

Council Meeting Minutes

November 18, 2025

Present:

Vice Mayor Joe Beasley

Councilmember Jonathan Hankins

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember David Fox

Councilmember Danny Willis

Councilmember Glen Keen

Absent:

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

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN REVIEW

Council met in work session at 6:00pm.

Manager Regon presented several rebate options for customers affected by construction during phase 1 of the RT 460 project. The primary focus was on providing relief through meals tax rebates and utility bill credits. Data from the past three months indicated a noticeable decline in business for two affected customers, she suggested a total rebate amount of \$3,373.46 for meals tax. An alternative proposal involved applying a bill credit directly to customers' utility bills, with an estimated total of \$4,51.90 for the affected area.

Regarding mitigation efforts, the discussion covered pressure washing of affected buildings. The average water usage for pressure washing ranges from 250 to 500 gallons, with outsourcing costs estimated at \$375. Larger buildings could incur more costs estimating outsourcing this exceeds \$7,000. If pressure washing is done in-house it should be approximately \$6,473. Manager Regon suggested sending letters to affected customers, offering them the option to have pressure washing performed by a contractor, which would transfer liability away from the town.

Vice Mayor Beasley expressed a preference for utility bill credits and pressure washing, noting that this was the first phase of the project and that water rebates had been used previously in similar situations, but meals tax rebates had not. Councilmember Cline proposed considering a

percentage-based cost for pressure washing to determine the rebate amount, with a cap date set for requests. Concerns were raised about timing, especially with upcoming spring construction dust issues will continue. With that in mind, making bill credits potentially more practical than pressure washing at this stage.

Additional suggestions included offering rebates on business license fees and extending timelines for mitigation efforts. Councilmember Fox highlighted that Italian Village had experienced business losses due to construction and recommended rebates on meals tax, combined with pressure washing, to support affected businesses. Councilmember Cline emphasized the importance of being prepared to implement any chosen mitigation measures and suggested that the town has sufficient budget flexibility to support these initiatives.

There was consensus that rebates should be directed toward water bills, considering the project's water-related nature. The impact was most significant in areas affected by road construction. Legal considerations regarding meal tax rebates were discussed; the town cannot waive taxes but can rebate them after payment. Monthly meals tax comparisons could be used to assess eligibility.

Councilmember Keen supported rebates for restaurants significantly impacted, proposing a combination of meal tax rebates and bill credits for water. Councilmember Cline recommended obtaining quotes from contractors to ensure fair pricing and suggested providing a list of approved contractors for pressure washing. The focus area for mitigation was the front row homes and businesses, which were most affected. The group agreed to offer all three options—pressure washing, meal tax rebate, and water bill credit—to support affected citizens and businesses.

A one-month rebate or bill credit period was deemed appropriate, acknowledging that it could not compensate for all losses but would serve as a gesture of support.

The group agreed to proceed with these mitigation strategies to assist affected customers and businesses effectively. Once Manager Regon has compiled the requested data for the Council to review further.

Current and Completed Projects

2026 Upcoming Comprehensive Plan Revision: Items that have been completed or are no longer feasible should be removed, and new projects should be added to reflect current priorities over the next 5 years.

RT 460 Project: This project is already active and is expected to be completed soon. It will not require inclusion in the upcoming plan.

WWTP Upgrade: The Wastewater Treatment Plant upgrade has commenced and should be incorporated into the strategic plan.

EMS Congressional Directed Spending: An allocation of \$354,000 has been designated for this project, with a matching \$300,000 from the town. A pre-bid meeting has been scheduled, pending

the completion of necessary drawings. Discussions are ongoing regarding funding priorities and potential collaboration with fire department facilities.

Tazewell Community Foundation: The project is scheduled for completion and opening by March.

Warhawk Park: The park is nearing completion, with final touches underway.

Digital Sign at Fire Department: Installation is complete.

Bowling Alley Demolition: The demolition has been completed.

