REGULAR WORK SESSION OF THE FARMVILLE TOWN COUNCIL HELD ON SEPTEMBER 3, 2025

At the regular work session of the Farmville Town Council held on Wednesday, September 3, 2025, at 6:00 PM, in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, located at 116 North Main Street, Farmville, Virginia, there were present Mayor Brian Vincent, presiding, and Council members Sallie Amos, A.D. "Chuckie" Reid, Daniel Dwyer, Tommy Pairet, Adam Yoelin, Donald Hunter, and John Hardy.

Staff present were Town Manager Scott Davis, Town Attorney Gary Elder, Chief of Police Andy Ellington, Deputy Town Manager/Finance Director Julie Moore, Captain William Hogan, Human Resources Manager Amanda Zirkle, Community Development Director Ashley Atkins-Austin, Town Planner Robert Dvorak, Emergency Communications Manager Crystal Barton, Deputy Clerk and IT Support Jacqueline Vaughan, and Clerk of Council Mary McKay.

Mayor Vincent called the meeting to order, and all guests were welcomed.

The Clerk called the roll, noting all Council members were present.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mr. Hardy made a motion to adopt the agenda as amended, seconded by Mr. Dwyer, and with all Council members voting "aye", the motion passed. Mayor Vincent interjected with the consideration of an amended agenda, to extend an offer allowing a presentation after the Declaration of Personal Interest. Members of the Farmville Downtown Partnership are unable to attend the September Regular Meeting.

DECLARATION OF PERSONAL INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest made.

FARMVILLE DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP PRESENTATION

Emily Gantt and Jake Romaine from the Farmville Downtown Partnership addressed the Council seeking permission to pursue a $50,000 T-Mobile grant to transform the High Bridge Plaza into a train-themed interactive play area for the community and visitors. A letter of recommendation was sought for the grant. Key project elements include the removal of the plaza stage and awning after the holiday season and repainting the caboose. Optional signage improvements were mentioned which could be included in the grant request. Council members asked questions about the impact of the annual tree lighting event without a stage, the timeframe for the project and about the information kiosks. The Town Manager mentioned that a portable stage could be placed in the same location for the annual event. Ms. Gantt noted the grant is due on September 30th, but the project would not start until after the first of the year and have an anticipated completion date of September 2026. Mr. Romaine mentioned the ongoing discussion about revitalizing the kiosks of which two are still in the downtown district.

FINANCE REPORT

Deputy Town Manager/Finance Director Julie Moore provided a review of the July 2025 charts and reports for the first month into the new FY2026 budget:

- Revenue to budget – Not at the 8% for one month because the budget assumes even monthly distribution, but major revenues like real estate taxes and business licenses are billed annually, causing early-year lag.
- Revenue to prior year - Most funds show higher revenue than last year except the Transportation Fund, which is lower due to a bus sale last year that hasn't recurred.
- Expenses to budget - Expenses are below the one-month budgeted amount.
- Expenses to prior year - Overall expenses are lower than last year, except for the General Fund, which is slightly higher due to three items: Fire radio payment, two police vehicles purchased, and a dispatch grant expense paid in July but reimbursed in August.

Mrs. Amos asked about the low revenue amount reflected for the summer camps. Ms. Moore reported that summer camp revenue is received earlier, in April-June, and is reflected in the June revenue.

DISCUSSION: GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND PUBLIC HEARING AND STATUS

Town Manager Davis reported that in the last meeting, the Council received information on the bond process from Ted Cole of Davenport & Company. He reported needing to know by next week whether the Council wishes to proceed with the current plan to meet with rating agencies on September 22–23 and hold a public hearing during the regular October meeting. He mentioned that the PPEA proposals won't be received until October 15 at 2 PM, so a suggestion was made for the Council to consider moving forward with the public hearing based on the "not-to-exceed" amount reported by Mr. Cole at the last meeting. A brief discussion was held on the "not-to-exceed" figure and clarification was made that the figure to be used for the public hearing is for both the fire station and ladder truck. It was noted that if the public hearing isn't approved next week, the timeline will be pushed back, potentially delaying the bond sale and closing into late November or December, but the funding is needed by January, for the approved fire truck.

There was a question raised about if interest rates drop after the first of the year and whether that might affect the bond rate. It was thought that the question should be asked of Mr. Cole. It was also asked if there is a way to pay for the fire truck should a delay occur.

Ms. Moore was asked to report on the payment options for the fire truck. She continued by stating that ARPA money that was agreed to be used for the UV treatment at the wastewater treatment plant must be spent by December and that there have been delays in receiving the equipment ordered. Potential options mentioned included prepaying the contractor by December 31 or, and this would need to be discussed with Mr. Cole, passing a resolution that the ARPA funds would be redirected to pay for the fire truck and then reimburse the Town using bond proceeds to pay for the UV project. The resolution would require specific legal language from the bond attorney of how the funding will be used. Statements were made of not being in favor of prepaying the contractor for the UV project.

