



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125

Tuesday, May, 5 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; 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 and Town Engineer Bruce Reese were attending remotely.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CITIZENS' TIME

Two residents spoke during Citizens' Time.

Rick F., a resident of Washington Street, discussed his previous experience in education, management, and auditing. He commended the Town for presenting a balanced budget, noting that it reflected sound judgment and thoughtful tradeoffs. He recommended that the Town work with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation's VoiCeS program to promote greater understanding of and stewardship for the local watershed. He also suggested replacing the railroad ties at the intersection of Washington Street and Commerce Street in the next fiscal budget with decorative stone and ornamental landscaping, noting that the area serves as a prominent gateway into the Town and could be enhanced to promote civic pride and visual appeal.

Mary Lorraine C., a resident of Myrtle Place, stated that she had lived in Occoquan for 26 years and expressed disappointment regarding the Mosque. She voiced opposition to the awning signage containing religious mantras and asserted that the use of fire hydrant yellow on the handrails was inconsistent with Architectural Review Board guidelines. She further stated that, in her opinion, the wording on the sign was offensive to her Christian faith and commented that awnings should not function as billboards.

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

Mayor Porta noted that Councilmember Perkins was supportive of the beautification concept for the intersection of Washington Street and Commerce Street proposed by resident Rick F. The Mayor asked Town Manager Linn whether the area was owned by the Town, to which the Town Manager responded in the affirmative. Mayor Porta then directed Town staff to further evaluate the proposed project for

future consideration.

Turning to the comments raised by Mary Lorraine C., Mayor Porta noted that there was an outstanding Notice of Violation related to the sign on the Mosque property. He further stated that both he and the Town Manager were surprised by the signage placed on the awning, as only the awning itself had previously been approved by the Architectural Review Board.

Town Manager Linn explained that the Mosque had applied for a sign permit after the signage had been installed and they received notice of the violation. He further explained that the application was denied because the signage exceeded the allowable square footage under the Town Code. Mayor Porta emphasized that the wording displayed on the sign constituted protected speech under the First Amendment and, therefore, could not serve as a basis for denying a sign permit.

Mary Lorraine C. then inquired about the yellow handrailing at the property. Town Manager Linn responded that until the ARB Meeting they had no prior complaints regarding the railing color and noted that the Town generally operates on a complaint-based enforcement system. Following her complaint raised at the ARB on the matter, Town Manager Linn investigated and found that the Mosque had not received a Certificate of Appropriateness for the railing color change and that the property owner had been notified and indicated an intention to return the railing color to black.

Mary Lorraine C. continued to express concern regarding the religious messaging displayed on the sign. She also asked about limitations on the number of times an entity's name may appear on signage, stating that she understood the limit to be six occurrences. Mayor Porta directed Town staff to investigate the matter further.

4. 2027 BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Porta opened the public hearing at 7:19 PM.

Mayor Porta invited the public to speak. No one spoke at the public hearing.

Councilmember Perkins moved to close the public hearing at 7:20 PM. Councilmember Love seconded. Motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

Vice Mayor Loges asked to take the request to adopt Police Week 2026 Proclamation out of the consent agenda to which all Town Councilmembers and the Mayor unanimously agreed.

a. Request to Accept the April 21st, 2026 Minutes

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

b. Request to Adopt Police Week 2026 Proclamation

After the item was removed from the Consent Agenda, Vice Mayor Loges raised the Police Week 2026 Proclamation and noted that May 4th marked Police Memorial Day and paid tribute to the law enforcement officers who lost their lives during the previous year. She also expressed her appreciation for the members of the Occoquan Police Department, stating that she was deeply grateful for their hard work and service to the community.

Mayor Porta likewise expressed his appreciation for the Occoquan Police Department, commending the officers' strong sense of duty and professionalism. He noted his confidence in both their conduct and their ability to effectively de-escalate difficult situations.

Vice Mayor Loges then moved to approve the request to adopt the Police Week 2026 proclamation. Councilmember Love seconded. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

6. ADVANCED ITEMS

The Mayor requested unanimous consent to move the Visit Occoquan Quarterly Report item and the Request to Waive Special Events Fee up on the agenda, to which all councilmembers unanimously agreed.

6a. Visit Occoquan Quarterly Report

Councilmember Fithian commended the report and inquired whether a spike in Instagram engagement during late January was related to a snow event. Sarah Burzio confirmed that one of the engagement peaks was associated with the snow; however, upon further review, she noted that the larger spike was attributable to exposure generated by an outside influencer. Ms. Burzio also referenced her participation in a podcast that promoted events occurring within the Town.