Farmers Market Pavilion: Construction began on Saturday, with structure construction beginning in February. Heritage Metal's bid was selected at \$265,000 for building the structure. This initiative is part of the North Tazewell Revitalization plan and should be included in the strategic plan.

Future and Proposed Projects

Facade Improvements: Applications for facade enhancements are ongoing. It is recommended to add this effort to the strategic plan.

Mountain Biking Trails: A budget of \$350,000 has been allocated, with an additional \$60,000 from Tazewell County contingent upon easement acquisitions.

Sidewalk Maintenance and ADA Compliance: Repairs on Main Street and Elk Street are scheduled for this fiscal year. Continued inclusion in the budget and comprehensive plan is advised. Opportunities for VDOT funding through SMART SCALE should be explored, although right-of-way considerations may pose challenges.

Lead and Copper Service Line Replacement: Town-owned service lines must be replaced by 2037 to meet EPA standards.

Primitive Camping and Night Fishing: Discussions with the county indicate success with primitive camping at Lake Witten. The project includes considerations for an emergency vehicle access road, potentially as part of Lincolnshire Park improvements. Cost feasibility should be examined.

Lincolnshire Park Restoration: The park requires ongoing improvements. The Recreation Director is actively working to expand recreation at the park. There have been past quotes regarding the field restoration. There was discussion of if these quotes and plans are feasible.

Old Ramey Lot Development: Potential for a multi-use field or soccer field is under consideration.

Fairground Property: If the County Fire Department relocates, the lower portion of the property may become available for development.

Natural Gas Infrastructure: Currently deemed unfeasible due to high costs and lack of pipeline infrastructure.

Emergency Planning and Water Reserve: The Cumberland Plateau Emergency Planning District has identified shortfalls. Hazard planning will be added to the strategic initiatives.

Upcoming Strategic Planning and Collaboration

Next month, a collaborative meeting with IEDA and the Planning Commission will be held to develop a comprehensive plan. The meeting will cover multiple topics within a two-hour timeframe. Preparation includes establishing a framework or agenda, which Manager Regon will distribute to all participants.

Work session came to a recess at 7:20pm.

CALL TO ORDER

Vice Mayor Beasley 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. Swearing-In Ceremony of Councilmember Glen Keen

Charity Hurst, Tazewell County Clerk of Court, officiated the swearing-in of Councilmember Glen Keen. The ceremony marked the beginning of Keen's term on the Town Council, effective from November 18, 2025, through December 31, 2026.

B. Recognition of Former Mayor Donald Buchanan

Vice Mayor Beasley led a tribute to former Mayor Donald Buchanan, honoring his dedicated service from December 2011 to 2018. Buchanan's leadership significantly influenced the town's development. He highlighted his involvement in major projects such as the YMCA and the Tazewell Community Foundation, reflecting his ongoing commitment to community growth. Councilmember Willis acknowledged the Buchanan family's longstanding contributions to our community.

C. Special Presentation to Emily Combs Davis

Emily Combs Davis was honored with a plaque commemorating her years of dedicated service as a former councilmember. Vice Mayor Beasley presented a special recognition to Emily Combs Davis, celebrating her extensive service and unwavering commitment to the community.

D. Financial Audit Overview

Corbin Stone and Dianna Epperly from Robinson, Farmer, Cox Associates, delivered the annual audit report, confirming the town's healthy financial status with an unmodified opinion. Over all outstanding debt is \$3.6 million, this did go up due to a reassessment. Annualized growth rates increased. Once they decrease it will come back down. Mr. Stone added that very few localities have a pension asset. Mr. Stone encouraged maintaining a strong fund balance to mitigate inflation pressures. Discussion also covered emergency funds, with smaller municipalities holding approximately 25% of their budget in reserve, and standard adjustments for new accounting standards.

E. Imagination Library Program Update

Erica Galloway, Executive Director of the Tazewell County Public Library, announced successful funding and launch of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program as of September 4th. The program has achieved 25% participation. Mrs. Galloway provided informational brochures and expressed gratitude for the council's support in funding this educational initiative.

