

## **Council Meeting Minutes**

**June 10, 2025**

Present:

Mayor Michael Hoops

Vice Mayor Joe Beasley

Councilmember Danny Willis

Councilmember Jonathan Hankins

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember Emily Davis

Councilmember David Fox

Absent:

Staff members present were Town Manager, LeeAnne Regon; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves; Clerk-Treasurer, Jessica Hayes.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Councilmember Cline made a motion to enter into the executive session. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

The Town Council entered into Executive Session at 7:00pm

## RESOLUTION

Motion made by: Hankins

Resolution Number: ES250610

Motion Seconded by: Fox

Meeting Date: June 10, 2025

Vote: All voted Aye

Purpose: Personnel Matters

## CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, the Tazewell Town Council has convened an executive session on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, 2.1-344.1 of the Code of Virginia requires a certification by this Council that such executive session was conducted in conformity with Virginia Law;

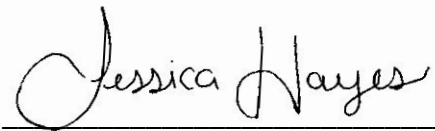
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Tazewell Town Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law were discussed in the executive session to which this certification resolution applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the executive session were heard, discussed or considered by the Tazewell Town Council.

## VOTE

Ayes: Willis, Hankins, Cline, Fox, Davis, Beasley

Nays: none

(For each nay vote, the substance of the departure from the requirements of the Act should be described.)

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jessica Hayes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Treasurer Hayes, Clerk

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to leave the executive session. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye;

Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Mayor Hoops read the resolution for the Certification of Executive Session. On roll call vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

### **Certification of Executive Session**

### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Hoops called the public council meeting to order at 7:30pm in the Town Hall Council Chambers

Pledge of Allegiance.

Nate Thomas led the meeting in the invocation prayer

### **Special Presentation/Request(s)**

#### **A. Billy Wagner Tribute**

Charity Hurst provided an update on the Billy Wagner Tribute, highlighting the strong community support for the project. The tribute plans are progressing well, with the vision for the tribute park rooted in honoring Billy Wagner's legacy. This initiative is seen as an opportunity to celebrate a local hero and enrich the community.

Mrs. Hurst introduced the community members involved in the project and announced that Tazewell Main Street has been selected as the location for the tribute. The committee is collaborating to ensure the successful installation of the tribute at the park. The artists, Maria Kirby-Smith from Canyon, South Carolina, and Lynda Solanasky from Texas, are working on the sculpture's design. They have reviewed the site and are considering moving the sculpture forward for better visibility from the road. Safety measures for the location have been approved, and they believe the sculpture will be a wonderful addition to Main Street.

Mrs. Hurst emphasized that this initiative is more than just a tribute; it is an investment in the Town of Tazewell. She believes that the Town's endorsement will strengthen the initiative and help secure funding support for the project. Attorney Pyott has some rough sketches for the site plans and is working on developing more detailed plans. They are also configuring the exact details of the statue and are awaiting analysis of the site foundation to ensure it can support the planned structure. The design aims to allow the park to be used for events such as the Christmas tree lighting.

The project is still in the early planning stages, and the committee is open to suggestions from the Council regarding design and planning. The IEDA supports the property's transformation into something beneficial for the community. Councilmember Cline inquired about available grants, and Mrs. Hurst is currently exploring grant opportunities.

If any are found, they will be presented to the Town. Mrs. Hurst sees this project as a valuable tool for boosting tourism.

