



**TOWN OF INDEPENDENCE
REGULAR SCHEDULED COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY AUGUST 12, 2025
329 DAVIS STREET
INDEPENDENCE, VIRGINIA 24348
5:00 PM**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Mark Miller, Vice Mayor Joan Collins, Jason Cassell, Buddy Halsey, Kit Marshall, Aaron Davis, and Lance Hart.

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

TOWN STAFF PRESENT: Kathy Knutson, Town Manager, Roger Brooks, Town Attorney, Matthew Adams, Police Chief, Terry Osborne, Public Works Director, and Kim Farmer, Town Clerk.

CITIZENS & GUESTS: Sandy Venzie, Larissa Venzie, Shannon Miller, and MaKayla Miller.

COUNCILMAN JASON CASSELL made a motion for Council to go into closed session citing VAFOIA Section 2.2-3711, to discuss personnel and contract negotiation asking the Town Attorney Roger Brooks to stay. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY** seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

COUNCILMAN AARON DAVIS made a motion for Council to go into open session citing VAFOIA Section 2.2-3712 that only matters in closed session were convened for and permitted under was discussed. Mayor Miller asked for a roll call vote:

**Jason Cassell – I So Certify
Joan Collins – I So Certify
Aaron Davis – I So Certify**

**Buddy Halsey-I So Certify
Kit Marshall-I So Certify
Lance Hart – I So Certify**

- Public Hearing (None)
- Call to Order
 - Welcome/Decorum- Mayor Mark Miller called the meeting to order this 12th day of August 2025 and declared a quorum present.
 - Approval of Agenda, Consent Agenda, Meeting Minutes-Mayor Mark Miller asked for a motion. **COUNCILMAN BUDDY HALSEY** made a motion to approve the agenda, consent

agenda and minutes as presented. **COUNCILMAN LANCE HART** seconded; motion carried with all ayes.

Summary:

The Town Council Meeting on July 10, 2025, covered several key points. The minutes from the previous meeting were approved. The finance report detailed disbursements, including \$101,007.74 for sewer project I and \$154,009.55 for the lead and copper project. The town received new code books and faced issues with cell phone service due to US Cellular merging with T-Mobile. Traffic and parking issues were discussed, with a motion to paint yellow lines on Bedwell Street. The utility director reported a 50% unaccounted water usage, and ongoing sewer and water projects were updated. The mayor highlighted recent community events and upcoming initiatives.

Action Items:

- [X] Remove parking spaces on the south side of Bedwell Street and one space on the north side. **VICE MAYOR JOAN COLLINS made a motion to eliminate parking spaces on 21 South. COUNCILMAN AARON DAVIS seconded; motion carried with all ayes.**
- [] Coordinate with the school district on traffic management during the start of the school year.
- [] Follow up with the electrician on the status of the work at the town park building.
- [] Invite the special events coordinator to the next meeting to provide an update on the preview races event.
- [] Work with the county on repurposing river rock from the recent storm cleanup for use in downtown beautification projects.
- [] Create a FEMA disaster log to track reimbursable expenses and activities.

Town Staff Reports and Updates:

Staff Reports

- Town Clerk, Kim Farmer, provides a detailed finance report, including disbursement requests and project updates for sewer and lead and copper projects.
- Town Clerk, Kim Farmer, mentions the receipt of new code books at the town office and issues with cell phone service due to US Cellular merging with T-Mobile.
- Police Chief Matthew Adams reports on various activities, including a smooth Highway 21-yard sale, Christmas in July event, and upcoming training for officers.

Traffic and Parking Issues

- Vice Mayor Joan Collins discusses traffic issues expected with the start of school and suggests changes to parking on Bedwell Street to improve safety.
- A motion is made and approved to paint yellow lines on the affected area and remove one parking space on the north side.
- Councilwoman Kit Marshall inquires about the town's responsibility for traffic control during school hours, and Police Chief Adams explains the current practices and plans for the upcoming school year.
- Mayor Miller and Police Chief Adams discuss the condition of street lights and the power company's response to fixing them.

Utility Director's Report

- Utility Director Terry Osborne provides a written report on water and sewer issues, including leaks, well house problems, and the need for additional pipeline and manholes.
- Utility Director Terry Osborne mentions ongoing work on the employee sewer class and issues with a digester's diffuser.
- Town Manager Kathy Knutson updates on the funding for the sewer project and the preliminary engineering report.
- Mayor Miller asks about the replacement of large meters, and Utility Director Osborne explains the challenges and plans for installation. Installation is anticipated for this fall.

Community Events and Website Updates

- Town Manager Knutson discusses the creation of an Outlook calendar for pavilion rentals and the availability of the new town website.
- Councilman Lance Hart inquires about the calendar link on the website, and Town Manager Knutson explains the ongoing learning process.
- Town Manager Knutson mentions a river cleanup project in conjunction with Mount Rogers and FEMA and the potential for repurposing removed river rock.
- Vice Mayor Joan Collins expresses concerns about the maintenance of rocks along with the use of chemicals, and Councilwoman Kit Marshall suggests using a variegated grass to control weeds.

FEMA Disaster Log and Reeves Bridge Update

- Town Manager Knutson introduces a FEMA disaster log to track reimbursable activities during natural disasters.
- Town Manager Knutson provides an update on the Reeves bridge project, including the submission of the engineer's report and the acquisition of new equipment through FEMA.
- Mayor Miller asks about the timeline for receiving reimbursement, and Town Manager Knutson explains the process.
- Town Manager Knutson mentions the Virginia 250 celebration and the upcoming ban on foam food containers.

Mayor's Report and Community Announcements

- Mayor Miller reports on the successful National Night Out event and congratulates employees on their new grandchildren.
- Mayor Miller mentions the completion of the tank at Darco and the need to start thinking about surplus items that the town could sale.
- Town Manager Knutson discusses the Styrofoam ban and the process for obtaining exemptions.
- Town Manager Knutson adds that releasing non-decomposable balloons is illegal in Virginia and North Carolina.

Development and Infrastructure Updates

- Councilwoman Kit Marshall provides an update on the permaculture group's efforts and the progress of the town park.
- Councilwoman Kit Marshall mentions the need to follow up with the electricians on the final tasks for the new building at the park.
- Councilwoman Kit Marshall discusses the upcoming privy races and the need for more social media advertising to attract more teams.
- Mayor Miller asks about the status of the dog control ordinance, and Vice Mayor Joan Collins mentions the need for more research before voting.

Final Discussions and Meeting Adjournment:

Mayor Miller adjourns the meeting.

-Meeting Decorum-

All official meetings are to be observed by the following decorum:

- Behavior during all official meetings shall be consistent with the behavior exercised in any court or legislative room found within the Commonwealth of Virginia; and,
- There shall be no outbursts, heckling or other forms of disrespectful behavior by any individuals present within these chambers; and,
- People wishing to speak shall do so respectfully and in accordance with the applicable Rules of Procedures and/or at the specific direction of the presiding official; and,
- Out of respect for the official business being conducted, for those conducting the official business and for those present for same purpose, there shall be no private conversations taking place in the audience or other forms of distractive behavior or nuisance; and
- Please turn off cell phones and other such devices before entering the meeting room.