F. Police Department Achievements and Initiatives

Police Chief Lampert introduced two new officers, Ethan Mills and Hunter Jones, both recent graduates from the police academy, and acknowledged Bobby Morgan for his extensive experience and contributions, including securing grants.

The department secured funding for a new mental health facility shower, thanks to Officer Missy Woodard. Deputy Chief Lowe completed advanced leadership training and secured a \$4,000 grant for a drone, with pilot certification underway. The department also hosted its first accreditation review, with Sean Hurd recognized for his outstanding leadership and honored with the Accreditation Manager of the Year award, elevating the town's reputation.

Finally, the department expressed gratitude to the Wayfarer for their donation of tables, highlighting community support for law enforcement efforts.

Local Business Recognition-None

Approval of Minutes

Councilmember Fox made a motion to approve minutes from the October 14, 2025 meeting. Councilmember Cline seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye.

Approval of Financial Statements & Financial Report

Councilmember Cline made a motion to approve financial statements and financial reports for October 2025. Councilmember Fox seconded. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye.

Committee/Conference Updates

A. Planning Commission

Building and Zoning Official Hurley reported that The Planning Commission Committee held a session on November 3rd, where discussions centered around potential property transactions and infrastructure adjustments. The county has engaged with David Ball regarding the purchase of the B&W lot to support the County Fire Department's relocation. Additionally, there is consideration

of closing a small section at the end of Bishop Street, a matter scheduled for review before the council next month.

B. IEDA

Cara Spivey stated that they met on November 3rd. They prepared for the upcoming joint meeting with the council in December. They did receive CPROP funding for 50,000 which will be used for paving at the Clinch River Pavilion Farmer's Market.

C. Tazewell Today

Emily Davis, the Executive Director of Tazewell Today, highlighted upcoming community event. The Thanksgiving Day Turkey Trot is scheduled for Thanksgiving morning. The event features various awards and is designed to be inclusive for all participants. It also supports local food donation efforts in partnership with A Child Shall Lead Them Food Pantry.

Looking ahead to the holiday season, the community will host a Christmas Tree event and a Winter Market with Parade on December 6th, running from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. and parade at 5:00pm. The market will feature a Gingerbread Contest and a workshop held on the preceding Friday night. She spoke briefly on an initiative that can be funded through a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission, which facilitated a community visioning tour and data collection efforts. The insights gained from this process are proving valuable for local planning and development. Tazewell Today has also enjoyed successful bingo night. Plans are underway to host six bingo events in the upcoming year, with three of these in partnership with organizations such as the Band Boosters, Project Grad, and Tazewell High School.

Unfinished Business – None

New Business

A. Announcement of Names for Applications Received for Vacant Mayoral Seat, and Set Special Called Town Council Meeting, with an Executive Session

Agenda Item to discuss Personnel Matters [Section 2.2-3711 (A)(1)] related to the Appointment to Fill Vacancy for Town Mayor, for Monday, December 1, 2025, at 7:30 p.m.

Attorney Pyott reported that a public hearing is scheduled for 7:30 p.m. Councilmember Cline asked whether the Town is actively working to update its code and charter to align with State requirements, and inquired if the Virginia Municipal League provides resources to track such changes. Attorney Pyott explained that updates often affect multiple areas of the code, particularly Title 46.2, and noted that changes enacted by the General Assembly can sometimes require emergency adoptions. He emphasized that this is not a typical occurrence and expressed uncertainty about whether an emergency order could expedite the process. Vice Mayor Beasley

agreed that several sections of language within the code need revision to ensure consistency with State law.

Councilmember Cline stated that we received an application from Vice Mayor Joe Beasley the then asked if Vice Mayor Beasley were elevated to Mayor, would the same vacancy-filling process would apply to the resulting open council seat. Council agreed that the next meeting will include scheduling the advertisement and public hearing for a seat expected to become available, with the process to be completed by the January 13th meeting. A motion was then made to set a public hearing for December 1st to receive public comments and applications. The motion was made by Councilmember Fox, seconded by Councilmember Keen. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye.

