TOWN OF URBANNA, VIRGINIA
Town Council — Regular Meeting
MINUTES
September 24, 2026 — 6:00 p.m.

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Urbanna, Virginia, was held on the 24th day of September, 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

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Robbie Wilson.

2. Approval of Electronic Participation by a Council Member

Councilmember Beth Justice requested to participate electronically from her home due to a medical condition (illness/fever) to avoid exposing others in attendance. A motion was made and seconded to allow Councilmember Justice to participate electronically from her home for this medical reason. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin……. Aye
Larry Chowning……. Aye
Alana Courtney……. Aye
Beth Justice……. Abstain
Martha Lowe……. Aye
Bruce Murray……. Aye
Robbie Wilson……. Aye

The motion passed 6–0, with Ms. Justice abstaining.

3. Roll Call

Marjorie Austin……. Present
Larry Chowning……. Present
Alana Courtney……. Present
Beth Justice……. Present (participating electronically from her home for a medical reason, as approved under Item 2)
Martha Lowe……. Present
Bruce Murray……. Present
Robbie Wilson……. Present

A quorum was established.

Others Present: Andrea Erard, Town Attorney; Michele Hutton, Town Treasurer; Members of the public.

4. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by those present.

5. Review and Adoption of Meeting Agenda

Councilmember Austin made a motion to adopt the meeting agenda as presented. Councilmember Lowe seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin…….. Aye
Larry Chowning…….. Aye
Alana Courtney…….. Aye
Beth Justice…….. Aye
Martha Lowe…….. Aye
Bruce Murray…….. Aye
Robbie Wilson…….. Aye

The motion passed 7–0.

6. Approval of Minutes

Councilmember Austin made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as presented. Councilmember Courtney seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin…….. Aye
Larry Chowning…….. Aye
Alana Courtney…….. Aye
Beth Justice…….. Aye
Martha Lowe…….. Aye
Bruce Murray…….. Aye
Robbie Wilson…….. Aye

The motion passed 7–0.

7. Public Comment 1 & Council Response to Public Comment 1

No members of the public signed up to speak during Public Comment 1.

8. Reports

a. Treasurer Staff Report

The Treasurer presented the report for the month of August (the agenda cover sheet had referenced July figures in error; the report given was for August). Highlights:

1. August activity was routine, with no extraordinary or unusual expenses; only regular recurring bills were paid.
2. The Town received a personal property tax release payment of $5,995 in August.
3. Balances in the Town's operating accounts are expected to rise in September as additional revenue is received.

Question: Councilmember Chowning asked whether there had been any trouble pulling money from the Taber Fund for the upcoming bridge payment. Response: The Treasurer stated that the funds had not yet been withdrawn because a bill had not yet been received,

but that before the bridge contract was signed she had confirmed with the financial institution that the funds could be readily accessed. She explained that once a withdrawal request is submitted before approximately 2:00 p.m., payment can typically be issued the same day, and that the institution allows a cushion of about three days; a check would then be mailed.

b. Bridge and Well Updates

The Mayor gave a verbal update, illustrated with photographs of the completed bridge:

- The bridge is substantially complete; remaining work is limited to signage. A bill has not yet been received from the contractor.
- The bridge was load-tested using Tanker 1 from the fire department, fully loaded with water, corresponding to its 45,000-pound rating; Michele Hutton rode across during the test. The structure showed no deflection.
- Golf carts, personal vehicles with boat trailers, and Oyster Festival stakeholders have since crossed the bridge successfully and reported satisfaction with it.
- The engineer (Gary) had originally designed concrete-block barricading to create separate pedestrian lanes; given how well the bridge turned out as a walking surface, the plan is instead to allow pedestrians to use the main span rather than barricade the sides.
- The Town has obtained a letter from its insurance carrier confirming the bridge is insurable, based on the design being stamped by a professional engineer (PE) and confirmation that the bridge was built according to the stamped installation directions.
- A councilmember stated that he had personally used the bridge this week with a boat and trailer and found it to work very well; it was noted that the contractor was pleased with how the entrances turned out, having been concerned that the ramp approach would be too steep for trailers.
- A question was raised about a posted sign (referencing a weight or clearance figure) that needs to come down; in response, it was noted that the left-side railing will be cut down, and that the rail spacing does not meet an appropriate standard and will also be corrected. A cover over exposed plumbing will be repaired before winter using repurposed lumber. Steve has also provided crushed stone/gravel ("crush and run") to address potholes in the walking area near the bridge, and this cleanup work is planned before Oyster Festival.
- Regarding the well: repairs were originally scheduled to begin the day of the meeting but were delayed one day due to weather and will begin the following morning. Toano Well has been engaged and will have a welder on site to cut and re-splice the affected pipe before it is reinstalled. Steve, who was involved in the original well installation, will be on site all day to monitor the work on the Town's behalf. The Treasurer was asked to convey the Town's thanks to Steve for his time.
- Regarding the Hayes Landing property: plans have been received, and a community workday is being organized, tentatively for mid-November, to allow for cleanup ahead of colder weather. Recent flooding has left debris near the site that will need to be cleared beforehand.

