



OCCOQUAN TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Town Hall - 314 Mill Street, Occoquan, VA 22125

Tuesday, June, 16 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; Tammy Hassett, Events Director; Martin Crim, Town Attorney

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Porta called the meeting to order at 7:03 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.

Michele W., a business owner and resident of Ellicott Street, addressed the Council regarding the Swords, Brooms, and Magical Beasts event scheduled for Sunday, August 9. She presented two requests on behalf of the event organizers. First, she requested permission to place a tent on the Riverwalk behind Mamie Davis Park to host a fantasy-themed tea party featuring teas and treats from Occoquan businesses. Second, she requested permission to display a temporary promotional banner for the event at the Town's banner location at the intersection of Commerce Street and Washington Street.

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

Mayor Porta asked Town Manager Linn whether the proposed tent would require a permit from Prince William County. Town Manager Linn responded that, based on the small size of the tent, a County permit would not be required. He further noted that Visit Occoquan had previously submitted a similar request and that the Town had been supportive of allowing the use of the Riverwalk for such activities. Mayor Porta indicated his support for allowing the use of the Riverwalk for a small tent associated with the event.

The discussion then turned to the request to display a promotional banner at the intersection of Commerce Street and Washington Street. Mayor Porta stated that this presented a more difficult issue because the Town's banner location is currently reserved for Town-sponsored events only. He expressed concern that opening the banner location to private businesses or organizations could create content and policy issues. Vice Mayor Loges agreed that the Town should not permit the use of the town locations for non-town sponsored events. Councilmember Love noted that a promotional banner

could potentially be displayed on private property if the event organizers obtained permission from the property owner.

Town Manager Linn referenced a recent meeting with the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Town staff, and the adjacent property owner regarding the Commerce Street and Washington Street right-of-way location. He indicated that the exact right-of-way and the private property boundary were not exact but that the area including the tree and the property between the sidewalk and the front porch were in VDOT right-of-way.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Request to Accept the May 19th, 2026 Minutes

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 May 15th, he served as emcee for the first Trivia Night of the season.
- On May 16th, he participated in the Occoquan River Maritime Association Blessing of the Fleet as a spotter boat.
- On May 23rd, he joined Councilmember Love in providing a tour of Occoquan for retired Rear Admiral Sam Cox, director of Naval History and Heritage Command and curator of the Navy.
- On June 3rd, he and Town Manager Linn attended the Town Association of Northern Virginia meeting in Haymarket.
- On June 6th, he conducted kayaking tours during RiverFest
- On June 7th, he hosted the Duck Splash at RiverFest.
- On June 16th, he attended the ribbon cutting for Drew's Men's Clothing Store with Councilmember Love, Town Manager Linn, Events Director Hassett, and Assistant Town Manager Lubash.

Mayor Porta also announced that a new antique bookstore, Buzz Books, will be opening at 406 Mill Street.

He further noted that the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Post in Occoquan will celebrate its 80th anniversary on June 27th. In recognition of the occasion, the Mayor expressed his desire to partner with the Occoquan Historical Society to present the Post with a commemorative plaque honoring the World War I veterans from Occoquan, Virginia.

6. COUNCILMEMBER REPORTS

Councilmember Perkins noted that he was a volunteer for RiverFest on Sunday June 7th.

Councilmember Love noted that he participated in the Tour of Occoquan for Read Admiral Cox on May 23rd. He was the sole elected official on the Memorial Day Observance at Quantico National Cemetery on May 25th. He volunteered on June 7th at RiverFest and participated in the ribbon cutting at Drew's Men's Clothing on June 16th.

Councilmember Fithian noted that she and her granddaughter volunteered at Riverfest at both the green stop and conservation alley. She gave kudos to Events Director Hassett and Events Coordinator Bastone.

7. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Architectural Review Board Chair Michele White reported that the Board met on May 26th and received training on the scope and responsibilities of the Architectural Review Board. She noted that three Board members were absent and expressed that she had hoped all members would have been present for the training. Chair White also stated that, while she understood the reason, she was disappointed that the Board could not discuss matters that had previously come before it for practical examples. Mayor Porta reminded Chair White that the Board may convene in closed session with the Town Attorney to discuss appropriate legal matters and encouraged the Board to utilize Town staff for assistance.

Chair White reported that the Board considered five applications during its meeting. Four applications were approved, and one application was postponed.

Chair White requested guidance regarding the use of plastic and vinyl flower garlands on the exterior of buildings. Mayor Porta stated that he did not believe the Architectural Review Board should be reviewing decorative flowers or garlands placed on the exterior of buildings. Town Engineer Reese responded that, under the current Town Code, exterior alterations require a Certificate of Appropriateness. He further explained that while seasonal garlands over a doorway represent a minor decorative element, the same code would also apply to more substantial alterations, such as covering the entire front façade of a building with artificial flowers. He noted that the Architectural Review Board has the discretion to apply reasonable judgment when evaluating exterior changes within the Historic District and to distinguish between minor decorative displays and more significant alterations.