Ms. Burzio further explained that Visit Occoquan would be withdrawing from participation in the Virginia Main Street Program, noting that, following the departure of the former Deputy Town Manager, she could no longer meet the operational obligations required to remain in the program. Mayor Porta commented that the decision was also influenced by financial obligations that neither the Town nor Visit Occoquan could reasonably sustain.

The Mayor then asked whether the Town's level of involvement in the Virginia Main Street Program affected eligibility for the public art grant. Ms. Burzio responded that the Town had transitioned from the "Mobilizing" phase to the "Exploring" phase within the program structure.

7a. Request to Waive Special Events Fee for Visit Occoquan

Mayor Porta noted that this request related to Visit Occoquan's annual fundraising event and that the organization was seeking use of Mamie Davis Park along with a waiver of the associated fee. Town Manager Linn clarified that Town-based nonprofits are not typically charged a facility use fee; however, because the event would involve closure of the park, alcohol service, and ticket sales, a Special Event Permit and the associated \$25 application fee would ordinarily be required. Mayor Porta stated that the Council appeared comfortable waiving the fee. Town Manager Linn also noted that occupancy limitations would need to be evaluated.

Sarah Burzio described the proposed event, explaining that it would include a silent auction, food and beverage tastings, and a bar serving alcoholic beverages. Councilmember Perkins stated that the anticipated attendance needed to be determined in order to assess whether Mamie Davis Park could safely accommodate the event. He also suggested incorporating a portion of the Riverwalk into the event layout.

Mayor Porta asked whether additional police presence would be required. Town Manager Linn responded that the event would necessitate increased police staffing. Ms. Burzio added that the organization's ABC license requirements included controlled and monitored entrances and

exits. Councilmember Love raised additional concerns regarding occupancy calculations for the usable space within Mamie Davis Park.

Mayor Porta directed Town Manager Linn to coordinate with the Town Engineer to determine a safe occupancy limit for the park. Town Manager Linn further noted that he wished to consult with the Town Attorney regarding potential liability considerations associated with utilizing portions of the Riverwalk for the event.

Councilmember Love moved to approve the request from Visit Occoquan, Inc. to hold a fundraising event at Mamie Davis Park on October 17, 2026, or its designated rain date, and to authorize: (i) a waiver of the Special Event application fee; and (ii) an increase in event capacity to up to 150 attendees, subject to compliance with all applicable Town policies, permit requirements, and public safety conditions imposed by Town staff. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Perkins.

Vice Mayor Loges asked whether the wording of the motion would provide Town Manager Linn with the authority to make any necessary determinations following consultation with the Town Attorney and Town Engineer. Mayor Porta confirmed that the language of the motion would allow for such determinations.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

7. MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Porta reported the following:

- On April 8th, he attended the Riverwalk Expansion Special Committee meeting.
- On April 10th, he attended the Leadership Prince William annual Evening of Excellence.
- On April 11th, he participated in Shad Run event.
- On April 13th, gave a tour to a group from Sacramento, CA ran by Sports Leisure Tourism
- On April 15th, meeting with Town Engineer and Town Manager Linn on Riverwalk Expansion issues.
- On April 17th, he and Town Maranger Linn met with Prince William County transportation officials about the Ellicott Street sidewalk project.
- On April 19th, he sponsored and attended the Zero Abuse Project dinner
- On April 22nd, he was a celebrity waiter at the Lake Ridge Rotary annual fundraiser luncheon.
- On April 24th, he gave a tour to Fairfax members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute
- On April 24th, he attended the celebration of life of Karen Smith
- On April 25th, he attended the grand opening for Cozy Calico Books.
- On April 27th, he attended the Arbor Day planting event at River Mill Park and he thanked council member Perkins for his work at the event.

Mayor Porta also talked to the members of the ARC of Prince William about adding a bench in honor of Karen Smith on the property or sidewalk at Spinaweb. Vice Mayor Loges noted that there are other benches that are not the recycled ones and to look into possibly using a similar one.

8. COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Councilmember Fithian noted that she attended the grand opening of the Cozy Calico Bookstore on April 25th and was impressed by the large turnout of attendees and authors. She remarked that it was

likely the largest grand opening she could recall and expressed appreciation for the variety of activities provided for children. Councilmember Fithian and Mayor Porta both commented that it may have been the largest ribbon-cutting event they had witnessed in the past ten years.

9. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Perkins, Chair of the Planning Commission, provided a brief update from the Commission's April meeting. He noted that the Commission continues to review and discuss the draft Comprehensive Plan 2036. Councilmember Perkins stated that beginning meetings 30 minutes earlier has allowed the Commission to conduct a more in-depth review of the document. He also noted that the draft Comprehensive Plan must be reviewed by the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and the Virginia Department of Transportation before it is forwarded to the Town Council for consideration.

