

The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on June 2, 2026 at Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 5:17 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/389824>

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. **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Pamela Bingham, 1717 West Princeton Road, stated that she lived in the Camelot neighborhood near the high school. Although she had not been attending Council meetings in person, she had been following online discussions when possible. As dedicated taxpayer and citizen, she was compelled to speak out tonight due to concerns she recently learned about in her community meeting. She said that she strongly felt that the Council's decision to approve the data center in Ramblewood had severely eroded the trust of the citizenry. She said that in general, she was opposed to data centers in residential areas due to the numerous adverse impacts they could have. Although they still did not fully understand the environmental implications, there were confirmed significant effects on water, energy, and noise. She was shocked that they all would choose to locate a data center in a residential area, and she believed this decision had irreparably damaged the trust of the citizens they represented.

Ms. Bingham said that the lack of community engagement, particularly in the late stages of the decision-making process, was unacceptable. She noted that there had been an entire campaign to let the community learn about the casino project, but there was no campaign for the data centers. She thought this meant some of the members of Council should lose their seats in the next election, as this action never should have been

supported. She said that as an engineer and a strong advocate for technology, she was not opposed to data centers in principle; however, she was strongly against their placement in residential areas and the potential impacts. She said that she was also a member of the Wilcox Watershed Conservancy, the Virginia Conservation Network, and several other organizations. She was deeply concerned about the lack of community engagement with regard to this decision and would now be actively fighting against the data center. She said that they would utilize their resources, both statewide and nationally, to address this issue.

Ms. Bingham said that she would like to bring attention to her second concern, the America 250 campaign. She said that initially, it was not focused on people like herself, but what she had always loved about Petersburg was that this was the first free Black community. She was glad to see sisters from Pocahontas Island here, and she thought it should be included in every celebration of America's 250th Anniversary. She said that however, in all of the brochures and advertising for the events, there was nothing about Petersburg, save for a single mention of their historic hotel. She questioned why their City's tourism was not represented in the statewide materials. She stated that this needed to be remedied.

Sonja Holt-Cartwright, 2035 Colston Street, said that she served as the Ward 2 representative on the City of Petersburg Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Advisory Board, and she stood before them tonight to submit her resignation from that position, effective July 31, 2026. She had been appointed by Council in 2023 to a four-year term, and during her time on the Board, she had observed a consistent pattern of Advisory Board recommendations being overridden, funding being reallocated away from critical home repairs, proposed award amounts being reduced, and in one instance, funds being directed to an organization that did not apply for them.

Ms. Holt-Cartwright said that as recipients of federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding, they had taken an oath to be faithful stewards of those dollars on behalf of this community. She could no longer serve in a role that did not honor this oath. She also stood before Council as a resident of Ward 2. She explained that on July 14, 2025, almost a year ago, her home sustained damage from City drainage failures. A tree root blockage in the City's drainage line had been confirmed by City crews; her crawl space had flooded, her dehumidifier had been destroyed, and mold was now growing in her home. Cracks were forming in the walls, and her family's health and safety were at risk.

Ms. Holt-Cartwright said that over the last 12 months, she had contacted and been in contact with the Departments of Utilities, Stormwater, Street Operations, Risk Management, the Vice Mayor's office, the Deputy City Manager, and the City Manager. She had received apologies, commitments, and promises to advocate, but none of these had been kept. No one had taken accountability or responsibility, instead, they had passed the buck. She said that City Manager Altman had told her, "Our job is to improve the lives of the people in our community." She firmly believed this, and she held this Council accountable to the duty they had taken, to the oath they had taken to the people of this City, to improve the lives of all the people in this City. She stated that she was one resident who knew how to make a call, but there were many residents who did not. She said that she wanted every resident in this room to know that they had the power in this City. According to the city of Petersburg's own organizational chart, residents sat at the top. Therefore, she implored Council to do right by the residents in this City.

