

TOWN OF URBANNA, VIRGINIA
Town Council — Regular Meeting
MINUTES
July 9, 2026 — 6:00 p.m.

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Urbanna, Virginia, was held on the 9th day of July, 2026, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the Meeting Room of the Middlesex Volunteer Fire Department located at 330 Virginia Street in Urbanna, VA.

1. Call to Order

Vice Mayor Larry Chowning, presiding, called the regular meeting of the Urbanna Town Council to order at 6:03 p.m. on July 9, 2026.

2. Approval of Electronic Participation by a Council Member (if needed)

No electronic participation was requested for this meeting.

3. Roll Call of Members

Marjorie Austin..... Present
Larry Chowning, Vice Mayor..... Present
Alana Courtney Absent at roll call
Beth Justice Present
Martha Lowe Absent
Bruce Murray Present
Robbie Wilson, Mayor..... Absent
A quorum was established.

Others Present:

Andrea Erard, Town Attorney
Michelle Hutton, Town Treasurer
Members of the public

It was noted that Council Member Lowe was absent due to a pre-arranged vacation. Council Member Courtney arrived later in the meeting, at approximately 6:38 p.m., during Council Announcements & Requests (Item 12).

4. Pledge of Allegiance

Those present stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Review and Adoption of Meeting Agenda

One addition to the agenda was presented: a resolution by Council to appoint new representatives to the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission (PDC), added as Item 10E under New Business. It was confirmed that a single vote could approve the amendment and the agenda as a whole.

Councilmember Austin made a motion to approve the agenda as amended. Councilmember Justice seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

6. Approval of Minutes — June 25, 2026 Work Session

Councilmember Austin made a motion to approve the June 25, 2026 work session draft minutes as presented. Councilmember Justice seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

7. Reports

a. Treasurer Staff Report (Michelle Hutton)

The Treasurer's report was emailed to Council in advance; no questions were received in reply. Treasurer Hutton highlighted that the Town earned \$5,667 in interest last month. Bills paid in May included engineering work at the bridge and the Town's annual \$5,000 payment to the Town of Kilmarnock, which is collected for the Rivers Realm. She also transferred \$6,000 from the operating account into the USDA account to cover the monthly loan payments at the end of the fiscal year. The Treasurer's office has been working on closing out the past fiscal year and is very close to having everything updated and entered into the system. Treasurer Hutton asked whether there were any questions; there were none.

b. Town Administrator Report

Vice Mayor Chowning read the written report submitted by Mayor Wilson highlighting items accomplished in the month of June:

1. The FY 2026–2027 budget was approved and is now in operation, along with the budget amendment bringing the purchase of the Town Hall into the FY 2025–2026 budget.
2. The Town was able to recover \$14,250 from USDA on the well project by closing out its retainage.
3. The swimming pool season has been successful thus far.
4. The new DEQ well water permit was received and the old permit terminated. The Mayor has reached out to all major parties involved in the Town's water system operations to establish relationships and receive status updates.
5. Numerous repair projects have been started or are ongoing — mostly small items such as weed control, sidewalks, new flags on Main Street, and dock repairs at the marina park. The report thanked the volunteers and employees who make this possible, noting that these small items add up to a more pleasant and safe town.
6. The bridge geotechnical drilling is confirmed for the end of July; an earlier date has been requested if at all possible.
7. The Department of Wildlife Resources completed its review of the Town's no-wake zone and found the Town to be in non-compliance, which was not a surprise. Resolving this situation is a priority.

The report described the theme of the night's agenda as "clean-up" — closing out past issues and positioning the Town to begin moving forward on a growing list of future priorities. The Mayor welcomed Vice Mayor Chowning to his new role and thanked him for running the meeting, and welcomed the new members of Council at their first meeting, noting that volunteering for Council is a true act of public service.

8. Public Comment 1 & Council Response

No members of the public offered comment during the first public-comment period.

9. Old Business

a. Marr Legal Bill

Town Attorney Erard reviewed the background: before the Town purchased 300 Virginia Street, many attempts were made to reach a deal to purchase 390 Virginia Street. Because the transaction involved a homeowner-association element, Council retained attorney William A. Marr Jr., who concentrates his practice in that area. Mr. Marr was ultimately unable to reach an agreement with the sellers.