Attorney Pyott followed up with questions about the site foundation, mentioning a recent meeting with Jim Ribble for a property survey. There are concerns about the foundation's composition, as the site was previously a building demolition area. Once the site foundation inspection results are available, planning can proceed. Attorney Pyott believes the tribute will be a crowning jewel for Main Street and hopes it will be completed by October 2026

## **B. Affordable Housing Partnership Proposal**

Kondwani Patterson, representing Each One Teach One Inc., proposed a partnership to address the pressing need for affordable housing in Tazewell. The plan involves developing Sugarhill model duplexes or modular housing options on county-owned land, aiming to minimize costs while maximizing quality for low to moderate-income families. The community is facing a serious shortage of affordable housing, and these duplexes, each approximately 3 bedrooms and 2 bathrooms, are intended to help alleviate this issue. The project plans to build a total of 6-8 duplexes.

There are several grant opportunities available to support this initiative. The chosen land is located above Sierra Springs Apartments, and leveraging existing infrastructure will help reduce costs. The estimated cost for each duplex is \$222,000. The financing strategy includes a Virginia Housing Grant of up to \$500,000, Federal Home Loan Bank AHP, USDA Rural Development, and block grants. County support, land permits, rental income, and profitability are also key components of the strategy. The proposed rent is \$900 per unit or \$1800 per duplex.

The benefits to Tazewell County include increased housing, job creation, and community partnerships. The project involves collaboration with Down East Custom Homes, Clinch Valley, Habitat for Humanity, Tazewell County, Virginia Housing Authority, IEDA, and Each One Teach One. The initiative also aims to promote sustainability and business development, awarding more scholarships in the area. Additional features include self-service laundry facilities, package delivery lockers, and shared workspace for remote work.

The collaboration with the Town, County, and IEDA is crucial for securing the right of way for accessibility and obtaining county loan support for sustainable funding. Mr. Patterson emphasized the need for support from the Town, County, and IEDA to develop this project. Meetings with the County are scheduled for tomorrow, and the team plans to attend upcoming meetings.

Councilmember Cline is reviewing the zoning of the property, which is currently classified as B2. He believes that changing the zoning should not be an issue. Vice Mayor Beasley inquired if the housing could be both rental and ownership, and Mr. Patterson confirmed that the plans are flexible and open to suggestions. Councilmember Fox asked about the possibility of rent-to-own options, and Mr. Patterson indicated that this is something they are willing to consider. Councilmember Davis noted that the road is not maintained by the Town. Mr. Patterson mentioned that they have another model option but are looking for the most sustainable solution

## **C. Camp Joy Summer Camp Support Request**

Mrs. Lester submitted a donation request form but was unable to attend the meeting. The request is for \$700 to fund camp attendance for seven children, at a cost of \$100 per child, from June 16th to July 18th. This is the first time they have requested funding for Camp Joy. Last year, thirty-one children from the town attended the camp.

During the discussion, Councilmember Davis noted that according to the donation guidelines, participants under 50 would qualify for a maximum donation of \$500. Councilmember Fox initially made a motion to approve the full \$700, which Councilmember Willis seconded. However, Vice Mayor Beasley expressed concern that the request exceeded the guidelines and suggested a donation of \$500, the maximum allowed. Councilmember Cline and Councilmember Willis offered to contribute an additional \$100 each of their own money if the motion was amended to \$500. Councilmember Fox then amended the motion to \$500, with additional contributions from Councilmember Cline and Councilmember Willis. Councilmember Willis seconded the amended motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

## **Local Business Recognition**

### **A. Tazz Conveyor**

Councilmember Willis expressed his desire to recognize Tazz Conveyor for its impressive milestone of being in business for over 30 years. He highlighted that Tazz Conveyor provides fair wages to several employees. Although the owner frequently travels and was unable to attend the meeting, Councilmember Willis will personally present the awards to him

## **Approval of Minutes**

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to approve minutes from the May 13, 2025 meeting. Councilmember Davis seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

## **Approval of Financial Statements & Financial Report**

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to approve financial statements and financial reports for May 2025. Councilmember Cline seconded. On discussion. Councilmember Cline wanted clarification regarding the solar project. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

## **Committee/Conference Updates**

### **A. Planning Commission Committee**

The Planning Commission convened on the 2nd to discuss the Riverside Propane project. After thorough review, it was determined that the project met all necessary requirements. Consequently, the committee decided to advance the proposal to the council for their consideration. The plat was formally motioned, seconded, and subsequently moved up to the council for approval.

