



OCOCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, January 6, 2026
7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Earnie Porta; Vice Mayor Jenn Loges, Councilmembers Robert Love, Cindy Fithian, Theo Daubresse and Eliot Perkins

Absent: None

Staff: Adam Linn, Town Manager / Chief of Police; Megan Lubash, Town Clerk / Assistant Town Manager; Jason Forman, Deputy Chief of Police; Tammy Hassett, Events Director; Martin Crim, Town Attorney; Kristin Shaw, Town Treasurer

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Porta called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Porta noted that Martin Crim, Town Attorney attended remotely.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CITIZENS' TIME

One resident spoke during Citizens' Time.

Justin L., a resident of Center Lane, spoke about a collision that occurred last year in which his parked vehicle was struck and damaged. He asked whether the parking spot at Union Street and Center Lane could be removed, or if other measures, such as installing cameras, could be implemented to better protect residents' vehicles.

Since there were no further citizen comments, Citizens' Time was closed.

Discussion on parking spot on Center Lane and Union Street Safety

Mayor Porta noted that this topic has been brought up several times before. When investigated in the past, the number of parking spaces in the Town has not been a consideration, but VDOT and other traffic engineers have mentioned this parking space serves as a de facto traffic calming measure. He directed Town Staff and Police Department to investigate this spot and similar ones such as the spot at Washington Street and Mill Street near the Post Office.

4. CONSENT AGENDA – Mayor Porta noted that since Council Members had questions about the items in the Consent Agenda he was pulling them all from the Consent Agenda to be voted on separately.

a. Request to Accept the December 9th Meeting Minutes

Councilmember Fithian had two corrections to the minutes. First, that Councilmember Love was listed as both absent and present; and second that the word "hundred" was duplicated in the draft ordinance. With those corrections made, Councilmember Fithian moved to approve the request to accept the December 9th minutes. Councilmember Love seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

b. Request to accept Unmanned Aircraft Trade and Replacement Program Grant

Vice Mayor Loges moved to approve the request to accept the Unmanned Aircraft Trade and Replacement Program Grant. Councilmember Perkins seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

c. Request to Set Concurrent Public Hearing on ZTA for Special Use Permits for Tobacco, Vape, Cannabis, or Psychoactive Specialty Establishments on January 20th, 2026.

Mayor Porta commented that he does not favor the format of holding joint public hearings with the Planning Commission. He stated that the structure of these joint public hearings is awkward and typically does not provide even minimal time to consider comments from the hearing before the Planning Commission and Town Council are expected to take action. Going forward he suggested that even on noncontroversial matters the Planning Commission's public hearing be held prior to the normally scheduled time for the Town Council meeting, followed by the Planning Commission meeting, again before the normally scheduled time for the Town Council meeting. This would then be followed by the Town Council's public hearing and regular meeting.

Mayor Porta, discussing the wording of the proposed ordinance with Vice Mayor Loges and Councilmember Daubresse, expressed concern that the wording was too broad regarding gummies. Vice Mayor Loges reminded Mayor Porta that the ordinance only impacts stores that devote more than 10 percent of their floor space to those types of goods.

Councilmember Fithian lauded the ordinance as being well written and well researched.

Councilmember Perkins, from a Planning Commissioner perspective, thought that the way the ordinance was drafted made sure that no current Town Businesses would be penalized.

Councilmember Perkins praised Vice Mayor Loges initiative in creating this ordinance and Town Attorney Crim's advice and guidance in this matter.

Mayor Porta asked Town Attorney Crim whether the 450 feet distance requirement would still allow for some properties in Town where businesses could apply for a SUP. Town Attorney Crim answered that there would be a few spaces in Town that would allow for these types of businesses using that distance.

Vice Mayor Loges drew attention to fact that similar ordinances in other Virginia municipalities use the metric of 1,000 feet from a residence, park, or place of worship as the exclusion zone. The size of Occoquan is such that 1,000 feet would exclude all of these businesses because of the density of residential properties in Occoquan.

Councilmember Perkins moved to set the Town Council Public Hearing on ZTA for Special Use Permits for Tobacco, Vape, Cannabis, or Psychoactive Specialty Establishments on January 20th, 2026. Vice Mayor Loges seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Porta reported the following:

- On December 12th, he attended part of the Seal the Deal Elopements with the Clerk of the Circuit Court Jacqueline Smith at Madigan's.
- On December 15th he attended the Menorah lighting event with Councilmember Love.

- On December 17th he attended the Volunteer Dinner. He thanked Town Manager Linn and Town staff for the gracious comments and gifts given to the Town Council members.
- On December 18th he oversaw the Leadership Prince William History and Government Day at VFW 7916 and the subsequent holiday party at Madigan's.
- On December 19th he judged the Occoquan Point & Barrington Point holiday lighting contest.

6. COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Councilmember Love indicated that this was the 3rd time he had raised his right hand in an oath and the 12th time in his life. He is looking forward to working with the Town and Town Staff in future endeavors.

Councilmember Daubresse was excited for setting out and mapping definitive goals for the Town for next year.

Vice Mayor Loges thanked Town Staff for the gift of the ornaments. She and her husband appreciated that they were made in the United States by a veteran owned company.

7. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Planning Commission Chair Perkins noted that they are working on finishing the Comprehensive Plan for 2026-2036 by the end of July. They will meet the standard by the end of June and then try to do surveys and research to amend the document afterwards.

Mayor Porta noted that it was a heavy lift for the Planning Commission and Town Staff to do the Comprehensive Plan in less than 6 months' time and that he thus thought meeting the statutory requirement but then proceeding with additional analysis and recommendations was a sound strategy.

Councilmember Daubresse, the Town Council Representative for the Architectural Review Board, reported that there were three applications approved. Michelle White was elected as the chair of the Architectural Review Board (ARB). The ARB also discussed alternatives to the A-frame sign and use of vinyl on a chalkboard sign.

Mayor Porta advised that the ARB should be thorough and comprehensive about the A-frames since there is a lot of history related to those guidelines.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

a. Administrative Report

Town Manager Linn gave two updates. The first concerned River Road. He advised that the Town Engineer completed an auto-turn calculation and found they could not safely add another parking spot at the front of the street. The home at the end of River Road parks four cars on their property. Parking enforcement is ongoing and complaints and issues have decreased. Currently, there are some concerns with the cars in the last house blocking others access to moving their trash cans when they have too many cars parked on the property.

The second update was that Town Manager Linn requested a speed study in October from the Prince William County Department of Transportation for traffic on Washington Street. After repeated requests, the County responded on January 6th, that the average speed was 26 miles per hour and that this was not more than 5 miles above the speed limit. Town Manager Linn reminded them that

the speed limit on Washington Street is 20 miles per hour and requested the raw data from the study. The County indicated that they had lost a speed sensor loop so they did not have the data but would be redoing the study in the beginning of January.

Mayor Porta stated that he expects that if the speed study shows the real average speed to be around 26 miles per hour that the speed study will be unsatisfying and that the real issue is the need for a sidewalk on west side of Washington Street.

Vice Mayor Loges and Councilmember Perkins remarked that the hill near the crosswalk is not safe because of sightlines of cars on that hill.

Councilmember Daubresse asked if a speed table was a possible solution. Town Manager Linn mentioned that VDOT would not consider that if the average speed was not high enough to qualify for speed remediation.

Mayor Porta believed that the fundamental issue is that the crosswalk, installed at the Town's request, is at an unsafe location.

Mayor Porta asked about Stormwater Infrastructure, specifically if we will be getting reimbursements this quarter. Town Manager Linn said that this was the goal, but to submit the documentation to EPA, the Town needed the priorities list from the engineering contractor.

Councilmember Daubresse asked how much of the grant was already spent, which Town Manager Linn replied was about \$10,000 and would be around \$27,000.00 by the time the priorities list is made. Councilmember Daubresse then asked if the \$900,000.00 was already allocated. Town Manager Linn reminded Town Council that the original solution, containing lining the stormwater pipes went from a \$800,000.00 cost to a proposed \$2.4-million-dollar cost.

Mayor Porta explained the long length of time and many pitfalls associated with acquiring money from state and federal grants. Mayor Porta, Councilmember Fithian, and Councilmember Perkins discussed grants from the state in regards to Riverwalk.

Councilmember Love mentioned he would talk and work with Staff in finding practical funding alternatives to move forward with the Riverwalk expansion.

Mayor Porta wanted to applaud the Public Safety Department of the Town for their work with events, but also with cooperation with other jurisdictions. Their ability to collaborate with other law enforcement and first responder agencies allows the Town to acquire many tools frugally.

Mayor Porta also wanted to follow up on a request from a resident about including a personal community events or meetups posting area in the Town newsletter. Councilmembers appear to be against the idea, and Mayor Porta indicated that he was not able to confirm that the Town of Clifton ever had a personal community events or meetups area in their newsletters. Councilmember Love believes the initiative is inappropriate for the Town's newsletter.

b. Town Treasurer's Report

Vice Mayor Loges asked if the vehicle that the Town is trying to sell should be sold for a lower amount. She is concerned that the Town will incur up-keep and maintenance costs if the vehicle remains in Town.

Town Manager Linn noted that the Town regularly starts the car and checks it. The car is no longer tagged, under the Town's insurance, or being operated as a vehicle. Town Manager Linn noted that the Town will try to sell the car again by the end of this quarter.

