

The regular meeting of the Petersburg City Council was held on July 21, 2026 at Petersburg Public Library. Mayor Parham called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The meeting video link is <https://petersburgva.new.swagit.com/videos/394080>

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:

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. Proclamation Honoring Walt's Automotive and Electric in Recognition of Thirty-Eight Years of Dedicated Service in the City of Petersburg, Virginia

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation Honoring Walt's Automotive and Electric in Recognition of Thirty-Eight Years of Dedicated Service in the City of Petersburg, Virginia.

Walt Parham accepted the proclamation.

- b. Proclamation Honoring the Life, Legacy, and Service of Walter Hamlin "B" Brown III

Mayor Parham presented the Proclamation Honoring the Life, Legacy, and Service of Walter Hamlin "B" Brown III.

Members of the Blandford Boys accepted the proclamation and gave remarks.

6. PRESENTATION

a. Introduction and Updates of the Wilcox Watershed Conservatory -- Matthew Whalen, President

Matthew Whalen, 2032 Matoax Avenue, President of Wilcox Watershed Conservancy, gave a presentation. He stated that he was before Council today to reintroduce and to suggest a few opportunities moving forward for the City and the Wilcox Watershed Conservancy. He reported that the Wilcox Watershed Conservancy was in a rebuilding phase. The Wilcox Watershed Conservancy was a nonprofit that had been established in 2007, dedicated to the preservation and restoration of Petersburg Legends Historical Park. With over 330 acres of green space in the city, it was the largest contiguous green space that the City owned and operated, and it contained a variety of sites relevant to their geology, history, biology, and recreational opportunities. He explained that they were in the midst of revamping their strategic plan, but the current plan's first goal was to maintain, improve, and preserve Petersburg Legends Historical Park and promote its natural and cultural beauty.

Mr. Whalen said that Conservancy members were excited about the recent efforts from the City to refurbish the playground area with the new basketball courts and tennis courts. The City had started to pursue funding to restore the trail network with a goal of connecting the two sides of the park, and there had been improved dedication to maintenance. He stated that the Conservancy was asking City Council to consider further protections of this land in order to potentially open additional funding opportunities in the future that were associated with land conservation and funds to promote access, trails, and recreational opportunities. He emphasized the importance of the Legends Park Meadow, which held many important native species. He thanked the City for their maintenance efforts, which had allowed for a variety of rare plants to grow here. He expressed his hope that the City and Conservancy could work closely together to make this park a place for everyone to enjoy.

Council Member Westbrook stated that in addition to maintaining the park, he hoped they could work toward improving it as well. He asked if they could better place the historical markers, so that visitors could access that information without having to walk the trails.

Mr. Whalen said they could certainly consider relocating some of those signs. He noted that the trails grant they submitted to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) included funds to improve their trails and widen the buffers, providing greater visual access to the signs. He agreed there should be more signage closer to the roadways, so that was something they could consider.

Council Member Westbrook asked when the women's group cleaned up the basin of the lake.

Mr. Whalen said that he believed he was referring to the women workers from the Works Progress Administration, that would have been during the Great Depression.

Council Member Westbrook asked what that work entailed, and whether they should undertake that type of work again with public support.

Mr. Whalen acknowledged he was not an expert on the history like some of the Conservancy's other board members, but to his knowledge the federal WPA was created to provide access to parks and recreation, as well as preservation. He stated that a number of women workers came into Petersburg and cut down trees, blazed the trails, opened the meadow, and brought in plantings and seeds, using traditional knowledge to enhance the landscape. The legacy of that work was most clearly seen in the Meadow; however, some of those plants were now known to be invasive. In terms of whether more of that work could be done, he believed they absolutely could do some smart forestry work to revitalize the habitat and help clean out the debris, which would make the space feel more welcoming.

Council Member Westbrook stated that he knew the Conservancy worked with Virginia State University (VSU), and he was wondering if they worked with the City Arborist to clean up the dead trees in the area.

Mr. Whalen confirmed that they had consulted with Ms. Lester, who had assisted them with removing some dangerous dead trees. He stated that in terms of future work, it was absolutely possible; they just needed to meet together and determine how that would work.

Council Member Westbrook asked if the Conservancy had met with their new Deputy City Manager Mr. Stoke. He had previously discussed the park with Mr. Stoke, emphasizing that this park was the crown jewel of Petersburg. He asked if the Conservancy had looked into partnerships with Economic Development to ensure everyone was coming to the table for these discussions on improving the park.

