



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125

Tuesday, April, 7 2026

7:00 p.m.

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

Absent: None

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; Tammy Hassett, Events Director; Martin Crim, Town Attorney; Bruce Reese, Town Engineer

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Mayor Porta noted that Town Attorney Martin Crim and Town Engineer Bruce Reese were attending remotely.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CITIZENS' TIME

One resident spoke during Citizens' Time.

Desirae M., the owner of Black Magic and Leggy Lashings on Commerce Street wanted to address three topics. First, she raised concerns regarding enforcement of angled parking in the historic district, specifically the requirement that vehicles not park facing outward. She noted that parking is often difficult to find and expressed concern about the number of accidents that occur when vehicles are backing out of angled spaces. She also indicated that the Occoquan Police Department had recently spoken with her about enforcement of the requirement prohibiting outward-facing parking and she advised that she sits in her car many times a day and wants to see the front of her business in case anyone comes in.

Second, she referenced a courtesy notice of violation she received for exceeding the number of permitted minor signs and for making an exterior alteration without obtaining a Certificate of Appropriateness from the Architectural Review Board. She expressed frustration, characterizing the requirements and review process as a "cash grab."

Lastly, she inquired whether business owners could purchase a parking permit or sticker that would allow them to park near their businesses within the timed-parking district.

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

Mayor Porta noted that there is no proposed change to the timed-parking district that would allow

owners or employees to be exempt from the time limits, as the Town Council has considered input from numerous business owners who rely on timed parking to promote customer turnover in the Town's limited parking supply. He then addressed the issue of outward-facing angled parking, explaining that the matter had been raised by the Town Council just a few months ago and that such parking is a violation of Virginia State Code. Finally, Mayor Porta directed Town staff to meet with the business owner to review the minor sign regulations, clarify the nature of the violation, and assist her in navigating the Architectural Review Board process.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- a. Request to Accept the March 17th, 2026 Minutes
- b. Request to Proclaim April 26, 2026, Arbor Day
- c. Request to Appoint Member to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Mayor Porta asked who was being appointed to the Board of Zoning Appeals and Assistant Town Manager Lubash noted it was resident Christopher Pille. Councilmember Perkins moved to approve the request to accept consent agenda. Councilmember Love seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Porta reported the following:

- On March 6th, he attended a brief Ramadan activity at the mosque.
- On March 10th, met with Karla Justice regarding an historic tugboat she purchased and hopes of refurbishing it to put along the waterfront.
- On March 13th, he attended the funeral of Pops McLain at Ebenezer Baptist Church. He was recently honored by the Town for his 99th birthday.
- On March 18th, he attended the Occoquan River Safety Forum.
- On March 19th, he attended the Sands Anderson client event at the Bottle Stop.
- On March 21st, he introduced a panel on the Beltway Sniper at the Prince William History Symposium.
- On March 21st, he attended the Installation of Officers Banquet at the Occoquan Woodbridge Lorton Volunteer Fire Department.
- On March 28th, he attended an employee appreciation event at the Prince William Marina.
- On March 30th, he attended the funeral service of Karen Smith.
- On March 31st, he gave a presentation on Occoquan History at George Mason University.
- On April 2nd, he participated in a meeting with Mr. Perkins, Mr. Linn, Mr. Reese, and others with Kevin Sills, on the Mill at Occoquan project.
- On April 4th, he announced the winners of the PEEPS diorama contest.
- On April 7th, acting as the ACTS Board President attended the ACTS-initiated BOCS proclamation on Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

6. COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Councilmember Perkins raised concerns regarding a deer repellent device installed on Washington Street. He reported receiving complaints from more than seven residents over a three-day period. Upon review, he noted that the device uses ultrasonic frequencies intended to deter animals from the property. However, residents reported that their dogs reacted negatively, pulling at leashes and

barking, and some individuals indicated they could hear the sound, describing it as loud and harsh. Councilmember Perkins further explained that the device is motion-activated and, while positioned on private property, its effects extend to the adjacent public sidewalk and street. Vice Mayor Loges added that she had also received numerous complaints from residents, including individuals with hearing aids who found the device particularly disruptive.