- The Mayor thanked everyone who assisted with the bridge project.

9. New Business

a. Main St. Sign MOU

The Mayor introduced the item, explaining that Urbanna Main Street received a grant to install wayfinding signage in town and that a legal agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) between the Town and Urbanna Main Street was required before installation could proceed. He noted that the agreement had been finalized only that afternoon and that changes from the prior draft were primarily in phrasing, not substance.

Megan Hall from Urbanna Main Street and Sarah Jane, also with Urbanna Main Street, presented to Council:

- Urbanna Main Street is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and one of 27 Virginia Main Street communities in the national Main Street America network, which provides access to grant funding, training, and technical resources.
- The organization was formerly known as "UBI"; it has completed all legal steps with the IRS and the State Corporation Commission to formally become Urbanna Main Street, effective May 2025, and to absorb UBI's existing 501(c)(3) status.
- A $15,000 Community Vitality Grant, received in March 2025, will fund the fabrication of wayfinding signage. The April 15 grant deadline was extended, but the organization is now working toward a completion deadline of December 31.
- Five initial sign locations have been identified for Phase 1, with additional phases to follow as further grants are pursued; locations remain subject to adjustment as agreements with individual property owners are finalized.
- Signage recommendations were derived from the Planning Commission's 2022 Tourism Action Plan.
- One sign near the kayak launch will include a QR code linking to Blue Water Trail information developed by Councilmember Chowning. In response to a question relayed by the Mayor on Councilmember Chowning's behalf about a second QR code referenced in the materials, representatives of Urbanna Main Street were unsure whether a second sign requirement exists and said they would follow up.
- At the request of the Urbanna Business Association, a separate business directory sign is planned to list town businesses; it will use an updatable overlay so listings can be revised at low cost, with Main Street responsible for keeping it current.
- A proposed directory sign location at the corner of Cross and Virginia Streets was found to obstruct sightlines; alternative locations on the Hall property and on property offered by Chris Hight are under consideration.
- Discussion also addressed the Town's museum kiosk, whose audio/video display is not currently functioning. The plan is to repair or replace the video content, post it to the Town's Facebook page and YouTube channel, and place new aluminum QR-code stickers over the existing museum kiosk codes rather than fabricate new signage.

- Urbanna Main Street reported that it has formed a beautification committee and is separately pursuing a $75,000 DHCD planning grant (submitted through the Town's CAMS system). If awarded, the grant would go to the Town and fund a master planning process addressing blight and other improvements. A subsequent grant of approximately $1 million to $1.25 million could then be pursued to implement that plan. It was agreed that, if the $75,000 grant is awarded, a work session would be scheduled to review its terms before any further action.
- Council members raised questions about the financial administration of grant funds. It was clarified that the current $15,000 wayfinding grant was paid directly to Urbanna Main Street's bank account, as required for a grant to a 501(c)(3); by contrast, grants awarded to the municipality (such as the $75,000 planning grant) would be received by the Town. It was noted that each project will be governed by a separate MOU rather than a single blanket agreement, allowing administration terms to be negotiated per project; the Mayor stated a goal of building grant administration costs into future large grants, potentially through a third-party grant administrator, to avoid burdening Town staff and to optimize grant administration.
- Councilmember Lowe raised two specific concerns about the draft MOU: (1) that the procurement-compliance provisions (Section F) provide the Town with copies of records only upon request, and recommended that the Town instead receive such records automatically; and (2) that the Town should be automatically notified if Urbanna Main Street enters default or suspension status, rather than learning of it after the fact. Representatives of Urbanna Main Street agreed to maintain open communication on these points.
- Councilmember Lowe also questioned the MOU's reference to a "deed of gift" for the signs, noting that deeds legally convey only real property, not personal property. The Town Attorney explained that a "deed of gift" is nonetheless the correct legal term for a document transferring ownership of personal property without payment, functioning similarly to a bill of sale, and confirmed that it would not be recorded at the courthouse. It was further explained that the signs are being structured as Town property specifically to avoid additional VDOT permitting requirements.
- It was noted that the Mayor serves as an ex officio member of the Urbanna Main Street board and that the MOU designates a Town liaison. The draft required that any fabrication, installation, or modification of a sign receive formal email approval from the Mayor or the Town Administrator as an additional safeguard for the use of grant funds.
- Councilmember Austin, noting her role in advising the project, was invited to continue in that capacity.
- In response to a public question about whether the $15,000 grant funds pass through the Town's accounts, it was clarified that the funds were deposited directly into Urbanna Main Street's bank account and do not pass through the Town's accounts.