Mr. Whalen replied that he had not met with Mr. Stoke yet, but he really welcomed the opportunity to do so. He would love for the Wilcox Watershed Conservancy to have that kind of access to build some of those partnerships.

Council Member Westbrook asked Mr. Whalen what his ultimate vision for the future of this park. He noted that they anticipated an increase in tourism in the future, and he would like to hear how the Wilcox Lake Conservancy and City of Petersburg could promote the park to visitors.

Mr. Whalen stated that he believed they were aligned on many of the goals for the park. The Conservancy had discussed how to repurpose the boathouse for events or boat rentals, and they welcomed that type of improvement. He said that he could not speak for the rest of their board, especially as they continued to develop their strategic plan, but he personally would like to see Legends Park as a space for everyone, one that was safe, accessible, and informative about its history. He noted that the two sides of the park were separated, with only one ingress and egress from Defense Road, and he would love to see the two sides of the park connected for pedestrian access.

Council Member Westbrook stated that he would appreciate another update from the Conservancy in the springtime to hear about how their partnerships and work were progressing. He said that he wanted to hear how they could come to the table and make the park a better asset to the City of Petersburg. He noted that there used to be much higher utilization of the park space, including seasonal events for the entire community.

Council Member Smith-Lee asked if they were planning to grind down the stumps near the lake.

Mr. Whalen confirmed that they were currently working on removing trees from the meadow area, and he hoped they could do the same in the dam area.

Council Member Smith-Lee suggested they install some benches throughout the park as well, particularly along the lake edge where people fished.

Mr. Whalen said that part of that DCR Trails Grant that the City applied for does include some money to restore some of the fencing and signage, and they might be able to leverage some of that to provide seating.

Council Member Jones stated that if they did not completely remove the tree stumps, the trees could easily grow back and it became a waste of time and money. He noted that the water in the lake was currently unsafe and unhealthy, and it was concerning that people were fishing there. They should not allow people to fish, swim, or paddle on the lake because the 2019 water quality advisory had never been lifted. He asked that the Conservancy consider the water quality issue as part of their work in the park.

Mr. Whalen said that he would look into the history of the advisory, which was before his time here, and he would look into what may have caused that. He said that he did know that there was some sewage infrastructure that ran through the lake. However, as part of a small Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Water Quality Citizen Science Monitoring grant that he had, he sometimes brought VSU students out there. He measured the levels of coliform bacteria about a monthly basis in the warm parts of the year. Using that metric, temperature, oxygen, and things that mattered for fish, it was healthier than some of the other tributaries that flowed through Petersburg.

Council Member Jones asked if they were testing for unsafe algae levels.

Mr. Whalen replied no; but that was where his mind went when he mentioned the water quality advisory, and he would look into that further.

7. RESPONSES TO PREVIOUS PUBLIC INFORMATION POSTED

Mayor Parham stated that Responses to Previous Public Information Posted was included under Council Communicates.

[Approval of Consent Agenda (to include minutes of previous meetings):]

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

a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:

- July 7, 2026 Closed Session Minutes
- July 7, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the consent agenda.

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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

9. OFFICIAL PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Amending the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Petersburg for the Purpose of Clarifying the Design Standards for Residential Off-Street Parking Areas

Jared Crews, Director of Planning & Community Development, provided a brief summary of the item. He explained that Article 19 of the City Ordinance regulated parking requirements, which included rules for the number of spaces for given use, as well as design requirements like size and material. Several sections were confusing or contradictory, and this had resulted in some delays to their development review process. Therefore, staff was requesting that Council consider a text amendment that would address these issues with regard to residential driveways.

Mr. Crews reviewed the recommended changes, which included differentiation of parking area curbs and markings for single-family and two-family dwellings, and allowing paved surface to exceed 35% of the front yard to the extent necessary to meet minimum parking space and design requirements. He explained that the primary purpose for these amendments was to avoid stalling permit reviews and to

avoid overburdening the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) with exception requests related to this same issue.

Mr. Crews summarized that the Planning Commission held a public hearing to review the proposed amendment on June 4, 2026, where they unanimously recommended approval (6-0) of the ordinance as drafted, and staff also recommended approval of the ordinance.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Gary Talley, 23, Fort Rice, stated that this sounded like a good plan to him.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

Council Member Jones noted that there were many front yards in the City that were entirely paved over with concrete. He asked if this item was brought forward because staff did not want to see any more concrete yards. He also asked why he would want to stripe residential driveways. He stated that the City needed to stop delaying development with things as small as a curb or driveway.