Councilmember Perkins mentioned that the City of Alexandria classifies floral arrangements as temporary decoration. If it is kept up and becomes an eyesore, then it becomes a building code issue.

Mayor Porta directed Town staff to advise residents of the Historic District that a Certificate of Appropriateness is not required for the installation of decorative garlands and requested that staff develop an administrative solution to address the issue. Town Manager Linn and Town Engineer Reese advised that staff is already preparing a zoning text amendment to clarify the applicable requirements in the Town Code.

Chair Perkins, noted that there was to be training for the Planning Commission coming up with the Town Attorney. Town Attorney Crim noted that Assistant Town Attorney Gallehr was going to give the presentation and training. Chair Perkins also noted that they intend to provide the 2036 Comprehensive Plan to Town Council at the July 7th, 2026 meeting.

Mayor Porta asked Planning Commission Chair Perkins whether there were any areas within the Town zoned for industrial use, noting that a utility company had recently made an inquiry. Chair Perkins responded that there are currently no properties within the Town that are zoned for industrial use or designated for future industrial zoning.

8. ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

a. Administrative Report

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

Mayor Porta asked whether the right-of-way issues at the intersection of Commerce Street and Washington Street could affect the proposed stone gateway project. Town Manager Linn responded that construction of the stone gateway is currently planned for Fiscal Year 2028 and that the project will undergo further planning, including cost estimates and coordination with VDOT to address any right-of-way issues, in anticipation of the FY2028 Budget and construction.

The Mayor also inquired about the Town's unmanned aircraft system. Town Manager Linn reported that the drone has been purchased and was successfully utilized during RiverFest. In response to a question about interagency cooperation, Town Manager Linn noted that the Town currently has a memorandum of understanding with George Mason University Police and has previously partnered with Prince William County on unmanned aircraft operations.

Mayor Porta asked about the zoning notices of violation reflected in the May report that were listed as unfounded. Town Manager Linn explained that those matters had been investigated and were determined to be unfounded but no actual notices of violations had been sent out or issued.

The Mayor also asked about the Public Safety Division's marine patrol operations. In response, Town Manager Linn stated that patrols are generally not conducted on weekdays, except on holidays, and are typically conducted on weekends when weather conditions are favorable.

Lastly, Mayor Porta noted an apparent inconsistency in the volunteer hours reported, observing that one section reflected totals through May while another section only reflected totals through April.

Vice Mayor Loges inquired about the brick repair work on Center Lane and asked why similar repairs were not being performed on Mill Street and other locations. Town Manager Linn responded that the Public Works Department is conducting brick repairs throughout Town. Assistant Town Manager Lubash added that Public Works had temporarily fallen behind on brick maintenance while preparing for RiverFest, but that repair work is ongoing and will continue throughout the week.

Vice Mayor Loges also commented that the trash receptacles at River Mill Park were frequently overflowing and asked whether additional receptacles could be installed. Town Manager Linn advised that grant funding for an additional receptacle, along with budgeted funds for new trash cans, will become available in the new fiscal year.

Referring to a discussion from a previous Town Council meeting, Vice Mayor Loges also inquired about the status of installing storm drain markers or signage indicating that the drains discharge into the Occoquan River.

Councilmember Fithian inquired about the status of the accessible curb ramps at the Union Street crosswalks. Town Manager Linn responded that Prince William County had advised the Town that construction would begin following RiverFest. Town Engineer Reese added that Prince William County had returned two requested revisions to the Ellicott Street sidewalk project. One of the engineering comments recommended revising the plans to incorporate a mountable curb consistent with the Town Code.

Councilmember Love requested an update on the geotechnical survey for the Riverwalk project. Town Engineer Reese reported that the cost estimates had been provided to the Town and were awaiting approval. Town Manager Linn confirmed that the Town had received the estimates and was conducting a detailed review of the proposed scope of work, including the specific locations where testing should be performed. Mayor Porta added that Town Manager Linn was carefully evaluating the study to ensure the testing plan was appropriate. Councilmember Love asked whether the geotechnical investigation would be completed by the end of June. Town Manager Linn responded that completion by the end of July was a more realistic timeline.

Councilmember Perkins expressed concerns regarding the Town's landscaping contractor, noting that landscaping had not been installed in all locations identified in the contract. He also stated that he was underwhelmed by the overall quality of the landscaping and commented that the Town's landscaping efforts over the past three years had been disappointing.