During the review process, a few areas in the approved plat submission were identified as needing some revisions. These revisions are not yet ready for a public hearing. The plan is to present these revisions to the Planning Commission next month for further review. Following this review, the revised plat will be brought before the public for a hearing.

### **B. Industrial/Economic Development Authority**

IEDA Chair Cara Spivey expressed her enthusiasm for the grants received for the Clinch River Pavilion project. She highlighted the excitement surrounding the preliminary quotes obtained, which indicate that the plans may soon come to fruition. The project is currently in Phase 2 of the PAR, and the team is working to maximize the use of existing funds while actively seeking additional funding for later phases. The Farmers Market is being kept informed as the project progresses.

The team is also excited about the Riverside project located across the street, which presents a great opportunity for the future location of several businesses, including a potential cannery. Councilmember Cline mentioned discussions about moving boundaries to provide opportunities for grant acquisition and suggested designating the zone to open up access. Manager Regon and Executive Assistant Reeves are working on a strategic plan to meet with the county VEZ, which requires a public hearing in November. Given the deadline, they are being very proactive in their efforts. Manager Regon and Executive Assistant Reeves noted that ARC funding should be available in January.

Overall, the team is optimistic about the progress and potential of these projects, and they are committed to securing the necessary funding and support to bring their plans to life.

## **Unfinished Business**

### **A. 2nd Reading & Approval of 2025/26 Budget**

Councilmember Davis made a motion to waive the second reading for the approval of the 2025/2026 Budget. Vice Mayor Beasley seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to approve the 2025/2026 budget as presented. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. Councilmember Davis, who serves as the Director of Tazewell Today, is permitted to participate in the vote. This is because the budget in question affects at least more than two other organizations, and state code allows for her participation in such circumstances. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, nay; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

### **B. 2nd Reading & Approval of Rezoning Harris Lane Properties (VOTE) \***

Councilmember Cline made a motion to waive the second reading for the approval of Rezoning Harris Lane Properties. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote,

Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Councilmember Cline made a motion to approve the rezoning of the Harris Lane Properties. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Ordinance #2025-06-10

*Amendment to Existing Ordinance*

**Chapter 23**

**ZONING**

**Article I. In General**

**Sec. 23-2.1. Town of Tazewell Zoning Map**

**BE IT ORDAINED** by the Council of the Town of Tazewell, Virginia, pursuant to §6-2 of the Town Charter, §§23-2, 23-2.1 and 23-6 of the Code of the Town of Tazewell, and Virginia Code §15.2-2281, that it hereby AMENDS the Code of the Tazewell to enact the following change to the Town of Tazewell Zoning Map in order to reclassify the zoning designation of a certain parcels of real property located within the Town as identified below, and to reconfigure the Town of Tazewell Zoning Map accordingly:

**Sec. 23-2.1. Town of Tazewell Zoning Map**

**Tax Map Parcel Nos.: 094B109 0008B; 094B109 000B**

*Reclassify* from CONSERVATION, SPECIAL C-1, to RESIDENTIAL, LIMITED R-1 (0-2 Dwelling Units Per Acre, Gross)

*(all other designations as indicated on the Town of Tazewell Zoning Map remain unchanged)*

(Ord. of 06-10-2025)

First Reading: May 13, 2025  
Second Reading: June 10, 2025

VOTE:	Beasley	<u>Aye</u>
	Cline	<u>Aye</u>
	Davis	<u>Aye</u>
	Fox	<u>Aye</u>
	Hankins	<u>Aye</u>
	Willis	<u>Aye</u>

  
Mayor

  
Clerk

This Ordinance shall be in effect from and after thirty (30) days from the date of its passage  
Effective Date: July 11, 2025