Kerra Stephens, 228 Rolfe Street, said that she would like to take a moment to speak on a few matters that she had already addressed. She said that the trail has been looking better and better, and she would like to thank the City for that improvement. However, they were still missing trash cans, which was a concern. She encouraged everyone to join in their upcoming cleanup event on Juneteenth this month, and the trash cans would be helpful to have by that point. She said that she would also like to mention a local resident who recently power washed the bridge on their trail, which had greatly improved its appearance.

Ms. Stephens said that on another matter, she would like to bring attention to a home located at 228 Witten Street, which was currently vacant and in disrepair. Unfortunately, it had become a shelter for local wildlife,

including a family of raccoons, the ceiling had collapsed, and vegetation was creeping onto adjacent properties. She said that she also wanted to bring up the heavy trucks that were coming through the neighborhood. She understood there was a plan with the treatment plant, and that the Roper site was planned to become a green space. She asked if there was any plan or timeline for what was happening with the Roper site, because it was looking stagnant and the community wanted to know what would be done to move forward without the bypass road. She said in summary, she was requesting the trash cans, an update on the Roper site, and for everyone to join in their cleanup event on Juneteenth.

Ajani Sekou, 27 South Sycamore Street, said that he was intrigued that the budget and CDBG program were both raised in previous comments, because he had been seeking grants for building facade improvements and found there was nothing available. He said that he also noticed that Visit Petersburg had one of the largest budgets in the City, but if they were not advertising effectively, then those funds would be better spent on other initiatives and citizens who could promote the City. The marketing and other tourism-related decisions did not align with what they were trying to promote in the City, and while they were trying their best, the money was not being used effectively. He said that he agreed with Council Member Cuthbert that they needed more transparency on where exactly their funds were going, especially as they all worked to keep the City on a positive trajectory. He requested assistance and transparency from Council as they continued to work together.

Barb Rudolph, 1675 Mount Vernon Street, stated that she had a couple of concerns regarding the relationship between the City Council and City government with the School Division. She said that the first issue that had come to mind was the budgeting process. She said that recently, the School Division had come to city council to appropriate \$2 million from the previous year to spend it. She said that on both occasions, City Council had given them a thorough questioning. She said that what she heard from Council was that they believed the schools should have spent all the money and there should not have been a remaining balance. She said that however, she thought it was worth noting that when the City Manager came to Council with a balance of some number, they did not grill them about their spending because they knew it would add to the balance and improve their bond rating, allowing them to borrow money for future projects. She said that the point was that the Council should not treat the schools differently because they did not have an incentive to scrutinize their spending. She said that the schools should be getting a benefit in terms of allowing them to use their balances for capital projects.

Ms. Rudolph said that she was not sure if this concern had been derailed by the athletic center, but she did think there was a double standard at play. She said that her second concern was the overall funding of the schools. While the proposed budget provided the schools with several hundred thousand dollars more than they received in the current year, their funding had been relatively flat compared to the City's increasing revenues. They all believed that investing in their Schools was crucial for the development and progress of their children and the City, and she urged Council to put some money behind it. She said that she thought it was essential to treat the schools with the same level of support and funding that Council gave to the City's own direct supports.

Marlo Green, Rolfe Street, said that she would like to provide a few updates on the OCR Community Empowerment Group. Firstly, on May 26, OCR was recognized by Friends of the Lower Appomattox (FOLAR), as a community partner. She said that they received an award, which was accepted by Delegate Kimberly Pope Adams, one of their board members and treasurer, on their behalf. Secondly, on May 30, they hosted their first forest bathing experience on Pocahontas Island, which drew around 25 to 30 participants. She said that Trina Roberts from the Breathe Bar led the meditation and sound bath, followed by a tea session where they discussed Pocahontas Island and their experiences. She said that lastly, she would like to mention their upcoming cleanup on Juneteenth in partnership with FOLAR. They will be working together to remove invasive species and needed volunteers to help with the cleanup. The event will take place on Juneteenth at 149 Rolfe Street from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. She said that she would be providing

snacks, and she hoped to see some City officials join them. She said that she would like to share a bonus update regarding the Jarratt House historic marker. She said that in terms of fundraising they had raised \$3,500 to close the gap, which was a significant achievement.