Councilmember Chowning moved to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with Urbanna Main Street as presented. Councilmember Austin seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin……. Aye
Larry Chowning……. Aye
Alana Courtney……. Aye
Beth Justice……. Aye
Martha Lowe……. Aye
Bruce Murray……. Aye
Robbie Wilson……. Aye

The motion passed 7–0.

b. Oyster Festival Traffic and Parking Resolutions

The Mayor explained that, consistent with the previously approved Oyster Festival master plan, Council needed to formally adopt two resolutions for the Oyster Festival: Resolution 2026-019, confirming street closures and traffic restrictions, and Resolution 2026-020, designating no-parking areas. He noted that in past years, without an adopted resolution, State Police had advised the Town that they could not enforce traffic and parking restrictions during the festival; adopting these resolutions provides the necessary legal basis for enforcement. The Treasurer was thanked for ensuring the resolutions were brought forward in time.

Question: A council member asked about handicapped parking signage near the marina, referencing a past conflict in which a festival tent was proposed for placement over a handicapped space. Response: It was clarified that handicapped parking spaces at the marina are being relocated, not eliminated, to accommodate festival needs, including space for a paramedic rescue unit staged on the waterfront. Affected patrons are being contacted in advance to coordinate alternate parking. It was also noted that some marina slip tenants may leave vehicles parked in the area during the festival because their boats remain in their slips during the event.

Councilmember Austin moved to adopt Resolutions 2026-019 and 2026-020 as presented. Councilmember Chowning seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin……. Aye
Larry Chowning……. Aye
Alana Courtney……. Aye
Beth Justice……. Aye
Martha Lowe……. Aye
Bruce Murray……. Aye
Robbie Wilson……. Aye

The motion passed 7–0.

c. Town Administrator Interview Meeting Motion

The Mayor explained that this motion would provide the affirmative vote required under the Virginia Code to permit Council to convene a closed meeting, at a location and time not fixed in advance, solely to interview candidates for the Town Administrator position, to protect the privacy of both candidates and Council.

Councilmember Austin moved to the motion to announce that within the next 15 days, the Urbanna Town Council will meet at an undisclosed location and enter a closed meeting solely to interview candidates for the Town Administrator position. An initial roll call was begun before it was determined that the motion had not been seconded. Following a discussion, and after Public Comment 2 had begun, Council returned to this item and took a corrected roll-call vote, with Councilmember Murray seconding the motion. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin……. Aye
Larry Chowning……. Aye
Alana Courtney……. Aye
Beth Justice……. Aye
Martha Lowe……. Aye
Bruce Murray……. Aye
Robbie Wilson……. Aye

The motion passed 7–0.

10. Public Comment 2 & Council Response to Public Comment 2

Daniel Snead, of Urbanna, addressed Council:

Question: Mr. Snead asked whether the Blue Water Trail information needed to be updated, noting that conditions on the creek have changed. Response: Councilmember Chowning noted this was a good question. Discussion followed regarding navigational aids; it was noted that LORAN navigation systems, once used for boating on the creek, were discontinued approximately 20 years ago in favor of GPS. It was also noted that the Blue Water Trail's first phase is complete and functional, and that Councilmember Chowning has been in communication with Whitney Long of Explore Middlesex regarding how the Blue Water Trail is portrayed through the "Visit Widget" app used by Explore Middlesex, and a possibly separate app used by Virginia's River Realm. It was noted that additional phases of the Blue Water Trail project have not yet been completed.

