The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on March 17, 2026 at Petersburg Public Library. Samuel Parham called the meeting to order at 5:03 p.m. The meeting video link is *https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/378308*

1. **ROLL CALL:**

Present:

Samuel Parham, Councilor -- Ward 3
Darrin Hill, Councilor -- 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:

Deputy City Manager Kenneth Miller
City Attorney Anthony C. Williams
City Clerk Tangi R. Hill

2. **PRAYER**

Vice Mayor Hill led the Council meeting in prayer

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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

4. **DETERMINATION OF THE PRESENCE OF A QUORUM:**

A quorum was present.

5. **PROCLAMATIONS/RECOGNITIONS/PRESENTATION OF CEREMONIAL PROCLAMATIONS**

a. Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Petersburg Alumnae Chapter, 85th Anniversary of its Charter Day on April 5, 2026

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation to Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., Petersburg Alumnae Chapter, proclaiming the 85th Anniversary of its Charter Day on April 5, 2026.

Members of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority accepted the Proclamation.

b. 2026 National Procurement Month

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation proclaiming March 2026 as National Procurement Month.

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, accepted the Proclamation on behalf of the Finance Department.

c. 2026 National Social Work Month

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation proclaiming March 2026 as National Social Work Month.

William D'Aiuto, Director of Social Services, accepted the Proclamation.

6. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION POSTED

Mayor Parham stated that this information was included under Council Communicates.

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

a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- March 3, 2026 Closed Session
- March 3, 2026 Work Session

b. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for the Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing the Vacation of Right-of-Way to Support the Construction of the New Courthouse (Public Hearing to be Held on April 24, 2026)

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. 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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

8. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Approve a Request by Ibrahim Al Tamimy, on behalf of 601 E Wyth Street LLC, for a Special Use Permit to Operate a Stand-Alone Vehicle Repair Shop/Automobile Service Station at 601 East Wythe Street, Parcel ID 012270012, in the B-2, General Commercial Zoning District

Jared Crews, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development, presented the staff report. He stated that this was a special use permit request for a standalone vehicle repair or automobile service station at 601 East Wythe Street, located in the B-2 General Commercial District. The subject property, situated at the intersection of South Old Church Street and East Wythe, is 0.23 acres in size. The applicant seeks to operate a vehicle repair or service station in the existing 1,500 square foot building on the site. The building had a history of operating as a vehicle service use, most recently as a car wash. The legal non-conforming status for that use expired due to the property being vacant for more than two years, necessitating a special use permit to reestablish that use. The application was accompanied by a layout plan, elevations, and proposed site improvements, including repaving, resurfacing, and re-striping the parking area, plantings along the street frontage, lighting, trash receptacles, and benches.

Mr. Crews explained that the City had emphasized the need to improve major corridors, particularly near gateways, by limiting uses that may have negative visual impacts and encouraging uses that would revitalize those corridors. In that regard, this area was home to several existing vehicle repair and sales facilities, including the one at 610 East Washington. He said that additionally, the existing building required significant repairs before it could be occupied, and there was a need for clarity regarding the intended use. The plans initially stated that there would be no vehicle storage, but the application mentioned a use similar to the existing business at 610 East Washington. The applicants had expressed a desire for additional uses like car repair, tire sales, or car sales throughout their conversations.

Mr. Crews said that the plan coincided with the applicant's existing business, located on the other side of the block along Washington Street. Staff had provided recommended conditions for consideration and the permit could be revoked for failure to adhere to the conditions or with any other local, state, or federal law. He summarized that the Planning Commission unanimously recommended denial of the special use permit request, citing that the proposed use did not align with the guidance from the Comprehensive Plan, particularly located near a gateway to the City and on a designated corridor, and not being in line with the primary uses for a community mixed-use area. Additionally, there was concern about the existing vehicle service uses along the corridor and the visual impact they had.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Seeing no speakers, Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

Council Member Jones stated that this was a request for a vehicle repair shop, so he did not understand why staff had recommended conditions that limited the type of vehicle repair work that could take place. He said that he also did not think that the other surrounding auto shops should preclude this business from being allowed to operate in this location, especially when the application included proposed site improvements that would help revitalize and beautify the corridor.

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve 2026-SUP-01, a request by Ibrahim Al Tamimy, on behalf of 601 E Wyth St LLC for a special use permit to operate a stand-alone vehicle repair shop/automobile service station at 601 East Wythe Street, Parcel ID 012270012, in the B-2, General Commercial Zoning District, with staff's proposed conditions.

