encouraged the City to prioritize renovation of their existing housing units rather than building new, cheaper buildings that would likely crumble within 30 years. She noted that there was a recent petition to change the mayoral system to allow for an elected mayor.

Javon Guerrier stated that he worked at Petersburg High School, 3101 Johnson Road, Petersburg, Virginia. He said that one thing that was discussed was the capital infrastructure. He said that he appreciated Council Member Jones' input on that topic. He said that he would like to request that when capital infrastructure plans are discussed, teachers and students also be given the opportunity to provide input. He explained that in his classroom, he had a significant issue with the lack of functioning sockets in the floor, which made it extremely difficult to charge computers. He said that as a computer information systems teacher, he often had to use multiple extension cords to charge their classroom devices, which could be distracting and disrupt learning.

Mr. Guerrier said that there were a lot of other infrastructure issues that students could speak to, as well. He said that he believed that involving students and teachers in the process could lead to more effective and learning-friendly infrastructure. He said that another topic that was brought up was Peabody High School. He said that his career was in computer engineering and he had worked in Silicon Valley for the past three years, so he could confirm that artificial intelligence (AI) was playing a massive role in many industries now. He said that it was very important to him that Petersburg be part of that process, and this was why he returned home.

Mr. Guerrier stated that Peabody High School held a special significance for him, as it was a symbol of the community's Black history and impressive legacy. He said that he wanted to carry on that legacy by providing students with the opportunity to learn about and engage with their heritage. He noted that when he shared this information with his students, they tended to be more engaged and motivated, as they felt a sense of connection to something larger than themselves, rather than being stuck in a City that was just falling apart.

Vernal Gannaway, 652 Old Wagner Road, said that he was originally from Petersburg and he was a part of Peabody until his father decided it was time for him to attend Petersburg High School to complete his studies. He noted that he actually had received more contact from Peabody than he did from his alma mater. He stated that he was still waiting for his street light to be fixed, which he had been waiting on for about ten years now. He agreed with the previous speakers who raised the issue of infrastructure. They needed to

improve their infrastructure, and as he had stated at their last Council meeting, the job was not completed until it was done. He requested Council to please prioritize fixing and improving the City's infrastructure before they turned their attention to smaller things like street sweeping.

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

Council Member Cuthbert said that he would like to commend the Code enforcement effort of the City, led and inspired by Mr. Ken Miller. He noted one house on a corner of South Sycamore Street had successfully transferred owners and was beautifully renovated, and Code enforcement and the City Manager assisted with that. He encouraged anyone interested in joining the volunteer group to contact the City Clerk so they could participate on the second Monday of every month. He additionally thanked Mr. Miller for his swift response in cleaning up a dumpster in the downtown area this afternoon, which was yet another example of the excellent work their City employees were doing.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that earlier in the meeting, Vice Mayor Hill had suggested Council look into categorical funding for their public schools, and he would like to consider it during the later part of their budget season this year. He said that the status quo was unacceptable and categorical funding may help them make some positive progress. He reported that he had held a Ward 4 meeting on January 8, and the primary topic was the future of Old Town. He stated that Mr. Miller had taken good notes and he hoped the City could incorporate some of the good ideas raised at that Ward 4 meeting by the public and use them to direct progress in Old Town.

Council Member Jones thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. He acknowledged that people had raised some valid concerns, but he must provide context for those citizens who had just moved to the City. He explained that 60 years ago, the leadership of the City never tried to take care of the issues of infrastructure, education, or poverty. He could attest that this current Council was paying attention to those issues and did listen to their constituents. He wanted to assure everyone that more was being done now in 2026 than any of the previous administrations in charge of the City; the current government was still experiencing the effects of the past administration's decisions. He asked everyone to please consider the progress being made in the City compared to previous years, as it clearly showed they were moving forward.

Council Member Jones stated that he would always hold everyone accountable, and that included Council and the City government. He emphasized that it was not too late for Petersburg to become self-sufficient, and he agreed with the public commenter who advised against depending on federal and state dollars. He stated that all of Petersburg's citizens had to be their own leaders. He added that the City could not force people to renovate old homes or force them not to build new ones because they did not control development on private property. He stated that their Code compliance was moving forward and there were improvements being made in that regard. He emphasized that any of the improvements being asked for by the citizens would require money to do so, and that came from their taxes.

Council Member Jones stated that he would also like to mention the Peabody School.

Mayor Parham said that he would yield his time to allow Council Member Jones to finish his comments.

Council Member Jones stated that the Peabody School was a great school and he loved what came out of that school. He noted the alma mater song that he was not taught during his time there, as well as the storied history of the school that he also was never taught. He felt that there must have been something given up or lost along the way, as no one ever pointed out the greatness that Peabody had created in the past, which would have shown him how great he could be. He emphasized that leadership must be the focal point of an institution, and he felt it had been on the sidelines during his time at Peabody; the focal point was survival instead.

