



COUNCIL

Communicates

Highlights from City Council Meetings

May 20, 2025

Petersburg Public Library

City Council Members

Ward 1

Marlow Jones

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Ward 2

Darrin Hill

Vice Mayor

dhill@petersburg-va.org

Ward 3

Samuel Parham

Mayor

sparham@petersburg-va.org

Ward 4

Charles Cuthbert

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Ward 5

W. Howard Myers

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Ward 6

Anette Smith-Lee

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Ward 7

Arnold Westbrook

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Please Note:

These are not the official minutes of the City Council meeting.

The official minutes and agendas can be accessed on the city website:

www.petersburg-va.org

Please note that the official minutes are not posted until approved by City Council.

Closed Session

3:00 pm

1. Roll Call

Present on rollcall: Mayor Parham, Vice Mayor Hill, Councilman Myers, Councilwoman Annette Smith-Lee

2. Closed Session

The purpose of this meeting is to convene in the closed session pursuant to:

- a. §2.2-3711(A)(7) and (8) of the Code of Virginia for the Purpose of Receiving Legal Advice and Status Update from the City Attorney and Legal Consultation Regarding the Subject of Actual or Probable Litigation and Specific Legal Matters Requiring the Provision of Legal Advice by the City Attorney, Specifically Including But Not Limited to Discussion Regarding the Legal Requirements of §15.2-2013 of the Code of Virginia and Actual or Probable Litigation; and
- b. §2.2-3711(A)(29) of the Code of Virginia for the Purpose of Discussion Regarding the Subject of Award of a Public Contract Involving the Expenditure of Public Funds, and Discussion of the Terms or Scope of Such Contract, Where Discussion in an Open Session Would Adversely Affect the Bargaining Position or Negotiating Strategy of the Public Body; and
- c. §2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia for the Purpose of Discussion Pertaining to Performance, Assignment, and Appointment of Specific Public Employees of the City of Petersburg, Specifically Including But Not Limited to Discussion of the Performance, Assignment, and Appointment of a Specific Public Officer of the City of Petersburg.

3. Adjournment

Motions were made and approved to suspend the Rules of Council and to rescind 23-ORD-51 concerning North Adams and Sycamore Grove.

A motion was approved directing the City Manager to allocate, as part of the City's budget, the amount of \$1 million to improve the landscape and visual pathway from downtown to the casino site.

A motion was approved to appropriate the amount of \$32,090 to the Virginia Community Resource Center for a collaboration with CACH to disseminate funding for homeless prevention to Petersburg residents only.

Regular City Council Meeting

5:00 pm

1. Roll Call
Councilman Jones, absent.
2. Prayer
Led by Vice Mayor Hill.
3. Pledge of Allegiance
Led by Mayor Parham.
4. Determination of the Presence of a Quorum
Quorum present.
5. Proclamations/Recognitions/Presentation of Ceremonial Proclamations
 - a. Emergency Medical Services Week Proclamation
 - b. Recognition of Petersburg Firefighter of the Year, Captain Jerren Lucas, Sr.
6. Responses to Previous Public Information Posted
Council Communicates
7. Approval of Consent Agenda (to include minutes of previous meetings):
 - a. Minutes of Previous Meetings:
 - May 6, 2025 Closed Session Minutes
 - May 6, 2025 City Council Work Session Minutes
 - December 17, 2024 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes
 - b. Consideration of an Update of the Title VI Program and Adoption of the Resolution for the Petersburg Area Transit Title VI Program
Approved.

8. Official Public Hearings

a. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY25 Grants Fund
No public comments.

Approved.

b. A Public Hearing for Consideration of the Approval of the Proposed Petersburg City Public Schools FY26 Budget

Public Comment

Barb Rudolph

Ms. Rudolph mentioned that her comments were also directed toward the School Board. She pointed out that, while local funding exceeds the required local match, additional funds are still needed. While she believes funding should be higher, she understands that this aligns with the Schools' request. She clarified that she is not suggesting the current funding be rejected, but emphasized the importance of prioritizing school improvements. Additionally, she acknowledged that the Schools have left funds unutilized in the past, even though upgrades to school facilities are needed.

Approved.

c. A Public Hearing for Consideration of the Approval of the Proposed City of Petersburg FY26 Operating Budget.

Public Hearing

Barb Rudolph

Ms. Rudolph expressed her appreciation to the Finance team for their detailed work on the budget. She requested a list of all funded positions along with their respective departments. Regarding vacancy savings, she suggested presenting them as a separate line item. Ms. Rudolph also inquired about the funds from the casino, including incentive payments and revenue. She noted that \$15 million is expected to be received this year once the casino obtains its permit from the lottery, and she would like to understand how these funds will be allocated. Additionally, she requested a plan for utilizing the potential \$6 million in revenue from the casino for the second half of the year.

Kristin Kasenbaum

Ms. Kasenbaum raised concerns about the long-term financial effects of not reducing property taxes in Petersburg this year. She cited examples of other localities that lowered property taxes but later experienced tax increases. Additionally, she drew comparisons between Petersburg and Prince George County.

Tabled to June 3 Special Meeting.

d. A Public Hearing for Consideration of a Request to Use the Budget Stabilization Fund

No public comments

Approved.

e. A Public Hearing for the Consideration of an Ordinance Adopting the FY26 Tax Rate

No change to tax rate \$1.27 presented.

Public Comments

Robert Anderson

Mr. Anderson stated that his property assessment had risen by 50% and argued that the tax rate should be reduced accordingly. He questioned who represents the individuals who are not present at these discussions, noting that many have lost hope. He also expressed concern that the Council may not fully understand the struggles faced by those living in poverty.