Vice Mayor Chowning read the staff background: in July 2024, Attorney Marr was retained to assist with the purchase of the 390 Virginia Street property, which was unsuccessful. In February 2026, the Town received Mr. Marr's legal bill. In April 2026, the previous mayor sent a written letter to Mr. Marr requesting renegotiation of the charges; the outcome of that letter is unknown. In June 2026, Mayor Wilson contacted Mr. Marr and negotiated the bill down by \$5,000, to a total of \$15,000. A \$5,000 retainer was paid at the beginning of the engagement. Fiscal impact: \$15,000 from the financial contingency fund amended into the FY 2025–2026 budget; funds are available for this payment.

During discussion, it was noted that Council was not aware of this bill until after the transition. Councilmember Murray stated that he did not like it, but the Town has an obligation to pay.

Councilmember Austin made a motion to approve payment of \$15,000 to William A. Marr Jr., Esquire, for the legal services retained for the purchase of 390 Virginia Street. Councilmember Justice seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin Aye

Larry Chowning..... Aye

Beth Justice..... Aye

Bruce Murray..... Aye

(Council Member Courtney had not yet arrived; Council Member Lowe and Mayor Wilson were absent.)

The motion passed 4–0.

10. New Business

a. Purchasing Policy

A written purchasing policy was presented documenting what has been the Town's longstanding practice — that a bill of \$5,000 or more must be approved by the chair of the finance committee and/or a majority vote of Council — so that there is no confusion about what is or is not being done. It was presented as a starting point, to be refined and enhanced going forward.

In response to a question about who signs Town checks, Treasurer Hutton explained that two signatures are required; the authorized signers are currently Robbie Wilson, Marjorie Austin, and Meribel, but because Mayor Wilson is serving in the administrator position and approves the bills, he does not sign checks, so there is no conflict of interest. Members also questioned whether the \$5,000 threshold should be adjusted. Vice Mayor Chowning asked that the item be tabled so that it can be discussed further when Mayor Wilson, Council Member Lowe, and the other absent members are present.

Councilmember Austin made a motion to table the purchasing policy until the next regular meeting. Councilmember Justice seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

b. VML Civility Pledge

Councilmember Austin presented the VML civility pledge, a code addressing how members of Council treat not only each other but the public as well. In response to a question as to whether the Town had done something similar before, she explained that Council first adopted the pledge a couple of years ago, so it is nothing new; with new members now on Council, she asked that it be adopted again and said she will present it again in January when the newly elected members are seated. Councilmember Austin read the pledge aloud: the Town of Urbanna pledges to practice and promote civility within the governing body; the elected officials enact the pledge to build a stronger and more prosperous community by advocating for civil engagement, respecting others and their viewpoints, and finding solutions for the betterment of the community; the pledge ensures all communication, both spoken and written, is open, honest, and transparent, cultivating trust and relationships; it ensures mutual respect in achieving municipal goals, recognizing that patience, tolerance, and civility are imperative to success; and it creates the opportunity for finding common ground and engaging in civil discussion through active listening and thoughtful participation.

Councilmember Austin made a motion to adopt the VML Civility Pledge.

Councilmember Justice seconded. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

c. Town Administrator Management and Recruitment Support Contract

Vice Mayor Chowning described this as the most important item of the night. The Town has been seeking help to find an administrator, and complicated zoning matters require expertise the Town has always had to hire for. A contract was presented from Local Solutions, Inc. (LSI), John Edwards, who served as town manager of West Point for approximately thirty years. Mr. Edwards’s role is essentially that of a recruiter and advisor — to find the right person at the right price and protect the Town’s interests. Councilmember Austin stated that Mr. Edwards’s advice to date has been spot-on and has held up to her own research. Members noted that Mayor Wilson has done a fabulous job handling town administration while also working full-time, that this is a step the Town needs to take to move ahead, and that these matters should be put in order rather than left to the incoming council.

Councilmember Austin made a motion to adopt the contract with Local Solutions, Inc.

Councilmember Justice seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin Aye

Larry Chowning..... Aye

Beth Justice..... Aye

Bruce Murray..... Aye

(Council Member Courtney had not yet arrived; Council Member Lowe and Mayor Wilson were absent.)

The motion passed 4–0.

d. Martha Lowe BZA Resignation

Town Attorney Erard explained that, with Ms. Lowe’s appointment to the Town Council, she is unable to serve on both the Council and the Board of Zoning Appeals, and she has tendered her resignation from the BZA. Members of the BZA are appointed by the court, and it is customary for Council to recommend a person to the court for appointment. Council

was asked what process it wished to use — existing applications of interest on file, or announcing the vacancy for open applications.

