

Council Meeting Minutes

July 8, 2025

Present:

Mayor Michael Hoops

Vice Mayor Joe Beasley

Councilmember Danny Willis

Councilmember Jonathan Hankins

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember David Fox

Absent:

Staff members present were Town Manager, LeeAnne Regon; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves; Attorney, Brad Pyott; Clerk-Treasurer, Jessica Hayes; Police Chief, Stan Lampert; Fire Chief, John Thomas; EMS Director, Syndee Saleem.

WORK SESSION

1. Comprehensive Plan Review

The Planning Commission will submit any recommended changes to the Comprehensive Plan and has determined that reviewing the plan in advance is beneficial for preparation. The Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed every five years. Councilmember Cline inquired about which data may need updating; population data was identified as an area requiring revision. Executive Assistant Reeves suggested including projects that require grant funding within the plan, such as the Clinch River Pavilion, North Tazewell Revitalization, and Town of Tazewell EMS Building Renovation projects. Route 460 and the Wastewater Treatment Plant should also be included if they were not previously. Warhawk Park may be omitted since its completion is expected this year. The Tazewell Community Foundation Medical Office Building may not be necessary to include, as it is not a town project but rather a donation effort. Vice Mayor Beasley proposed adding Lincolnshire Park for facility and site improvements. Mountain Biking was recommended to be listed separately under tourism rather than recreation to enhance tourism initiatives.

Councilmember Cline questioned whether responsibility for certain tasks could be shifted to the county, given limitations in town resources for staffing and maintenance. Manager Regon referenced historical agreements regarding ownership of the Water Treatment Plant. Councilmember Willis noted previous management's stance on rate disparities between bills issued and received. Councilmember Cline suggested considering county control over the Wastewater Treatment Plant, while Vice Mayor Beasley noted this might lead to subsequent collections by the county. Manager Regon expressed concerns about outstanding debts following upgrades to the facility. Councilmember Cline asked which infrastructure projects should be added to the plan, such as bike lanes and green lanes. Manager Regon indicated that the Lead and Copper study requires a plan for replacement of all metal and galvanized pipe by 2027, with potential funding opportunities available. Rex Peppler informed that further funding would be necessary for project completion by 2037, covering 928 properties.

Vice Mayor Beasley recommended incorporating sidewalk upgrades, particularly at Barnes Trail, the fairground, and Steeles Lane. Installation of sewer lines for residents lacking access is projected for 2027–2028, which Councilmember Willis and Vice Mayor Beasley agreed should be included.

Councilmember Cline inquired about changes to night fishing hours, citing council discussions; Manager Regon stated that the Police Department had safety concerns. Councilmember Cline explored possible mitigation options such as security cameras, patrols, or trail cameras and recommended consulting VRSA for insurance guidance. Vice Mayor Beasley suggested that insurance may not be restrictive, referencing current allowances. These matters may not fall directly within the plan but remain topics of board interest. It was recommended that all playgrounds be categorized under recreation. The Soccer Fields at Ramey Lot require accurate cost estimates and capacity assessments, with consideration for a combination of one full-sized and two smaller fields for multi-use. Councilmember Cline summarized the focus areas as tourism, infrastructure, and recreation. He asked about strategies for housing development, including potential partnerships with DHCD and efforts to encourage affordable housing. Councilmember Willis supported the inclusion of affordable housing but expressed concerns about funding feasibility. Councilmember Willis also recommended consulting Chris Wearmouth about prior YMCA plans for housing development and possible funding opportunities. Councilmember Cline advocated exploring housing for elderly or retired individuals, though Vice Mayor Beasley noted limited land availability for such projects. Mayor Hoops did not consider it necessary to include in the plan at this stage.

Vice Mayor Beasley mentioned that economic development activities, including seeking grants for various projects, should be considered within industrial needs. Finally, Councilmember Cline requested summarizing and structuring the Comprehensive Plan for greater clarity and conciseness, noting its current length exceeds 180 pages and emphasizing the importance of clearly outlined objectives.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

The Town Council entered into Executive Session at 6:45pm

Certification of Executive Session

RESOLUTION

Motion made by: Beasley

Resolution Number: ES250708

Motion Seconded by: Cline

Meeting Date: July 8, 2025

Vote: All voted Aye

Purpose: Prospective Business and
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;

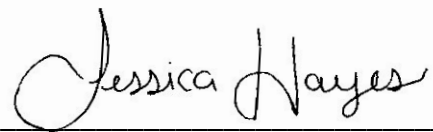
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Tazewell Town Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law were discussed in the executive session to which this certification resolution applies, 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, 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; 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; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

PUBLIC HEARING

Sewer Bonds for Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade – Public Hearing

Mayor Hoops opened the public hearing for the Sewer Bonds for Waste Water Treatment Plant Upgrade.