Mayor Parham said that there was no second to the motion, so the motion died.

Vice Mayor Hill said that he understood the passion behind building up and improving this corridor, but Planning staff had thoroughly looked through this application in relation to the subject parcel and surrounding area and determined the request was not appropriate.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to deny 2026-SUP-01, a request by Ibrahim Al Tamimy, on behalf of 601 E Wyth St LLC for a special use permit to operate a stand-alone vehicle repair shop/automobile service station at 601 East Wythe Street, Parcel ID 012270012, in the B-2, General Commercial Zoning District. Council Member Myers seconded the motion.

Council Member Jones expressed his disappointment that the City was so quick to deny this request by a local small business. He said that it felt like they were shutting them down when they should be supporting and showing appreciation for their local businesses. He thought that the recommendation for denial was inconsistent and he did not understand the logic in leaving the lot dilapidated and vacant versus allowing this request, which would improve the property.

Mayor Parham called the vote on 2026-SUP-01.

The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

b. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 Grants Fund Budget

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager provided a brief summary of the item. He stated that staff was requesting Council to accept funds awarded through grants for various departments. He said that the Department of Public Works and Utilities had received a litter grant for $7,674. The Department of Conservation and Recreation had been awarded $750,000 for Wilcox Lake. The Petersburg Bureau of Police had received a grant from the Department of Justice for the JAG Award, totaling $27,684. He stated that none of these grants required a match; they were fully funded. The total amount awarded from these grants was $785,358.52.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Seeing no speakers, he closed the public hearing.

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the amendment to the Grants Fund. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

Council Member Westbrook asked if the litter grant could be used to address illegal dumping. He also asked if this grant could be used to help with Wilcox Lake and its dam.

Mr. Cozier said that Wilcox Lake had received multiple grants to assist with the dam replacement.

Council Member Westbrook asked if staff could provide the total amount of funding provided to Wilcox Lake.

Mr. Cozier confirmed that yes, he could follow up with that information.

Randall Williams, Assistant Director of Public Works, said that regarding the litter grant, it would be used to fund their biannual community cleanup events.

Council Member Westbrook asked if there was a possibility they could consider adding a third date to that schedule using this grant.

Mr. Williams confirmed they could.

Council Member Jones asked if staff could provide some clearer information regarding how the grants funding was applied to the City's expenditures. He asked if there was an update on the Wilcox Lake dam.

Joanne Williams, Public Information Officer, explained that the $700,000 was the City's match, which they had secured through another grant. Therefore, there was no additional match required from them.

Council Member Jones asked when they could expect work to begin on that project.

Ms. Williams replied that they would be putting the project out to bid as soon as possible.

Mayor Parham called the vote to approve the amendment to the FY26 Grants Fund.

The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

c. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 Utilities Fund Budget & FY26 Streets Fund Budget

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that the amendment to the Utilities Fund budget was a result of the rate increase that was approved earlier this year. The amendment to the Streets budget was intended to cover the funding that was approved last year for Oak Hill Road; the amendment needed to be carried forward into the current fiscal year, as the funds were not fully expended last year. He said that the total cost would be $2,772,368.

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 amend the FY26 Utilities Fund budget and FY26 Streets Fund budget. Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

Council Member Jones asked if there was funding allocated for the temporary bridge or the permanent bridge.

Mr. Cozier clarified that this funding had been approved last year and was requested to roll over into the current fiscal year. He said that to his knowledge, funding was included for the temporary bridge and the permanent bridge was still being developed.

Mayor Parham called the vote on the amendment to the FY26 Utilities Fund budget and the Streets Fund budget.

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

d. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the Code of Ordinance, Section 106-109, Real Estate Tax, to Change Elderly and Disabled Gross Amount, and Section 106-112, Change the Amount of the Exemption

Brittany Flowers, Commissioner of the Revenue, provided a brief summary of the item. She explained that this item was regarding amendments to the Code of Ordinance Section 106-109, Real Estate Tax, to change the Elderly and Disabled gross amount, and Section 106-112, to change the amount of the exemption. She said that at Council's previous meeting, she was requested to provide more information on other localities' program limits, specifically localities with casinos, as well as Fredericksburg, which had a data center. She provided this information as part of her presentation, which varied between localities. She requested Council to approve increases from $45,000 to $55,000 for the income limit; assets remaining the same at $80,000; and the cap limit increasing from $1,500 to $1,700. These changes would become effective July 1, 2026.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Marlo Green, 301 Rolfe Street, expressed her support for the proposed increases to the income limits for the tax relief program. She asked Council to consider raising them even higher in order to prevent impacts to elderly residents as the City was being developed. She also was not sure how the recommendations related to the area median income (AMI) in the City, which should certainly be considered.