Mayor Porta noted that a resident had voluntarily planted flowers at River Mill Park and in the right-of-way near 202 Commerce Street. Assistant Town Manager Lubash added that the resident had contacted Town Hall to request that the water be turned on to support the plantings and had not requested any compensation for the work.

b. Town Treasurer's Report

Mayor Porta noted that the Meal's Tax is substantially better than previous years. He also noted that the Transient Occupancy Tax Delinquencies were down to zero and asked if the issues with HomeStay and VRBO have been settled. Town Manager Linn reports that the issues with those companies are ongoing. Mayor Porta noted that the budget to actuals are better than expected or nearing the budget.

Vice Mayor Loges noted she had some questions that she would pass along to Treasurer Shaw at a later date.

c. Town Attorney's Report

Town Attorney Crim updated the Town Council on the Cannabis Bill in the Virginia General Assembly. He reported that the governor has come to an understanding with the general assembly to pass this as part of the budget and that the market for cannabis would not open until July 1, 2027. Town Attorney Crim also noted that Occoquan was called out in the new Stephen Spielberg movie, "Disclosure Day".

Mayor Porta revisited the earlier discussion regarding Architectural Review Board Chair White's comments about not being able to discuss specific matters during the Board's training session. He asked whether the Architectural Review Board could convene in closed session to discuss particular matters with the Town Attorney. Town Attorney Crim responded that the Board could do so and explained that, during the training session, he had asked Board members not to discuss specific cases in order to keep the training focused on general legal principles and Board procedures.

Mayor Porta then asked Chair White whether she would like to schedule a closed session for the Architectural Review Board with the Town Attorney. Chair White expressed her appreciation for the opportunity and indicated that she would like to do so.

Mayor Porta next inquired about the discussion in the Town Attorney's report concerning the new

Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) law, which takes effect on July 1, 2027. He asked whether the legislation provides any exemptions for localities below a certain population threshold and whether accessory dwelling units would be permitted by right.

Town Attorney Crim responded that the legislation does not include any population-based exemptions and that accessory dwelling units would be permitted by right under the new law. He recommended that the Town adopt a local ordinance to clearly implement the state requirements and reduce ambiguity by establishing well-defined standards consistent with state law.

9. Regular Business

a. Request to execute Contract with Visit Occoquan

Town Manager Linn explained that the proposed agreement was structured as a six-month contract rather than a full-year agreement. Mayor Porta stated that he appreciated the proposal but expressed concern about limiting the contract to the period of July 1 through December 31, 2026. Town Manager Linn responded that the majority of Visit Occoquan's work is concentrated during the first half of the fiscal year due to preparations for RiverFest, the Fall Arts & Crafts Show, and the Holiday Artisan Market.

Councilmember Fithian moved to authorize the Town Manager to execute the FY 2027 Visit Occoquan contract and scope of work, as presented, in an amount not to exceed \$18,800. Councilmember Perkins seconded the motion.

During discussion, Vice Mayor Loges asked whether the items removed from the scope of work would no longer be performed by Visit Occoquan or would instead be completed as separate projects. Town Manager Linn explained that those tasks would be assumed by Town staff as a cost-saving measure to maintain a balanced budget.

At Mayor Porta's invitation, Sarah Burzio of Visit Occoquan addressed the Council. She explained that the scope of services provided to the Town has steadily expanded over the years and that the proposed pricing more closely reflects market rates rather than the discounted rates Visit Occoquan has historically charged. She also noted that the agreement would remain with Visit Occoquan, not Hitchcock Creative, and that she routinely works under project-based contracts.

Mayor Porta asked about the cost of a 12-month agreement. Town Manager Linn reiterated that the six-month structure aligned with the workload, and would allow staff to evaluate which responsibilities could be absorbed internally. Ms. Burzio advised that a full-year contract would total approximately \$36,000 for the same level but \$27,700, based on the reduced services. Mayor Porta noted that this amount exceeded the FY 2027 budget by approximately \$2,000.

Vice Mayor Loges expressed a preference for a 12-month or milestone-based agreement rather than a six-month contract. After discussion, Mayor Porta conducted a straw poll, and a majority of the Council indicated support for a 12-month agreement. Town Manager Linn noted that delaying action would postpone execution because there would be no Council meeting before the current contract expired. Vice Mayor Loges suggested amending the pending motion.

Councilmember Fithian amended her motion to authorize the Town Manager to execute a 12-month FY 2027 Visit Occoquan contract and scope of work in an amount not to exceed \$27,700. Councilmember Perkins seconded the amended motion. The amended motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

b. Request to Name the 19th Century Army Corps of Engineering Dike in the Occoquan River

Mayor Porta discussed the history of the USS Stepping Stones and the suggestion of "Stepping Stone Isle." He also indicated that he liked Middle Mud as a possible name.

