

Council Meeting Minutes

February 10, 2026

Present:

Mayor Joe Beasley

Councilmember Danny Willis

Vice Mayor Jonathan Hankins

Councilmember Zach Cline

Councilmember Glen Keen, Jr.

Councilmember Elisabeth Takach

Absent:

Councilmember David Fox

Staff members present were Town Manager, Leeanne Regon; Executive Assistant, Susan Reeves; Attorney, Brad Pyott; Clerk-Treasurer, Jessica Hayes; Police Chief Stanley Lampert, Fire Chief John Thomas; Recreation Director Kenneth Hicks.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

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

The Town Council entered into Executive Session at 6:45PM.

Certification of Executive Session

RESOLUTION

Motion made by: Keen

Resolution Number: ES260210

Motion Seconded by: Cline

Meeting Date: February 10, 2026

Vote: All voted Aye

Purpose: Real Property, Personnel
Matters, Consultation Legal Council

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;

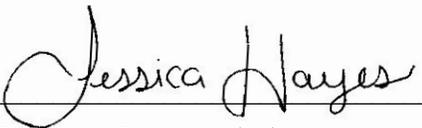
NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Tazewell Town Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia Law were discussed in the executive session to which this certification resolution applies,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

Nays: none

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



Treasurer Hayes, Clerk

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

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

CALL TO ORDER

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

Pledge of Allegiance.

Pastor Nate Thomas led the meeting in the invocation prayer.

Special Presentations

A. Special Presentation for Black History Month

Betty Wallace attended today to deliver a special presentation for Black History Month. She stated that in 1977, the Warrens and Hollys recorded their family history, which included extensive research on the presence and experiences of enslaved people in Tazewell County. In the early 1800s, approximately 3% of the county's population were slaveholders, while around 11% of residents were enslaved. Although the number of slaveholders remained relatively stable, the enslaved population grew significantly between 1820 and 1830 as enslaved families expanded.

Historical records also document numerous emancipations between 1800 and 1840. Many enslaved individuals were freed through the wills of slaveholders upon their death. One notable example involved a slaveholder who not only granted freedom but also provided a five-mile swath of land, which later became known as Mudfork.

Accounts from the Civil War era describe enslaved people escaping through Tazewell County. Because both Union and Confederate troops traveled through the area on their way to the Saltville salt mines, the movement of armies created opportunities for escape. However, risks remained high. In one documented case, a Confederate soldier recognized enslaved individuals traveling with Union forces and wrote to his wife so their enslavers could be notified.

The last known formerly enslaved person to die in Tazewell County was Samuel Harris, born in 1848 in Abbs Valley. Interviewed several times late in life, Harris recounted his experiences under slavery. He remembered believing that if "the men in blue" won the war, he would finally be free; if not, he doubted freedom would ever come. He and his brother planned to escape to McDowell County, West Virginia, where they knew someone who could help them reach the Underground Railroad—their intended first step toward freedom.

Mrs. Wallace noted that, growing up in Tazewell, she did not witness racial tension and felt the community had become an inclusive environment by her generation. In recent years, the Town has taken steps to actively acknowledge its history with slavery. Tazewell now hosts an annual Juneteenth Celebration, which includes a Freedom Walk and historical storytelling. The community also features the "Standing Tall and Proud" mural near the courthouse,

depicting 16 influential Black residents of Tazewell County, several of whom were born into slavery.

B. Recognition of Former Mayor Michael Hoops with Placement of Portrait in Council Chambers

Mayor Beasley presented an award to Former Mayor Micheal Hoops, recognizing his service as Mayor of the Town of Tazewell from January 1st, 2019 to January 2025. Mr. Hoops reflected on the honor of serving Tazewell during those years, explaining that he ran for mayor after moving his family to the town and wanting to contribute positively to the community. He expressed gratitude for his time in office and appreciation for the members currently serving, adding that it is wonderful to return.

C. FBLA Week Proclamation

Mayor Beasley read the recognition certificate.