Ms. Green explained that the historic marker would highlight the intersection of Native American and African American history, including Lavinia Sampson and Richard Jarratt, a freed Black man who owned a boat called the Jolly Sailor in the 1800s. She said that she was hoping to secure Council support to make this project a reality. Once she submitted the documents, she would be relocating to the Library of Virginia next week to gather the supporting documents, as they required actual record retrieval. She said that she was hoping to secure City support with this initiative. Following that, they would have an unveiling event. She said that she would keep Council updated on the progress. After this Saturday, they would be resuming their Turtle Club each Saturday, and she encouraged everyone to attend those meetings when possible.

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

a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- May 19, 2026 Closed Session Minutes
- May 19, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes
- May 26, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes

- b. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Approving a Request by the City of Petersburg to Rezone Property at 300 Poplar Drive, Parcel ID 082020004, and 27 Seyler Drive, parcel ID 088020003, from the R-1 Single Family Residence and R-4 Multiple Dwelling Districts to the MXD-3 Mixed Use District in Accordance with Code of Virginia Section 15.2-2286 and Article 28 of the City of Petersburg Zoning Ordinance
- c. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Joseph Crawford, J Crawford LLC, to Appeal a Decision Made by the Architectural Review Board to Deny Previously-Completed Removal of Chimneys and Replacement Roof at 224 South South Street in the Folly Castle Historic District
- d. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Approving a Request by Erin Schaefer to Rezone Property at 608 Hinton Street, Parcel ID 02310006 from the M-1 Light Industrial District of the R-3 Two-Family Residence District
- e. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing to Approve the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds for Program Year 2026 - 2027 and Fiscal Year 2027 as Recommended by the CDBG Advisory Board
- f. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Approving a Request by Bernard Harper, on Behalf of Club 17 Charitable Foundation Inc., to Rezone with Proffers Property at 507 South Adams Street, Parcel ID 03113001 from the R-3 Two-Family Residence District to the B-2 General Commercial District
- g. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 General Fund and the FY26 Grants Fund
- h. First Read and Schedule a Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend and Re-Adopt Section 2-422 of the City Code and Adding Section 2-422.1 to the City Code, As Amended, to Increase the Contracting Limits for Professional Services and Job Order Contracting

- i. An Ordinance Amendment to Amend Section 106-112 of the City Code for Exemptions to the Elderly and Disabled Tax Relief

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

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, Hill, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A; absent: Smith-Lee.

7. SPECIAL REPORTS

- b. Presentation on Program Year 2026 CDBG Advisory Board Recommendations

Jennifer Murphy James, staff person for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, gave a presentation. She provided a brief overview of the Community Development Block Grant, a federal fund administered by the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Department. The program's objectives included benefiting low to moderate-income persons in the City, preventing or eliminating slums or blight, and meeting the urgent needs of the community when other funds were not available, and the goals included creating a sustainable living environment, providing decent housing, and promoting economic opportunity. The expected outcomes of a project were to create availability, accessibility, affordability, and sustainability.

Ms. James explained that the entire City of Petersburg qualified as a Citywide service area for Block Grant funds. As a result of their successful program implementation this year, they were eligible for Section 108 Loan funds, and if the City chose to utilize those funds, they were eligible for approximately \$1.9 million from HUD. The City had been awarded \$586,394.00 from HUD for this upcoming program year in Fiscal Year 2027. They were required to submit their annual action plan for the year two of their five-year consolidated plan to HUD by August 16. It was important to note that during their last program year, they had exceeded the 15% cap on supporting public service projects by 4.66%, which limited their ability to fund additional public service projects in the upcoming year.