Mayor Hoops read the first reading for the Sewer Bonds for Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade.

On Tuesday, the 8th day of July, 2025, the Council of the Town of Tazewell, Virginia, will conduct a public hearing on the proposed issuance of one or more series of general obligation water and sewer bonds of the Town of Tazewell in the estimated maximum principal amount of \$15,500,000. The purposes of the proposed bonds, together with other available funds, are (a) to finance a wastewater treatment plant rehabilitation, together with related expenses, and (b) to pay costs associated with issuing such bonds. In addition to the pledge of the Town's full faith and credit to the repayment of the bonds, the Town may also pledge net revenues from its water and sewer systems.

The public hearing, which may be continued or adjourned, will be conducted at 7:15 p.m. in the Town Council Chambers, Tazewell Municipal Building, 211 Central Avenue, Tazewell, Virginia 24651. Interested persons may appear at such time and place and present their views. He adjourned the public hearing at 7:18pm.

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. Tazewell High School Marching Band Support Request

Heather Davis, the Band Booster President, reported that approximately 80 students are involved and will attend band camp the following week. She requested that the town consider making a donation, noting that the band receives minimal funding from Tazewell County Schools. In addition to holding various fundraising initiatives such as concession stands, spaghetti dinners, and Bingo events in partnership with Tazewell Today, they typically host a golf tournament; however, scheduling conflicts have prevented this event from occurring this year. The band currently includes several seventh and eighth grade members.

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to donate \$500, which was seconded by Councilmember Fox. Councilmember Cline inquired whether this amount adhered to established guidelines for donations, and Vice Mayor Beasley confirmed that it did. Councilmember Cline also asked whether additional funding was being sought from the county, to which Ms. Davis affirmed. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Local Business Recognition

A. The Wayfarer

Donna Roberts reported that The Wayfarer recently held a successful soft private event, which served as a preview for their standard operations. A band is scheduled to perform on the 16th. The project has remained within budget, and the current focus is on staffing, which has delayed the announcement of a grand opening date. It is anticipated that the venue will only be closed on Tuesdays. Plans are underway to introduce competitive karaoke as well. The menu features healthy options, including the use of beef tallow, locally sourced beef and chicken, and consideration of lettuce from local regenerative farms. This week, the menu will be expanded to include steaks and additional side dishes, with the full menu expected to be available by the grand opening. Police Chief Lampert expressed appreciation for the invitation and highlighted concerns regarding parking availability in the area.

Approval of Minutes

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to approve minutes from the June 3rd and June 10, 2025 meetings. Councilmember Fox seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Approval of Financial Statements & Financial Report

Councilmember Willis made a motion to approve financial statements and financial reports for June 2025. Councilmember Hankins seconded. On discussion. Councilmember Cline wanted clarification regarding the solar project. Attorney Pyott said that at this time there is no update despite reaching out to the company. We are unsure of what the delay is. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Committee/Conference Updates

A. Planning Commission Committee

Building Official Hurley reported that the Planning Commission approved sending chapter 24 platting amendments to council for review, aligning local regulations with state code.

Councilmember Willis inquired about house demolitions: Riverside Drive has been referred to Brandon Hart; Highland Ave is scheduled; work continues on Hill Street, with Painter Street next in line.

Unfinished Business

A. Land Use Tax Exemption

Attorney Pyott noted previous actions taken by the county and expressed a desire for additional time to discuss these matters with the council and to prepare a draft for their review. He requested more time to conduct further research. He also pointed out several comparisons he believes the council may not be aware of and voiced concerns regarding a potential figure of approximately \$7,000. He observed that the county's numbers have declined, which Councilmember Cline questioned given that tax values have increased. Councilmember Willis suggested continuing the discussion after the numbers provided by the county are verified. Attorney Pyott proposed that the decrease might be attributed to reductions in larger parcels, while Councilmember Cline inquired if land re-categorization could be a contributing factor. The council agreed to investigate the matter further but expressed a general inclination toward pursuing this exemption. It was estimated that a number of properties, specifically 21 taxpayers, would be affected by this change, which includes a five-year rollback period. Councilmember Cline also requested information on the percentage distribution among the three different uses—such as agriculture, open space, and timber—with the possibility that only a small proportion relates to timber. Attorney Pyott intends to prepare a draft for the council's review at their next meeting.

10. New Business

A. 1st Reading Sewer Bonds for Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade

Mayor Hoops conducted the first reading of the Sewer Bonds for the Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade. The second reading has been scheduled for August 12th.

