

TOWN OF URBANNA, VIRGINIA
Town Council — Work Session
APPROVED MINUTES
July 23, 2026 — 6:00 p.m.

A Work Session of the Town Council of the Town of Urbanna, Virginia, was held on the 23rd 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

Mayor Robbie Wilson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and noted that this Work Session would follow a discussion-based format: Council would work through items and, where action is needed, direct staff to bring back a formal proposal, resolution, or ordinance for a future vote.

2. Approval of Electronic Participation by a Council Member

Not necessary; no Council Member requested electronic participation. Town Attorney Andrea Erard participated remotely.

3. Roll Call

Marjorie Austin..... Present
Larry Chowning..... Present
Alana Courtney..... Present
Beth Justice..... Present
Martha Lowe..... Present
Bruce Murray..... Present
Robbie Wilson, Mayor..... Present

A quorum was established.

Others Present: Andrea Erard, Town Attorney (via electronic participation); Michelle Hutton, Town Treasurer; Geri Reyes, Office Assistant; John Edwards, Consultant, Local Solutions, Inc.; Members of the public.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

The Mayor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

5. Review and Adoption of Meeting Agenda

A motion was made and seconded to approve the meeting agenda as published. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote.

6. Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the July 9, 2026 Regular Meeting were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote, all seven members present voting in favor.

7. Public Comment 1 & Council Response

No members of the public signed up for Public Comment 1.

8. Work Session Matters

a. Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) Vacancy

Staff reported that Ms. Lowe has resigned from the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA), creating a vacancy. To recruit a replacement, staff have prepared a volunteer interest/application form and a description of the BZA's purpose and responsibilities, to be made available on the Town website and at Town Hall. The BZA was described as a quasi-judicial body, appointed by the Circuit Court, that hears appeals of zoning decisions; it meets infrequently — the last meeting was estimated to have been roughly two years ago.

By consensus, Council directed staff to advertise the BZA vacancy using the prepared volunteer interest form.

b. Purchasing Policy

Council reviewed a draft Purchasing Policy prepared by the Town Attorney, comparing the Town's current (largely informal) practice against the Town of West Point's purchasing policy and the Attorney's proposed draft. No formal adoption occurred; Mr. Edwards and the Town Attorney will incorporate Council's direction from this discussion into a revised policy for consideration and possible adoption at a future meeting. Council's direction on the following points was as follows:

1. **Routine purchases:** Purchases under \$1,000 may be made by the Town Administrator without additional written quotes or Council approval.
2. **Administrator approval ceiling:** The Town Administrator may approve purchases up to \$5,000 without prior Council approval; anything above \$5,000 requires Council approval. Council discussed but did not adopt an inflation-indexed adjustment to this threshold.
3. **Quote requirements:** Purchases between \$1,000 and \$5,000 require three written or oral quotes; purchases over \$5,000 require at least three informal written bids (or formal competitive bidding, where required by law). It was noted that the Town, with a population under 3,500, is not subject to the Virginia Public Procurement Act.
4. **Finance-committee tier eliminated:** Council agreed to remove the prior practice under which the finance committee chair could approve purchases; purchasing decisions above the Administrator's ceiling will go to full Council, not a committee.
5. **Recurring-payment exemption:** Recurring payments under existing contracts (e.g., utilities, debt service, payroll, previously awarded contracts such as trash collection or landscaping) will be exempt from the competitive-quote requirement

once the underlying contract has been approved by Council. Council specifically agreed that **outside/additional legal services should not be exempt** and should continue to require Council approval, distinguishing them from the Town's standing legal-services contract.

6. **Purchase order (PO) system:** Council discussed implementing a formal PO system but agreed not to adopt one at this time, citing administrative burden and limitations of the Town's current accounting software (which generates a purchase order automatically at time of payment). The possibility of a formal PO system may be revisited separately in the future.
7. **Emergency provision:** The draft policy includes an emergency provision allowing immediate purchases necessary to protect public health, safety, or property, with the expenditure to be reported to Council as soon as practicable.
8. **Check-signing authority:** Council discussed the Town's current three-layer check approval process (bill approval by the Mayor/Town Administrator, followed by two authorized signers) and noted the risk of having too few backup signers if one is unavailable. No decision was made; Council noted this should be examined further, including formalizing in policy the check-signing separation that has been followed since it was recommended by a State Police audit some years ago.
9. **Ethics/unauthorized-purchase clause:** The Town Attorney's draft includes an ethics section addressing the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act, a gift ban, and an unauthorized-purchase clause. Council did not object to including such provisions and directed the Attorney to draft language for future review; no language was adopted at this meeting.

c. Luna — Marina Berth Request

Council discussed a request to allow the historic sailing vessel *Luna*, currently based in Deltaville, to berth seasonally at the Town Marina. The vessel participates in the Urbanna Oyster Festival annually. The Mayor reported having spoken with John Colamore regarding the vessel's interest in using the Town Marina as a seasonal berth and in offering cruises between Deltaville and Urbanna.