Ms. James said that they had carryover funds from a canceled project, totaling approximately \$201,548.90, which needed to be reallocated this program year. In previous years, the City had consistently hit its 20% cap on administrative service costs, which was something they needed to keep in mind as they moved forward. One of the key areas they would focus on was meeting HUD's priority goals, which had been addressed by the current administration. These goals included reducing barriers to homeownership, investing in communities with opportunity zones, promoting self-sufficiency, and homelessness.

Ms. James stated that after reviewing 38 applications, the Advisory Board identified their top projects as project:Homes, the McKenney Foundation, Rebuilding Together Richmond, and the CDBG Administration. The recommended award for project:Homes was \$115,000, which will be used for housing rehabilitation, a critical home repair project that aligns with HUD's guidelines. The McKenney Library was recommended to receive an award of \$250,000 for historic preservation and rehabilitation to avoid blight. Rebuilding Together Richmond focused on critical home repair and housing rehabilitation, and their recommended award for this project was \$115,000. The Community Development Block Grant Administration included training and administrative fees and was recommended for \$106,394 in funding.

Ms. James said that the total funding recommended for these projects was \$586,394. For carryover funds, the runners-up in the scoring rubric were River Street Education, Lending Helping Hands, and ThisAbility. River Street Education qualified under the economic development and micro-enterprise category, while Lending Helping Hands falls under providing services for the homeless. ThisAbility falls under self-sufficiency, providing support to families with youth and children with disabilities. The total funds recommended for these programs are \$201,548.90, divided equally among the three programs.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if Rebuilding Together Richmond was a program specific to the City of Richmond.

Ms. James clarified that it was a regional not-for-profit organization that operated within the Crater District and the Greater Richmond area. She confirmed that the program provided services to the City of Petersburg.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if the CDBG program followed up with award recipients to ensure the projects were completed.

Ms. James confirmed she received updates as the work progressed and visited the projects once they were completed.

8. MONTHLY REPORTS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

9. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

10. CAPITAL PROJECTS UPDATE

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

11. UTILITIES

a. Department of Public Works and Utilities - June 2026

Randall Williams, Assistant Director of Public Works provided the monthly report for the Public Works and Utilities Division for the month of May. Their general work included water and sewer services, such as water main repairs, assessments, water taps, and service upgrades, as well as sewer backups assessments and water taps. They also had a few emergency repairs, including putting the West Street fire hydrant back in service. Regarding the Sycamore Street sewer replacement and repair, they replaced approximately 70 to 100 feet of 18-inch sewer pipe and would be lining the pipe to prevent future issues. They also repaired a 12-inch water line on Washington Street in late May.

Mr. Williams reported that in terms of drainage maintenance and roadway safety, the Street Operations Division had high-priority drainage locations around the city that they continually worked on. One example was the drainage work done at 652 Old Wagner Road. The Washington Street water main break was also addressed, and their Utilities and Streets Divisions worked together to establish a traffic plan for West Washington Street. Other City projects currently underway included Phase 1 of the Commissioner of Revenue Office, where they had completed the initial setup and were also preparing for Phase 2, which would involve further enclosing the Office to protect sensitive information.

Mr. Williams stated that additionally, they were in the process of removing old playground equipment at Lakemont Elementary School and leveling the area, and would be repairing the fence around the baseball

field. One of their larger projects was the Market Street Fire Station, which involved both interior and exterior work. They had worked closely with the Fire Chief and their contractor to ensure everything was upgraded sufficiently on the interior. The exterior apron had been successfully repaired, along with some interior spots in the bay and some doors replaced.

Vice Mayor Hill asked the City Manager if aging infrastructure was the main factor in the water main breaks they had been experiencing, or if there were other issues that were causing the breaks.

March Altman, City Manager, confirmed that aging infrastructure was the primary cause, particularly because some of their infrastructure was over 100 years old. They were researching ways to prevent future breaks such as slip-lining within the pipes; however, they would certainly be digging up and replacing the entirety of those aging lines throughout the City. In other instances, contractors may accidentally hit water lines when working on other projects, but the primary issue was their very old infrastructure.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if they had a prioritization of water and wastewater system components that should be proactively replaced.