Vice Mayor Loges applauded Town Staff for cleaning up the trash along Rt. 123 with alacrity when it had accumulated. Town Manager Linn gave credit to Deputy Chief Forman and the crew of staff and police involved in the clean up along the road.

Vice Mayor Loges then spoke about the Meals Tax delinquencies; she wanted to know if they were current. Town Manager Linn noted that they were delinquent on a payment plan and have moved to collections. Town Manager Linn mentioned the next step would be going to court.

Town Treasurer Shaw mentioned that Real Estate Taxes are being processed by Deputy Treasurer Auville and that she has found a way to automate much of the process for the following year.

Mayor Porta noted a legacy remnant in the Financial Statements for the middle column and suggested that it should read, 'Unaudited income/expense' to which the Town Treasurer agreed. Town Treasurer Shaw mentioned she will try to automate these reports to make them standardized when she has time after the audit.

Mayor Porta noted that the expenses look within normal bounds. The Mayor saw a note that the report was on an accrual basis. Town Treasurer Shaw mentioned this was an automatic note from QuickBooks and that the statements are still on a cash, not accrual, basis.

c. Town Attorney's Report

Mr. Crim provided a written report as part of the agenda packet. He also reminded the Town Council that a copy of the cannabis bill is not yet available, as it has not been introduced. Additionally, he noted that the three sponsors of the cannabis bill signed an editorial saying they would not include a referendum provision. He explained that in California, including a referendum provision effectively prevented retail marijuana stores from operating, allowing black-market sales to dominate the market.

Mayor Porta added that law enforcement is frustrated with not having a rapid test for marijuana. Town Manager Linn noted he will be attending a symposium on that topic.

9. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Request to Approve Resolution of Appreciation for Brenda Seefeldt R-2026-01

Councilmember Daubresse moved to approve the resolution of appreciation for Brenda Seefeldt. Council member Fithian seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Discussion on Mill Street Pocket Park Mural Design Contest Guidelines and Information

Mayor Porta thought it was well put together. He asked Town Attorney Crim of the verbiage, "there can be no political, social, or religious statements of influences." Town Attorney Crim said that while the statement was vague, people will understand what it means.

Mayor Porta did not like that the verbiage looked like the Town was only reimbursing for materials and not paying a commission to the artist. Town Manager Linn replied that the intent was to reimburse materials up front and then the commission or additional payment upon completion.

Mayor Porta would like it to be a set commission amount and then a budgeted amount for materials costs. The Mayor asked Town Manager Linn how this process occurred for the Mural at Route 123 and he said it was similar. Mayor Porta remembered that the commission and cost was \$5,000.00, which was criticized by the Prince William Arts Council as being too low.

Councilmember Daubresse recommended having a cap on the costs of materials which Councilmember Fithian thought was a good idea.

Mayor Porta then suggested a set commission and then materials costs and suggested \$5,000.00 plus materials costs. Town Manager Linn added that Town Staff believes it will cost closer to \$8,000.00 for commission and costs.

Mayor Porta asked Town Attorney Crim if this could be discussed in closed session. Town Attorney Crim said that this kind of procurement did not appear to qualify for what could be discussed in closed session. Town Attorney Crim then advised that requests for proposals have a \$5,000.00 dollar commission and up to \$3,000.00 for supplies and materials.

Mayor Porta, using Town Manager Linn's advice, suggested setting the commission at \$6,000.00 and having the applicants submit a budget for materials and supplies, with which the other councilmembers agreed.

b. Discussion on Utility Pole Mounted Decorations

Mayor Porta wanted to discuss this topic of replacing wreaths with snowflakes or another design. Deputy Chief Forman presented as a spokesperson for Town Staff to show the direction of the Holiday 2026 Proposal.

Deputy Chief Forman identified some challenges from this holiday season as storage & inventory, electrical & power, and décor consistency. He and Events Director Hassett have started organizing and inventorying the current decorations. He suggested having primary zones to ensure consistency and replacing wreaths with a new unified pole decoration over time as the wreaths reach the end of their life.

Deputy Chief Forman also wanted to improve the fullness and color unity of the Town Tree and other trees in the Town's parks and Historic District while also adding lights to the roof top of other government buildings as was done for the Mill House Museum. He mentioned that Public Works and Events are looking at new options for contractors for decorating the Town.

Councilmember Perkins appreciated the concept of having a more unified look. He also suggested a custom tree topper that epitomizes Occoquan.

Vice Mayor Loges reminded Town Staff that the Town Tree needs maintenance throughout the year to better shape and maintain it. Deputy Chief Forman noted that Town Staff is looking into having an arborist or our landscaping contract perform tree maintenance and the Town has funds allocated for this effort.