Reference: Virginia Code §15.2-2281

04/14/25

## **New Business**

### **A. Set Public Hearing for Sewer Bonds for Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade for Tuesday, July 8, 2025, at 7:15 p.m.**

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to set the public hearing for Sewer Bonds for Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade for Tuesday, July 8, 2025 at 7:15pm. Councilmember Davis seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

### **B. Farmers Market Project Update**

Manager Regon provided an update on the Clinch River Pavilion project, announcing that they have received a check for the River Walk portion of the project from Cumberland Forestry. She has obtained several preliminary quotes and is currently awaiting an answer regarding the size versus materials. During a visit to St. Paul, the team reviewed their Pavilion, Market, and Town, which provided valuable insights. Manager Regon is confident that the project can be completed with the allocated funds.

However, Councilmember Cline expressed concerns about the expenditure on a PAR (Preliminary Architectural Report) early in the project, only to now be redesigning it. Manager Regon stated that initially, the Tobacco Commission required an engineering study as a prerequisite to apply for the grant. It was necessary to go a head with the grant application.

### **C. Warhawk Park Project Update**

Manager Regon announced that they have successfully secured a grant and are collaborating with Each One Teach One on the project. The project includes a pavilion and basketball courts, with the Tazewell County Career and Technical Center carpentry class actively involved in constructing the pavilion. The roof is expected to be installed before the Juneteenth celebration. Additionally, the county has allocated \$15,000 for utility hookups and materials

### **D. Rt. 460 Water Line Replacement Project Update**

Manager Regon announced that the Rt 460 Water Project officially commenced yesterday. Over the past two days, the team successfully laid 320 feet of pipe, and they are pleased with the progress made so far.

### **E. Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade Project Update**

Manager Regon has signed an award letter with Orders Construction for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade. They have also reached out to the contact at the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). Once the public hearings are completed, they will be able to proceed with securing loan funding for the project.

### **F. Land Use Tax Exemption Discussion**



Councilmember Willis has been approached by several sources regarding land use tax exemptions. He questioned why these exemptions had not been implemented in the past. Councilmember Cline provided an update, estimating that the total value of the impacted real estate is \$6,250, with the cost to the town being approximately \$7,000. There are three types of land use tax reductions: agriculture, forestry (which requires a forestry plan), and open space. The county uses the state land and authority council, and there is a rollback on parcels if the zoning is ever changed.

Councilmember Willis believes that, given the agricultural nature of the area, the town should consider offering the same exemptions as the county. Councilmember Cline agrees that this is worth considering. The county provides a list of active exemptions, and Manager Regon mentioned that this information would be provided to the town. Attorney Pyott stated that the town would need to adopt the exemptions, but it does not require approval from the general assembly. He believes that the exemptions can be amended into the existing code.

Councilmember Willis requested Attorney Pyott to present a draft and research the tax code. Councilmember Fox motioned to allow Attorney Pyott to proceed on this matter. Councilmember Willis seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

#### **G. Mowing Discussion**

Councilmember Willis raised concerns about the unkept streets and park, questioning whether there was sufficient manpower to address the issue. Manager Regon responded that with two new employees starting today, the total number of employees dedicated to mowing would increase to eight. She mentioned that the current budget allocates \$100,000 for part-time mowing, but she does not foresee having enough room in the budget to contract out the work, as it has been costly in the past.

Vice Mayor Beasley suggested that contracting out the work could be done flexibly and emphasized the importance of maintaining residential properties. Councilmember Willis proposed contracting out the mowing services three times a month, specifically for the area of Riverside Drive from the west side to east side. The area from White's Muffler to Fairground. Pop Shop to the exit ramp to intersection at Farm Bureau. Contract it for 3 times a month. Manager Regon agreed to work on advertising for bids for this contract.