Council agreed that people should be able to apply, noting that some residents who were previously weekenders now live in town full-time. In response to a question about the application deadline and past practice, Treasurer Hutton noted a BZA vacancy has not been advertised in quite a while, and Town Attorney Erard advised there is no legal requirement governing the advertisement period, but that the law provides a BZA member continues to serve until replaced, so sooner is better. By consensus, Council set an application deadline of the end of July. Mayor Wilson will create an application, post the vacancy on the Town website, and advertise it in the newspaper.

e. Resolution — Appointment of Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission Representatives

This item, added to the agenda at the start of the meeting, was taken up following Public Comment 2. Currently, Bill Goldsmith and Ted Costin are the Town’s representatives to the PDC, and new members must be appointed. The PDC has called an emergency meeting for the following Tuesday and wants all localities represented. Only one representative votes when present; terms end with the member’s term of office, and it has been customary for the Mayor to serve as the primary representative. Councilmember Austin offered to serve as the alternate, noting she could not attend the Tuesday meeting due to a scheduled surgery.

Councilmember Austin made a motion to adopt the resolution appointing Mayor Robbie Wilson as the Town’s primary representative to the Middle Peninsula Planning District Commission and Councilmember Marjorie Austin as alternate.

Councilmember Justice seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin Aye
Larry Chowning..... Aye
Beth Justice..... Aye
Bruce Murray..... Aye

(Council Member Courtney had not yet arrived; Council Member Lowe and Mayor Wilson were absent.)

The motion passed 4–0.

11. Public Comment 2 & Council Response

Daniel Snead addressed Council with questions regarding the Local Solutions, Inc. contract and the Marr legal bill:

Question: Is the \$2,000-per-week arrangement an advisory role or a part-time job?

Response: Mr. Edwards is a consultant; he will limit his other projects, and he reports to the Council, with day-to-day coordination through Mayor Wilson.

Question: In light of the Marr bill, does the Town know what the consultant is spending its money on? Response: Yes — his itemized bill comes to the Town, and it is public information, available in the meeting packet online and at the Town office.

Councilmembers Austin and Justice added that Council evaluated other options and providers before selecting LSI; the selection was based on best fit for the Town rather than price alone, though Mr. Edwards’s pricing was in line with the market and he was not the highest. He has done zoning work for the Town before, has been very efficient, and is local, being based in West Point — a small town with many of the same issues as Urbanna.

The commenter expressed appreciation, and Council responded that it is working to move the Town back toward normal operations.

12. Council Announcements & Requests

Councilmember Austin

Reported on the upcoming Second Saturday event this Saturday featuring the Michael Clark Band, a new food truck — Cajun Carryout — alongside the regular Dragon Run Dogs vendor. On July 26 the band The Misfits will hold a fundraiser for the Second Saturday program, which is funded by sponsors and donations rather than the Town; beer will be sold at the fundraiser, and beer sales may begin at regular Second Saturdays as well. Two misting tents will be set up next month to help with the heat. (Council Member Courtney arrived at this point in the meeting.) Councilmember Austin will be absent this Saturday for medical reasons; Treasurer Hutton and her husband, and Daniel with Franktronics will help staff the event.

Councilmember Justice

Reported on the July 4th weekend celebration. Because of the extreme heat, the main event was postponed rather than asking volunteers and attendees to endure the conditions. The morning children's activities went forward while it was cooler and were a great success: children decorated their bikes and paraded behind Mayor Wilson's decorated golf cart, complimentary face painting was provided, a misting tent was set up, and ice cream was served. She thanked Mayor Wilson and his family, including his wife and daughter Shannon, and Treasurer Hutton, who purchased the decorations and supplies. She noted the event opened her eyes to the need for more activities for the young people in town, which she hopes to help with during her remaining term. The full event — including Ray Pittman's band and Sweet Justice — has been moved to Labor Day Saturday, and many of the same vendors are expected. The military band, which had been scheduled for Friday evening, appreciated being given the option to pass because of the heat and will try to send volunteers for Labor Day.

Council commended Councilmember Justice for making the postponement decision early: because the cancellation was made more than 24 hours in advance, the Town was able to move its ABC certificate, cancel and rebook the police detail for Labor Day, and incur no loss of revenue, shifting those costs to the actual event. Other localities, including venues in Richmond, made similar cancellations. Going forward, the same policy will apply to Second Saturday events: if weather requires it, a postponement decision will be made around noon on the day of the event.

Councilmember Chowning

Announced that Westminster Canterbury will send a busload of residents on Wednesday for a historical tour of the town, after which the visitors will eat in Urbanna's restaurants. Westminster Canterbury arranges this tour once every three or four years.

13. Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded; the meeting was adjourned by unanimous voice vote at 6:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert E Wilson III

Robbie Wilson, Mayor

07/24/2026

Approved: date of adoption