Mr. Crews clarified that staff's goal with this request was to get rid of those overly complicated rules that were causing the delays. This language was removing the requirement about striping and putting a curb on a single driveway. He was unsure as to why that language was originally put in the Ordinance; his assumption was that it was an oversight, where no distinction was made between residential and commercial parking. He added that although there had been a written rule about striping residential driveways, it had never been enforced and this was intended to align the Ordinance with their current practices.

Council Member Cuthbert asked for clarification on Mr. Crews' reference to appeals on driveway width being sent to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Mr. Crews explained that someone could request a special exception from their Board of Zoning Appeals to either exceed or not meet the parking requirements. Where they saw cases where there was not enough room to build a driveway or someone wanted to build an even larger driveway, they could ask the Board of Zoning Appeals to give them an exception to that rule to do one of those things. He added that they were currently working on a full re-write of the Zoning Ordinance, which would include review and revision of special exceptions, so they could potentially amend that particular item.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that it was inappropriate for front yards to be entirely paved over in their City neighborhoods. He expressed reservation about allowing people to pave over the front yard in any case.

Mr. Crews clarified that exceeding the 35% maximum was only allowed when necessary to meet minimum parking requirements. This was intended to avoid an overabundance of street parking and to avoid stalling building permit approvals if a person could not fit a large enough driveway.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that they did not have to deny the building permit; they could just tell them they had to park on the street.

Mr. Crews clarified that they did not currently have that ability in their Ordinance. The requirement was to have a certain amount of off-street parking.

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, stated that the way Mr. Crews had explained it to him was that absent this ordinance, they would have a whole bunch of non-conforming lots which were essentially unbuildable

because they had to have parking. Since they did not have a provision in the Zoning Ordinance to allow on-street parking, they would just have to remain undeveloped. This was why staff brought this request forward.

Mr. Crews confirmed that was correct, short of an exception being granted through the BZA. The general rule of thumb was that if there were so many requests for a variance or a special exception, that told them that there was a flaw in the ordinance and it could use a solution.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he was not happy with that. He asked if this Ordinance in its proposed amended form prohibited parking on unpaved portions of a front yard.

Mr. Crews answered that that was already in place, the requirement that they had to be parked on a paved surface was within Article 19.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he often saw cars parked in the dirt of front yards.

Mr. Crews replied that that was technically a violation of the Ordinance. The City attempted to enforce it, but it was a prevalent problem, and they could not solve all those individual cases.

Vice Mayor Hill asked if this amendment would eliminate the ability for people to pave their entire front yard.

Mr. Crews confirmed yes; that rule would remain.

Council Member Westbrook asked how this impacted construction of accessory dwelling units (ADU) on properties in the City, especially where parking was limited. He asked if staff could provide more examples as they related to this Ordinance. He also asked if properties that currently had their entire front yards paved would be violating the Ordinance.

Mr. Crews replied that the state legislation on accessory dwelling units was very specific about what localities were allowed to regulate. One of those things that a locality could not require more parking than what would have been required for the principal dwelling, so the minimum parking requirement would still be for the single-family dwelling and the City could not require additional parking on that lot for the accessory dwelling unit in this Ordinance. He said that with regard to the prevalence of paved front yards, especially with newer builds, many of those resulted from special exceptions granted by the BZA to build parking to the necessary figure. He clarified that City staff did not support impervious front yards and they were committed to enforcing the regulation that any exceptions should be minimal and should not cover the entire front yard.

Council Member Westbrook stated that he knew of residents who purchased lots to park vehicles without any other nuisances or code violations. He asked if this Ordinance impacted situations such as that.

Mr. Crews said that if it was a separate property, it would be considered a separate use under their Ordinance. He believed that it would be classified as an off-site parking facility and would require approval from the Board of Zoning Appeals. Typically, if there was no structure on the lot, the off-site parking area was not allowed.

Council Member Westbrook expressed concern that requiring a special permit for that may lend itself to unequal treatment between cases. He stated that they could not prevent someone from buying seven cars, and that person should not be penalized for that.

Mr. Crews reiterated that staff was trying to clarify the rules themselves so that there was no need for an exception and there was no arbitration involved; one either met those requirements or did not. He stated that this would make it a fairer process by applying the regulation across the board.

Council Member Westbrook asked if Council would consider tabling this item until they could get some more visual examples of the impacts.