Gary Talley, 2323 Fort Rice Street, stated that these numbers were interesting, but he asked what the impact would be. He asked how many people this would affect and what impact this would have on tax collection. He asked if it was a good or bad thing, and if they could make it better. He asked that there be clearer definition of the term "disabled" for this program, as well.

Tina Noran, 120 Leavenworth Street, suggested that the asset limit should be higher in order to prevent disqualifying people with retirement funds and those who may still be on fixed incomes.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

Ms. Flowers stated that regarding the question about the AMI, she would like to clarify that the numbers she was recommending were based on the applicant who applied for the program. She agreed with raising them higher, but these recommendations were based on the applications received. She said that to Mr. Talley's question, she could say that they had 450 applications set to be mailed, with the assumption that all 450 would apply. She said that as she did not collect data on real estate, she was not aware of their current collection rate. She did consider increasing the income limit to $55,000, but she stopped at 50,000 based on the income data from applicants who were denied. The asset calculation only included assets owned by applicants, excluding their primary residence.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if the Finance team could provide information on what impact this would have on the City's revenues.

Mr. Cozier answered that staff could look into it. He said that raising the limits and increasing the number of people included would have a direct impact on the amount of taxes collected for real estate, and while he did not assume it would be a major change, they could certainly provide exact numbers.

Vice Mayor Hill said that he was supportive of the recommendations, but wanted to make sure their departments were working out those details together so they understood the exact impacts and consider any other necessary adjustments.

Council Member Myers asked if Ms. Flowers could explain the asset limit again.

Ms. Flowers explained that the assets included anything that one owned, such as vehicles and parcels, but did not include one's primary residence.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve amending Sections 106-109 and 106-112 to increase the gross income and total amount of exemption for elderly and disabled tax relief. 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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

Ms. Flower stated for information purposes, on April 13, from 12:00 p.m. to 3 p.m., she would be providing in-person application assistance for the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief Program. She encouraged anyone who needed help filling out and completing their applications to attend.

9. PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD

Priscilla Lewis Carter,1116 Pointer Street, stated that she was represented by Council Member Smith-Lee in the 6th Ward. She said that she was born and raised in Petersburg at what was once 834 Wilcox Street, formerly in the 5th Ward. She said that her educational journey began in this City at Giles B. Cook School, Henry Williams Elementary, and as a member of the first group of students to attend the newly built Westview Elementary School. She later graduated as a proud alumna of the historic Peabody High School class of 1965, the largest graduating class at that time with 208 students.

Ms. Carter stated that she was here today along with her many surviving classmates in strong support of preserving the Peabody Complex buildings as a resource for the future. She explained that they envisioned the Peabody Complex as a vibrant, multi-use community hub designed to serve all citizens, a shared space for community organizations working throughout the City. The centralized space could allow for groups to coordinate more effectively, expand programs, provide educational and vocational training, and build stronger partnerships that lifted up the entire City. She requested City Council to allow this historic complex to be saved, restored, and preserved by the Peabody Academic Learning and Development Center (PALDC).

Judy Bailey, 1105 Woodland Road, stated that as an alumna of Peabody School, she proudly supported the Peabody Academic Learning and Development Center's effort to save, restore, renew, and to have custodial ownership of the Peabody Complex, the first and oldest public high school for Black students in the nation. She noted that the school originated from the First Baptist Church in Petersburg, the oldest Black congregation in the nation. She stated that restoring the school would strengthen their community, as it did years ago by educating students, and its legacy in their Black community's history meant that transforming the school into a community resource would be all the more powerful and meaningful. She requested Council to allow for this positive restoration and repair for the ultimate benefit of their entire City and their people.

Tina Noren, 120 Leavenworth Street, spoke regarding the upcoming FY27 Budget. She asked Council to consider how to address longstanding problems within this budget, specifically focusing on two key things: accurately estimating the increase in revenue from the casino and property taxes; and allocating that increase to departments that had been chronically underfunded. She stated that they needed to make sure they had a clear plan for how they would be allocating any increased revenue. She requested that Council and the City Administration provide clear estimates for revenues and enable department leaders to address infrastructure, services, staffing, quality of life, and pay. She requested more information regarding the opportunities for residents to review and provide feedback on the proposed budget during the budget development process.

