

The Work Session of the Petersburg City Council was held on April 7, 2026, at Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 5:20 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/381385>

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
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 PROCLAMATION

a. National Black Bookstore Day

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation recognizing April 7 as National Black Bookstore Day.

Demetrius Frazier, owner of Resist Bookstore, accepted the proclamation and gave remarks.

b. Child Abuse Prevention Month

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation recognizing the month of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

William D'Aiuto, Director of Social Services, accepted the proclamation and gave remarks.

c. Petersburg High School Boys Basketball Team Championship Proclamation

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation Honoring the Petersburg high School Crimson Wave 2026 VHSL Class 3 Boys Basketball Championship.

Ty White, Head Coach of Petersburg High School boys' basketball team, accepted the proclamation and gave remarks.

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Bobby Beverly spoke regarding the position of Mayor and Vice Mayor on City Council. He stated that currently, these positions were elected from the current sitting Council Members, and this policy was part of the City Charter. He said that citizens could petition to change the City Charter, which required 10% of City voters to begin the process. He stated that the ceremonial mayor should not conduct business on behalf of the City; that duty belongs to the City Manager. He said that Mayor, Vice Mayor, and Council Members should not have contracts with any business, but it does occur. He said that in many instances, local government was more corrupt than state and federal governments. He encouraged everyone to vote to replace the current sitting Council Members in Wards 1, 3, 5, and 7 this November.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, commended the City Assessor Mary Williams and the appraiser Shannon Griffin. She explained that she successfully appealed her initial real estate tax assessment and greatly appreciated all the help she had received from the Assessor and City staff.

Marlo Green, 301 Rolfe Street, asked for an update on Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) project UPC124714. She said that Pocahontas Island residents were very excited for this project to enhance the Appomattox River Trail and add a parking lot, but she wondered if it would be delayed by the water treatment plant's current use of the laydown yard. She asked for clarity on the agreement related to the treatment plant's use of 150 Saponi Street and clarification on Jones Paving, which had expanded beyond its normal site to the Roper site. This was a concern because they had received \$2.5 million from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) for that site. She expressed concern that her community had been encroached upon by industrial development for a while now and it was getting worse.

Ms. Green stated that speaking on behalf of OCR Empowerment Group, she wanted to inform Council that they had an upcoming master plan meeting on April 27, 2026, from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at the Petersburg Library. The master plan will be for the Pocahontas Island parks and green spaces, which was separate from the trails. They had engaged Timmons Group to develop the master plan and implementation later this year. She encouraged everyone to give their opinion on what they wanted to see on the Island.

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

a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- March 17, 2026, Closed Session
- March 17, 2026, Regular Council Meeting

b. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Approve a Request by Harry Bawa, Pinetree Apartments LLC, on Behalf of Chanmeet Signh LLC, for a Special Use Permit for Multiple-Family Dwellings as Authorized and Controlled by the R-5 Multiple Dwelling District Standards at 3060 and 3090 Pinetree Drive, Parcel IDs 059010806 and 059010807 in the B-2 General Commercial District

- c. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing the Vacation of Right-of-Way to Support the Construction of a New Courthouse
- d. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Granting Dominion Power an Easement for Overhead Power to Support the Construction of the New Courthouse
- e. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Granting Dominion Power an Easement for Underground Power to Support the Construction of the New Courthouse
- f. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 General Fund, Grants Fund, & Golf Fund

Council Member Myers made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. 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.

8. SPECIAL REPORTS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

9. MONTHLY REPORTS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

10. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT

a. Accounts Receivable Aging Report

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, presented a report on the outstanding funds owed to the City of Petersburg. He explained that for real property, the statute of limitations to collect real property is 20 years, so the list goes back to Fiscal Year 07. Over the last 20 years, with the majority being from the last fiscal year, the City was still owed \$5,178,003 in real property receivables. Approximately half of the 13,000 taxpayer accounts were sent directly to taxpayers, and the other half were sent to mortgage companies. There were 215 past due accounts in foreclosure proceedings, and those accounts totaled \$1,744,642 in delinquent taxes. There were 95 taxpayers on payment plans, which totaled \$816,768.

Mr. Cozier continued to review the personal property receivables report, noting that state code limited the collection of these taxes to five years. The total amount of outstanding personal property was \$10,819,415 from FY 21 through FY 25. He stated that the collections team introduced three- and six-month payment plans to boost payments and results of that initiative were pending. He then discussed the meals tax receivables report, which totaled \$412,564 from FY 21 through FY 25. Their lodging tax receivables totaled \$10,214 from FY 21 through FY 25.

Mr. Cozier stated that the utility accounts receivable totaled \$10,230,340 from FY 21 through FY 25. He explained that one of the City's audit findings was regarding the utility subsidiary ledger reconciliation, which was being addressed. The utility reconciliation process documentation was nearly finished, guaranteeing that data stayed accurate and aligned with the general ledger. Finally, he discussed key performance indicators (KPI) for tax accounts and utility billing. He noted that they had been on the right track over the past couple of years, with results exceeding their targeted amounts.

Council Member Cuthbert disagreed with Mr. Cozier's assessment that the City was on the right trajectory. He said that these outstanding amounts totaled over \$25 million. He asked if Mr. Altman could provide more information on what they were doing to correct this issue.