Council Member Jones stated that he believed they could move forward with the amendment and if they later faced issues they could revisit it and make adjustments.

Council Member Jones made a motion to approve the Ordinance Amending the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Petersburg for the Purpose of Clarifying the Design Standards for Residential Off-Street Parking Areas.

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

- b. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Amending the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Petersburg for the Purpose of Clarifying the Criteria for Approval of Certificates of Appropriateness and the Process for Updates to the Historic Districts Design Guidelines and Appeals of Architectural Review Board Decisions

Jared Crews, Director of Planning & Community Development, provided a brief summary of the item. He stated this proposed text amendment related to Article 35 of the Zoning Ordinance, which covered the City's local historic districts. It included rules for preservation, including that the Architectural Review Board (ARB) had to review exterior changes of structures in those districts. The ARB used the Historic District Design Guidelines as a reference for reviewing projects. He explained that the guidelines had never been formally codified, meaning their Zoning Ordinance did not actually reference those, and their goal was to formalize the guidelines through reference in the Ordinance. He noted that without the guidelines being backed by the Code, it became difficult to determine whether to uphold or overturn ARB decisions.

Mr. Crews reviewed the proposed text amendment to Article 35, Section 7, which specifically referred to the ARB's use of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the City of Petersburg Historic Districts Design Guidelines; and the City of Petersburg Historic District Guidelines may be amended as deemed necessary by City Council by formal Resolution following review and recommendation by the Architectural Review Board. Furthermore, in Article 35, Section 13 and Article 31, Section 3, it stipulated the \$250 fee applied for appeals to ARB decisions. He stated that one of their key objectives with respect to the Comprehensive Plan was to amend their Zoning Ordinance to ensure compatible development in historic districts. Staff felt that this text amendment would strengthen their Historic Preservation Ordinance by clearly defining the process that the ARB was using to review projects and by providing additional legitimacy and enforceability to their overall efforts.

Mr. Crews summarized that on June 4, 2026, the Planning Commission held a public hearing and unanimously recommended approval of the amendment (6-0). On July 8, 2026, the Architectural Review Board unanimously voted to recommend the adoption of the current draft of the updated Historic District Design Guidelines to be used as the official guidelines. He added that the Planning Commission had made a recommendation for the application fee to be waived for individuals 60 and older. After discussion

with the City Attorney, staff believed they had no enabling legislation to provide that kind of fee waiver, so it was not included in the formal recommendation.

Mr. Williams noted that this item was raised partially due to his concerns about the defensibility of ARB decisions without the guidelines being formally included in the Ordinance. He emphasized that this was very important for the City to have in its Ordinance.

Mayor Parham opened the public hearing.

Louis Malin, 1578 Westover Avenue, commended Mr. Crews on acting as their interim preservation planner over the past year. He stated that the development of these guidelines had been a long process, with two public hearings and consultants meeting with the ARB. By referencing these guidelines and Secretary's standards, the ARB had a codified standard that prevented arbitrary decisions. He expressed his support for the proposed Ordinance.

Mayor Parham closed the public hearing.

Council Member Cuthbert made a motion to adopt the Ordinance Amending the Zoning Ordinance of the City of Petersburg for the Purpose of Clarifying the Criteria for Approval of Certificates of Appropriateness and the Process for Updates to the Historic Districts Design Guidelines and Appeals of Architectural Review Board Decisions.

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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

c. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY27 Grants Fund

Garry Cozier, Budget Manager, gave a brief summary of the item. He stated that this item pertained to a single \$50,000 reimbursable grant for the Petersburg Bureau of Police. The grant was awarded by the 911 Services Board and it was for their geographic information system (GIS) and data program. He summarized that staff recommended approval of the amendment to the FY27 Grants Fund.

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

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the amendment to the FY27 Grants Fund.

Council Member Smith-Lee seconded the motion.

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

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

10. PUBLIC INFORMATION PERIOD

Mayor Parham read the rules of procedure for public comment.

Nicole Ventura, 420 Mistletoe Street, stated that while she appreciated the work that went into preparing a budget, every budget required difficult choice and she wanted to ask Council what were Petersburg's

priorities. She noted this year's final adopted budget appropriately increased funding for Police, Code Enforcement, and Public Works; the foundation of a successful City. It also increased spending on beautification, Citywide Christmas, and continued taxpayer support of the municipal golf course. She stated that she was not unsupportive of any of those items, but she was against putting discretionary spending ahead of the basic needs that shaped Petersburg as a place people lived and invested in. She asked the City to determine whether continued public ownership provided greater value than the alternatives.