Julian Green, 1625 Blair Road, stated that he wanted to invite everyone present to a workshop regarding Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). He explained that ICE was targeting ethnic groups and deporting them, and furthermore, people were losing their lives as a direct consequence of these ICE operations. He emphasized that it was essential for everyone to know their rights in these situations. He invited everyone to attend the workshop at First Baptist Church on Saturday, March 21 at 10:00 a.m., where organization and legal counsel would be giving advice. He stated that everyone needed to be educated on their legal rights as it pertained to ICE coming and taking their neighbors away without letting their families know where they were. He requested that all Council members attend so the community could be aware and cognizant when they had to come into contact with ICE.

Constance Green, 3364 Seton Road, stated that she was here to discuss data centers. She expressed serious concern about the health impacts, environmental pollution, and increased costs that citizens would be subjected to due to data centers. She noted that most surrounding communities were denying and boycotting data centers because of the known hazards and impacts. She stated that considering Petersburg had the highest hospitalization rate for asthma in the state of Virginia, a data center would gravely exacerbate those respiratory problems. She stated that Dr. Webb, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Commissioner met with community health stakeholders on February 26 and discussed improving the health of the most vulnerable populations, acknowledging that Petersburg was the least healthy locality in Virginia. She asked Council to please keep in mind all of the negative impacts data centers could have on each of their lives.

Kyle Dixon, 109 Perry Street, stated that he owned the Cavaliers semi-professional basketball team. He expressed his appreciation for all the support the City and Council had given to their team. He said that the season had started with four away games, and their first home game was this Sunday at 5:00 p.m. at Richard

Bland College. He said that all residents of the City could attend the games for free. He also had shirts to give to Council Members. He stated that he was grateful for the past ten years with the basketball team and for all the support they had received thus far. He hoped to see everyone at the game on Sunday.

Marlo Green, 301 Rolfe Street, stated that she wanted to provide a few updates. She stated that OCR Empowerment Group visited the Jared House on February 26, and she was joined by representatives from Preservation Virginia, the Department of Historic Resources. She was pleased to announce OCR was working on securing funding in collaboration with these organizations. On March 12, she met with Vice Mayor Hill and she thanked him for his inspiring remarks. She noted that they also brought out Virginia Housing, List Virginia, and Cameron Foundation for a tour of the workforce housing project on Pocahontas Island and a mixed-use development project in Old Town. She was excited about the momentum they were gaining throughout the state.

Ms. Green stated that on another topic, she would like to request Council to provide Pocahontas Island residents with a project schedule for the upgrades being made to the water treatment plant. She explained that the work trucks did not appear to be following a set route and were unnecessarily damaging multiple roads. Furthermore, she wanted to be sure they were paying the same as other localities for the services at the treatment plant, and that the City was using their full authority to regulate the schedule and work going on at the plant. Finally, she wanted to request an update on the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) grant and project schedule.

Van Hardenberg, Charles V. Hardenberg, PC, 139 Monroe Street, stated that he was pleasantly surprised at the expedient resolution to their parking issues at their building. He was very impressed that after voicing concerns at the previous City Council meeting about the impacts the courthouse construction was having on their parking, the next morning the City responded and marked parking spots for his firm, and the day after that they erected permanent signs. He thanked Council for doing such a great job.

Bobby Beverly, 2305 Dunedin Drive, stated that on February 26 of this year, the Henrico County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously against building a data center in their area. The citizens passionately expressed their opposition to the venture, standing before them to make their voices heard. In contrast, the City Council in Petersburg voted in favor of a data center, sending a clear message to the 7th Ward and the City as a whole. It was evident that the citizens' voices were being disregarded. He said that on November 3 of this year, he encouraged the citizens of Petersburg to exercise their right to vote and send a message to the Council at the ballot box. He said that leaders must be accountable to the people and respond to their concerns, rather than ignoring them and expecting no consequences. He said that true leadership required listening to the masses and being replaced by more competent and genuinely concerned leaders who prioritized the people's needs.

Barbara Hoosier, 2335 Anderson Street, expressed concerns regarding the Petersburg Health Department's lack of basic services and inconsistency. She stated that for example, people taking medical and childcare jobs were required to take a tuberculosis test, and the Petersburg Health Department simply referred those in need of testing to Patient First in Colonial Heights, or other nearby medical facilities. However, this posed an issue when insurance may not be accepted, and when prospective job candidates may not have cash on hand. She emphasized that this was unacceptable, especially when the City had a local Health Department and had a stigma of being the most unhealthy City in the state. She expressed concern that their Health Department did not offer basic services like blood pressure readings. She requested that Council revitalize the Health Department in order to address the basic needs of this community, and to take an active role by promoting wellness through healthcare, nutrition classes, and educational information.