#### **H. Riverside Propane Recommendation from Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission determined that the project met all necessary requirements. They advanced the site plan proposal to the council for consideration. Councilmember Fox made a motion to approve the site plan for Riverside Propane. Vice Mayor Beasley seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

#### **I. Miscellaneous - None**

## **Miscellaneous Public Comment - None**

### **Council Comments**

#### **Solar update.**

Attorney Pyott provided an update on the solar project, mentioning that he reached out to Jeff Gore last week and plans to follow up with him again tomorrow. Although there is an agreement currently in effect, communication has been lacking over the past few months. As of now, they have not received any updates on the project's progress or next steps.

#### **Councilmember Davis has announced her resignation from the Tazewell Town Council, effective June 30, 2025. Below is the transcript of her resignation letter:**

"I first ran for this seat in 2018 because I believed our local government should reflect the people it serves, especially the everyday voices too often left out. Women make up 52% of Tazewell's population but remain underrepresented in local decision-making. When women aren't at the table, our town misses out on valuable insights, experiences, and solutions. Our town deserves leadership that represents its full diversity. I was honored to be elected in 2018, re-elected in 2022, and I have done my best to serve with honor and integrity.

In 2020, I was asked to serve as the volunteer treasurer for Tazewell Today, which is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to revitalizing our town and strengthening the heart of our community. That same year, Tazewell Today's application to become a Virginia Main Street organization was accepted. To maintain this designation, the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, along with Main Street America, evaluates Tazewell Today's progress annually. Tazewell Today plays a central role in shaping the vibrancy, economy, and identity of our town. It organizes nearly all the community events you see on Main Street and beyond, and it has been included in the Town's comprehensive plan since 2016. When the position of Executive Director became available in 2024, I applied and was eventually hired.

Since Tazewell Today receives part of its funding from the Town, I took every step to ensure that my involvement was ethical and transparent. I sought guidance from the Town's attorney and the Virginia Conflicts of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council. Their guidance was clear: my dual service was both legal and ethical, as long as I recused myself from related votes and refrained from participating in contract negotiations. I have followed that guidance.

Unfortunately, despite this due diligence and transparency, a small number of individuals have chosen to elevate optics over facts and suspicion over substance. These actions have created an environment that undermines my ability to contribute meaningfully. I have been excluded from communications that directly impact the town and an organization at the center of this town's economic and community strategy. This is not just a personal frustration; it is a disservice to this Council, the nonprofit, and most importantly, to our residents. The energy and time consumed by this manufactured conflict have come at the expense of progress, collaboration, and the real work for which we were elected.

I am the only woman on this Council. And I cannot help but wonder if my integrity and dual service would be viewed differently if I were a different gender. There is a stark contrast between the treatment I have received and that of an elected county official who simultaneously works for a department funded by the very body he helps govern. That arrangement appears to raise no public concern, yet my leadership in a nonprofit has sparked months of disruption.

I say this not to deflect accountability, but to highlight a deeper truth: bias, whether conscious or unconscious, can erode trust, distort judgment, and hinder public institutions from realizing their full potential.

Let me be clear: I am stepping down because this distraction has been allowed to undermine both effective governance and the important, ongoing work of Tazewell Today. It is a disservice to this Council, to the nonprofit, and to the community we all serve.

But stepping down also gives me new freedom. I can now advocate more freely and forcefully for Tazewell Today and for the revitalization of Tazewell. It means I can now speak openly at Council meetings, engage directly with each of you as individuals, and speak more boldly and publicly about the economic opportunities that are within our reach. I am not leaving the work—I am recommitting to it, from a position where I can be more vocal, more active, and more effective.

Thank you to those who believed in this work, supported me, and stood for a better future for Tazewell. I will keep working toward that future, just from a different seat.”

### **Adjournment**

Councilmember Davis motioned to adjourn, Councilmember Fox seconded the motion. Councilmember Cline took a moment to thank Councilmember Davis for her service on the council and continued service with Tazewell Today. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Councilmember Davis, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Meeting adjourned at 9:18pm.