Robert Grossman, Kings Road, said that transparency to him meant keeping citizens informed. He expressed concern that he had only received two responses to his emails, and that only happened after much persistence. He asked Council consider the deforestation of the Amazon rainforest for cattle grazing and the reduced protections of U.S.-owned lands when thinking about their local citizens' outrage at data center development in Ramblewood and Camelot. He stated that they were majorly concerned with the destruction of the last remaining forested area there, which they preferred to remain as green space, potentially even a recreational amenity. He noted the many alternative locations available for a data center that would be better suited. He stated that they did not need to infringe upon residential areas when they had so much land available in other areas.

Carol Oliver, 1145 Woodland Road, stated that City property tax was excessive and discouraged people from moving to Petersburg. She stated that she had invited a professor of finance to discuss potential alternatives to provide revenue to the City, including a South Crater Road development center, consolidation with other jurisdictions, and reducing rates to encourage more business development. She stated that she would forward the full information to Council for their review.

Gary Talley, 2323 Fort Rice Street, stated that he wanted to bring attention to the required match for the Community Services Board. He said that he went through their budget line by line and could not find it anywhere. The amount was the same as last year, \$365,800, and that was a lot of money to be added later. He said that he also wanted to ask about Council's decision-making and problem-solving process. He said that for years, he taught a class in that, and he thought Council was not using that process sometimes, which resulted in bad decisions. He stated that the Oak Street Bridge was closed for three years and they finally opened a temporary bridge there. He asked why they did not decide that years ago. He said that it would be most helpful to Council and the City as a whole if they used a better decision-making process.

Ajani Sekou, 27 South Sycamore Street, expressed concern about a recent issue with Habitat for Humanity and asked that an investigation be conducted. He reported that he had to move the date for his Art the Block Festival due to a bottleneck in middle management. He stated that it was supposed to be hosted by the City of Petersburg, but it now had to be located on private property. He noted that other localities had offered him a much easier process, which he thought made the City look bad. He emphasized that City staff must be held accountable in that regard. He asked that they all learn to think in new ways about how to solve their problems, because the old way of thinking was not working.

Francena Reed, 1420 Chanticleer Drive, stated that she knew that Council Member Jones and the Deputy City Manager were working on addressing her concerns about speed bumps. She asked if there were any updates on streetlights and the noise ordinance.

Mayor Parham asked Ms. Reed to forward her questions to Council Member Jones so he and staff could respond.

Hunta Williams, 1049 8th Street, signed that he was deaf-blind with limited abilities to see, and he had a few concerns. He had a home on the side of the creek, having bought the house in November about a year ago. He had been contacting the City a lot but had received no response. He signed that the communication had been awful, and it was necessary to improve communication with deaf and hard of hearing people. The website was not very clear and was not very accessible for his vision; he could not change it to have a dark

background or anything like that. He signed that at the intersection of with street, there were a lot of car accidents. When he was walking down the street, there was limited space for walking without risk of falling, and he was concerned about being hit there and something needed to be done in that area. He asked how the City could improve their relationship with the deaf-blind community, considering he had called and had not received a lot of communication. He did not know how he could trust their process if he did not have the accessibility and accommodations for understanding and access. He added that on the 4th of July, near his home there were a lot of fireworks that almost hit his house. He had complained to the Petersburg Police, but they did nothing about that. He asked that they make the fonts larger on their presentations so he could see it better.

Wendy Austin, 544 High Street, stated citizens really had to work hard to be involved in changing things about their government because it was such a long process. She said that she had noticed the data center article today in the business section for coming and one by right in industrial because that was the way the new ordinance was. She suggested to all residents who had concerns about data centers and other developments all across the City to be involved in the current update of the subdivision ordinances that would come to Council for approval later in the year. She congratulated Mr. Crews, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Garlock on their recent appointments to Planning Director, Public Works Director, and Code Enforcement, respectively. She felt that filling these empty positions would help improve the process for getting things passed through their community. She was hopeful about their Deputy City Managers as well, and that beautification was no longer the turf division. She stressed the importance of investing in beautification of the City, which was important to safety and investment.