Mayor Porta inquired whether any Town or Virginia code provisions apply to this type of device. Town Manager Linn responded that there is no ordinance specifically regulating the ultrasonic frequency (hertz) emitted by such repellents. The Mayor suggested that Town staff and the Occoquan Police Department speak with the resident who installed the device to address the concerns. Town Manager Linn advised that Deputy Chief Forman suggested the issue could potentially be evaluated under the criminal assault statutes. Town Manager Linn further advised that the resident could mitigate the impacts by adjusting the device so that it is directed toward their own property, rather than toward the sidewalk or street and indicated that he would attempt to speak with the resident.

Councilmember Love noted that on March 10th he gave a tour of Occoquan to Lina Omar, the former Iraqi Ambassador to Bulgaria. Councilmember Love also attended the Sands Anderson client event.

Councilmember Fithian noted that she also attended the Installation of Officers Banquet for the Occoquan Woodbridge Lorton Volunteer Fire Department.

7. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Architectural Review Board Chair Michele White provided an update, noting that the Board met on March 24th and reviewed three applications. The first application was approved with a date restriction, the second was tabled to the April meeting due to insufficient information, and the third application was approved.

Councilmember Perkins, Chair of the Planning Commission, provided a brief update from the March meeting. He noted that the Commission continues to review and discuss the draft Comprehensive Plan 2036 and has decided to begin meetings 30 minutes earlier to allow additional time for this work. Vice Mayor Loges inquired whether the meeting order had been considered, specifically having the Architectural Review Board meet first. Councilmember Perkins responded that they did consider changing but indicated that the current schedule was the Commission's preferred schedule.

Mayor Porta inquired of the Chair and Town staff regarding the fees associated with signage and Architectural Review Board applications. Assistant Town Manager Lubash explained that sign permit fees are calculated based on square footage, while the Architectural Review Board application carries a flat fee of \$75.00 for any application. The Mayor then asked whether these fees had been adjusted. Town Manager Linn responded that he believed there was a change when Council adjusted the zoning fees but that he did not believe there was a significant change during his tenure but would have staff review the matter to confirm.

Mayor Porta then discussed the Riverwalk Expansion Special Committee (RESC) meeting held on March 25th. He emphasized that these sessions are public meetings, not public hearings, and noted that the next meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2026.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

d. Administrative Report

Mayor Porta noted that the administrative report referenced the RESC as a public hearing and clarified that it should be identified as a public meeting. He also commended Public Works Associate James Auville for his work at the Mill House Museum.

The Mayor then requested clarification regarding the trespass incidents listed in the Public Safety Report. Town Manager Linn explained that some incidents involve individuals entering private property posted with “No Trespassing” signs, while others stem from businesses requesting that unruly patrons be formally trespassed or banned.

Vice Mayor Loges reported ongoing water issues on Edgehill Drive, specifically water continues to surface through the asphalt. Town Manager Linn stated that staff would notify VDOT. She also inquired about the property at 116 Washington Street and a potential variance request. Town Engineer Reese advised that the applicant revised the project by reducing the depth of the proposed townhouses, thereby eliminating the need for a variance for the driveways.

Vice Mayor Loges also inquired about the investment pool.

e. Town Treasurer’s Report

Vice Mayor Loges noted that vehicle license revenues are nearly on target, falling just \$20 short of the budgeted amount.

Vice Mayor Loges next inquired whether the Mill Street lease remained favorable to the Town. Town Manager Linn responded that the meals tax generated by the establishment exceeds the rental income, making the arrangement beneficial.

The Vice Mayor also asked about the investment pool, noting a decline. Town Treasurer Shaw explained that there have been no new withdrawals in 2026 but there had been two in 2025 which could indicate the reduction for the prior year comparison. The Vice Mayor also asked about the unearned Craft Show revenue. Town Treasurer Shaw explained the unearned Craft Show revenue, which is currently reported as zero, would only be related to craft show funds received for the Craft Show in the next fiscal year and that goes along with the direction from the external auditors.

Councilmember Love asked whether the rent under the Mill Street lease had been increased. Town Manager Linn confirmed that the lease includes a 1.5% increase each year and that increase has been included. He also inquired about businesses that are significantly delinquent on their BPOL taxes. Town Treasurer Shaw indicated that staff is working to write off accounts for businesses no longer in operation, while continuing collection efforts against the one business that remains active.