B. Set Public Hearing for Zoning Map Corrections for Riverside Drive Properties (B&W Auto and Tazewell Farm Bureau) to be zoned B-2 from R-2, and to add a Zoning Use for B-1, B-2, and M-1 to allow Fire, Police, and Local Government Services, for Tuesday, December 9, 2025, at 7:15 p.m.

Zoning and Building Official Hurley explained that the county submitted this request in anticipation of relocating its fire department. During the review, a zoning need was identified, as current provisions do not specify municipal uses such as fire and police facilities within any of the districts. Hurley noted that this omission was likely an oversight that occurred without notice. He advised that the matter can be addressed comprehensively in a single public hearing, which will allow for the correction and the addition of clear specifications for municipal buildings across all zones. Hurley emphasized that this is an appropriate time to make the adjustment while the broader correction is underway. Councilmember Hankins made a motion to set the public hearing for December 9th at 7:15pm. Councilmember Fox seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Councilmember Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Fox, aye; Vice Mayor Beasley, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye.

C. EMS Update

EMS Director Saleem provided an update on the recent Community Dinner, noting that the event was very successful this year, serving approximately 500 members of the community. Of those, 170 attended in person while 330 received takeout meals. She expressed her gratitude to Councilmember Cline for assisting, as well as to Councilmember Hankins and his wife for their support.

Director Saleem also reported that she has taken possession of both new ambulances. Once radios are installed, the vehicles will be ready for service. She further noted that the RFP was advertised on October 13th for the EMS building upgrade, with the pre-bid meeting held on September 29th, which generated significant interest.

Manager Regon explained that Thompson and Litton prepared the initial materials and presented two options: constructing a new facility from the ground up or renovating the existing building. During the pre-bid meeting, contractors asked whether construction documents were available; however, these were not included in the materials Thompson and Litton had provided, though they were referenced in the PAR. Thompson and Litton are now working to prepare the necessary documents, which will require scheduling another pre-bid meeting. While this will cause some delay, it is necessary to ensure competitive bids. Manager Regon emphasized that the feedback received from bidders and contractors was valuable.

Councilmember Cline asked whether there was anything that could be done immediately to improve the department's quality of life. Director Saleem responded that while they are managing for now, the department is expanding and space is becoming limited.

D. Fire Department Request

Fire Chief Thomas reported that the department is in need of a new pumper truck, with an estimated cost of \$1.2 million. He explained that EPA regulations limit the age of service trucks, and while the department currently operates two trucks, one is already close to being out of date. Planning for replacement is critical, as delivery of a new truck could take up to three years even if ordered immediately. Chief Thomas emphasized that these trucks are essential, as pumper trucks are the first to arrive on scene and are central to fire department operations. He noted that payments would not begin until the truck is delivered.

Councilmember Keen asked whether additional bids had been sought. Chief Thomas responded that he wished to secure council support before pursuing further bids, but indicated he was willing to do so. With budget season approaching, he stressed the importance of planning for this expense. Vice Mayor Beasley observed that by the time a new truck is received, the other truck will also be nearing replacement age. While acknowledging the significant cost, Vice Mayor Beasley noted that the investment would serve the department for approximately 25 years.

Discussion followed regarding potential grant funding. Chief Thomas explained that while the department has secured smaller grants, they have not been able to obtain funding of this magnitude. Manager Regon stated she would investigate further, though she noted that the department's financial standing sometimes complicates grant eligibility. Vice Mayor Beasley suggested earmarking funds to support grant applications moving forward.

Councilmember Cline inquired about training opportunities that could provide certification for the Fire Department to conduct fireworks displays. Chief Thomas explained that the certification process had previously proven too costly, which led the department to contract the service instead. Manager Regon added that state law requires at least two fireworks displays per year to maintain certification. She will gather additional information for further discussion in January.

Council concluded that no upfront funds would be required at this stage. A resolution of support for the truck purchase will be considered at the December meeting.