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

Council Member Cuthbert reported that since September 2025, the total number of non-operational streetlights in the City had been reduced from 83 to 28, which marked some real progress. He thanked Mr. Miller, Mr. Harris, and the City Electrician for working together to achieve this. They were working on addressing the remaining 28, which was great. This work went a long way toward making their City more attractive, safer, and well-cared for. He stated that with regard to data centers, he read an article from Richmond Biz Sense that stated there were three data centers moving forward in Petersburg, and previous to this had only been aware of one other. He asked that the City Administration keep everyone better informed. He asked if the Mayor had been aware of these data centers.

Mayor Parham said that he had read about them in the news, and he had been contacted about a story on data centers, and he had referred them to Council Member Westbrook because he had held multiple meetings on the issue.

Council Member Cuthbert emphasized the importance of transparency, and asked that City Administration keep Council and the public as informed on data center development as possible.

Council Member Jones thanked everyone for attending today's meeting. He stated that he had just learned about the data centers himself. He noted that these were by-right developments that did not require review by Council. He said that as with any project, the only thing they could control from this position was regulation of future development through planning and zoning. He stated that his main goal when joining Council was to ensure employees were treated right, and they made a big step through paying half of their employees' healthcare insurance costs. He noted that many of their department heads earned over \$100,000 per year but did not attend Council meetings, and he would suggest they at least come to one meeting per month. He thought they owed it to the citizens to show up and experience the spirit of these meetings. He commented that spirit, rather than blood, was what made people family, and he could not claim anyone who did harm to another as his family. He stated that to achieve their goals in Petersburg, they had to come together in spirit and work it out. He said that despite daily struggles, having a good feeling about the future made him excited and dedicated in spirit to do his best each day.

Council Member Westbrook reported that he and Deputy City Manager Miller had visited Summit Pointe Apartments, where there had been an issue with illegal dumping. He explained that the management of the apartment complex had video footage of nonresidents driving U-Hauls to the property and dumping there. He stated that he would continue to work with Deputy City Manager Miller and Police Chief Christian to be stricter with littering and illegal dumping laws to protect their residents. He requested the Deputy City Manager to bring back Friends of the Lower Appomattox River (FOLAR) to a Council meeting in September or October to discuss the connectivity between Ferndale Park and the Fall Line Trail. He expressed concern that the Fall Line Trail had not been completed in Petersburg, despite the long-standing plans to do so, and it would be helpful for everyone to come to the table and discuss it. He noted that beautification in the City was the responsibility of everyone in the City, with Public Works being the leadership in that area. He stated that he wanted to look deeper into who was responsible for cleaning their neighborhoods and encourage citizens to do so without leaning entirely on Public Works. He asked everyone to do the neighborly thing and help each other out.

Council Member Westbrook announced the Citizens Academy was scheduled for September 2, and interested people should contact Captain Carol Adams. The program would be held at the Police Community Outreach Center and would help citizens learn more ways to improve safety through policing their own communities. He stated that with regard to data centers, he continued to do his own research and acknowledged he was quoted in the Richmond Biz Sense article. He said that he was not necessarily pro-data centers, but he also supported quality economic development in the City, which data centers could provide. He stated that he wanted to ensure citizens could come to the table and have their concerns heard, so he would be holding a ward meeting on September 8 where they could talk about data centers as a community and as a City.

Council Member Myers thanked Council and everyone who supported his endeavors. He gave his gratitude to all 95 volunteers who assisted in the food distribution drive on the first Monday of July, including the City staff members and their Commonwealth Attorney. They helped over 250 families, which was especially important during this time when food stamps were being reduced. He encouraged everyone to come out and volunteer on the first Monday in August at 3:30 p.m. at Mt. Olivet Baptist Church. He also thanked the Chesterfield Food Bank for providing 40,000 pounds of groceries to Petersburg citizens.

Council Member Myers announced that on July 25, Community Friends and Family Event would be at 277 River Street where they would be hosting R&B singer Miki Howard, and recent VSU graduate Armonty The Truth. He said that admission was free and he invited everyone to come out and enjoy the concert.

Council Member Smith-Lee announced the Community Day with Petersburg Public Schools would be on August 8 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and would include school resources, a job fair, family activities, a health clinic, haircuts and braiding, and a DJ. She invited all their local families to attend and get their back-to-school supplies. She announced that Lending Helping Hands was having a back-to-school giveaway on July 25 from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. at Club 17, which she encouraged everyone to join. She announced that there would be a Ward 6 meeting on September 9 at Cool Springs Elementary School. She also prayed for Bernard Lundy's recovery.