Councilmember Perkins moved to adopt resolution-2026-08 to name the 19th century dike "Mariner's Mishap."

Vice Mayor Loges discussed adopting "Otter Point" in recognition of otters returning the Occoquan.

Councilmember Perkins withdrew his motion and Councilmember Fithian moved to adopt resolution-2026-08 to name the 19th century dike "Stepping Stones Isle," as submitted by Councilmember Love, for a term of one year beginning on July 1, 2026 and expiring on June 30, 2027. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Perkins. The motion passed by unanimous voice vote.

10. DISCUSSION ITEMS**a. FY2027 Adopted Budget Draft Discussion**

Mayor Porta complimented the presentation, stating that it was well done. Town Manager Linn noted that he had incorporated additional graphics and explanatory descriptions to make the budget presentation clearer and easier to understand.

b. Discussion on Naming the Pocket Park

Mayor Porta moved this item forward on the agenda for consideration.

Vice Mayor Loges moved to officially designate the park located at 172 Mill Street as "The Mural Garden." She further moved that the designation become effective immediately upon adoption and that Town staff be authorized to take all actions necessary to implement the designation, including installing signage and updating Town documents, maps, and informational materials to reflect the official name. Councilmember Love seconded the motion.

During discussion, Councilmember Perkins commented that he found the name to be uninspiring and stated that he would have preferred a more distinctive name.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

c. Discussion on RiverFest 2026

Mayor Porta commended Events Director Hassett and staff on the success of RiverFest. Events Director Hassett thanked the Town Council for its support and noted that the financial figures included in the report were preliminary, as several expenses had not yet been finalized.

Councilmember Fithian asked about vendor booth pricing. Events Director Hassett responded that future events would likely include variable pricing for food trucks based on the length of their participation.

Events Director Hassett reported that vendor feedback was mixed, although most vendors indicated they planned to return. She noted concerns regarding load-out logistics and that

several commercial vendors on Commerce Street were disappointed with their sales. Councilmember Perkins suggested that load-out challenges may have been caused by volunteers unfamiliar with established procedures. He also observed that Commerce Street businesses that actively engaged festival attendees appeared to perform better than those that did not, and noted that the extreme heat likely affected attendance and sales.

Events Director Hassett stated that the kayak tours were very well received. Councilmember Perkins commented favorably on the increase in higher-quality vendors and encouraged staff to continue recruiting vendors of similar caliber. Events Director Hassett noted that she had declined several long-standing vendors this year to improve the overall quality of the show.

Councilmember Daubresse asked whether the festival had reached capacity. Events Director Hassett replied that, while additional vendor spaces could potentially be created, the current layout provides sufficient flexibility to relocate vendors when necessary and maintains adequate pedestrian circulation.

Events Director Hassett then raised the possibility of moving RiverFest in 2027 to the third weekend in May, one week before Memorial Day. Town Manager Linn explained that staff wanted Council's initial feedback before including the recommendation in the final RiverFest report. Events Director Hassett noted that a May date could help avoid the increasingly frequent June heat waves. Town Manager Linn added that there were 12 emergency medical transports during this year's event due to heat-related illnesses. Councilmember Love also noted that the current June dates conflict with several other regional events.

The discussion then turned to the future of the beer garden. Events Director Hassett stated that a successful beer garden would require a larger tent to provide adequate shade. She also noted that an existing beer garden in Town had expressed interest in expanding its shaded seating during festival weekends. She suggested that reducing the number of ancillary activities and focusing on the core festival experience could make the event more attractive to vendors. Councilmember Daubresse commented that the cul-de-sac serves as a natural endpoint for the festival footprint and that preserving River Mill Park primarily as a park remains desirable.

Finally, Events Director Hassett proposed revising the vendor application process so that applicants would not pay booth fees until they had been accepted, thereby eliminating the need to process refunds for unaccepted applicants. Vice Mayor Loges suggested that staff consider a nominal application fee to discourage lower-quality submissions. Sarah Burzio responded that application fees are uncommon for craft shows in the region and could reduce the number of applicants.

11. Closed Session

Vice Mayor Loges moved that the Council convene in closed session to discuss the following: As permitted by Virginia Code § 2.2-3711 (A)(8), consultation with legal counsel regarding specific legal matters requiring the provision of legal advice by such counsel, relating to The Mill at Occoquan. Councilmember Perkins seconded. The motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

The council went into closed session at 9:22 p.m.

The Council came out of closed session at 9:49 p.m.

Vice Mayor Loges 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 Fithian.

The motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

12. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:50 p.m.



Megan Lubash, Town Clerk