Vice Mayor Loges then asked about transient occupancy tax revenues. Town Treasurer Shaw and Town Manager Linn explained that VRBO is also known as HomeAway and have previously been remitting payments timely but has not done so recently. In contrast, Airbnb continues to remit payments monthly, broken down by individual property; however, those revenues have declined by approximately 11.5% this year. Town Manager Linn added that, unlike Airbnb, VRBO/HomeAway has not responded to the Town’s inquiries, and the Town will be issuing a Treasurer’s summons and would likely be doing property audits.

f. Town Attorney’s Report

Town Attorney Crim noted that House Bill 655 now allows for manufactured homes in all zoning districts. Mayor Porta noted he recommended against addressing this bill at the Town level.

Mayor Porta then asked about the Town Prosecutor position and if it had been filled. Town Manager Linn went over the qualifications and experiences of the new prosecutor and mentioned that she will introduce herself at the next Town Council meeting. Councilmember Fithian asked for her name and Town Manager Linn said it was Lisa Caruso.

Mayor Porta asked about the collective bargaining bill in the Virginia State Legislature. Town Attorney Crim gave a brief description of how it currently looks and possible complications.

At this point, Mayor Porta bid farewell to Town Attorney Crim and Town Engineer Reese.

The Mayor also thanked Sarah of Visit Occoquan and Events Director Hassett on their event and getting the word out about the Peeps week event.

9. Regular Business

a. Coalition Against Bigger Trucks Letter

Mayor Porta requested unanimous consent to add the item to the agenda, which was granted. A letter drafted by the Coalition Against Bigger Trucks was distributed to members of the Town Council. Town Manager Linn stated that he would transmit the letter if directed by Council. Mayor Porta noted that Virginia's representatives are already opposed to the measure.

Councilmember Fithian moved to authorize Town Manager Linn to send the letter. Councilmember Perkins expressed agreement with Mayor Porta's position. Councilmember Love stated that he believes the Town should refrain from engaging in national or federal matters and would prefer to hear additional perspectives before supporting such action. He also cautioned against "opening a can of worms."

No one seconded the motion and it failed to carry.

b. Request to Approve Lease Extension for 200 Mill Street

Councilmember Love moved to approve the request to exercise the Optional 5-year lease extension on the 200 Mill Street Lease with the Occoquan Beer Garden, LLC. Councilmember Perkins seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Budget Work Session #5 (CIP Fund) Discussion

Town Manager Linn provided an overview of items already incorporated into the budget, noting that event revenue serves as the primary funding source for the Capital Improvement Program (CIP), aside from grant funding. During discussion of current FY26 CIP projects, Mayor Porta asked about restriping McKenzie Drive. Town Manager Linn advised that a project is planned for this late April early May to address the faded pavement markings on that street.

Town Manager Linn continued the status of the FY2026 CIP, explaining that the EPA grant remains under review and that the associated work will not be completed by June 30th. Councilmember Perkins inquired about the Riverwalk staining project, and Town Manager Linn clarified that the budgeted amount covers materials only and does not include labor costs that are provided by town staff. He also noted that the event mobile sound system will not require expenditure due to a charitable donation last year.

Turning to the FY2027 CIP, Town Manager Linn outlined planned projects over the next five years, including improvements to the Mill Street Museum, Old Visitor Center, Police Annex, Town Hall, and the River Mill Park bathhouse.

Mayor Porta asked whether the staff laptop replacement project should be removed from the CIP budget. Town Manager Linn responded that auditors have supported its inclusion in the CIP due to the cost and lifecycle of the equipment, and Vice Mayor Loges agreed with that assessment.

Vice Mayor Loges then asked about the costs associated with license plate readers. Town Manager Linn explained that the primary expenses included in the CIP relate to software. The Vice Mayor viewed the technology as a potential staffing support tool that could enhance fair and consistent parking enforcement. Deputy Chief Forman added that the department wants to ensure the system is effective before committing additional funds. Mayor Porta suggested including the item in the FY2027 budget to allow flexibility should the technology prove viable earlier than FY2028.

Town Manager Linn also noted that \$130,000 has been allocated for the Riverwalk project anticipating additional funding will not be available until FY2028.