Council Member Smith-Lee congratulated Mr. Richard Harris for his support of the 6th Ward and the entire City of Petersburg. She welcomed Mr. Garlock, their new Code Compliance Director. She also encouraged everyone to do their part and contact their ward representative if they needed assistance. She gave a shout-out to Resolutions Winery on West Washington Street for their outstanding customer service. She congratulated her little league baseball team, the Braves, for their recent 7-1 win. She added that with regard to the data center issue, she would encourage all of her colleagues on Council to work together and share information with each other, so that they could discuss it as a group and stay informed.

Vice Mayor Hill thanked everyone for coming to today's meeting. He noted their City's beautification efforts had resulted in it looking a lot better, but much more needed to be done. He said that the Masons recently cleaned up some portions of Halifax Street, where there was lot of trash in people's yards. He stated that in response to a public comment about the City's budget priorities, he understood the point made, and he would point out that the City had prioritized sidewalks, streets, lights, and he believed they were heading in the right direction there. He said that once they were done paving the major streets, he hoped they could extend paving into the City neighborhoods. He asked citizens to please let Council know if they had major issues with roads in their neighborhoods so they could address them. He acknowledged that there was a dumping problem throughout the City, which they were working to resolve.

Vice Mayor Hill announced there was going to be a kickball tournament on Sunday at 12:00 p.m. at Legends Park. Additionally, they would be breaking ground on the new playground at Legends Park soon. He said there was a lot of exciting activity happening in the City, and he hoped they would all be a part of that. He stated that Council and staff were committed to moving a lot faster in terms of the administrative process. He noted that oftentimes, the City was unaware of issues until citizens reported them, so he encouraged everyone to let them know. He congratulated Mr. Crews, Mr. Harris, and Mr. Garlock on their recent appointments and expressed his appreciation for their hard work.

Mayor Parham reported that he had a great meeting with Mr. Garlock and Ms. Hammond at Richard Bland last week and at Fort Lee with Colonel Bendelewski and the new President there, Kenny Alexander. He said that they discussed creation of more workforce training opportunities for their young people in Petersburg. He was grateful for the partnership they had with these agencies and was excited for the opportunities they would provide in the future. He congratulated Mr. Harris on his promotion and thanked him for his committed field work and reliability. He additionally thanked Mr. Marquis Allen and his staff for redoing the playground at Legends Park, which was already being heartily enjoyed by their local children.

Mayor Parham agreed with Council member Jones' earlier comment that some days he just felt bubbly inside, and when they visited the Fieldhouse Sports Training Facility, he felt the nostalgia of having a first-class facility there. He thanked everyone working to make that a reality. He additionally thanked School Board members and School Division personnel for being present at tonight's meeting. He emphasized that the City was committed to giving their teachers the best possible pay and making Petersburg at the top of their regional pay scale.

Council Member Westbrook wished Randy Batts a very happy birthday. He additionally thanked Mr. Ajani Sekou for his contribution to the PAL art exhibit, What Freedom Means. He said that Mr. Sekou won first place and he encouraged everyone to view Mr. Sekou's art and support his work with the ArteXchange.

12. ITEMS REMOVED FROM CONSENT AGENDA

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

13. FINANCE AND BUDGET REPORT

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

14. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There were no items under this portion of the agenda.

15. NEW BUSINESS

- a. A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Issue a Bona Fide Offer to Purchase the Property Located at 139 Monroe Street in Furtherance of the Courthouse Project

Anthony Williams, City Attorney, gave a presentation. He stated that he would provide information on Items 15a, 15b, and 15c, and Council would take action on each item individually. He explained that these three items were resolutions to authorize the City Manager to issue a bona fide offer of purchase for certain real property necessary to an existing project. He explained that the significance of a bona fide offer of purchase was that it was nothing more than an offer based on an MAI-certified appraiser's valuation of the property. However, if an agreement was not reached with the current owner, the next step of acquisition under the statute would be an ordinance to authorize proceeding with acquiring the property through involuntary means. The property at 139 Monroe Street was critical to completing the Courthouse Project, and the first step was the issuance of this letter.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Issue a Bona Fide Offer to Purchase the Property Located at 139 Monroe Street in Furtherance of the Courthouse Project.

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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

- b. A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Issue a Bona Fide Offer to Purchase a Portion of the Property Located at 100 Bollingbrook Street in Furtherance of the Sidewalk/Roadway Project

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Issue a Bona Fide Offer to Purchase a Portion of the Property Located at 100 Bollingbrook Street in Furtherance of the Sidewalk/Roadway Project.