Certificate of Recognition FBLA Week



WHEREAS, Future Business Leaders of America is a nonprofit educational organization whose first chapter was established in Johnson City, Tennessee, in 1942; and

WHEREAS, Iowa became FBLA's first state chapter in 1947; and

WHEREAS, Tazewell High School officially chartered its FBLA local chapter in 1953 under the leadership of Mrs. William Bundy and Mrs. John Kulick; and

WHEREAS, FBLA includes more than 250,000 members and advisers in 4,600 chapters nationwide in middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities, career and technical schools, and private business schools; and

WHEREAS, FBLA is a professional business organization dedicated to bringing business and education together in a positive working relationship through innovative leadership and career development programs; and

WHEREAS, FBLA members perform community service activities and strive to build a student's understanding of the realities of the modern business world; and

WHEREAS, FBLA teaches middle school, high school, and college students, business and leadership principles, and assists them in the transition from school to work;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Joseph R. Beasley, Mayor of the Town of Tazewell, do hereby proclaim February 8 – 14, 2026, as FBLA Week in Tazewell, Virginia.



Joseph R. Beasley, Mayor
Town of Tazewell

Councilmember Cline motioned to approve the proclamation for the week of February 8-14, 2026 to be known as FBLA Week in Tazewell, Va. Vice Mayor Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

D. Tazewell County Chamber of Commerce Oktobrewfest Event Request

Pam Meade, Executive Director of the Tazewell County Chamber of Commerce, stated that the Oktobrewfest Event is scheduled for October 3rd from 5 to 9 p.m. Permission is requested to allow the event to be held on Main Street and to close part of the street from noon until 9 p.m. that day. This event continues to grow; last year, attendance was so high that food vendors completely sold out. The event has made a strong comeback. It is designed as a family-friendly gathering and not just for beer connoisseurs, it's an enjoyable experience for everyone. Councilmember Cline proposed a motion to allow street closure for the Oktoberfest Event. Councilmember Takach seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, nay; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

E. Introduction John Rhudy, Tazewell County Southern District Supervisor

John Rhudy has served in the office for two months and is committed to working with the town on future initiatives, including projects related to the cannery. He anticipates productive collaboration with us on upcoming endeavors.

F. Doc Witten House Donation

Litz Vandyke and Roger Pike addressed the council regarding the Doc Witten house donation. Mr. Vandyke stated that Dr. Jack W. "Doc" Witten (1880–1959) was a physician, World War I veteran, long-serving Virginia legislator, and a deeply influential humanitarian in Tazewell County. Inspired to pursue medicine after losing his mother at age twelve, he went on to earn degrees from Tazewell College, Emory & Henry, and the Medical College of Virginia. His professional and civic leadership earned him major honors, including MCV's Alumnus of the Year and VMI's Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award in 1949.

He served 30 years in the Virginia General Assembly—first in the House of Delegates, then the Senate, and later returning to the House—where he focused on community improvement and public service. His military service included deployment to the French Front in World War I, where he rose to the rank of Major.

His greatest legacy was the Witten Home, where over five decades he provided stability, education, and moral guidance to more than 150 boys from difficult circumstances. Many went on to attend colleges and military academies, and 24 served in World War II, with several earning high military honors. His work was supported by Maggie Rose, who helped run the household.

Dr. Witten was also deeply involved in local athletics, serving as Tazewell High School's team doctor for more than 30 years and supporting many of his boys who played on school teams and later in college.

His impact extended beyond the region, welcoming boys from several states and even from Korea and Israel. In recent years, community leader Bettye VanDyke played a central role in preserving his legacy by restoring his home and establishing a scholarship in his honor. After her passing in 2025, her family continues this work by donating the restored Witten residence to the Town of Tazewell.

Councilmember Willis moved to accept the donation of the "Doc" Witten House, with the stipulation that the property be reserved for recognition and commemoration of Dr. Jack W. "Doc" Witten. Councilmember Keen seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

Local Business Recognition

A. Cargo Oil, Inc

Ab Peery could not attend today. We appreciate their longstanding business and valuable contributions to our community.

B. Between Friends Gifts

Vickie Boothe's business has operated for 19 years and will reach 20 in September. Based in her hometown of Tazewell, she has spent 11 years on Main Street in the former Betty Vandyke building, a location she dreamed of as a child. When she started, there were few retail businesses on Main, but the area has grown significantly. She encourages the community to shop local and believes supporting Main Street businesses is essential. Vickie is deeply proud of her hometown.

C. Kandi Kakes, LLC.

Kandi Sigmon, who makes custom cakes, was unable to attend. Their new business is opening next to Love Ya Babe Florist. We wish them success as they start their venture.