Mr. Snead also commented that Founders Day was a success, with good attendance and speakers, but raised a concern regarding the lack of public restroom facilities in the vicinity of Virginia Street and Cross Street, noting that the gas station, drug store, and other formerly available facilities are closed to the public, and that a portable toilet located near the marina was in poor condition.

Question: Mr. Snead asked whether the Town could help address restroom availability for events such as Founders Day and for the regular arrival of tour groups (including senior visitors less able to walk to the marina or pool facilities). Response: The Mayor stated he has a good working relationship with the organizers of Founders Day (Friends of Urbanna), and that the Town helped by purchasing event insurance this year. He stated that, at a minimum, standard portable toilets, rather than more expensive "executive" restroom trailers, should be considered, and that he would take this on as an action item to research costs, funding sources, and an appropriate location, noting that funding for this purpose is not currently budgeted. Discussion included possible short-term options such as leasing

restroom access from a private property owner (e.g., near the former drugstore or gas station) and a long-term goal of constructing a small permanent public restroom facility, potentially as part of a small downtown park, though it was noted this would require significant planning and permitting.

Additional public discussion addressed the need for advance notice from tour operators and event organizers so that the Town can arrange portable facilities in time; it was noted that regular tour bus groups (including groups associated with Westminster Canterbury) visit town without formal advance coordination with the Town office.

Ms. Powers, a member of the public, asked whether restroom facilities at Taylor Park (the pool house) could be made available to the public. Response: It was explained that these facilities are kept locked most of the time and are only unlocked for specific scheduled uses, such as the farmer's market and the summer concert series, due to past incidents of vandalism at both the pool and marina restrooms, and that leaving the facility unlocked and unsupervised during the day was considered a potential liability.

Another member of the public noted that the marina restroom facilities were constructed with grant funding restricted to transient boaters, not the general public.

11. Council Announcements & Requests

Ms. Austin

Councilmember Austin reported that the Second Saturday event series has concluded for the season; the final event of the year was rained out and was expected to feature the Ray Pittman Band. She thanked everyone who participated in and supported Second Saturday events throughout the year, noting the series will resume in May 2027.

Mr. Chowning

Councilmember Chowning reported that he had been contacted by Brian Miller, who had attended the VDOT meeting regarding the Robert O. Norris Bridge across the river, at which a proposal was discussed to lower the bridge's vertical clearance by 10 feet as a cost-saving measure. He expressed concern that reducing clearance from the current 110 feet to 100 feet could affect vessel traffic, citing the sailing vessel Lynx, with an air draft of approximately 94 feet, as a vessel that could be affected depending on conditions. Council discussed sending a formal letter expressing concern about any reduction in bridge clearance and coordinating with neighboring localities on the issue. The next VDOT meeting on the matter is scheduled for October 22.

Ms. Courtney

Councilmember Courtney reported that she had nothing further.

Mayor Wilson

The Mayor reported that he and a fellow planning commission member had attended the VCU Certified Planning Commissioners course, a two-day in-person training. He described it as an excellent program, noting sessions on zoning and comprehensive planning issues,

including examples from Northern Virginia localities involving data centers proposed for sites approved for other uses decades earlier. He encouraged Council to pursue an update to the Town's comprehensive plan through an open public process, potentially engaging a third-party firm to conduct public meetings and surveys. He reminded members that training funds are available to anyone serving on a Town board or commission, encouraged them to take advantage of these opportunities, and urged Council members to attend the upcoming VML Annual Conference in October.

Ms. Justice

Councilmember Justice reported that she had nothing further.

Ms. Lowe

Councilmember Lowe reported that she had nothing further.

Mr. Murray

Councilmember Murray reported that he had nothing further.

12. Adjourn or Recess

Councilmember Austin made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Courtney seconded. The roll was called:

Marjorie Austin…….. Aye
Larry Chowning…….. Aye
Alana Courtney…….. Aye
Beth Justice…….. Aye
Martha Lowe…….. Aye
Bruce Murray…….. Aye
Robbie Wilson…….. Aye

The motion passed 7–0.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Robbie Wilson

Preparer name and title
Robbie Wilson, Mayor

Approved: date of adoption October 8th, 2026