



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - DRAFT
Town Hall – 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125
Tuesday, March 17, 2026
7:00 p.m.

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

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Porta called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Mayor Porta noted that the meeting was taking place on St. Patrick's Day.

2. CITIZENS' TIME

Two residents spoke during Citizens' Time.

Laine S., the business owner of Swords, Brooms, and Magical Beasts (SBMB, LLC), updated Town Council on her event of March 7th. She reported that there were over 1,200 patrons in Town. Vendors were located at Madigan's, the VFW Post and 402 Mill Street. They had 500 copies of a scavenger hunt designed to bring people off Mill Street. In her survey after the fact, seven businesses reported having their best sales day ever. Her goal with Town businesses was to help them get a positive benefit out of her event.

Councilmember Love asked her how she felt about the event. Laine S. mentioned she was impressed by the energy of the crowd and the experiences of the business owners.

Vice Mayor Loges asked about the Itinerant Vendor Event Fee. Laine S. reported that she paid the full amount and Mayor Porta noted that this fee was for both the March and August dates.

Michele W., a resident and business owner, pointed out the small additions of Occoquan lore that were added to the event's map including the old seal, Iron Man, ducks, and peeps.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Request to Accept March 3, 2026, Town Council Meeting Minutes**
- b. Request to Appoint Kerry Jetton to the Planning Commission**
- c. Request to Appoint Alec Nugent to the Architectural Review Board**

Vice Mayor Loges moved to approve the request to accept the consent agenda. Councilmember Fithian seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

4. REGULAR BUSINESS

a. Request to Amend Town Code § 35.003 to Direct the Treasurer to create lists of Uncollectable Taxes and Delinquents

Councilmember Fithian moved to the matter. Councilmember Love seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. FY2027 Budget Work Session #2 (Event Fund Update & General Fund)

Town Manager Linn reported on the Events Fund Budget's update. He explained the budget was revised to reflect a streamlined approach to event programming and expenditures. Total projected revenue was reduced due to the removal of the Murder Mystery event. Correspondingly, expenditures had been reduced with savings realized from eliminating costs associated with that event, as well as targeted reductions in advertising, personnel services, and materials and supplies. Overall, the updated projections result in an increase in net revenue.

Councilmember Perkins asked for clarification as he was absent from the previous meeting. Mayor Porta explained that the discussion from the last meeting related to the advertising costs and the number of events proposed, including the Murder Mystery Event. Councilmember Perkins agreed with giving Town Staff creative leeway to explore events that excite them. In reference to the Holiday Artisan Market, Councilmember Perkins urged Events Staff to be thoughtful when planning the overlap of the market with the fireside nights event.

Councilmember Daubresse asked about the Valentine's Day event. Town Manager Linn indicated that the February event would not be held on Valentine's weekend. Councilmember Daubresse also inquired about the reduced advertising budget. Town Manager Linn explained that they reduced the quantity of rack cards and certain social media posts. Councilmember Daubresse noted that he did not want to see a reduction in the momentum of their social media presence. Events Director Hassett explained that they are reducing certain traditional media such as magazines and rack cards and focusing more on targeted social media advertisements.

Councilmember Perkins noted that he wanted Events to look at the elements of events such as the Murder Mystery that worked and try to extrapolate those details into new and existing events.

Mayor Porta noted a willingness to follow Staff's inspiration and allow for flexibility. He noted that he trusts Town Manager Linn to be an effective arbiter for Staff's creativity in finding events that would be beneficial for the Town and mindful to Staff's time and effort. Lastly, he applauded Staff on addressing the comments from previous discussion and making effective changes.

Discussion then turned to the General Fund where Town Manager Linn explained that revenue and expenditures were rising. The increase in expenditures comes from personnel services, service contracts, and professional contacts. He also explained that this proposed budget includes a funds transfer to make it a balanced budget. Town Manager Linn then continued through the presentation and answered questions.

Mayor Porta asked Town Manager Linn to clarify a slide so that it was clear that the increase in Meal's tax revenue is not a three percent increase to the tax rate, but an expected increase in the revenue received by the Town from increased sales.

Councilmember Fithian asked if the increase to the refuse contract was in response to rising fuel costs. Town Manager Linn explained that we had received notice that the contract will be implementing a fuel surcharge soon; the projected increase was based on the contracted amount which was based on the consumer price index for the Washington DC metro area for refuse.

When going over tax revenue, Councilmember Daubresse asked why the utility tax went down. Town Manager Linn explained that they were basing their numbers off the actual and not the projected. He explained that they are paid quarterly and it is hard to estimate.