Approval of Minutes

Vice Mayor Hankins made a motion to approve minutes from the January 13, 2025 council meeting. Councilmember Keen seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

Approval of Financial Statements & Financial Report

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

Committee/Conference Updates

A. Planning Commission Committee

Building and Zoning Official Hurley updated that the Planning Commission did not meet last Monday. Weather was not cooperating and two members were out for illness. Next meeting will be in March.

B. Tazewell Today

Director Emily Davis reported on Restaurant Week in January, which included 11 out of 13 local restaurants (one closed for the month) and featured a raffle with over 300 entries to boost participation and track engagement. She recently attended the Virginia Main Street Directors Retreat in Loray, allowing collaboration with other directors. On February 26 at 6pm, Joe Borgstrom from Place + Main Advisors will give a virtual presentation in Tazewell. SMARP grant planning is ongoing, with a draft presentation expected in March. The Polar Plunge fundraiser is coming up, and community and council are encouraged to join. A Bingo fundraiser with Project Graduation is scheduled for March 8 at Nuckolls Hall. The Promotion Committee will fill Easter eggs for the upcoming hunt at their next meeting, inviting volunteers to help.

C. Industrial/Development Economic Development Authority

I/EDA Chairperson Cara Spivey announced that the meeting scheduled for this past Monday was cancelled due to inclement weather.

D. Comprehensive Plan Review Sub-Committee

Councilmember Cline reported that the meeting was not held due to inclement weather. The council is currently reviewing goals, objectives, and strategies for their implementation over the next five years. Meetings are scheduled for the first Monday in March at 5:30 p.m. Manager Regon noted that Hill Studio assembled the previous packet; however, she has been unable to reach the representative at this time.

Unfinished Business

A. 2ND Reading & Approval of Ordinance - Closure of Portion of Bishop Street.

Vice Mayor Hankins motioned to waive the second reading. Councilmember Takach seconded the motion. Attorney Pyott noted that the only change since the last reading was that the title will be changed on the actual Platt recording. On vote, Councilmember

Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

Tax Map Parcel No.: 094A704 _____

ORDINANCE OF VACATION

BE IT ORDAINED by the Council of the Town of Tazewell, Virginia, pursuant to Virginia Code §15.2-2006, et seq. (Repl. Vol. 2025), that it hereby enacts the following Ordinance of Vacation regarding a portion of Bishop Street which runs in an east/west direction and is specifically located west of existing Broadway Street in the Town of Tazewell (formerly known as North Tazewell), the affected portion of which street is more specifically shown as highlighted in yellow on that certain Plat entitled "PLAT Showing Survey for Kahalid Afouis, Being Re-division of Lots 40-45 Map of the Peninsula - Tazewell, Virginia," a copy of which map is attached hereto as Exhibit "A". The original of said map is found of record in the Clerk's Office for the Circuit Court of Tazewell County in Deed Book _____, at page _____.

It is hereby established that pursuant to the criteria set forth in Virginia Code §15.2-2006 (Repl. Vol. 2025), a public hearing was duly held before the Council for the Town of Tazewell at 7:15 p.m. on January 13, 2026, with notice of said hearing published twice in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph, and with notice being provided to the affected adjoining landowners. Following the offer of public comment by those in favor of and those against vacation of the portion of said street, and none being offered, the public hearing was closed.

It is hereby further established that during the course of the subsequent regularly scheduled meeting of the Council on January 13, 2026, upon motion made and duly seconded, it was the consensus of the Council to vacate, discontinue and close the portion of said street as identified and identified by the yellow highlighted portion on said Plat, a copy of which is attached hereto, to all vehicular traffic, pedestrian traffic, and traffic of any other kind, on the following conditions:

1. That in accord with Virginia Code §15.2-2008, the adjoining owner whose property immediately abuts the vacated portion of said street/road to the east shall be responsible for paying to the Town the assessed on the value for the vacated portion in question, that value being determined by the Commissioner of Revenue to be identified and designated as follows:

TMP No. 094A704 _____ \$3,000.00

2. That in accord with the Town's subdivision ordinance (Town Code §24-1, et seq.), the vacated portion of the street will merge with the existing abutting property of that owner into one new and larger boundary (identified by two separate tax parcels), such that the newly acquired fractional portion cannot be sold, transferred, or subdivided and sold or transferred separate from the original boundary of the new owner; and
3. That the fractional portion acquired by the new owner shall be subject to any and all existing utility easements presently existing therein, and to the parcel's future availability for the construction, installation and maintenance of utilities necessary for the Town of Tazewell.