Architectural Review Board liaison Councilmember Daubresse provided an update on the Board's recent activities. He noted that the Board experienced a citizen comment period similar to that of the current Town Council meeting. Following the citizen comments, the Board added the matter to the agenda for discussion and ultimately decided to draft a response letter to the citizen. He further noted that the Board reviewed two applications during its April meeting, approving one application and denying the other.

Vice Mayor Loges inquired about the status of the letter. Town Manager Linn responded that he had been tasked with preparing the response and noted that he had reviewed the draft before forwarding it to Town Attorney Crim for legal review.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

a. Administrative Report

Town Manager Linn presented a written report and answered questions from the Council.

Mayor Porta asked whether the Union Street Crosswalk Project was intended to improve sidewalk access in order to meet ADA requirements, to which Town Manager Linn responded in the affirmative.

Vice Mayor Loges inquired about a balloon payment reportedly coming due for the Mill at Occoquan project. Councilmember Daubresse confirmed that a payment was due in April and stated that he would look further into the matter. The Vice Mayor also asked whether the numerous vehicles parked at 116 Washington Street indicated that the property would be used as an interim parking lot. Property owner Lance H., who was present in the audience, came forward to speak and explained that the vehicles were only temporarily parked there while repairs were being completed.

Councilmember Daubresse asked for an update on the status of the stormwater grant. Town Manager Linn responded that there had been no substantive change, noting that the grant funding had been awarded to the Town, but several administrative and bureaucratic steps remained before execution could occur. Councilmember Daubresse then asked whether the Town had a plan in place once funding was secured. Town Manager Linn confirmed that the Town had both a project plan and an implementation timeline prepared.

Councilmember Fithian asked about the status of the new unmanned aircraft system (UAS) that had been expected to arrive during the first quarter of the year. Town Manager Linn explained that

administrative delays on the vendor fulfillment side had slowed delivery, but he anticipated the drone would arrive within the coming days.

b. Town Treasurer's Report

Mayor Porta noted that most accounts were at the seventy-five percent mark.

Town Treasurer Shaw noted that Square had doubled 12k transactions into Quickbooks and that she had started tickets to get the problem resolved.

Mayor Porta asked for an update regarding the restaurant group in Town and whether they had entered into a payment plan with the Town. Town Treasurer Shaw stated that a letter had been sent offering the opportunity to establish a payment plan; however, no response had been received. Vice Mayor Loges noted that members of the restaurant group had reached out to her directly, but Town Treasurer Shaw explained that the continued lack of communication with both the Treasurer's Office and the Town Manager, coupled with ongoing delinquencies, had prompted the Town to pursue legal action.

Vice Mayor Loges recommended that the Town consider creating weekly backups of its QuickBooks Online financial records onto an external hard drive. Town Treasurer Shaw stated that the recommendation would be taken under advisement.

Vice Mayor Loges also requested an update regarding VRBO/HomeAway and Airbnb. Town Treasurer Shaw reported that the Town had not yet received a response from VRBO/HomeAway but had received communication from Airbnb. Vice Mayor Loges asked whether the Town could subpoena VRBO/HomeAway for information. Town Attorney Crim responded that he would research the issue further, though he was not optimistic that such efforts would produce a fruitful result.

Mayor Porta further noted his intention to close the Burke & Herbert bank account associated with the Occoquan Historical Society, as payroll operations had been transitioned to Square.

c. Town Attorney's Report

Town Attorney Crim updated the Town Council on certain Virginia House Bills. Mayor Porta wanted to know about the potential impact of Delegate Sewell's paid family and medical leave legislation, which Town Attorney Crim noted he would have to get back to the Mayor on.

Town Attorney Crim noted that the cannabis bill and collective bargaining bill has an action deadline of May 23rd. He also noted there was a FOIA bill that passed that does not allow you to add to an agenda after the agenda is published unless an item is time sensitive. Mayor Porta asked a hypothetical about adding a time sensitive matter to the agenda and possible enforcement and remedies for violations.

Councilmember Fithian asked about the gift to the Town in the Town Attorney's report. Town Manager Linn noted that it was from a resident to purchase a new motor for the police boat.