E. Rt. 460 Waterline Replacement Project Update

Manager Regon reported that paving has been completed, with plans in place to mill the remaining lane and overlay the entire road in the spring. She noted that the four-way hill section was opened last Friday, and the ditch line was patched at that time. The full overlay of the road will be scheduled for spring.

She further explained that a pre-bid meeting is upcoming, and a crane will need to be procured for installation of a pressure reducing vault. The Virginia Department of Health project remains pending as the Town is still awaiting delivery of bridge materials required to complete that phase. In addition, a small section of pipe is scheduled to be laid on Market Street and also from Hardee's to the bridge near The Great Escape, and from Advance Auto to the entrance of Food Lion.

Councilmember Keen commended the Town crew, stating that they have done an excellent job with the resources available and continue to perform at a high level.

F. Mountain Biking Project Update

Manager Regon reported that both property owners have indicated their intent to sign, with one already committed and the other expected to do so shortly. Once the agreements are official, the project can be presented to Tazewell County, which could award \$60,000 in funding to further support the initiative. While the final cost is not yet determined, this would bring total available funding to approximately \$410,000.

Councilmember Cline noted that the funding could be used to secure designs and drawings, which could then be presented to the community to evaluate the vision and determine feasibility. Vice Mayor Beasley added that, since the design has not yet been finalized, the project—spanning 500 acres—can be tailored to specifically protect local land and water resources.

G. Dog Park Update

Manager Regon reported that fountains, benches, and trash receptacles have been installed at the dog park. She is seeking information on suitable tree species that could be planted to provide shade. Manager Regon noted the potential for further improvements and suggested revisiting the project in the spring to explore ways to make the space more inviting and better utilized.

H. Comprehensive Plan Review

Vice Mayor Beasley reminded Council of the Special Called Joint Public Meeting with the Town Council, Planning Commission, and I/EDA scheduled for Monday, December 1, 2025, at 5:30 p.m.

I. Employee Christmas Dinner

Manager Regon extended an invitation to Town Council members to attend the Employee Christmas Dinner on Friday, December 12, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the VIP Room. Members were asked to RSVP by November 21st if they plan to attend.

J. Southwest Virginia Legislative Reception

Manager Regon announced the upcoming Southwest Virginia Legislative Reception in Richmond on January 28, 2026. She noted that she has attended the event for the past two years and emphasized that it provides an excellent opportunity to meet with major funders and discuss ongoing projects. Council members interested in attending were encouraged to do so.

Miscellaneous

Manager Regon reported that the Ice Rink grand opening will take place Friday evening at 6:00 p.m., featuring a food truck, free admission, and Christmas music. Vice Mayor Beasley suggested exploring options for a covering, while Cara Spivey proposed utilizing the Pavilion in future years. Councilmember Fox requested music on Main Street; however, it was noted that the speaker system is no longer in place. The Tazewell Today office may serve as an alternative location, as the speakers are still available but not currently installed.

Manager Regon concluded by thanking her department heads for their dedication and hard work. Police Chief Lampert expressed his appreciation for her leadership and efforts.

Public Comments

Craig August, from Iowa, addressed Council. He shared that he and his family visited the area last year and, during that time, he developed a deep appreciation for the Town, describing it as “like a Hallmark Town.” Mr. August, now retired from a career programming C&C machine, noted his strong attention to detail and expressed gratitude for the opportunity to be here.

He reported that he is in the process of purchasing the property at 204 Tazewell Avenue, which has been unoccupied for many years. He outlined his plans for significant renovations, explaining that he has already obtained multiple quotes and is working to secure financing. Mr. August stated that his goal is to have the exterior of the home fully completed by this time next year. He came before Council to introduce himself and to explore ways he might contribute to the community. He requested assistance in identifying potential referrals for contractors and structural engineers, as well as information on available grants or tax incentives to support his project.

Council Comments

Police Chief Lampert announced that they are having a Christmas party at the police department sponsored by a citizen in our community. It will be on December 10th at 6pm. The council encouraged to attend.

Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:39pm.