It is hereby further established and acknowledged by the Council for the Town that Kahalid Ofouis, his wife, the owners whose property abuts the vacated portion of Bishop Street to the north and south, has caused to be paid to the Town the assessed value associated with the fractional portion of said street which abuts said owner's existing property in the amount as set forth hereinabove.

By his signature hereinbelow, the Mayor for the Town of Tazewell hereby acknowledges and affirms the Tazewell Town Council's adoption of this Ordinance of Vacation, and the Council's further direction that a certified copy hereof be recorded as deeds are recorded and indexed in the name of the Town of Tazewell, and the individual Grantees as set forth below:

TMP No. 094A704 _____

Kahalid Afouis
husband and wife, as tenants by the entirety

Ayes: _____
Nays: _____
Absent: _____

I hereby certify that the foregoing *Ordinance of Vacation* was duly adopted by a _____ vote of the Tazewell Town Council present at its regular meeting on January 13, 2026.

Given under my hand this _____ day of _____, 2026.

TOWN OF TAZEWELL

Joe R. Beasley, Mayor

ATTEST:

Town Clerk

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA,
COUNTY OF TAZEWELL, to-wit:

The foregoing *Ordinance of Vacation* was acknowledged before me by Joe R. Beasley, Mayor of the Town of Tazewell, on this ___ day of _____, 2026.

My commission expires _____.

Notary Public

Councilmember Keen motioned to approve the ordinance for closure of a portion of Bishop Street and to accept the changes made on the Platt. Vice Mayor Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

This ordinance will take effect 30 days from today.

B. Fire Works discussion.

Town Council would like to see the town shoot of their own fireworks which would allow for more flexibility to have a show on Independence Day. We have discussed having members of our Fire Department getting certified to set off Fire Works. Police Chief has reached out to the Virginia Fire Marshall Office to get information regarding what would be required from us to apply with them. They provided the steps for us. It typically takes 4 to 6 technicians to do a show. Manager Regon and Executive Assistant

Susan Reeves met with VRSA to discuss how this could affect our insurance and liability. Fireworks claims are not inexpensive claims. If a separate company sets it off, we have no liability. If a misfire should occur, there is no coverage through VRSA and if a fire fighter were to be injured it is not covered because they are volunteer. It is strongly recommended if we have our own Firefighters do this, we suggest having them to have their own insurance and liability as we are not covered under our policy. If they travel to another locality to set off shows which could be required during certification. They wouldn't be covered for those either. Town of Tazewell should not except money for shooting fireworks so this would mean we cannot gain revenue by offering these services for others. Councilmember Willis stated that he is sticking with his comment last month that they should step away from this because they are volunteer it shouldn't be something we require of someone to do.

In the past Executive Assistant Reeves added that the cost of the fireworks display was \$12,000 but due to tariffs it is now \$14,000 for the same quality show. We are reserved for July 3rd as the 4th was not available. Liability standpoint she has a lot of concern for our firefighters. Councilmember Takach believes that we could put it on the citizens or individuals that may want to do this as a business should anyone want to pursue technician certification but to not do this as a town. Councilmember Keen suggests that they move forward for July 3rd for this year and keep it contracted out at this time. Councilmember Cline asked regarding inclement weather. Executive Assistant Reeves replied that if it rains it out, we can pick another day throughout the year. Councilmember Cline stated that the show quality time frame was fine last year. He is comfortable for the \$14,000 show.

Councilmember Cline made a motion to move forward with the quote and to contract out the Fireworks show for July 3rd. Councilmember Keen seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

New Business

A. 1616 Riverside Drive Project

IEDA Chairperson Cara Spivey introduced Jordan Dillon from the Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commission (CPPDC). Mrs. Dillon explained that the Planning District serves four counties and acts as a liaison to federal and state agencies, helping localities identify, secure, and manage available funding.

Chairperson Spivey noted that the IEDA owns several properties in Town and has been concentrating efforts in the North Tazewell District. The property at 1616 Riverside Drive is now vacant, and the IEDA is exploring opportunities to revitalize it as an incubator-style facility. Concepts under consideration include a Fablab/workforce development hub, a commercial kitchen, a community-accessible makerspace, and potentially a cannery. She emphasized the value of County collaboration, as the County

initially expressed interest in the cannery concept and there is adequate space for joint use.