Vice Mayor Loges commented that the pole mounted wreaths have a character and historic charm to

them and would like to find a way to incorporate them in future plans.

Councilmember Daubresse asked if there were currently 44 pole mounted snowflakes and wreaths. Town Manager Linn and Deputy Chief Forman replied that there were currently 41 pole mounted decorations.

c. Discussion on Holiday Artisan Market

Events Director Hassett started recapping the Annual Tree Lighting. This year there were two fire pit areas that were well attended with the goal of creating movement on Mill Street.

Councilmember Fithian asked about the food vendors at the fire pits and if they were successful. Events Director Hassett explained that while food sales were slow early in the day, they revved up at night; coffee and drinks sales were steady throughout the event.

Mayor Porta mentioned that as in years past he had received multiple complaints that the musical acts performing just before the tree lighting could not be heard and expressed his preference for continuing to have such groups walk through the town singing or at set locations like the fire pits where the smaller crowds did not absorb all the sound, but not have them try to entertain the large crowd gathered immediately before the tree lighting. To make them heard at the latter would require a multiple-microphone sound system that would likely only get used once a year for a short time and thus not be cost-effective.

Vice Mayor Loges noted that having one person lead the crowd gathered for the tree-lighting in a sing-a-long was a possible solution. Building off that, Councilmember Daubresse noted that a curated list of songs that younger children would enjoy could also help. Mayor Porta supported both suggestions, mentioning that some groups, such as the New Dominion Choraliers, have preferred to sing traditional Christmas carols as opposed to some more generic holiday songs, and that a curated song list would thus be helpful.

Councilmember Fithian remembered a pianist on an electric piano that was loud enough to be heard that invited attendees to sing along.

Events Director Hassett then talked about the Holiday Artisan Market which had a new footprint, covering Commerce and Mill Streets. The shuttle was efficient in getting attendees to the event. There were 80 vendors and many attendees reported the ambiance as being charming. One thing to change in the next year will be the inclusion of port-a-potties. Events Director Hassett also noted feedback asking to start the event earlier on both days as people would like to shop in the morning and end sooner.

Councilmember Perkins noted that the event had a very different atmosphere in the day and at night. He proposed doing different activities and events in the day and at night to add to the effect. He particularly liked, as a connoisseur of holiday markets, that both the Town and then vendors decorating their booths added to the holiday ambiance of the event.

Councilmember Fithian noted that she received many accolades towards the kid's booth but indicated she thought including Chanukah as well as Santa and Christmas activities would be a great addition.

Events Director Hassett noted that the event started with Santa arriving by boat and parading through town. The Market Square was also a great facet as a central place for entertainment during

the event. The Fireside with Friends, put together by Councilmember Perkins and his friends, was very well received. Town Manager Linn noted that the roadway was burned by the firepits and caution should be taken in future years.

Events Director Hassett noted that the s'mores, which were sponsored by Westminster, were a great success, with s'mores being exhausted very quickly and having to change over to just marshmallows for the rest of the day.

Councilmember Perkins noted that after having talked to the Westminster contact they would like to have their booth closer to their sponsorship items (the s'mores) or central. Events Director Hassett noted that Westminster is a strong sponsor for events in Occoquan and they have already committed to sponsorships for future shows.

Next Events Director Hassett spoke on community engagement projects such as "Fill the Sleigh". The Donation box in Town Hall was filled with donations and Volunteer Prince William was able to make 14 very full gift baskets for seniors.

Events Director Hassett talked about the post market vendor survey with 33 responses from the 80 vendors. The responses were very positive and reported average or above average sales.

Councilmember Perkins noted that the vendors approached him saying they loved the atmosphere that the event created,

Councilmember Daubresse wanted to know if there was a different way of vetting this market than the other two, as he noted the quality of the artisans was higher for this market. Events Director Hassett noted that this market had no commercial and only makers, which is harder to do at the larger two shows. She also noted that 17 more spots could be added to this footprint. She could have added more vendors but declined to prevent certain categories from being overrepresented. She did mention that bringing in gourmet food vendors could be a new category to include in future markets.

Events Director Hassett and Town Manager Linn applauded the work of Events Coordinator Bastone in curating the success of these events. The Town Manager also thanked both Events Director Hassett's and Events Coordinator Bastone's husbands for their help and support.

Deputy Chief Forman noted that there was a great amount of public safety planning and effort that started before these events started. He had to walk a tight line of keeping Town staff and attendees feeling safe to successfully put on the event while thwarting conspiracies in the background.

Mayor Porta asked Town Manager Linn if Prince William County's change of radio encryption would impact the Town of Occoquan. Town Manager Linn responded that the Town had proactively coordinated when they received the new radios to include the new encryption keys and programming.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 p.m.