B. Law Changes Effective July 1st

Attorney Pyott explained that these are routine ordinance adoptions required on an annual basis. The ordinances must be adopted to remain consistent with state code. Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to pass the law changes. Councilmember Fox seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Vice Mayor Beasley moved to classify the motion as an emergency measure and requested that the proposed changes to take effect immediately. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

C. Mowing Bids Update

Manager Regon provided an update regarding the town's mowing services. At the previous meeting, the council requested that certain sections of the town be put out to bid in order to assist with mowing responsibilities. A request for bids was subsequently issued, encompassing three separate sections. During the bid opening held last week, 12 bids were received. The recommended awards are as follows: BID 1 to KNL at \$1,564 per mow, BID 2 to Johnny Dillon at \$550 per mow, and BID 3 to Williams Tree Service at \$550 per mow. If mowing occurs twice per month, the total cost for all sections would be approx. \$13,612.00.

Upon council approval, contracts will be issued to the successful bidders. This approach will allow municipal teams to dedicate more attention to maintenance of the park and lake areas. Councilmember Cline inquired if there are other locations that should be considered, specifically noting concerns about Tazewell Avenue, where overhanging trees above the sidewalk require maintenance. It was suggested that, if this process proves effective, additional routes may be considered for bidding next year.

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to award the bids as presented. Councilmember Willis seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

D. Virginia Enterprise Zone Discussion

Manager Regon met with Mandy Archer from the VA Enterprise Zone to discuss potential amendments. Any proposed changes must be submitted to the county, as two public hearings are required for approval. Additionally, Manager Regon consulted with IEDA, who provided minor modifications. These adjustments do not result in any losses for the zone.

Councilmember Willis inquired about Pine Street's inclusion in the enterprise zone; it is currently not encompassed. Cline recalled that eligibility requires certain sections to be contiguous. There was interest in adding locations such as Whites Muffler, Stop and Save, Grundy National Bank Lot, the vacant lot property across the street (requiring 2.8 acres), and the former Riverside Fashion site (requiring 0.8 acres). Suggestions also included Lillies of the Field, several warehouses, B&W, Farm Bureau, Crigger Repair, Old Snappy's Building (requiring 4.1 acres). Areas of Fincastle suggested are Mint Motors, Kevin Crisp' property and the shopping plaza where Your Great Escape is (requiring 4.7 acres). On Main Street, the Board of Supervisors Building, The Traveler lots 465 and 467, and the Cox Lot (Green Space), totaling 1.6 acres, were discussed.

Councilmember Cline expressed concern regarding limitations on the total acreage the county would approve, noting that updates can typically be made annually. Attorney Pyott clarified that under current policy, reviews occur every ten years, with the last update completed in 2016. The Council directed Manager Regon to pursue additional acreage, particularly aiming to include all of Main Street. It was noted that Tazewell has a smaller enterprise zone compared to neighboring areas, and expanding this could incentivize more business and industry development locally.

Vice Mayor Beasley recommended a motion to extend the existing enterprise zone to include all of Main Street and Pine Street. Attorney Pyott suggested reviewing the criteria prior to submitting an official request. Vice Mayor Beasley moved to accept the proposal if additional acreage is available to the west, with Councilmember Hankins seconding. Councilmember Cline requested that the application seek the maximum allowable space. The county expects to conduct public hearings on these changes in October, with adoption anticipated soon after. Vice Mayor Beasley amended the motion to include Main Street West to Fairgrounds as permitted along with the above mentioned proposals. Councilmember Hankins seconded the amended motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

E. Nominations for Town Council Representative for Planning Commission Vacancy

Councilmember Cline nominated Councilmember Willis to act as representative on the Planning Commission board. Vice Mayor Beasley seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

F. Pool Pass Concerns

Councilmember Fox raised concerns regarding pool pass policies. He noted that pool closures create challenges, particularly around charging parents or guardians for entry when they are not utilizing the pool facilities themselves. Councilmember Cline inquired whether these concerns

pertain to season passes or day passes, citing his own experience of purchasing access for three children.

Vice Mayor Beasley observed that adults supervising children still use the facility, and lifeguards remain responsible for everyone within its boundaries for insurance purposes. He expressed concerns about the administrative difficulty of exempting certain supervisors from facility responsibilities. Vice Mayor Beasley emphasized that anyone inside the fenced area is considered under the facility's care.

Councilmember Fox suggested that supervisors for swimmers with disabilities should be exempt from entry fees, potentially through the implementation of a waiver. He clarified that his proposal applies specifically to individuals assisting those with disabilities. Vice Mayor Beasley stated that the pool is equipped with accessible features, while Manager Regon noted that the pool's lift is currently out of service, but a replacement has been ordered.

Councilmember Cline recommended considering the exemption only for season passes, which would allow for appropriate documentation and ease administrative processes. Councilmember Willis asked Councilmember Fox to prepare a formal proposal for discussion at the next meeting.