Eric Sanders, 624 Roberson Street, requested Council to destroy Peabody High School and build a new high school and junior high school.

Paula Chester, 1013 Oakmont Drive, stated that she was here to advocate for improvements to Halifax Triangle. She said that improvements had been made to other historic districts and historical sites, and she firmly believed that the Halifax Triangle should be considered highly. She said that there were many notable historic places in the Halifax Triangle area, and she thought they should consider paving some of the streets and adding planters to beautify that section of the City.

Kerra Stephens, 225 Rolfe Street, stated that there had been an ongoing issue of no parking signs being placed around Pocahontas Island. She stated that recently, one of her family members was stopped and yelled at by a construction truck from the treatment plant at the end of their street, which was unsettling to her. She said that this was unacceptable considering she lived on the street while the driver was coming through their residential area in an oversized vehicle. She requested that Council clarify the project schedule at the treatment plant because currently they seemed to come and go at random. Additionally, she would like to request that the City fix the multiple potholes in their neighborhood as soon as possible. She also announced that OCR Empowerment Group would be hosting an event in April to review the Pocahontas Island master plan for their parks, which would be held in the library. She encouraged everyone to attend and give their input.

Linwood Christian, 633 West Washington Street, thanked their former and current Police Chiefs and Deputy Chief who had been very supportive of him during trying times and made their Police Department look good. He said that additionally, he wanted to say how concerning 2024 had been due to Donald Trump's return to presidential office and because of the many casino commercials that City Council members had appeared in. He stated that Halifax Street was a gateway to the City, and when he looked at the school he attended along with the Vice Mayor and others, it made no sense why it looked the way it currently did, especially compared to their other historic sites in the City. Furthermore, there had been a disturbing lack of commitment from Council with regard to providing recreational opportunities for their youth and senior populations. He requested that Council please take citizens' comments seriously and respond to them as necessary.

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

Council Member Cuthbert announced that he would be holding a Ward 4 meeting at the library on April 9, 5:30 p.m. He said that the agenda would be a continuation from their last ward meeting, which was very productive. They would be discussing development potential on the Chevrolet property acquired by the City, traffic calming measures to reduce speeding, and speed camera installations. He also thanked City staff for installing rumble strips and stop signs to prevent reckless driving and hoped they could install more in the future. He encouraged everyone to attend the Ward 4 meeting in April.

Council Member Jones stated that with regard to the concerns raised about data centers, the City's aim was to diversify revenue and ensure there were no gaps in their services. He asked that all Petersburg citizens focus on unifying their core values. He said that he was willing to follow the public's will when it came to data centers, but he asked that they maintain that same energy when it came to other potentially harmful businesses such as vape shops and guns. He said that they needed to find sources of revenue so that residential taxes did not continue to increase. He said in terms of life expectancy, there were a variety of factors that impacted that. He said that regarding Peabody High School, his time as a student there did not include any dialogue about how great the school was or how encouraging the history should be to them. He stated that he understood the intent of the alumni to preserve the legacy of the school, but he felt they were omitting an important aspect of the history, which was that for some time they chose to leave Peabody behind in favor of integrating with Petersburg High School.

Council Member Westbrook congratulated the Petersburg High School basketball team for their state championship win. He stated that the debate team also did very well in their regional tournament, with four people moving onto the state tournament, which he would be providing updates on over the next month. He noted that he had also taken four Virginia State University (VSU) students to Atlanta for a debate tournament, where they debated whether the United States should constitutionalize the right to vote. He said that VSU won first place for their social justice debates, which he was very proud of. He said that additionally, Read Across America was the first week of March, which was a great opportunity for students to read to their younger counterparts. He stated that he was also participating in peace training with third graders in conjunction with the Nobel Peace Center at Pleasants Lane Elementary. Those students would be deputized as peace agents within the City of Petersburg at the first City Council meeting during May, and he hoped everyone would come out and support them. Finally, there was an arts showcase this past weekend that he unfortunately could not attend but was thankful to have happen for their students. He emphasized that it was everyone's responsibility to support and celebrate their youth.