Council Member Jones agreed with the citizens who were concerned about the current state of the building and they must do something about it, but there needed to be an agenda and funding to achieve it. He said that if the public supported it, he would gladly use their money to fix up the school and Council could direct the City Manager to do so. He reiterated that those kinds of projects had to be funded by the taxpayers in some form, and they must understand that. Furthermore, he wanted to clarify that even if the Peabody School was not physically in existence, the ideology and dreams could still carry on.

Council Member Jones stated that some of the concerns raised by citizens were due to forces outside of the City trying to influence them, rather than internal forces. He said that the comment made about ICE was about an outside force being in their City, and the City had resources to help people protect themselves and know their rights. He stated that the City would do everything possible to protect their citizens. He acknowledged that some people may be unhappy with the current system of City government, but he also did not want to reverse the progress they had made. He encouraged citizens to come forward with suggestions to solve the issues they raised, rather than only pointing out the problems.

Council Member Jones emphasized that there were a lot of good things going on in Petersburg and he hoped everyone would keep them in mind. He urged everyone to stay strong together and not let outside forces tear them apart. He asked everyone to please email him if something was wrong, not to passively post about things on social media. He expressed his heartfelt love to all of Petersburg citizens and hoped that everyone understood that the current Council was actively working to make collective progress. He asked citizens to please consider providing their Council Members with a citizen's agenda on what they wanted and how they wanted to achieve it. They could certainly create committees to discuss these items and provide them to Council for formal consideration. He said that they could also email their Clerk and she would forward the information to Council.

Council Member Jones added that when he and the Mayor visited Petersburg High School, they witnessed that there were no locker rooms or showers, and they asked the Schools representatives to do what they had to do to provide that for the students. He said that the response from the Schools representative was extremely flippant and derogatory, and he wanted to express to the public that Council was trying to combat that type of rhetoric. He stated that they were committed to providing locker rooms and showers for all the students as part of improving the public health in their City, and everyone could see for themselves if they visited the high school. However, his point was that Council had to stop doing the School Division's job for them. He assured the public that their needs would be met and their goals would be achieved.

Council Member Westbrook thanked Council Member Jones for his heartfelt comments. He gave his condolences to Mr. Marquis Allen, their Parks and Recreation Director whose mother recently passed away. He asked staff to please assist in putting on their Black History Month celebration this year to allow Mr. Allen the time to process his grief. He reported that he and Council Member Smith-Lee had a very successful joint Ward meeting, and he wanted to encourage everyone to please continue attending and participating in Council and Ward meetings, as well as reaching out to their Council Members whenever they had concerns.

Council Member Westbrook assured the public that their feedback was essential and was taken seriously as part of the City's work plan. He said that the City should be able to explain and tell the public what they were doing, as well as listening to how they could do things better, and act with clarity on behalf of leadership. He asked the public to please understand the style of government they had, that they were a Council and government working together. He asked them to seriously consider if they wanted the "strong mayor" system like Richmond had, because it could become detrimental if the mayor was a tyrant. He stated that snow was coming this weekend, so he wanted to ask the City Manager to address the warming stations in the City.

City Manager Altman stated that yes, snow was expected this weekend. According to models, they could anticipate double-digit inches of snow. Staff had begun discussing the development of a warming center, and they would provide more information as their discussions progressed this week as they prepared for the

snow. He said that they would inform the citizens if a warming center was available, its location, and the operating hours.

Council Member Westbrook stated that he hoped they could be proactive as a City. He asked the public to please prepare for potential feet of snow and to look out for their neighbors. He hoped that their homeless neighbors and those without heat could get the help they needed during the inclement weather. He stated that he also wanted to ask everyone to please not speed down the roads. They had put down rumble strips and other traffic-calming measures in areas of concern, but ultimately people had to slow down and drive safely. He announced that he would be hosting another Ward meeting in March. Finally, he wanted to reiterate Council Member Jones' comments by stating that he agreed the community needed action, but they all must work together in that action. Council served as policymakers and were doing what was best for Petersburg in the future, but they were not acting on a day-to-day basis.

Council Member Myers stated that after 15 years of sitting on this dais, he had listened to what had happened in the City since 2015. He said that he did not have much to add to his colleagues' remarks, as those who had expressed negative opinions tonight had left the room and had not been part of the City's growth over the past 15 years. He noted that people had suggested they should elect the City's mayor, but he questioned how different things would be if that were the system in place. He was not suggesting that the mayor should or should not be elected, but he was curious about what was flawed with the current Mayor that suggested they should change the rules. He noted that they had pulled the City out of past ruin, but no one spoke to that point; they only voiced negativity.