Councilmember Perkins asked about the Transient Occupancy tax. Town Manager Linn noted that they have requested an audit from VRBO and believe that the decrease in revenue is because they have not been paying their taxes to the Town. Town Manager Linn noted that Town Treasurer Shaw sent out audit letters to VRBO and AirBNB. He also explained that audits will go out to the short-term rentals if the companies do not respond to the audit letters. Town Manager Linn noted that the Business, Professional, Occupational License tax form now has a spot to capture short term rentals and transient occupancy businesses.

While discussing the real estate tax, Mayor Porta noted that the Town of Occoquan received more tax revenue from its commercial activity than from its residential real estate tax. He also noted that twelve percent of homes were valued under \$200,000.00 and eleven percent were valued over \$750,000.00.

Mayor Porta then inquired about non-taxable properties. Town Manager Linn explained that there are seven tax-exempt properties which are owned by the Town and County. There are twenty-four designated as common areas for Homeowners Associations which technically are paid by the individual HOA members as part of their taxes. There are also twenty-six residential properties that receive tax relief and pay no taxes to the Town. The Mayor then asked Town Manager Linn for a slide to break down the tax-exemptions in Town.

Town Manager Linn presented the real estate assessment showing a net increase of 2.5 percent and to offset that increase the tax rate would need to be lowered \$0.11314 per \$100 of assessed value.

Town Manager Linn then discussed Meal's Tax and how Occoquan has the lowest Meal's Tax of the Towns in Prince William County. He also explained that historically the largest months for Meal's Tax revenue are April, May, June, and August.

Discussion then moved to Expenses in the General Fund. Town Manager Linn explained the engineering, legal, and IT expenses. There were no questions in regards to the administrative expenses.

In Public Safety, Town Manager Linn noted that there is a 3.8 percent increase in personnel which did not include the proposed salary pool to address the increases in neighboring localities.

Vice Mayor Loges asked about the amount of the public safety grants expected, and Town Manager Linn responded. Vice Mayor Loges then explained that she wanted to be able to show that the Town is funded almost seventy-five percent from funds other than taxes. Mayor Porta reported that he has observed a notable decrease in the number of people commenting about being overpoliced since his first term.

The Mayor also asked how many full-time police officers are in Town. Town Manager Linn noted that there were 4 full-time employees, or 4.5 including him as the Chief of Police. Councilmember Perkins noted that there are also many volunteer police officers in Town who assist with special events.

The next topic reviewed was Public Works. Mayor Porta asked if there were only three garbage and refuse companies in our area. Town Manger Linn indicated that the town only received three bids and had chosen the contractor who had the lowest bid and was familiar with the Town.

When discussing pocket parks and trails, Vice Mayor Loges indicated that a trail at Furnace Branch Park may invite illicit activities. Mayor Porta commented if the idea was just as an invasive clean up and to make it more visually appealing, the nearby HOA may be amenable to cleaning it up. Councilmember Perkins mentioned it would be a great place to reintroduce native plants.

Town Manager Linn noted that there were no raises for the elected officials as they voted against such a measure the previous year.

A discussion of the deficit/revenue followed. Town Manager Linn explained four proposed solutions to the deficit. The Town could do a fund transfer, increase the Real Estate Tax rate, increase the Meals Tax rate, or reduce expenditures. Vice Mayor Loges and Councilmember Perkins spoke in favor of the fund transfer and against tax rate increases. Councilmember Perkins noted that the expenditures seem appropriate. Councilmember Love asked if there had been a thorough accounting of discretionary spending to reduce expenditures. Town Manager Linn reported that there was very little discretionary spending in the proposed budget.

The Mayor noted that because of good management, and revenue creating events in Town there is usually a budget surplus making the funds transfer unnecessary. Councilmember Love mentioned that if the Riverwalk is important to the Town, then any budget surplus or additional item should be looked at as a dollar towards the Riverwalk.

6. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Porta reminded staff that the first Riverwalk Expansion Special Committee will be on March 25th. He asked if the meeting could be held at 5 p.m. to accommodate Nick Roper who is a member of the committee to which all Town Councilmembers agreed.

The Mayor also wanted to express his condolences to Councilmember Perkins whose Mother-in-Law recently passed away. He also mentioned the recent deaths of the following Occoquan residents: Don Ohs, Anne Sawyer, and David Nguyen. He also mentioned that Karen Smith, a board member of ACTS and Executive Director of The ARC of Greater Prince William died. The latter organization runs Spinaweb in Occoquan and the Mayor directed Staff to find a way to commemorate her in Town.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.