City Manager Altman noted that there was nothing staff could do to compel people to pay their bills. Once there was nonpayment, they could begin the process of ensuring payment was made and getting them current. He stated that Mr. Cozier had referred to collections versus their budgeted amounts had improved over the past few years. He said that ultimately, the City would need to engage with collection agencies to assist with collecting the past due amounts. However, they likely could not recover the full amounts due to a variety of factors, and that should be kept in mind.

Mr. Cozier noted that the outstanding amounts for the Utility Fund were in a separate fund from the other taxes.

Council Member Cuthbert emphasized that if they could collect the \$10 million owed for utilities, they could avoid further utility rate increases. He asked staff what their plan was to collect these amounts.

City Manager Altman stated that staff would engage collection agencies to assist them in collecting those dollars.

Council Member Cuthbert asked how this amount became so large.

City Manager Altman replied that to his knowledge, it appeared to be a lack of payment from customers, combined with the City's potential failure to aggressively pursue collections after the fact.

Council Member Cuthbert asked what they would do differently moving forward to reduce this number.

City Manager Altman answered that they could work with citizens to get them caught up on payments, but for amounts past due, they needed to consider utilizing collection agencies to assist beyond staff's current capabilities.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if they shut off utilities for nonpayment.

City Manager Altman stated that they had not done that since his time here. He noted that a moratorium on utility shut-offs was placed during the COVID-19 pandemic and he was unsure whether that had ever been formally lifted. He stated that he thought that if they were going to be more aggressive in their approach, it was crucial to understand the circumstances and the steps involved in shutting off the water. He acknowledged that it was one of the tools at their disposal, but they should be strategic in their methods.

Council Member Cuthbert acknowledged state statute limited their ability to shut off water during cold and hot weather periods, and he supported that. However, there were times when it may be appropriate to shut off water in order to collect payments. He said that considering the utility's customers who paid their bills on time, he did not believe the City administration should allow others to receive water for free. He said that with \$10 million uncollected, the City needed to do something to rectify the situation.

City Manager Altman asked if he could return to Council at their May work session with some proposed solutions for addressing the large collections and moving forward to tackle these numbers, with the goal of reducing them.

Council Member Cuthbert said that he would greatly appreciate that. He said that the City must be proactive in addressing these past due bills. He asked when the last foreclosure sale was held to satisfy past due real estate taxes owed to the City.

Mr. Cozier replied that he did not have that date available right now.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if the City Manager could provide that information at their next work session.

City Manager Altman confirmed that he would.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if Mr. Williams could address the two-year waiting period for starting the collections process for past due bills.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney answered that generally, localities in the state must follow that waiting period, although certain localities with a fiscal stress index rating of 100 or higher based on the DHCD Fiscal Index Report from July 2020 were able to collect after six months of delinquency. He said that he believed Petersburg fell into the latter category.

Council Member Cuthbert asked the City Manager if there was something they could do in that regard.

City Manager Altman confirmed that they could begin sending six-month past due properties to their collection agent to work on.

Mayor Parham thanked Mr. Cozier and his staff for all their work. He asked if the Commissioner of the Revenue would like to provide some insight into the discussion.

Brittany Flowers, Commissioner of the Revenue, clarified that for personal property tax, if they took people's state income taxes, their collection rate would go up, and if they did DMV stops, their collection rate would go up. She explained that for meals tax, nonpayment was considered embezzlement of funds. To that end, her office had been working with the Commonwealth Attorney, Department of Taxation to collect those taxes. She emphasized that the collections could be achieved internally rather than externally.

Council Member Cuthbert asked why the personal property receivables totaled almost \$11 million.

Ms. Flowers clarified that her office did not collect those amounts; she was providing suggestions for how the City could better collect what was owed, which she was familiar with from her previous work in the Treasurer's Office, but the City had not implemented the DMV stops or income tax diversions for a long time. She said that because meals tax was a trust tax, nonpayment was a felony, and because of that she involved the Commonwealth Attorney, which was a very effective method for resolving those outstanding balances. She reiterated that she wanted to share her perspective on what she knew was possible for internal collection processes.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if it was correct that the City had not been doing DMV stops or income tax collection.

Ms. Flowers confirmed that was correct; they had not done those for multiple years.

Council Member Cuthbert expressed concern that the City was not utilizing every available tool to solve this massive issue.

City Manager Altman affirmed that he would discuss those tools when he brought back information on this topic at Council's May work session.

11. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

12. UTILITIES

a. Public Works & Utilities Monthly Report

March Altman, City Manager, stated that Mr. Williams was unable to attend the meeting due to illness, and the monthly report was included in the meeting packet.

13. STREETS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

14. FACILITIES

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

15. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

16. CITY MANAGER'S AGENDA

March Altman, City Manager, stated that he had no report this evening.

17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK

Tangi Hill, Clerk of Council, announced that the Community Housing Resource Fair will be held on Thursday, April 9, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. and again from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. at the Petersburg Library. For those interested in learning more, this event was a collaboration between Petersburg Public Schools, Peoples Advantage Helping Hands, and City Council Member Howard Myers. More information was available on the City's website. Additionally, on April 9, Council Member Cuthbert will be hosting a ward meeting in the multi-purpose room adjacent to the library. She said that on April 14, Mayor Parham will be hosting a joint ward meeting with Chair Pritchett, which will take place at Walnut Hill. This information was also available on the City's website.

18. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY

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

19. 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 6:20 p.m.

Adopted: May 5, 2026

APPROVED:



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk