



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, December 9, 2025
7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Ernie Porta, Vice Mayor Jenn Loges, Councilmembers Cindy Fithian, Theo Daubresse, and Eliot Perkins

Absent: Councilmember Love

Staff: Adam Linn, Town Manager / Chief of Police; Philip Auville, Deputy Town Treasurer; Kristin Shaw, Town Treasurer; Jason Forman, Deputy Chief of Police; Martin Crim, Town Attorney

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Porta called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Mayor Porta noted that Vice Mayor Loges was attending remotely from Fulton, Maryland for medical reasons.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CITIZEN'S TIME

Three residents spoke during Citizen's Time.

Lance H. congratulated the Town on a successful Holiday Artisan Market. He made a suggestion for the Police Department to use more people or mechanical aids to help project their voices without needing to yell. He updated the progress on Rockledge Mansion and 204 Ellicott Street. Lastly, he mentioned that there were no major changes to the work being done at the Parsonage.

Mayor Porta asked about trees behind the lot containing the Parsonage and Lance H. replied that those trees would be removed. The Mayor also inquired about Rockledge Mansion and Lance H. noted that they are renovating that building with the hope of renting it to possibly a restaurateur and if not possibly selling it.

Walt S. noted that the Holiday Artisan Market was great, but noted some speed concerns with traffic on Mill Street. He also had a concern with the draft lighting ordinance. He mentioned his concern was with the definition of the color temperature of lights; lights labeled as warm are sold at 2,700 or 3,000 kelvin while the ordinance limits warm to be 2,400 Kelvin or less. Walt S. asked that council keep this and other factors in mind with the draft lighting ordinance.

Michelle W. inquired if there was a way to enforce or stop cars from parking in reverse on the diagonal spaces. She also commented that she loved the Holiday Artisan Market and that it was well run and helped her as a business owner in Town.

Mayor Porta asked Town Staff about the backing in parking on the timed district. Town Manager Linn mentioned that there is no ordinance against it. Town Attorney Crim mentioned that signage would be needed to enforce any rule against backing-in to park. Councilmember Perkins inquired into how

many signs would be needed to enforce this. Town Attorney Crim and Town Manager Linn mentioned that different district court judges have subjective criteria to how many signs would be needed to enforce this rule. Mayor Porta directed Town Staff to look into this matter.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Request to Accept November 18th, 2025, Town Council Meeting Minutes
- b. Request to Appoint Michele White to the ARB

Councilmember Perkins moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilmember Fithian seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote

Town Manager Linn asked for unanimous consent for permission to change the closed session of the November 18th 2025 minutes to change the phrase, "Town Council Meeting minutes November 2025" to "Town Manager". The motion to amend was made by Councilmember Fithian and seconded by Councilmember Daubresse. It passed by unanimous voice vote.

5. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Porta reported the following:

- On November 18th he attended a dinner of the Virginia House Appropriations Committee by invitation of Chairman Delegate Luke Torian.
- On November 20th he attended the ribbon cutting for Fix O'Whimsy.
- On November 20th he attended a historical talk at Town Hall co-sponsored with the County Historical Preservation Division and Historic Prince William
- One November 22nd he attended a filming at the Mill Street Draft Garden.
- One November 22nd he attended the Shop Late and Tree Lighting events.
- On November 23rd he gave a presentation on Inez Thurston at Ebenezer Baptist Church on the occasion of her 99th birthday.
- On December 4th he gave a lunch and tour to the Main Street representatives
- On December 6th- 7th he successfully brought Santa in by boat for the Holiday Artisan Market which he attended both days.

Mayor Porta also lauded Town Staff on putting on such a great Holiday Artisan Market. He noted that he had never received so many compliments for an event and so many happy patrons. He also liked the holiday market square at the center of the market.

Mayor Porta would like to include a copy of an anonymous note with many complimentary words and some suggestions for future holiday events. The main problem was with sound, as not everyone could hear. He believes the sound system has been fixed, but it is hard to hear the New Dominion Choraliers. He would also like to discuss the wreaths and stars/snowflakes. These two topics should be discussed in January for the debrief.

The Mayor also wanted to alert the public to challenges in Virginia's upcoming budget that may impact the Town.

The Mayor also talked about the Mainstreet program. Small municipalities of 5000 people or less are expected to fundraise \$100,000.00 dollars annually through their 501(3)(c) organizations, with 30-50%

coming from the municipality. He does not expect progress to be instantaneous, but it is important to keep these expectations in mind if the program is something the Council wishes to pursue.

He also addressed Town Attorney Crim about a small community announcements board in the newsletter that will be further addressed in the Town Attorney's report.

6. COUNCILMEMBERS REPORTS

Mayor Porta presented Councilmember Love's report as he could not attend tonight's meeting:

- On November 10th he attended the VFW Post 7916 Marine Corps Birthday Celebration.
- On November 18th he participated in the Invasive Species discussion with a representative from Loudon County.
- On December 4th he attended the Bells Across PA for Pittsburgh 250 at the Heinz History Center.
- On December 6th and 7th he participated in the Holiday Artisan Market.

Councilmember Perkins reported the following:

- On November 18th he attended the Invasive Species discussion with a representative from Loudon County. He thanked Councilmember Love for initiating the discussion.
- On November 20th he attended the ribbon cutting for Fix O'Whimsy.
- On November 22nd, he attended the Tree Lighting event.
- On December 1st, he attended a meeting with Town Staff regarding the firesides at the Holiday Artisan Market
- On December 4th, he attended the Mainstreet presentation.
- On December 6th he took part in the Artisan Market in managing the fireside

Councilmember Perkins lauded the Holiday Artisan Market's organization and atmosphere. He believes that Occoquan's atmosphere was better than the other holiday market he attended with events such as Santa moving throughout town and decorations from the vendors and Staff. He would like to thank his wife Heather Welker, and neighbors: Ralph Newel, Melanie Fenwick, Elise LeGuelte, Johann LeGuelte, Michael Lochner, & Sandra Sierdzinska.

Councilmember Daubresse spoke on the Holiday Artisan Market. He noted how the Town Council was receptive to suggestions for changes from prior years and listened to the Town's businesses, Town's residents, and vendors to make an event that surpassed that of prior years and was beneficial to all parties. He also thanked the Town's Police Department for helping maintain people's peace of mind in these large events.

Councilmember Fithian reported the following:

- On November 22nd she attended the Tree Lighting event.
- One December 4th she attended the Mainstreet presentation.
- On December 6th she attended and volunteered at the Holiday Artisan Market.

Councilmember Fithian reported hearing only good comments in regards to the Holiday Artisan Market. She volunteered at Santa's workshop and saw that families and children loved the crafts at the event, especially the letters to Santa.

Councilmember Perkins and Mayor Loges took a moment to thank Visit Occoquan, Inc. and Sarah Burzio for their work in promoting the Holiday Artisan Market on social media.

Vice Mayor Loges reported the following:

- She praised Riverside Pizza Factory's pizza, commenting that it was her first choice for pizza now.
- She reported that she continues to work with Town Staff and Town Attorney Crim on the vape shop ordinance.
- She also praised the Holiday Artisan Market.

Vice Mayor Loges gave a special thank you to Police Department for their dedication to public safety. She thought that the duct tape crosswalk at D'Rocco's was a great idea to help pedestrians access the market. She also approved of the permanent bollards but noted that there should be a sign at the start of the alleys so that cars know there is no through traffic. She also appreciated that the barriers were decorated so that they blended into the event.

7. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Perkins reported that the Planning Commission will be taking up a reasonable standard for vape shops, a process the Planning Commission is working along side Town Attorney Crim and Vice Mayor Loges. The Planning Commission is also starting the process of evaluating and updating the Comprehensive Plan for July 1st, 2026. The Planning Commission has also started the process of working on their piece of the Strategic Planning document.

Councilmember Daubresse mentioned that there was no meeting in the past month for the Architectural Review Board and they will have an election for a new Chair at this upcoming meeting.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

a. Admin Report

Town Manager Linn let the council know that there will be a report on the Holiday Artisan Market at the January 6th, 2026, meeting.

Mayor Porta asked, after having seen an update regarding police vehicles on the report, how many police vehicles the Town owns. Town Manager Linn reported that the Town has 6 police vehicles, and they are looking to sell one and one is leased.

Mayor Porta requested an update on the parking situation on River Road. Town Manager Linn replied that there is going to be a discussion item on January 6th, 2026. Mayor Porta decided to defer his questions until the next meeting.

Mayor Porta asked about the CBG art project and asked that the email be sent to the members of the Town Council to approve before being sent out to the public.

Councilmember Fithian asked if there was a plan to approach the Governor-Elect and her administration about the Riverwalk project.

b. Treasurer Report

Town Treasurer Shaw talked about her first month working for the Town.

Mayor Porta indicated there were no expenses that seemed out of line and that he expected a large change to the Real Estate Tax in next month's report.

Mayor Porta mentioned there was a small lag in the Meals Tax revenue for this month. Town Treasurer Shaw mentioned there was four to six thousand dollars outstanding.

Vice Mayor Loges noted that CIP – Streetscape that had \$8,800 budgeted and had paid out \$22,000.00. Town Manager Linn believed that the discrepancy came from the vehicle crashing into the kiosk near the Mill Street Museum and that they had received insurance proceeds to cover that replacement.

c. Town Attorney Report

Before starting with the report, Town Attorney Crim wanted to address previous comments. He first addressed Walt S.'s comment regarding lighting enforcement. His colleague Tracy Gallehr worked hard on this new area of enforcement. Town Attorney Crim mentioned the use of criminal penalties as an enforcement tool that could be waived for smaller offenses, but allows for better enforcement for repeat offenders.

Town Attorney Crim mentioned that the state's cannabis ordinance is not yet pre-filed. The three patrons published an editorial stating that they are removing the referendum provision from the draft legislation because of the experience in California. The goal of removing this provision is to eliminate the black market for cannabis.

Mayor Porta asked about there being a small amount of space on the newsletter for community events. The Mayor brought up possible first amendment issues if they opened up a board on the community meet up groups. The Mayor suggested if it was opened to a first-come-first-serve bases to non-commercial groups. Town Attorney Crim replied that you could do that, by establishing a limited public forum with specific rules that was content neutral based on an assessment of the needs of the community for such a group. There would need to be definitions of what non-commercial and other terms would be. Town Attorney Crim noted a possible problem with such meeting boards needing to be content-neutral, giving the example of allowing a white supremacist bicycle club to advertise.

9. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Request to Adopt Ordinance O-2025-12 on Lighting

Town Manager Linn noted the idea behind moving this lighting ordinance into general regulations from a zoning violation was to provide for quicker responses to complaints similar to the noise ordinance. When asked for an example by the Mayor, Town Manager Linn noted the recent Board of Zoning Appeal case where there was a light that could not easily be measured and was unshielded. Town Manager Linn mentioned that the case was centered on the shielding because the brightness or lumens could not be measured within the current code system; the Town Code is currently set to measure watts which is not useful with LED lights.

Walt S. spoke again about the problem with the amount of kelvin measured from a light and the possibility of false advertising in bulbs. Walt S. brought up that this ordinance will have a major impact on the town.

Mayor Porta noted examples of ordinance changes and that there is often a gradual spread of a new standard when pre-ordinance, non-conforming uses are subsequently renovated and required to come

into compliance.

Town Manager Linn clarified that this ordinance is not addressing shielding; it is just covering the brightness of light directed at light pollution and complaints.

Mayor Porta was concerned that the draft ordinance uses 2400 kelvin as the standard and retail stores sell lights advertised as warm up to 2700 kelvin. The Mayor and councilmembers noted it would be a good idea to investigate this matter further before voting on it.

Mayor Porta received unanimous consent to defer this to a later meeting.

b. Request to Adopt Ordinance O-2025-14 Designating the Town Manager as Chief Executive Officer for VA FOIA Purposes

Mayor Porta agreed that it was a good idea to designate the Town Manager as the chief executive officer under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

Councilmember Perkins moved to adopt the ordinance. Councilmember Fithian seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Ayes: Vice Mayor Loges, Councilmember Fithian, Councilmember Daubresse, and Councilmember Perkins

Nays: None

10. CLOSED SESSION

Councilmember Perkins moved that the Council convene in closed session to discuss the following as permitted by Virginia Code § 2.2-3711 (A)(1), a personnel matter involving: assignment, appointment, Town Council Meeting Minutes November 18, 2025 promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of the Town; specifically dealing with the Town Attorney, Town Maintenance Assistance, and ARB Chairperson.

Councilmember Perkins further moved that the Council convene in closed session to discuss the following as permitted by Virginia Code § 2.2-3711 (A)(3), a matter involving: discussion or consideration of the acquisition of real property for a public purpose specifically involving river front property along Mill Street, because discussion in an open meeting would adversely affect the Town's bargaining position or negotiation strategy. Councilmember Daubresse seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The Council went into closed session at 8:18 p.m.

The Council came out of closed session at 9:23 p.m.

Councilmember Perkins moved to certify that, in the closed session just concluded, nothing was discussed except the matter or matters (1) specifically identified in the motion to convene in closed session and (2) lawfully permitted to be discussed in a closed session under the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act as cited in that motion. Seconded by Councilmember Daubresse. The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Ayes: Vice Mayor Loges, Councilmember Daubresse, Councilmember Fithian, Councilmember Perkins

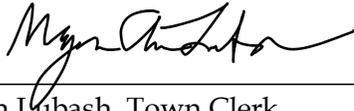
Nays: None

11. BUSINESS AFTER CLOSED SESSION

Councilmember Daubresse moved to approve one-time year-end bonus of \$1,730.40 for James Auville for his outstanding performance, reliability, and positive impact on Public Works and the Town. Town Attorney Crim noted that this was gross pay and would have taxes deducted from the amount. Councilmember Daubresse agreed to the gross pay. Councilmember Perkins seconded. Motion passed voice vote.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 p.m.



Megan Lubash, Town Clerk