

The Town of Washington

"THE FIRST WASHINGTON OF ALL"

May 11, 2026

7:00 p.m.

Approved Minutes

- CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Joe Whited opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Council members Patrick O'Connell, John Fox Sullivan, Jean Goodine, Brad Schneider, Drew Beard, and Deb Harris were present. Town Manager Barbara Batson was present, and Town Attorney Mr. Crim was absent.
- APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA: Mr. Schneider motioned the agenda be approved, Mr. Sullivan seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Drew Beard voted "yes"
Ms. Harris voted "yes"
Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Mayor Whited voted "yes"
And the motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"
Mr. Sullivan voted "yes"

- APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES: Ms. Harris motioned to approve the April 11, 2026 minutes, Mr. Sullivan seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Drew Beard voted "yes"
Ms. Harris voted "yes"
Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Mayor Whited voted "yes"
And the motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"
Mr. Sullivan voted "yes"

REPORTS:

Mayor's Report: Mayor Whited reported that over the Fourth of July weekend, John Bourgeois and a band would again perform at Avon Hall. He said the concert would be held July 3, 2026 at 7:00 p.m., and they agreed to reverse the location of the concert this year for easier navigation by patrons. He said on July 4th, the Town would host a social with Trinity Church, which would include food and refreshments, etc. in the parish hall. He noted that people could watch the fireworks from outside the church, and the "Field of Dreams" area behind the end shops will also be open for those who want to view it from there. He noted that once they get into autumn, since the Town was officially chartered in the fall, they will have a community event and some wonderful celebrations then. He mentioned that thanks to Ms. Batson's work, they would have more decorations than usual and the U.S. flag prominently displayed on Main Street.

Treasurer report: There was no report

Infrastructure Report: Mr. Schneider reported that he is still addressing the issue with the VFD for the pump house and having that installed. He said he is also working on the EQ tank for the wastewater treatment plant and was on a conference call with Racey Engineering and Environmental Systems Service (ESS), with Ms. Batson also present on the call. Mr. Schneider said that ESS had put together a technical proposal, but it was way out of scope with the project requirements, so he is basically designing the EQ tank himself now. He stated that they may have to file for an exception with DEQ because of certain specific parameters, and he would be working with Cody Hoehna at ESS, then go to Racey and stipulate what they want and where it needs to be located. Mr. Schneider said he would still like to get the sludgy water as part of the system, but he was not certain that was feasible—and the primary objective was to get the EQ tank in. Mr. Schneider stated that he had spoken with Ms. Batson today and will need to measure where the line is for Rush River II as it goes up to the plant. He said they need to be 50 feet off of that line, which is where the back of the proposed building is, and he would confirm that information by the following day and get it back to Ms. Batson. Mr. Schneider added that other than those things, he feels they are in pretty good shape, with no major interruptions to the systems and things running fairly smoothly.

Town Attorney: There was no report.

Zoning Administrator: There was no report.

Planning Commission (PC): David Pennington reported that the Planning Commission had not met for the last two months, but was planning to schedule a meeting in June to review the upcoming ordinance changes as well as the comprehensive plan update.

Mr. Sullivan asked if there was a sense of when that might start.

Mr. Pennington responded that the ordinance rewrite should happen first, as it is more critical, and they hoped to have meetings scheduled for late summer and early fall. He added that the actual comprehensive plan would follow within a few months.

Architectural Review Board (ARB): Ms. Batson reported that the ARB would be meeting on the following Monday, with the agenda to include a rewrite for 515 Mount Salem for the garage, the Town's work shed at the wastewater treatment plant, and the Inn—rewrite for the partial development area and expansion.

OLD BUSINESS: There was no old business

NEW BUSINESS

- a) Approval of FY26-27 Budget: Mayor Whited thanked everyone for getting them to this point in the budget cycle, particularly Ms. Batson, Gail Swift, and new Town Treasurer Deb Harris.