Mayor Porta requested unanimous consent to add to the agenda a discussion item regarding an email sent today to the Mayor and Council from Clerk of the Circuit Court Jacqueline Smith; there

was no objection. The Mayor characterized the matter as involving a disagreement between the Clerk's Office and the Chief Judge of the Prince William County Circuit Court regarding renovations sought by the judges that would result in the displacement of some of the Clerk's staff. Mayor Porta stated that he was reluctant for the town to take a position in a dispute between the Clerk's office and the judges. Councilmembers Fithian, Perkins, Love, and Daubresse each expressed agreement with taking no action.

11. Regular Business

a. Request to Approve Contract to Build Deck Behind Mill House Museum

Town Manager Linn explained that, following Council direction to explore an event space capable of accommodating approximately 50–75 people, staff initially received an estimate of approximately \$400,000 for a larger commercial-grade deck. Staff subsequently sought an alternative estimate from a commercial deck contractor for a smaller commercial-grade, ADA-compliant deck that included engineering services, with an estimated cost of approximately \$160,000.

Mayor Porta stated that the Town would continue pursuing the broader Riverwalk project, but noted that the proposed deck would provide a meaningful public amenity while long-term Riverwalk grant funding remained uncertain. Town Manager Linn added that the design would include a level entrance and a gate to limit access when necessary.

Councilmember Perkins asked for clarification regarding the higher estimate previously provided by Town Engineer Reese. Town Manager Linn explained that the earlier estimate contemplated a larger deck with construction extending into the water and included studies, materials, and associated infrastructure costs. Councilmember Daubresse stated that he would also like to obtain a second estimate.

The Council then engaged in a broader discussion regarding the proposed deck, including its potential use as an event venue, public amenity, or future Riverwalk connection. Councilmember Perkins asked about a possible connection to the Mill House Museum. Town Manager Linn noted that Prince William Home Improvement had estimated approximately \$10,000 to install a door, though the Occoquan Historical Society preferred either no door or one that would be historically appropriate at a later date.

Councilmember Perkins also noted that, if the space were to be used for events and rentals, additional electrical outlets should be installed throughout the deck area. Town Manager Linn responded that electrical upgrades to the Mill House Museum would likely be necessary, along with additional outlets and related infrastructure on the deck itself.

Mayor Porta asked whether the Council envisioned the deck primarily as an event space or as a general public amenity. Vice Mayor Loges raised security concerns regarding the secluded rear portion of the deck, while Mayor Porta indicated he viewed the space as primarily event-oriented. Councilmembers Perkins, Love, and Daubresse expressed support for maintaining public access similar to River Mill Park and Mamie Davis Park, while allowing the space to be reserved and closed during private events. Additional concerns were raised regarding railing safety, lighting, and security.

Councilmember Fithian asked whether the project would include protections against cost overruns. Town Manager Linn responded that the proposal was based on a fixed-price contract. She also questioned whether the expenditure would impact Riverwalk funding reserves. Mayor Porta noted that the Town maintained approximately \$700,000 in reserves and stated that sufficient funding

would remain available to support future grant-based Riverwalk efforts. Vice Mayor Loges requested additional pricing information regarding electrical work from the Town's contractors.

Mayor Porta then invited comments from the two members of the public in attendance. Lance H. offered several observations and recommendations, which the Mayor and Councilmembers took under consideration.

12. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Fish Advisory Discussion

Vice Mayor Loges noted a new advisory issued by the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) recommending against consuming fish from the Occoquan Reservoir due to PFOS "forever chemicals," which bioaccumulate in predator fish such as largemouth bass. She also noted that largemouth bass in portions of the Potomac River are already subject to advisories related to PCBs. Vice Mayor Loges requested that staff investigate the matter further and consider submitting FOIA requests to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and VDH to better understand what testing was conducted, where samples were taken, and how the testing was performed.

Vice Mayor Loges stated that her concerns centered on risk management, public perception, and the overall health of the river. She also suggested that future fishing events in Town be conducted on a catch-and-release basis. Town Manager Linn noted that current advisories essentially place consumption at an individual's own risk and observed that at least one prior event involving invasive species had operated under a catch-and-kill framework.

Vice Mayor Loges asked Town Attorney Crim whether the Town had any obligation to post signage regarding the advisory. Town Attorney Crim responded that he was not aware of any legal requirement and would research the matter further.

Councilmember Perkins expressed support for additional testing, noting that if PFOS contamination existed within the reservoir, it could also affect portions of the Occoquan River adjacent to the Town. He emphasized the importance of providing accurate information to the public and expressed concern about maintaining public confidence in both the safety of the drinking water supply and recreational use of the river. Mayor Porta agreed that any public messaging on the issue should be handled carefully, noting that fishing activity in Town is primarily recreational in nature.

13. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:39 p.m.



Megan Lubash, Town Clerk