Council Member Westbrook stated that additionally, he was very happy they received the litter grant and Wilcox Lake grant. He said that the plastic bag tax had been discussed by Council and he wanted to clarify that it had not been forgotten; they were providing more education to the public on the matter before bringing it back to Council to vote on it. He said that he hoped the Wilcox Lake Conservancy could present more information to Council in the near future about all the good work they were doing there. Additionally, it was about time to register kids for summer camps and other Parks and Rec activities. He also asked everyone to please be mindful and cut their grass proactively this spring. Finally, he was proud to visit the Smithsonian and see the new Vanguard exhibit, which included the Bishop Payne Divinity School from Petersburg.

Council Member Myers said that he wanted to thank Human Resources Director Delvont'e Frenzley for assisting him in delivering food to senior citizens in the City. He stated that he also wanted to state that he had recently heard some criticisms about manufactured homes, but he wanted to clarify that those homes were on foundations and were not trailers or mobile homes. Additionally, those homes were meant to provide affordable housing to those who may otherwise be living in hotels. He also thanked Mr. Harris, Mr. D'Aiuto, People's Advantage Federal Credit Union, and Chief Miller for their efforts in providing affordable housing and contributing toward greater community development. He stated that finally, he would be having a Ward meeting in May.

Council Member-Smith Lee thanked everyone for attending tonight's meeting. She also thanked the City Department heads for all their instrumental work in the City. She stated that in response to concerns regarding lack of recreational opportunities for the youth in Petersburg, she could personally attest that Council and many citizens remained committed to providing for their youth. She congratulated the Petersburg High School basketball team for their state championship win after 52 years. She thanked the coaches, staff, and players for all their hard work, as well as the community for supporting them and celebrating them. She asked everyone to please uplift the positive, good things happening in the City rather than dwelling on bad things and negativity.

Vice Mayor Hill congratulated the Petersburg High School basketball team for their incredible win. He said that he also wanted to thank Ms. Williams and their public relations team for their recent newsletter, which highlighted many local businesses. He requested that their Public Works and Code Enforcement address some areas in the City where vacant, private lots were accumulating trash. He stated that there were some ongoing efforts to revitalize the Halifax Triangle area, and details were forthcoming. Furthermore, he wanted to assure the community that Council was actively exploring possible solutions for the historic Peabody High School; however, it would be a major investment and would take time.

Vice Mayor Hill stated that there was concern that there had been a shooting at Legends Park, but he wanted to clarify it was a private incident at a home nearby. He noted that there was pending legislation at the state level to address magazine guns, and while he supported 2nd Amendment rights, he did not think anyone needed a machine gun. He encouraged everyone to have honest conversations with their family and friends about the dangers and impracticality of those types of guns. He stated that he agreed with Council Member

Smith-Lee that they needed to speak more positively; the City was turning ship toward a brighter future and dwelling on negativity was unnecessary.

Mayor Parham thanked Ms. Williams and her staff for the recent newsletter, which was very informative about what was going on in the City. He reminded Council Members that Ms. Nicole Loving was hosting revive training tomorrow at 2:30 p.m. at the Public Works building. He said that following up on Council Member Smith-Lee's comments, he knew that as lifelong Petersburg residents, they were wholeheartedly committed to inspiring and giving positive energy to their youth and school system. He thanked his City Council for bringing Ty White back to Petersburg, who had given an incredible vision to all of their students. His influence had expanded beyond athletics; they had an accredited high school in Petersburg for the first time in years because kids were motivated and hopeful.

Mayor Parham stated that they had wonderful kids in this City, so it was very important to provide them opportunities and encourage them to stay engaged. He stated that they were making incredible progress at all levels, especially considering the dire circumstances they were facing ten years ago. He noted the many important projects that were currently underway and the major improvements that would result. He wanted to let everyone know about the great things going on throughout the City.

11. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

12. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT

a. Department of Finance Monthly Update

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, provided the monthly update. He stated that this update would cover the budget and actual expenditures through the end of February. He said that as of now, 67% of the year had been expended, and overall, they were at 64% of their spend, so they remained on track. He said that the same could be said for their other funds, which were also on track. Council had recently approved an amendment to the Utilities Fund, which would bring that fund back in line as well.

13. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

14. NEW BUSINESS

a. Report from Planning Commission on Potential Proactive Rezoning

Jared Crews, Interim Director of Planning and Community Development, provided a report to Council. He first provided a brief overview of the item. He explained that at their February 3 joint meeting, City Council requested the Planning Commission to identify areas in vicinity of the Entertainment, Resort, and Casino (ERC) District that may be appropriate for proactive, City-initiated rezoning, specifically for redevelopment potential. He reviewed the Planning Commission's considerations, including Future Land Use Map (FLUM) guidance, existing conditions, and whether any additional changes beyond rezoning were appropriate. He provided information on the specific properties and existing conditions analyzed as part of this work, which included 300 Poplar Drive, 230 Medical Park Boulevard, 27 Seyler Drive, and Northwood Subdivision.

Mr. Crews explained that staff had recommended changes to the zoning districts that would accommodate redevelopment, including B-2 General Commercial and MXD3 Mixed Use; however, each had positive and negative aspects in terms of aligning with the Future Land Use Map and how they would impact current zoning and development in these areas. He stated that the Planning Commission recommended MXD3 Mixed Use for all subject properties he had mentioned because it would still require a special use permit for commercial and industrial uses, and residential uses were not included in the district. The proposed uses would be subject to review and approval by the Planning Commission and City Council, and they would have the ability to place conditions on the uses. While they anticipated commercial uses in general in that area, there was some concern around the range of uses in B-2, but he did not believe they would have the ability to prohibit some of the more intensive uses. The Planning Commission also recommended some additional provisions specific to the Northwood Subdivision, such as a special exception process that would allow for existing residences to be rebuilt in the future.

Mr. Crews stated that if a rezoning process was initiated, they would go through a public hearing process through the Planning Commission, notifying adjoining property owners, and then the Council would vote on it. He asked that they keep in mind they were currently rewriting their Zoning Ordinance, so they must ensure they did not create any nonconformities with any rezonings. Furthermore, the FLUM did not account for the casino development, which may mean a review and update of the FLUM itself in the future and acknowledge that designation. Finally, due to the scope of the request and planning involved, the Planning Commission requested for additional time to review these rezonings before giving a formal recommendation.

Council Member Cuthbert asked whether rezoning 230 Medical Park Boulevard would impact the housing development that was planned there. He asked if the City Attorney could provide more information.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that he believed the developer had a strong case to continue with that development even if the City initiated a rezoning right now. The plans for that development had already been approved and they had received a land disturbance permit, so they would likely be grandfathered in.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to direct the Planning Commission to draft an Ordinance implementing their recommendations on page 138 of the agenda packet, to be presented for Council's consideration at the second June meeting of City Council. Vice Mayor Hill seconded the motion.

Council Member Jones asked what "proactive rezoning" meant.

Mr. Crews explained that typically, an owner of a property filed an application to request Council to consider rezoning. For a proactive rezoning, City was initiating the process for the property as opposed to the property owner. In this particular case, Council had requested the Planning Commission to look at these properties, and the property owners were not seeking the rezonings.

Council Member Jones asked why the FLUM did not account for the casino when it had been in talks for years.

Mr. Crews replied that when the Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2024, the location of the casino was unknown, so it was not included on the map.

Council Member Jones asked if these parcels were under City ownership.

Mr. Crews said that these properties were privately owned by different individuals and entities.

Council Member Jones asked why the City was initiating this process for parcels that were privately owned.

Mr. Crews stated that the focus was on the future redevelopment potential for these properties, which currently had low-density uses, such as residential, on pieces of property that were anticipated to become prime real estate. He said that having low-income apartments on a parcel may not be the best and highest use of the property for the City.

Council Member Jones asked how close the scenario he had just described was to gentrification. He said that the definition of gentrification seemed to be closely aligned with what Mr. Crews had described. He said that it was not the City's property; yet they were initiating a rezoning. He mentioned that they were not wanting certain projects in that area because of low-income concerns, which sounded like gentrification to him. He said that if it was on the City, then they should take responsibility for it. He asked why they were rezoning now, rather than earlier when they had the opportunity to. He said that he understood there may not be an answer to that question.

Vice Mayor Hill said that on Seyler Lane, his constituents had learned that there were plans to develop an apartment complex right behind the existing residences, and he had received a lot of feedback that they did not want an apartment complex in their backyards. He said that there were also other medical uses in the surrounding area, so the apartments were not the most appropriate use of the area. He said that he thought they had to get ahead of these things before they happened. He said that it was not about gentrification, but about the best use of the property and considering the surrounding uses of the property. He said that he had asked City leaders to look into this because of that issue.

Mayor Parham called the vote on the motion to direct the Planning Commission to draft an Ordinance that implemented their recommendations on page 138 and hold a public hearing, presenting it to Council at the second Council meeting in June.