Dedicated dockage would occupy two marina slips (34 and 35) and could result in an estimated \$3,000 in annual lost slip-rental revenue in a worst-case scenario; if the vessel's schedule is provided in advance, the marina could rent the slips when the vessel is away, reducing the potential revenue loss. The vessel would not require significant maintenance at the marina; major repairs are performed at a boatyard elsewhere. Council discussed the potential tourism and economic benefit of the vessel's presence, while acknowledging the direct financial benefit is difficult to quantify.

By consensus, Council agreed to proceed with offering the *Luna* seasonal use of a marina slip and directed staff to obtain a proposed schedule from the vessel's representatives.

d. Town Administrator Recruitment

Consultant John Edwards (Local Solutions, Inc.) led Council through a worksheet to define the recruitment approach for a new Town Administrator, including a job description and a salary survey of comparable localities east of I-95. Surveyed salaries ranged from a part-time position at \$33,000 (Irvington) to full-time positions of approximately \$67,000 (Montrose, based on a 2004 figure), \$90,000 (Mineral), and \$128,000 (Warsaw, population approximately 1,800).

Council discussed at length whether the position should be full-time or part-time, and whether the Town Administrator should also serve as Zoning Administrator or whether zoning should be contracted out (to Middlesex County or a private consultant). It was noted that the current volume of zoning activity is significant, and that a private zoning consultant's quoted rate is approximately \$175 per hour. Council also noted that the County's Zoning Administrator has offered informal, no-cost consultation assistance in the interim.

By consensus, Council directed that the position be advertised as a **full-time** Town Administrator who would also serve as Zoning Administrator, with zoning experience listed as preferred. Mr. Edwards will prepare a job description reflecting this direction for Council's review, with the item expected to return at the August 6, 2026 meeting.

9. Public Comment 2 & Council Response

Daniel Snead, Town Resident, asked about the feasibility of a full-time versus part-time Administrator and the impact on zoning services. Mayor Wilson responded that while a full-time position is ideal, budget constraints necessitate a part-time approach initially, and noted the County Zoning Administrator's offer of free consultation to assist with zoning matters in the interim.

Billy Mayo, Town Resident, asked for an update on the bridge project. Mayor Wilson reported that a drilling crew is scheduled to begin collecting roadway core samples on the 27th, after which lab results will be used to obtain final quotes for a temporary steel bridge; the Town intends to obtain two competitive quotes, although only one is required, in an effort to reduce costs below the previously discussed \$450,000 estimate. The goal is to have the temporary bridge installed and open before the Oyster Festival. The Town's insurance carrier has indicated it will provide coverage once the bridge is engineered, certified, and approved, and once public notification of the scheduled work is provided. Council received the update and directed staff to continue with engineering, competitive pricing, and installation preparations.

10. Council Announcements and Requests

a. Marjorie Austin

Ms. Austin announced that the Second Saturday event will be held Sunday, July 26, 2026, from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the park. The band **The Misfits** will perform as a fundraiser for the Town. Beer sales will be permitted under the Town's ABC certificate.

b. Alana Courtney

Ms. Courtney noted that she has taken up the Council's request regarding Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Town Attorney Andrea Erard advised that the applicable state law does not take effect until July 1, 2027, giving the Town time to plan, but that it is a significant issue that will likely require inventorying existing accessory dwelling units in advance of implementation. She will provide a fuller briefing at a future meeting.

11. Closed Meeting

Not necessary.

12. Adjourn or Recess

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn. The motion was approved by unanimous voice vote. The exact adjournment time was not confirmed in the materials provided (see Open Questions).

Respectfully submitted,

Geri Reyes, Office Assistant

Approved: Robbie Wilson 08/27/2026 (date of adoption)