Vernelle Gannaway

Mr. Gannaway expressed his agreement with Mr. Anderson. He noted the increase in new housing developments and highlighted concerns about the affordability of taxes for residents as these new homes are built. He also commented that Petersburg was in a better state before the casino. (Note: the casino has not opened in Petersburg.)

Marlo Greene

Ms. Greene stated that more tax assistance was needed for senior citizens.

A substitute motion to lower the real estate tax rate by 2 cents failed to receive a second.

A motion to keep the same tax rate was approved. Councilman Cuthbert voted no.

f. A Public Hearing for the Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing the City Manager to Execute the Purchase Option Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and SUBSTRATE LLC for the Development of 130 N. Union Street and 122-124 West Tabb Street Located in Petersburg, VA.

Public Hearing

Kelsey Jewel

Ms. Jewel expressed her support for the project. Having lived in Petersburg for six years, she shared her love for the City's architecture.

Barry Roebuck

Mr. Roebuck shared that he has worked with the owner of Substrate LLC on two previous projects and voiced his support for the ordinance.

Bob Jenkins and 9 Additional Citizens

Expressed support for the project.

Approved.

9. Public Information Period

A public information period, limited in time to 30 minutes, shall be part of an Order of Business at each regular council meeting. Each speaker shall be a resident or business owner of the City and shall be limited to three minutes. No speaker will be permitted to speak on any item scheduled for consideration on the regular docket of the meeting at which the speaker is to speak. The order of speakers, limited by the 30-minute time period, shall be determined as follows:

- a. First, in chronological order of the notice, persons who have notified the Clerk no later than 12:00 noon of the day of the meeting,
- b. Second, in chronological order of their sign-up, persons who have signed a sign-up sheet placed by the Clerk in the rear of the meeting room prior to the meeting will be removed from the consent agenda

Marlo Greene

Ms. Greene raised concerns about the condition of a property on W. High Street and the findings from Code Compliance regarding that property. She also requested an update on the former Roper property. Additionally, Ms. Greene announced a Candlelight concert scheduled for June 26 at Union Station. She went on to describe a delayed response from Southside Emergency Crew during a health emergency involving her mother, noting that the delay was excessively long. She stated the Fire Department was then called, but by the time they arrived, her mother had passed away. She urged the City to consider establishing a rescue squad to replace Southside Emergency Rescue.

Kara Stephens

Ms. Stephens requested an update on a DCR grant given to the City to clear the former Roper site and convert it into green space, as most of the property lies within a floodway and floodplain. She also expressed that she continues to support the construction of a road through the property. (City Council previously rejected a proposal for a roadway across the floodplain on the former Roper site.)

Deborah Boyce

Ms. Boyce expressed her gratitude to the City Council members for their service to Petersburg. She emphasized the importance of focusing on a long-term vision for the City and preserving its historical communities, as well as finding ways to support long-time residents. She acknowledged the positive news that the budget is balanced and stated that she would not criticize matters about which she is not fully informed. Ms. Boyce asked about the comprehensive long-term plan for the City.

10. Business or reports from the Mayor or other Members of the City Council
Councilman Cuthbert

He expressed his desire to ensure that all streetlights are working. He announced an upcoming Ward meeting and emphasized the need for a revised budget process next year. He suggested holding more work sessions instead of two-on-two meetings and advocated for presenting the tax rate upfront.

Councilman Westbrook

He suggested advancing the budget process next year through participatory budgeting to improve civic engagement and build community trust. He highlighted a program called "Neighborly," proposing that citizens determine how to allocate \$1 million of the budget each year. He also requested an update from FOLAR, in July or September. He announced several upcoming events, including a Rotary Park cleanup on June 7.

He noted that the new casino manager recently spoke with VSU students and shared that the Fort Lee Road bridge will remain closed until Spring 2027.

Councilman Myers

He announced a joint Ward 1 and 5 meeting on June 7.

Councilwoman Smith-Lee

She announced that Colonial Heights now has a banner on the Boulevard honoring Colonel Taylor.

Vice Mayor Hill

He appreciates citizens being part of the solution, instead of part of the problem.

Mayor Parham

He announced that discussions regarding Airbnb would be revisited soon. The Mayor highlighted that property values in Prince George County are double those in Petersburg. He acknowledged the City's significant infrastructure needs, totaling a billion dollars, and emphasized the importance of giving the City a year to establish casino revenue. He stressed that everyone must contribute their fair share and firmly stated that he will not allow anyone to discredit the City Manager or the Finance Department. He urged staying committed to the current course, emphasizing the importance of progress and ensuring the City does not regress into financial difficulties.

11. Items removed from Consent Agenda

None.

12. Finance and Budget Report

None.

13. Unfinished Business
 - a. FY25 PCPS Budget Amendment Complete Ordinance
Approved.
14. New Business
 - a. Consideration of Appointments to the Community Development Block Grant Advisory Board
Tabled.
 - b. Consideration of Appointments to the Architectural Review Board
Tabled.
 - c. Consideration of Recommendations to the Board of Zoning Appeals
Tabled.
 - d. Consideration of Appointments to the Petersburg Arts Council
The appointments of Keelan Graves and Dr. Austin were approved.
15. City Manager's Report and Special Reports
Announced a special meeting on June 3 to adopt the budget.
16. Business or reports from the Clerk
None.
17. Business or reports from the City Attorney
None.
18. Adjournment