G. Set a Public Hearing for Platting Ordinance Amendment for Tuesday, August 12, 2025 at 7:15pm.

Vice Mayor Beasley made a motion to set the public hearing for the Platting Ordinance Amendment for Tuesday, August 12th at 7:15pm. Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

H. Use of Commonwealth Attorney's Office for Police Department Cases

Police Chief Lampert explained that the Police Department is seeking approval to transition the handling of criminal cases to the Commonwealth's office, citing financial considerations, time management, and issues arising from managing cases in two separate courts. Currently, felony and misdemeanor cases are processed in different courts, leading to potential miscommunications that can result in case dismissals because judges may not see the full context of a case. This separation has caused significant challenges.

Financially, court costs have nearly doubled, further supporting the need for change. Police Chief Lampert emphasized that this recommendation is not a reflection on the professionalism or high standards of the current attorney; rather, it addresses the complications created by splitting cases between courts, which strains resources and impacts successful convictions.

The proposed agreement with the Commonwealth will save more than \$5,300 in legal fees and substantially more in overtime. Councilmember Fox made a motion to approve the proposal, which was seconded by Vice Mayor Beasley. Councilmember Hankins asked if the primary goal was to

streamline processes, to which Police Chief Lampert replied that the core issue is the division of cases, especially when both felony and misdemeanor charges are involved, requiring officers to appear in different courts and complicating case closure.

Attorney Pyott noted that council is not required to procure an attorney for this process. Vice Mayor Beasley sought clarification that the police department would interact solely with the Commonwealth going forward. It was acknowledged that, per previous reappointments, this responsibility could fall under the appointed attorney. Tonight's discussion centers on whether an amendment is needed to facilitate the change.

Attorney Pyott was skeptical that this would significantly affect overtime, while Police Chief Lampert believed otherwise. Attorney Pyott further stated that any financial advantage would likely be realized through reduced legal fees and more efficient handling of mixed-offense cases by a single attorney.

Councilmember Cline asked about steps needed to implement the change. Existing active cases managed by the current attorney's office would remain with them until conclusion, while new cases would be transitioned to the Commonwealth as the shift takes effect. Vice Mayor Beasley suggested a follow-up next year to review potential savings and noted the need for reappointment in January. Since the budget year has just started, the police department wishes to begin the transition immediately. Vice Mayor Beasley also recommended specifying any necessary distinctions.

Clarification was provided that should Attorney Michael Thomas express interest in a particular case, he could still participate. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Miscellaneous

Night Fishing:

Councilmember Cline inquired about the possibility of implementing night fishing at Lincolnshire, similar to the program at Cavitt's Creek. He expressed interest in having this available for the current season. Police Chief Lampert responded that increased patrols could be arranged, with the option to reevaluate the situation if any issues arise. Manager Regon will confirm that there are no insurance concerns associated with this activity throughout the season.

Economic Liaison Position:

Councilmember Willis requested an update regarding the Economic Liaison role and inquired whether applications had been received. The response indicated that seven applications have been submitted, and the application review process will commence next week.

Recreation Department:

Councilmember Willis raised questions concerning the recreation department, specifically the need for a full-time, year-round director. Councilmember Cline recommended reviewing the job requirements and expectations, suggesting the potential to expand the scope of the position. Councilmember Willis offered an alternative perspective, proposing that the title or compensation might not necessarily need to match that of a director. Councilmember Cline emphasized the importance of reassessing the responsibilities associated with the director role.

Police Department Event:

The Police Department will host its Grand Opening event tomorrow from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM.

Miscellaneous Public Comment

Matt Muncy-Peery Farm features a lake and is considering options for public or private use of the pond. The owners are pursuing funding and grants for farm operations and plan to install advertising signage along Route 460. Beautification projects are planned for the property's edge across from the fairground. There is no access to the adjacent property within town limits. Beasley noted that all land west of the fairground remains in the county.

Tazewell Today Director Emily Davis announced that the Cruise In event is scheduled for July 25th, followed by Main Street Moments on July 26th. She requested that anyone aware of potential volunteers refer them to Tazewell Today. The vendor fee is \$50.00, with a discount code available for government entities. The July 4th event was deemed highly successful. Multiple bands are planned for Main Street Moments, and an additional event will be held on the fourth Friday in August, with no football game scheduled to conflict. This initiative is being evaluated for its growth potential. She noted that the recent event attracted approximately 50 to 75 attendees and suggested that local businesses remain open later that day to encourage increased foot traffic.

Council Comments

None.

Adjournment

Vice Mayor Beasley motioned to adjourn, Councilmember Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye.

Meeting adjourned at 9:36pm.