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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

- c. A Resolution to Authorize the City Manager to Issue a Bona Fide Offer to Purchase a Portion of the Property Located at 411 Second Street

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Resolution to Authorize the City Manager to Issue a Bona Fide Offer to Purchase a Portion of the Property Located at 411 Second Street.

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, Parham; no: N/A; abstain: N/A.

- d. A Resolution to Confirm the Intention of Council to Formally Adopt a Supplemental Appropriation Ordinance to Provide Additional Funding to Petersburg City Public Schools for FY27

Mayor Parham stated that the request from the School Division was for compensation to teachers, the phase one amount being \$1,009,000. He explained that this was the local funding required to bring teachers to a \$60,000 starting salary.

Vice Mayor Hill made a motion to approve the Resolution to Confirm the Intention of Council to Formally Adopt a Supplemental Appropriation Ordinance to Provide Additional Funding to Petersburg City Public Schools for FY27.

Council Member Jones seconded the motion.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if it was an irregular way to do business for Council to adopt a Resolution to Confirm the Intention prior to hearing from the public following a public hearing.

Mayor Parham clarified that this was confirming the intention so that the School Board and Superintendent could go ahead and send out contracts with the understanding of what the salaries would be set at prior to the public hearing for the appropriation of funds.

Council Member Cuthbert asked why this was not done with a public hearing.

Mayor Parham stated that they had to set the public hearing date for the actual transfer; this was just to confirm the intention to do so.

City Attorney Williams clarified that this was requested by the City Manager. He explained that it was not unusual for localities to do something like this. For example, the localities that he had worked for previously would only make two supplemental appropriations a year, so they were not adopting an ordinance every time someone wanted to amend the budget. Typically, it was not done for numbers this large, but it was something that was done. He said that a resolution is, by definition, nothing but a statement of intent of the City Council. It was his understanding was the reason it was done this way was because the Council had no meetings scheduled in August, and this would enable the School Division to move forward while at the same time the Council satisfied its formal procedural requirements in September. At that time, if Council decided not to adopt the Ordinance, they certainly could do that. He said that the Resolution was basically giving the School Division the assurance that, at this point, Council was intending to move forward with that.

Council Member Cuthbert stated that he was not opposed to the merits of the item, but he was opposed to the procedure. He said that it was essentially saying that Council had made a decision that required a public hearing before they had heard from the public. He stated that was not right. He said that they had been put in a corner, so he would vote for it, but it was not the way it ought to be done.

Mayor Parham clarified that this occurred because the state had approved a budget that was late, which in turn affected every locality's ability to make the necessary appropriations to their schools. Time was of the essence to get their teachers in their classrooms, and this would help the School Board to know where they could start the teacher pay at this year. He confirmed that this would come back for a public hearing in September, and this would allow the School Division to adjust the teacher job descriptions so they could get the necessary teachers for their schoolchildren.

Council Member Cuthbert expressed concern that Council had been rushing items through for the School Division, ignoring statutory requirements of public hearings before making decisions. He said that it was not right.

Mayor Parham called the vote on the motion to approve the Resolution.

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.

16. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT AND SPECIAL REPORTS

Kenneth Miller, Deputy City Manager, reported that this week, by Friday, they should have installed their first solar streetlight in the City. They would be installing a number of them throughout the City, meaning that in the event of an unusual occurrence where they had a power failure, they would have lighting in their City. Coupled with their robot lawnmowers and their rumble strips, they were moving in the right direction. He announced that this week, July 19-25, was pretrial probation and parole supervisor's week. He commended Ms. Loving and her team with Gateway Justice Services for doing a great job.

Council Member Cuthbert asked if the City Manager would be giving an update on their efforts to collect the \$25 million in past due taxes owed to the City.

Deputy City Manager Miller said that he had not asked City Manager Altman about that.

Council Member Cuthbert requested that this issue be added as an agenda item on Council's September meeting.

Mayor Parham stated that Council Member Cuthbert should make that request to the City Manager.

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.

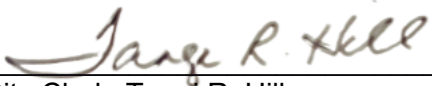
The City Council adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Adopted this the 1st day of September, 2026

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Parham", is located at the bottom right of the page.

Mayor, Samuel Parham

ATTEST:



City Clerk, Tangi R. Hill