Council Member Myers noted that some people had been here during that entire journey, and the progress they had made in 15 years was truly remarkable. He said that he would like to focus on one subject, which was that they tore down 200 houses in Ward 5 and replaced them. He said that those old houses were not able to be saved because of termites and other major structural damage, which was so bad that many of them toppled over as soon as the bucket trucks touched them. He stated that they had surpassed the state of dilapidation and back taxes, going from \$25 million in debt to being \$79 million in the black in less than 10 years.

Council Member Myers stated that when those who were new to the City came before them and complained, it was perplexing to him. He noted that he actually used to own the house at 203 North Jefferson Street, and he knew for a fact it had been renovated and was now a very beautiful home. Therefore, he did not understand why the current resident felt the need to complain. He said that there were other people in the City who did not have the income to live in the house she was living in. Council Member Myers emphasized that affordable housing was important for everyone, and the City had addressed it and continued to do so. He said that he did not understand why people were singling out the Mayor as problematic and wondered if they needed to elect Mayor Parham in that manner. He said that he personally served in this capacity on Council because he loved this City and chose to move here from Richmond 22 years ago. Everyone had been good to him and he could not complain. He announced that tomorrow at 4:00 p.m., there would be food distribution to the public on Market Street and River Street, and he encouraged anyone in need of groceries to come on down.

Vice Mayor Hill noted that it was an election year and people often voiced their concerns during this time. He said that if there were serious concerns in the community, he asked citizens to please have direct conversations with their City Council Member so the problems could be adequately addressed. He stated that they had a soft opening for the casino today, and he could confirm it was beautiful. He noted that Council and the City government had been working on a variety of initiatives to strengthen their community for a while and the casino was just one of those items. There were infrastructure improvements being made throughout the City, and being such an historic City meant that there was a lot to fix and improve as time progressed.

Vice Mayor Hill noted that many of the Council Members attended the Peabody School, so he wanted to assure everyone that they were aware of the importance of the school. He stated that the City did want to save the building and ensure it served the community. He noted that the Peabody alumni had ownership of the building for some time, but the City had to take it back because the alumni organization could not keep it up. He asked everyone to prioritize working together on these issues, rather than pointing fingers at individuals. He stated that when new people came into the City, they did not just look at City Council, they also looked at the residents of the community.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that he was born and raised in Petersburg, but he welcomed the newcomers to the City just the same. He simply asked everyone to please speak life into their City rather than death. He noted the great positivity that Petersburg had been experiencing, and hoped that everyone looked at those many positive aspects rather than just the negative aspects. He asked everyone to stay safe this weekend.

Mayor Parham thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. He also congratulated their Treasurer Paul Mullin, who was elected Chair of the Petersburg Democratic Committee. He further welcomed Jeff Stoke, who would be joining their organization as Deputy City Manager.

13. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items under this portion of the Consent Agenda.

14. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT

a. Department of Finance Monthly Update

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, presented the Department of Finance Monthly Update. He reported that the monthly budget to actuals as of the end of December covered the first half of the fiscal year, so 50% of the year was completed. Overall, their General Fund was 45% of spend and the other departments were all under 50% except for Dogwood. However, Dogwood operated under its own revenues, so that was acceptable. He summarized that overall, they were tracking very well and there was no overspend in any department. As stated earlier, their fund balance had increased, so they were doing well.

Council Member Cuthbert asked what percent of the Petersburg Area Transit (PAT) operating budget was funded by the citizens of Petersburg.

Mr. Cozier replied that the City of Petersburg gave a 4% local match. He said that the federal government provided 68% of the funding, the state contributed 28%, and the City of Petersburg provided 4%. He said that the same breakdown applied to the capital budget.

Council Member Cuthbert asked about borrowing funds for rolling stock.

Mr. Cozier replied that that would be on a case-by-case basis. He said that if a grant was specifically being pursued for rolling stock, it would not fall under the same reimbursement schedule.

City Manager Altman clarified that for the rolling stock, the City's contribution would be higher than the City's 4% of the funding formula. This was because the rolling stock would be under a different grant than the other budget. He stated that the exact number would be grant-specific, but staff could get those numbers and provide them to Council at their work session.

15. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

a. A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Amend the Development Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and NUWAVE DEVELOPMENT LLC for the Properties at 851 E. Bank Street, 1420

Ferndale Ave, 1162 Hinton Street, 417 S. Jefferson Street, 921 Priam Street, 1150 Rome Street, 201 Terrace Ave., Petersburg Virginia 23803 to Extract the Reverter Date

Brian Moore, Director of Economic Development, introduced the item. He stated that William Zimmer was requesting the reverter clause be removed from these particular properties.