Mrs. Dillon stated that now is the optimal time to pursue planning and development grants. Tazewell has strong momentum, with the Farmers Market and North Tazewell Downtown Revitalization projects nearing completion. She cautioned that planning dollars have a shelf life, and delaying could require redoing prior work. Additionally, current state and federal funding priorities—particularly ARC and DHCD—may shift under the incoming administration, and representatives have advised that next year’s funding pool will likely be smaller and more competitive.

Mrs. Dillon recommended applying for planning funds by the April 30 deadline (exact date to be confirmed). Planning must be completed before construction funding can be pursued. If awarded, planning work can be post-dated to allow the Town to finish current projects before shifting focus to this one in the fall.

Chairperson Spivey reminded Council that they had tentatively earmarked \$30,000 for this initiative. Mrs. Dillon confirmed that under an 80/20 match structure, this amount could serve as the Town’s required match. Chairperson Spivey noted that a similar approach was successful for the Farmers Market project.

Councilmember Cline asked whether partnering with the County would strengthen the application. Mrs. Dillon confirmed that multi-jurisdictional collaboration significantly increases competitiveness and aligns with regional planning efforts, especially as both the Town and County are updating their comprehensive plans.

Councilmember Cline added that while the comprehensive plan includes two recreational projects, this proposal is the first with clear small-business development potential, and he believes the timing is right. He made a motion to proceed allocate the \$30,000 to initiate planning. Councilmember Keen seconded the motion.

Councilmember Willis expressed concern about investing in only one portion of the building if other owners do not improve their adjoining sections. Chairperson Spivey responded that the other owners have already signed on to the North Tazewell façade improvement program, ensuring coordinated upgrades. Mrs. Dillon added that visible investment often encourages neighboring property owners to continue improving their spaces. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

B. Police Department Officer Purchase of Firearm

Chief Lampert noted that, pursuant to the code section, an officer retiring after ten years of service may purchase their former service weapon for one dollar, pending council approval. This applies to an individual retiring on March 1st, under Section 59.1-148.40. Councilmember Keen moved and Vice Mayor Hankins seconded the motion concerning

Officer Paul Little. Councilmember Cline inquired about the code's ten-year service requirement and confirmed alignment with its clauses. Attorney Pyott noted they are stated as "or" so in order to be considered the clauses are individual and must at least meet one of those. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

A brief update on the fencing project: progress is ongoing, the labor quote has been received, the order for fencing materials is placed, and delivery is pending.

C. Clinch River Pavilion & Farmers Market Update

Manager Regon stated that last week we received material for construction. We began construction yesterday on the Pavilion. The ribbon cutting date is set for May 1st at 11:30am. The Farmer's Market will open season on May 2nd. They are very excited to see this come together and be completed.

D. Mountain Biking Project Update

Manager Regon reported that Council previously authorized her to pursue the IMBA Trail Accelerator Grant, which supports planning work for the Town's Mountain Biking Project. The grant application closes March 15, and she has begun preparing the submission. The grant offers up to \$30,000, requiring a one-to-one match, and she intends to apply for the full amount.

Councilmember Cline added that Friends of Southwest Virginia has received planning grant dollars too, he said perhaps that is another angle to look at. Manager Regon added that Kim Davis and Friends of Southwest Virginia are both helpful and would be great assets to partner with on this.

E. Recreation Committee

Mayor Beasley stated that the Committee's primary objective is to focus on plans for upgrading local fields, reinstating soccer within the Town, and promoting the development of the recreation organization. He commended Recreation Director Kenneth Hicks for his outstanding performance and expressed optimism regarding the program's future growth. This committee will provide support to the Recreation Director, assisting in revitalizing the program for the town and fostering opportunities for youth development within our community. Councilmember Cline motioned to approve the Recreation committee. Vice Mayor Hankins seconded the motion. On vote, Councilmember Willis, aye; Vice Mayor Hankins, aye; Councilmember Cline, aye; Councilmember Keen, aye; Councilmember Takach, aye.

F. Misc

Manager Regon suggested a budget work session to be scheduled for the last week of February. They will secure a date via a doodle poll.

Miscellaneous Public Comment

Council Comments

Vice Mayor Hankins expressed appreciation to Public Works for their continued efforts and contributions.

Adjournment

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

Meeting adjourned at 9:21pm