



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

7:00 p.m.

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

Absent: Councilmember Eliot Perkins

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Mayor Porta noted that Town Attorney Martin Crim was attending remotely.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CITIZENS' TIME

One resident spoke during Citizens' Time.

Kerry J., a resident of Gaslight Landing, came to say that she applied to the Architectural Review Board and was one of two applicants. She wanted to attend to explain her experience with the Town, volunteer work, and creating bylaws.

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

Mayor Porta asked Town Manager Linn for clarification regarding the appointment of members to the Architectural Review Board. Town Manager Linn explained that two applicants had applied for one open position on the Board. The Architectural Review Board voted to recommend both applicants and forward their names to the Town Council for a final decision. He further noted that, in the interim, the Chair intended to reach out to a current member who had been considering stepping down.

Mayor Porta asked for unanimous consent to address this matter, no objections were made so the matter was discussed.

Vice Mayor Loges asked why Town Council would not appoint Kerrie J. to the Board at this meeting to which Mayor Porta explained that Town Council usually waits for a recommendation from the Board. Mayor Porta mentioned that there were vacancies on the Planning Commission that one of the applicants may consider. The Town Council agreed to make the determination at the next Town Council Meeting.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Request to Accept the March 3rd, 2026 Minutes

Vice Mayor Loges moved to approve the request to accept the March 3rd minutes. Councilmember Love seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Porta reported the following:

- On February 25th, he attended a Meeting of the Town Mayors with the Board of County Supervisors' Chair Deshundra Jefferson.
- On February 27th, he and Councilmember Perkins met with Kevin Sills for a status update for the Mill at Occoquan. They discussed the loan for the parcel, demolition of the steel structure, and nesting ospreys.
- On March 3rd, he attended the visitation of Town resident Ann Sawyer, former member of the Architectural Review Board and Occoquan Historical Society board, at Mountcastle Funeral Home.

Councilmember Love asked Mayor Porta to confirm that the presence of osprey nests would not delay the demolition of the Mill at Occoquan. Mayor Porta clarified that the issue is not the ospreys themselves, but that once they lay eggs, the nests are protected; but the nests can be moved under certain circumstance and at anytime prior to laying of eggs.

6. COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Councilmember Fithian wanted to thank everyone for the well wishes and condolences after the passing of her mother.

Councilmember Daubresse informed the Town Council and the Town Attorney that he has been approached by a potential buyer of 307 Mill Street and thus is seeking guidance on whether or not he will have to recuse himself from some of the Riverwalk discussions. Mayor Porta wanted Mr. Daubresse's disclosure noted in the minutes; he did not believe that there is a conflict of interest at this time that would preclude Mr. Daubresse's participation in Riverwalk discussions. The Council and Town Attorney Crim agreed.

Councilmember Love noted that on February 12th he attended the swearing in of M. Alexis Wright to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

7. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The Architectural Review Board Chair Michele White presented. She noted that there was no meeting in January and there were no applications in February. However, they did meet in February for administrative matters and they discussed creating by-laws to address using Robert's Rules of Order and attendance. She also mentioned that she planned on attending a training in September for ARB proceedings from the University of Virginia which Town Clerk Lubash found.

Mayor Porta asked if there was a place in the code that mentioned Robert's Rules of Order as the framework for the board. Town Attorney Crim mentioned 33.49 Procedure for Meetings subsection (E) says that Meetings shall be conducted according to *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, but could not find any specific language on attendance in the Town Code.

Town Manager Linn gave a short report for the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission had elections where Eliot Perkins was voted as Chair and Sam Sparks was elected as Vice Chair. He indicated that it was stated that Chair Perkins plans on stepping down after completing the Comprehensive Plan for 2036. Mayor Porta wanted to confirm that Chair Perkins was going to step down after the Comprehensive Plan was sent to council, which Town Manager Linn confirmed was the understanding at the Planning Commission meeting.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

b. Administrative Report

Mayor Porta had received some questions about the Shad Run. Town Manager Linn explained that it will be held on April 11th and that it will allow for fishing in Occoquan. Town Manager Linn reported that the water quality problems of the Potomac should not be a factor as we are a tributary to the Chesapeake and not located close to the contamination on the Potomac; however, he cautioned that people engaged in fishing should contact the Department of Environment Quality (DEQ) or the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) before consuming fish for heavy metal and environmental contamination questions.

Mayor Porta also wanted to ask about the Pocket Park Community Vitality Grant in reference to interest expressed by Commissioner Darryl Hawkins in the process. Town Clerk Lubash reported that Mr. Hawkins is involved and applied to be a juror for the project. Town Manager Linn noted that he did not bring up the Pocket Park mural at either the Planning Commission or Architectural Review Board.

Mayor Porta noted that the Prince William County was looking at removing the meals tax and a business owner asked if the Town was going to remove the Town's meals tax. The Mayor noted that the Town was not planning to repeal the meals tax and indicated that unlike the town, which has had one for decades, the County did not have the authority to institute one until a few years ago.

Councilmember Love asked about the information kiosk at 458 Mill Street. Town Clerk Lubash noted that the contractor had reported that the sign was manufactured, and they would install it the following week.

Mayor Porta then talked about scheduling the Riverwalk Committee for March 11th and March 25th at 6:00 p.m. Councilmembers and Town Manager Linn affirmed that the dates worked with them. Mayor Porta noted he would reach out to Nick Roper, the other member of the committee to see if those dates worked with him.

Councilmember Daubresse had a question about the Stormwater grant. Town Manager Linn provided an update saying the grant is being reviewed by the Environmental Protection Agency for award and that the scope of work had been finalized.