William Zimmer with Nuwave Development stated that the reverter clause in the original development agreement had created a barrier to financing for him. He said that he requested that the revised development agreement be approved. He explained that the revisions allowed their lender to finance the construction of the project. He said that with that in place, these lots could move forward as homes, generating tax revenue and contributing to neighborhood improvement. He said that the revised agreement maintained the City's protections, which governed their obligations as a developer. The revised agreement still included a 12-month build period, prohibited sales before a home was completed, and included City inspections and certifications. He appreciated Council's consideration, and he was happy to answer any questions.

City Attorney Williams clarified that the reverter clause was not actually requested to be removed; the developer was requesting that the City allow the lenders to have priority over the City's reverter clause. He noted the changes were highlighted in the package provided to Council, and he had provided comments and suggestions on the City's behalf. He believed that otherwise, the developer had accurately described the request.

Council Member Jones asked for clarification. He asked why the developer bought the properties without the financing in place to build the houses.

Mr. Zimmer explained that they had the money to purchase the properties, but the costs of development were millions of dollars that required additional financing. Most banks required a first position lien, especially for construction. They went to multiple lenders and all of them gave the same response.

Vice Mayor Hill said that the reverter clause allowed the City to take back the properties if the development did not occur, but the issue was that the banks wanted the ones to take it back first.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Resolution as presented. 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: Jones, Myers, Westbrook, Hill, and Parham; no: Cuthbert; abstain: N/A; absent: Smith-Lee.

16. NEW BUSINESS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

17. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT AND SPECIAL REPORTS

March Altman, City Manager urged all citizens to keep an eye on the weather and prepare ahead of the potentially severe snowstorm this weekend. The City would begin formally preparing tomorrow morning. He personally thanked City Council for their support, thoughts, prayers, and willingness to allow him time during their last Council meeting to handle a family emergency. He stated that his mother-in-law had been on a waiting list for several years and finally received a kidney replacement, and she was doing very well. He

noted that working with a group of people who gave unconditional support and treated each other like family was a very special thing to have and he appreciated it very much.

Council Member Jones noted that the City's public safety teams were already preparing in advance of the inclement weather and he wanted to say how impressed and grateful he was for their dedication to their good work. He emphasized that Public Works was absolutely crucial to their City's operations and accessibility, and he wanted Council and the City Manager to consider giving at least a 3% raise to their Public Works staff, similar to what they gave their first responders.

City Manager Altman agreed that Public Works operated in the same way as their other first responders. He stated that Council's steps thus far to reduce costs for insurance and the pay class and compensation study they implemented were positive. They would continue moving forward and they absolutely would consider Council Member Jones' suggestion.

Council Member Jones made a motion to formally consider the Department of Public Works as first responders in the City. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he appreciated Public Works but he thought they needed more time to consider the specifics of Council Member Jones' suggestion.

City Attorney Williams suggested that Council direct the City Manager to bring back the necessary documentation to implement what Council Member Jones was indicating. He thought that, while they certainly could identify Public Works as first responders, it did require some clarity and parameters in place to ensure they considered all aspects. He noted that State Code had specific language around the benefits that first responders had that others did not have. He thought the City could give Public Works certain benefits, but the City Manager should bring an Ordinance amendment to that effect.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he thought that was appropriate; it was a good, business-like way to proceed.

Council Member Jones stated that he did not support that approach because if the State Code did not mention Public Works as first responders, then they would not get those enumerated benefits anyway. He said that locally, as a City, they should recognize them as first responders so that they were included as part of first responders' pay raises.

Mayor Parham asked Council Member Jones if he would be amenable to the City Manager bringing that back to Council in order to build it into the budget.

City Manager Altman stated that it may be a policy statement, so the City could consider the Department of Public Works as a first responder but not necessarily as a definition in State Code. He said that staff would bring something back for Council's consideration.

Council Member Jones stated that he was amenable to the City Attorney's suggestion and would be okay with bringing it back. He just wanted to emphasize the importance and dedication of their Public Works Department.

Council Member Myers said that they could suspend the rules of Council to make the motion.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that the motion could be made and voted on right now, and the specific language could still be brought back at a later date. He asked the Mayor to call the vote.

Mayor Parham called the vote on formally considering the Department of Public Works as first responders in the City.

The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

18. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK

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

19. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY

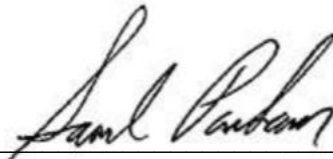
Anthony Williams, City Attorney stated that he had nothing to report this evening.

20. 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 7:43 p.m.

Adopted: 02/03/2026



Mayor, Samuel Parham

ATTEST:



Clerk of Council, Tangi R. Hill