The motion was approved on a roll call vote.

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

b. Resolution to Authorize Bona Fide Offer to Purchase 230 Medical Park Blvd. for Police Substation

Anthony Williams, City Attorney stated that this item pertained to 230 Medical Park Boulevard, which was also part of the last item presented by Mr. Crews. He stated that 235 Medical Park Boulevard was owned by the City and currently being developed into a new fire station. He stated that Council had suggested that the City look into buying this property and putting a police substation there. However, permits had already been issued for development on this parcel and the owner of the property was unlikely to sell. He stated that the Resolution before Council this evening would authorize the City Manager to make an offer on the property. In order to acquire a property by condemnation, they must first make a bona fide offer to purchase the property based on an appraisal of that property, and the Resolution began that process.

Council Member Jones stated that building on his previous comments regarding the City's actions verging on gentrification, this item appeared to him that the City was verging on acts of gangsterism. He stated that he had an issue with the idea of putting a police substation at this location because they had just recently built a new structure for their Police Department, and they had not even moved in there yet. Now, they were considering offering money in order to build a substation here, or else they would take it by eminent domain. He stated that Council represented the citizens of the City, and he did not think any of them wanted their property taken. He emphasized that it was simply wrong to do this, based on principle. He expressed concern that the group developing this parcel had been denied applications by Council before, and it appeared that they were poised to do the same thing to them again. He stated that this action would be putting the City behind in terms of political and moral progress. He noted that the City had the opportunity to do this before the developer bought the property.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Resolution to Authorize the Bona Fide Offer to Purchase 230 Medical Park Boulevard for a Police Substation. 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, Westbrook, Smith-Lee, and Hill, no: Jones and Parham; abstain: Myers.

c. Travel Inn Site Deed Restrictions

Kenneth Miller, Deputy City Manager, provided a brief summary of the item. He stated that before Council was a proposed Resolution to approve Travel Inn deed restrictions. For background, the City had received an IRF grant for $750,000 to demolish Travel Inn. The deed restriction stipulated that the grant could only be used for an economic development.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Travel Inn Deed Restrictions. 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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

d. Presentation and Update on the 2026 Employee Health Insurance

Mary Jones with One Digital gave a presentation to Council. She stated that One Digital had been working with the City for a few years regarding employee benefits. She stated that the renewal this year was July 1, 2026. She reviewed some of the changes that would be occurring with this Local Choice renewal, including a 13.2% increase, pharmacy tier changes for Key Advantage plans, employee assistance program (EAP), and renewal selections, which were due by April 1, 2026. She stated that there were two options before Council today, the first, Option A, would be to keep the plan as-is and the contribution would remain the same, sharing the increase with the employees. The total increase was $830,988, with $704,268 shared by the City and $126,720 to employees. The second scenario, Option B, would have the same total increase, but the City would absorb the entire $830,988 and the employee contribution would remain flat. She stated that the second option was recommended by One Digital and by the City Administration.

Council Member Jones said that he understood the total increase, but he asked if Ms. Jones could provide information on what the City had previously paid.

Ms. Jones said that she did not have that information.

Council Member Jones stated that the numbers were concerning, and they needed to know what previous number was. He asked if that could be provided as a follow-up. He said that somewhat related, he was curious whether their local pharmaceutical businesses could somehow contribute to the increases they were seeing for their employee benefits. He asked if this still included the City's previous plan in which they covered 50% of all employees' health insurance.

Ms. Jones confirmed that it did.

Council Member Jones made a motion to proceed with Option B. 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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

15. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT AND SPECIAL REPORTS

Kenneth Miller, Deputy City Manager, stated that enrollment for their summer youth internship program was open and he encouraged any interested youth to apply.

Council Member Jones asked Deputy City Manager Miller how they could begin to look at implementing a 3% pay increase for their Public Works employees.

Deputy City Manager Miller replied that staff could research that and provide follow-up information next month.

16. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK

Tangi Hill, City Clerk, announced that City Council will hold a special meeting on March 24 at 5:00 p.m. This meeting will serve as a public hearing for the tax assessment. There will also be a special joint meeting with Petersburg Public Schools for the FY27 work session, scheduled for March 31 at 6:30 p.m. She said that both meetings will be held in the event center at the library.

17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that he had no report this evening.

18. ADJOURNMENT

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

The City Council adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Adopted: 04/07/2026

Samuel Parham

Mayor, Samuel Parham

ATTEST:

Tangi R. Hill

Clerk of Council, Tangi R. Hill