Vice Mayor Loges asked about the transient occupancy taxes. Town Manager Linn reported that the companies are paying two months behind and also that Town Staff is trying to get answers on if they are paying the taxes to the Town of Occoquan or Prince William County. Councilmember Daubresse asked if the Town was checking with other transient occupancy companies such as VRBO to see if they were paying the Town as many units are cross listed on multiple sites. Town Manager Linn noted that the Town has not received tax payments from companies outside of AirBNB and that Town Staff will look into this.

c. Town Treasurer's Report

Mayor Porta noted that the revenue and expense items looked to be consistent with what would be expected at this time. The Mayor asked about the fines collection that was noted as a possible issue at the last meeting. Town Manager Linn mentioned that he believes that fines will not be an issue after having spoken to the Clerk's Office regarding fine classification issues.

d. Town Attorney's Report

Town Attorney Crim added the benefits of having lobbyist such as VML as their efforts had Senate Bill 454 amended to keep the business district stocked with business and not residential listings in Towns with less than 7,500 residents. Mayor Porta noted that Occoquan's Delegate Sewell had pushed for a higher ceiling on this to protect the business and historic districts of towns like Occoquan.

9. DISCUSSION ITEMS**e. Budget Work Session #3 (Events Fund) Discussion**

Town Manager Linn provided an overview of the events budget and the schedule for upcoming budget work sessions, which will continue through May. He explained that the majority of the Town's event revenue is generated from Riverfest, the Fall Arts and Craft Show, and the Holiday Artisan Market. Revenue generated from these events supports the Capital Improvement Plan and provides seed funding for future events.

Town Manager Linn also discussed the challenges associated with the Murder Mystery event and the possibility of pivoting to an indoor format to preserve the program. Vice Mayor Loges expressed appreciation for staff efforts but cautioned against overburdening staff with too many events. She also voiced opposition to holding an event on Valentine's Day due to the expectations and emotional significance associated with the holiday. Mayor Porta agreed that the Town should avoid staff burnout.

Mayor Porta and Vice Mayor Loges also expressed concern about the number of events scheduled in October. However, the Mayor noted that if new staff members are interested in exploring new events, they should be allowed to evaluate their feasibility for future years.

Mayor Porta, Vice Mayor Loges, and Councilmember Love reiterated their reservations about a Valentine's Day event. At the same time, both Mayor Porta and Town Manager Linn expressed staff support for the Town Trivia program and a desire to maintain the current number of trivia events.

Town Manager Linn clarified that while some expenses appear higher in the budget, projected costs may ultimately be lower due to sponsorships offsetting certain expenditures. Councilmember Daubresse asked whether shuttle costs for FY2027 had been confirmed. Town Manager Linn stated that the costs are confirmed, although contracts cannot be executed until the budget is formally adopted. He noted that additional quotes were obtained and came in higher than the Town's current contractor.

Vice Mayor Loges asked why net revenues from events were approximately \$180,000-\$200,000 in 2018 but are lower now. Town Manager Linn stated that he would review the historical data, noting that more vendor spaces are currently being sold than in 2018. Councilmember Fithian suggested

exploring advertising opportunities on the sides of shuttle buses. Councilmember Daubresse asked about expanding the Holiday Artisan Market footprint.

Town Manager Linn noted that the two largest expense categories are personnel and contractual services, such as shuttles and equipment rentals. Vice Mayor Loges asked whether personnel costs included only events staff. Town Manager Linn explained that the category includes events staff, on-call staff, VRS, and related costs.

Mayor Porta asked whether allocating 15 percent of the budget for marketing was typical. Councilmember Love and Daubresse noted that advertising costs generally range between 5 and 15 percent. Town Manager Linn added that the Advertising line item included both marketing from Visit Occoquan as well as printing costs.

Council discussed marketing strategies, including whether advertising could shift from social media to direct mail targeting nearby neighborhoods. Councilmember Daubresse noted that while direct mail can have a higher return on investment, social media engagement tends to increase as follower counts grow and is particularly effective for younger audiences. Mayor Porta responded that increased social media engagement has not necessarily translated into increased spending at Town businesses and emphasized that the Town's goal is to attract visitors who will patronize local businesses. He also noted that online event interest does not always translate into actual attendance.

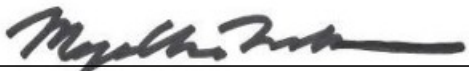
Mayor Porta also advised caution about expanding the Holiday Artisan Market later into the evening due to temperature concerns. Town Manager Linn stated that based on feedback, staff had revised the event so that vendors will remain open until 6:00 p.m., after which the event will transition into the Firelight Nights program. Councilmember Fithian noted that the lack of s'mores kits had been a common complaint from attendees. Town Manager Linn explained that s'mores were available but sold out, and noted that future programming will shift toward a more community-oriented model featuring shared fire pits and s'mores starting at a later time. He added that the kits were funded through sponsorship.

Regarding the annual Tree Lighting event, Town Manager Linn noted that this year's program will include sing-along caroling. Vice Mayor Loges suggested adding additional holiday music near the Urban Posh area, noting that the River Mill Park side of town tends to be more active during the event. Councilmember Daubresse also mentioned that Councilmember Perkins had previously suggested placing a live Santa on a rooftop; however, Mayor Porta and Town staff strongly advised against the idea due to safety concerns.

Town Manager Linn concluded that overall event revenues are projected to increase by approximately 3.3 percent. He noted that the events budget supports several Strategic Framework priorities, including personnel recruitment and retention, enhanced revenue from Town events programming, business support and development initiatives, and tourism-driven economic development. He also advised that staff will return to Council with potential revisions to the proposed budget based on feedback from the work session.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.



Megan Lubash, Town Clerk