City Manager Altman confirmed that they should be looking at proactive replacement, rather than constantly reacting to breaks.

Mr. Williams noted that over the past 18 months to two years, Tri-State Utilities had conducted assessments in various locations to identify which pipes could be slip-lined to prevent breaks. He confirmed that they had already done some of that proactive work, but there was more that needed to be done.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if it would be appropriate to include a line item in their capital budget for proactive water and wastewater pipe replacement.

City Manager Altman replied absolutely. He said that they would continue to fund slip-lining installations with their Utilities Fund, and their rate increases had allowed them to take out bonds for proactive replacements in addition to the work already underway.

Council Member Cuthbert asked for an update on stormwater charges being included on real estate bills.

City Manager Altman clarified that he was not sure they would ever have enough funds to address all the stormwater issues, as that was a very significant expense. He said that at some point, they may have had to consider the true cost of implementing this proactive measure. He said that he knew this was not ideal, but they may have to explore the fee structure to make it more feasible. He said that the City Attorney and he had been discussing the possibility of creating an ordinance or simply making the necessary change through a resolution, which would be brought to Council at their June 16 meeting.

12. SPECIAL REPORTS (CONTINUED)

- a. Metropolitan Business League -- Demetria Harris, Small Business and Community Engagement Manager, Metropolitan Business League

Demetria Harris, Small Business and Community Engagement Manager for the Metropolitan Business League, provided a report to Council. She reported that in February, she began her role with the Metropolitan Business League, and she had the opportunity to attend the Small Business Supplier Diversity Construction Conference. This event served as a baseline for building rapport with subcontractors in the City of Petersburg and the region. She had been working to track subcontractors

who were able to secure contracts with the Live Casino project and had been hosting meetings in the City to expand their reach. They had been hosting approximately 35 subcontractors per month, and contracts were being awarded.

Ms. Harris stated that they planned to disseminate this information to the community, as it became available. Additionally, they were working to remove barriers for companies and contractors who may not be able to bid or needed assistance with bidding and other resources to get them up to par. They were partnering with organizations in the city to provide these resources and support; their goal was to ensure that no business was left behind. If they were not yet ready to bid, the Metropolitan Business League was committed to providing the necessary resources to help them get up to speed.

Ms. Harris said that she had recently met with AnderCorp and Davis Brothers Construction, and they were currently seeking bids for construction, HVAC, electricians, and pavers. As they progressed, they would share information with the community about other opportunities that became available. They were on track to meet the 30% threshold, and she would continue to share her reports with the City Council on a monthly basis.

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

City Manager Altman stated that he would like to bring up two items. He stated that OCR was recently recognized by Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR), and the City of Petersburg was recognized for their work to maintain the river and its tributaries and streams. He stated that they received the FOLAR Chairman Service Award at their annual meeting, which he was pleased to accept on behalf of the City. He reported that staff participated at a staff advance meeting at Richard Bland College, and he thanked their hosts for allowing them to use the facility. He stated that they began the process of developing the Strategic Plan, which they planned to bring back to Council at their July meeting for review and approval. He thanked Council for their support and to their Senator for ensuring the City had the opportunity to utilize available funding for local initiatives.

17. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CLERK

Tangi Hill, City Clerk, stated that she had no report this evening.

18. BUSINESS OR REPORTS FROM THE CITY ATTORNEY

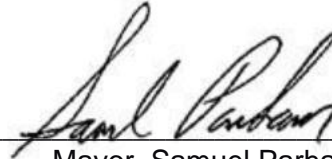
Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that he had no report this evening.

19. ADJOURNMENT

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

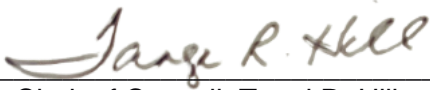
The City Council adjourned at 6:11 p.m.

Adopted: 6/16/2026



Mayor, Samuel Parham

ATTEST:



Clerk of Council, Tangi R. Hill