Ms. Harris stated that on April 11, Town Council had held a publicly open working session on the FY26-27 budget, with a number of items discussed there were reflected in the budget. She noted that included in the budget are several items still under consideration, but there were no significant changes other than the few items she was going to mention. Ms. Harris said the most notable item was that the Town would draw down money from the LGIP, the long-term investment fund invested in strategically over the years to support maintenance and water and water treatment system needs. She said the Town would invest in a new EQ tank, which would

enable extra capacity within the Town for hookups for critical projects such as the Rush River Community Center, Rush River II, and other expansions in Town. Ms. Harris stated that the Town was excited about that because the investment was turning into a payoff, and targeted investments made over time were intended to ensure coverage for those infrastructure needs.

Ms. Harris reported that the Town was also considering some other potential increases in the budget that year, including increasing the fire department grant that goes to Washington Rescue by about \$1,000 and investing in office supply equipment to reduce leasing costs over time. She stated that additional items in the budget reflected changes in actual infrastructure and energy costs, increased pay for Barbara Batson, and funding for community events during the year—such as community events celebrating the Town's 230th anniversary, special activities around the Fourth of July, and other standard costs. She said one other notable change was combining the water and sewer budget to provide more flexibility in how those budgets were managed, which would not be a change in cost or anything associated with it.

Mr. Schneider clarified that the new EQ tank does not increase the capacity of the plant—which stays at 65,000. He said it balances the flow to the two basins and improves the hydraulic flows, which is running at about 25,000 to 30,000 a day. He noted that there is a lot of room for growth, but the EQ tank itself isn't going to make the plant bigger. He explained that the primary item they are dealing with is fat, oil, and grease (FOG), which can be handled better in the EQ tank than with the two basins.

Mayor Whited stated that almost eight years ago when he was elected to the Council, the budget process was challenging—with expenses and income seeming unlikely to converge any time in the distant future. He stated that they did a lot of really hard work, with the current members of the Council and their predecessors making a lot of hard choices. He said that because of that in-depth look and the decision to address this, they have been able to invest over \$2.5 million as of this year's budget in Town infrastructure. He said this will enable the further growth of Rush River, which has allowed more people to move into the community at large and for a new a conference center that will generate more traffic in the County. Mayor Whited stated that overall, it would also enable the County to construct the new courthouse by ensuring they have the water and sewer capacity to support the structure. He added that it will also allow further expansion of already established businesses in Town, which will generally enhance the tourism in the county as well as the revenues of both the Town and the County.

Mayor Whited reiterated that they made the hard choice of figuring out how to manage their budget, how to sponsor expansion and development in the Town, which was not popular with many but has added to the general revenues of the County and has generally enhanced the community. He said they chose not to adversely impact the largest businesses and employers of the County or the other businesses that feed off of that locally and regionally. He said they decided to do the hard work and pay for it themselves, and they were willing to pay the political price of making the right choices about Rush River and other places to expand their community.

Mayor Whited stated that it had been suggested somehow that they in the Town were sort of the Grinches that were stealing Christmas when it came to taxes—but he would point out that the Town contributes approximately \$800,000 in revenue to the County's purse. He stated that some members of the Board of Supervisors liked to harp on the fact that they were only a Town of roughly 100 people, which represents about 1.3% of the County's 7,400 population, but

Mayor Whited pointed out that those individuals and businesses contribute 2.2% of the County's \$36 million budget. He noted that the Town's residents and businesses paid 40% per capita more in taxes every year to the County than any other residence or business.

Mayor Whited said the question was how much one community was expected to pay to carry the burden, and he felt they did their part to generate tourism revenue in the County. He said the residents of this Town were extraordinarily philanthropic and contributed in many ways to the various boards and private or nonprofit groups in this County—and he did not see how anyone could reach a conclusion that they are free riders. He emphasized that they took their responsibilities to the County writ large seriously, with \$250,000 coming in transfer of sales taxes and another \$500 million or so in real estate taxes, which he would argue was probably some of the highest per-rate contributions in real estate taxes in the County. He said on top of the real estate taxes contributing to their local fire levy, the single largest discretionary line item in their budget was associated with a contribution to the local fire rescue team at Company 1.

Mayor Whited emphasized that he was not interested in engaging in any back and forth, but he wanted to be clear that this Town was the economic engine in many ways that drives the County. He added that the Town does their bit to make sure that this wonderful community that they were all lucky to call home was preserved but also had a bright future ahead.

Mr. Schneider motioned to approve the budget., Mr. O'Connell seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Drew Beard voted "yes"
Ms. Harris voted "yes"
Mr. Schneider voted "yes"
Mayor Whited voted "yes"
And the motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Goodine voted "yes"
Mr. O'Connell voted "yes"
Mr. Sullivan voted "yes"

PUBLIC FORUM: Mr. Pennington asked Mr. Schneider if the 65,000 gallons per day was the limiting factor on the plant, and whether the loading was also a limiting factor.

Mr. Schneider confirmed that 65,000 is the design capacity of the plant, and the loading factor determines the daily throughput, which is where they are currently. He explained that the EQ tank would change the loading slightly, but there would still be a hydraulic limit, which is why they are at 65,000. He noted that currently, they are just under 30,000 a day, so there is plenty of room to expand and process more waste through the system.

Mr. Pennington asked if the [DOD] tracks with that. Mr. Schneider said yes, adding that the EQ tank would help a lot in that regard because they can deal with the FOG in that tank so when it's passed over to the aeration basins, they can do a better job. He stated that they currently have all that stuff in both basins, and ESS is doing a great job of managing that and still producing high-quality effluent to the state standards. He said they are also improving the aeration units, beginning with one done back in the spring and parts ordered to do the other one.

Ms. Netney said that she was very opposed to moving the library. She stated that the community currently paid nothing for the building, owned it outright, and had no reason to move into a rental that could increase over time. She said that the proposed one-year teaser rate did nothing for the long term, and no one knew how much the rent would rise. She said

that the library staff and most people in the community wanted to keep the beautiful library as it is. She stated that as a member of Friends of the Library, she believed two library board of trustee's members had been especially vocal in support of the move. She said that the current library was attractive architecturally, with a Jeffersonian look that was very fitting for Rappahannock County and matched the character of this beautiful and special place. She said they are trying to save the area from tasteless development, and the proposed new space was literally inside an office building and was just plain ugly. She stated that it was designed by a firm that specialized in modern design and is entirely out of character with the rest of the town, seeming more suitable for somewhere like Arizona or Nevada.

She said she was not the only person who felt that way, though she could speak only for herself. She stated that the developer was a public figure with personal stock holdings of \$8 billion, and she viewed the project as a Trojan horse, with this developer trying to get a tax write-off. She said that he had been lobbying to find some tenant for the space, and if he truly wanted to leave a legacy, the building should look more like his beautiful barn rather than an eyesore—or he could donate to the current library instead. She said that he will be gone someday, but future generations will have to live with the consequences of a poor decision long after that.

She said it would be a travesty to see the library building sold and had heard repeated complaints that the Town could not raise the \$6 million needed because donors were tapped out by the courthouse project and RAAC Theater, etc. She stated that the money did not have to be raised in one year and could instead be raised over 5–10 years through a long-term capital campaign. She said in the meantime, the teen center or the children's center could go into this new space. She stated that if the renovation of the library would take two years, Rush Commons could be used for the interim and the library could move back once the expansion was complete. She emphasized that she did not understand why there was such a rush, and moving the library would be very short-sighted. She said that she would be horrified to see the beautiful building sold and turned into something else, which would break a lot of hearts.

ADJOURNMENT: Mr. Schneider motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m., Ms. Harris seconded and a roll call vote was taken:

Mr. Drew Beard voted “yes”
Ms. Harris voted “yes”
Mr. Schneider voted “yes”
Mayor Whited voted “yes”
And the motion passed 7-0.

Ms. Goodine voted “yes”
Mr. O’Connell voted “yes”
Mr. Sullivan voted “yes”

THE NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL IS
July 13, 2026.

Barbara Batson, Town Manager/Clerk