Town Manager Linn advised that the Town plans to utilize a snowblower and rented equipment for snow removal in lieu of entering into a snow removal contract for FY2027. Vice Mayor Loges expressed concern about potential impacts on brick sidewalks; however, Town Manager Linn noted that snowblowers have been used on brick surfaces in prior years without damage or adverse effects.

Town Manager Linn advised that the EPA grant final scope of work will include \$1,125,031.00 for Stormwater infrastructure improvements including abandoning the Center Lane pipe, adding access boxes, using ground penetrating radar, and reinforcing the current pipes.

Town Manager Linn further advised that the CIP included five thousand for Streetscape including, lights, ornaments and bows or holiday décor.

Town Manager Linn noted that the vehicles and equipment budget will be allocated toward a public works vehicle, public safety vehicle maintenance, fire suppression equipment, Axon materials, and firearm system upgrade.

Mayor Porta asked whether the public works vehicle would be a skid steer or another type of small equipment. Town Manager Linn clarified that the purchase is intended for a smaller pickup truck, which will be more space and fuel-efficient for daily operations, while the existing truck will be retained and utilized as a snowplow and tow vehicle.

Councilmember Fithian requested an update on the Ellicott Street sidewalk project. Town Manager Linn relayed the most recent information received from the County, noting that VDOT and Dominion are coordinating on the project. However, the current timeline indicates that construction is not expected to begin until January 2028.

Lastly, Town Manager Linn outlined the funding sources for the CIP identifying net revenue, General Fund surplus, event revenues, and grants. Mayor Porta asked whether the \$1.5 million for the Riverwalk was reflected in the presentation, and Town Manager Linn confirmed that it was included to account for both the required match and potential grant funding.

Councilmember Fithian commended the Town Manager for his success in identifying and securing grants. Mayor Porta noted that the only change recommended by Council was to move the license plate reader project forward to the current fiscal year.

b. Mill Street Pocket Park Mural Selection

Assistant Town Manager Lubash provided a brief overview of the Mill Street Pocket Park project, noting that the jurors dedicated a substantial amount of time to reviewing the submissions. Vice Mayor Loges asked whether any jurors were present in the room, to which Assistant Town Manager Lubash responded that neither jurors nor artists were in attendance.

Mayor Porta reported that he had asked each Councilmember to identify their top two choices. Designs A and B were tied for the top selection, while Alternative E ranked as the second choice for three Councilmembers. Councilmember Fithian requested the jurors' remarks for the top five submissions, and Assistant Town Manager Lubash read those comments into the record.

Councilmembers discussed designs A, B, and Alternative E, outlining their preferences and the reasons each design was appealing. Following discussion, Vice Mayor Loges moved to choose mural design B as the winner. Councilmember Perkins seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Mayor Porta asked for the name of winner and Assistant Town Manager replied that it was Tyler Kauffman. The Mayor also asked if Rich Moore had submitted a design; Assistant Town Manager noted his was selection A. Town Manager Linn asked for the order from the Jurors for the five works. Assistant Town Manager Lubash replied that submission B came in fifth; Submission D and C both tied for third place. Submission D was designed by Briana Camp, Bahar Kazi, Chris Vitello, and Caroline Harding; Submission C was designed by Julia Glatfelter. Submission E was designed by Emely Ramos who had the highest score from the jurors. Councilmember Fithian asked if the jurors saw the alternative selection. Assistant Town Manager Lubash noted that the alternative design had been sent in after the jurors had made their determination and was based on the artist's trip to the Town and her noticing the variety of birds on the waterways.

Mayor Porta noted that juror Darryl Hawkins had expressed concerns to him regarding the evaluation criteria and communication process. Councilmember Perkins emphasized that the Town's response is important and suggested reaching out to the top five finalists to maintain their contact information for potential future opportunities. Mayor Porta then opened discussion on how best to engage with the artists, and Councilmember Perkins proposed offering alternative locations in Town for their designs.

Councilmember Perkins also referenced the Town's public arts program, to which Town Manager Linn noted that no funding has been allocated for it in the FY2027 budget. Councilmember Perkins added that the Planning Commission has expressed support for continued funding of the program. Mayor Porta asked whether Council was amenable to directing staff to contact the other four finalists to explore potential locations and funding opportunities for their artwork.

11. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Megan Lubash", written over a horizontal line.

Megan Lubash, Town Clerk