DISCUSSION: SIDEWALK ORDINANCE

The Town Manager referenced the recent Planning Commission meeting in which action was deferred on the topic. The Community Development Director provided a brief update and noted that some community members spoke in opposition to the proposed sidewalk ordinance due to cost burdens to developers and that the cost is not shared with the Town. After Ms. Atkins-Austin's update, discussion was held on the importance of revising the ordinance to allow flexibility, particularly by including a waiver or "out" for developers in situations where sidewalks may not be practical or necessary. A shared-use path alternative (asphalt trails for pedestrians, cyclists, and skateboarders) was suggested as a more cost-effective and functional solution. Concerns were also raised about whether alternative paths would qualify for VDOT funding. The need for incentives for developers (e.g., reduced utility tap fees) was mentioned. It was thought that sidewalks are an investment and that infrastructure planning is essential for the town's growth. Existing issues with current infrastructure, such as mailboxes and light poles obstructing sidewalks were also noted. Returning to a committee-based process with thorough discussion was mentioned as well as discussing a topic at more than one Work Session. Having community input during those Council discussions was emphasized. Mayor Vincent mentioned being amenable to committee meetings but is in favor of holding them in the Council chambers with video and audio components for transparency.

Concern was expressed about the current public comment process, noting that constituents often feel their input is disregarded when the Council votes shortly after hearing feedback. There was a suggestion to consider allowing public comment one month and voting in the next month, to give time for reflection and additional input. With some input from the Town Attorney, Council discussed the usage of parameters in the proposed sidewalk ordinance. The 45-day state-mandated timeline for subdivision approvals was mentioned by the Community Development Director. It was thought by the Council that the Planning Commission and Town Planner could help define some specific parameters to use as guidelines when new sidewalk infrastructure is being considered.

DISCUSSION: ROADWAY ENHANCEMENT AT E. THIRD STREET AT PERSIMMON TREE FORK ROAD AND MILNWOOD ROAD

There is a planned road enhancement at the East Third Street and Persimmon Tree Fork and Milnwood Road intersection in preparation for the new data center, as the current intersection would not function properly once the center is in place. The Virginia Department of Transportation has hired a consultant and, in collaboration with town, county, and VDOT staff, has explored several design scenarios over the past few months. The options have been narrowed down to three. A community input meeting is tentatively scheduled for Thursday, October 9th, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM at the Moton Museum. The meeting will be an open house format, with no formal presentation; community members can review the alternatives on display, ask questions, and provide feedback directly to consultants and staff. The project will be submitted through the Smart Scale program, which would not receive funding for at least five years.

DISCUSSION: COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Town Manager reported that the Council's feedback is still needed regarding the Comprehensive plan. A request was previously made for Council members to email their top discussion topics so that additional joint meetings could be scheduled with the Planning Commission. Commissioners have submitted their input to the Community Development Director. This in-depth review of the Comprehensive plan was identified as a priority during the Council retreat.

DISCUSSION: EMPLOYEE COMPENSATION

Town Manager Davis mentioned the recent hirings and police department's staffing challenges as reported at the last meeting. Since that report, two more officers have left employment with the Town, making the department one shift short. An anonymous employee satisfaction survey was conducted with compensation being a major concern. The Town Manager emphasized the increasing difficulty in recruiting qualified police officers due to higher starting salaries offered by surrounding jurisdictions. A recent hiring event drew 21 candidates, but only one has received a conditional offer, highlighting both the low interest and the department's commitment to maintaining high hiring standards.

The budget year began with no plan for employee raises and the Town covering the increase in health insurance premiums. The contingency fund balance was brought up and the anticipated uses for those funds, one of which is a sidewalk study that the Council has committed to. The Town Manager suggested a mid-year salary increase to assist with the pay issue on an interim basis, specifically $2,000 for police officers and $1,000 for all employees. Council members were provided with a review of related costs. The suggested increase would cost the General Fund $160,269.93, most of which could be covered by reallocating $158,000 from the contingency fund, instead of building a pickleball court. The remaining $2,269.93 could be funded through savings from unspent part-time staffing budgets.

Comparison surveys of police salaries with neighboring localities were reviewed. Council members were asked to review the information provided with additional discussion to be scheduled for the next regular meeting or the following month.

Council requested a report on the overtime costs [coverage for the vacant positions] for the last six months. Town Manager Davis advised a report could be provided for both six months and from the start of the FY2026 budget year. An inquiry was made about the employee survey conducted. He advised that the Council could be provided with information about the survey. Questions were asked by several Council members with discussion being held. The timing and financing of the new firehouse was brought up. A request was made about how long it had been since the Town’s debt had been at this level, with and without the firehouse and ladder truck for comparison. The possibility of delaying the bond for four years to reduce the amount of debt before taking on any additional was mentioned. Delaying would increase the costs of the renovations. Town Manager Davis clarified that the debt payments for the proposed firehouse will be the same as the expiring debt and would be spread over 20 years.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

No report was offered.

COMMENTS BY MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL

Mr. Hunter thanked everyone for their participation.

Mr. Yoelin reported that some citizens in and outside of his ward have expressed concern over the brightness of the new streetlights. He asked if something could be done when Dominion Power replaces the streetlight bulbs to use warm bulbs but with the same number of lumens.

Town Manager Davis reported on his attempt to schedule Leslie's attendance, a Dominion Power representative, at this meeting. She was unable to attend but he will try to schedule her visit for the October Work Session. He also noted that Leslie was one of the representatives who attended and provided a presentation about streetlights at the Small Towns Conference held at Longwood University.

Mayor Vincent noted the good work session held and followed Mr. Hunter's comments by expressing appreciation for everyone's participation and discussing the weighty subjects.

There being no other business and on a motion by Mr. Hunter, seconded by Mr. Pairet, and with all Council members voting "aye", the meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.

APPROVED:	ATTEST:
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Brian R. Vincent, Mayor	Mary H. McKay, Clerk of Council