Town Council Meeting: 15 October 2025
Draft Minutes

Call to Order: Mayor Joe Whited opened the meeting at 7:00 p.m. Council members Jean Goodine, Patrick O'Connell, Fred Catlin, Drew Beard, and Brad Schneider were present. Town Clerk Barbara Batson was also present.

Approval of Agenda: Mr. Catlin **moved** to approve the agenda as presented. Mr. Schneider **seconded** the motion.

Mayor Whited noted that there would be a motion to add the new treasurer as a signer on the Town's accounts.

The motion to approve the agenda passed unanimously (6-0).

Approval of Minutes: Ms. Goodine asked if there were minutes to approve. Mayor Whited stated that there were not, as Ms. Batson had been out.

Mayor's Report: Mayor Whited stated that "Christmas in Little Washington," a Rappahannock tradition, would be held on December 7. He stated that he did not mind if organizing it was a little harder, as he was sure the event would be much more successful. Mayor Whited said he had received a phone call in August indicating that the planning for the event was in a bad way, and the intended committee had dissolved for various reasons. Mayor Whited thanked John Fox Sullivan and Caroline Anstey, who were the first people he called when he realized he had an enormous problem. He stated that Chris Dobson and Sonia Trujillo, veterans of the committee, had also stepped in; and Deb Harris, Penny Cartes, and Kim Nelson, who had been involved since its beginning 20 years ago, also helped get things back on track.

Mayor Whited said he had spoken with Jim Abdo the previous week, and plans for the packing shed and the other two buildings on Main Street were beginning to move along. He stated the owners were working back and forth with the County building official to finish their permits so construction could begin on some long-languishing properties in town. Mayor Whited said he thought Council would help move this along when it invoked the demolition-by-request statute.

Mayor Whited congratulated Mr. Catlin for finally getting the trail open, and he had already seen people coming and going and was very happy to see the trail being used.

Mr. Catlin pointed out that Council members were involved in the Christmas in Little Washington parade, and he served on the committee.

Mayor Whited thanked him and stated that he and Mr. Catlin are also involved.

Ms. Goodine said the Christmas party date had not been set, and she stated that Council should establish a date because the next month was November.

Mayor Whited said the date would likely be addressed when the Council reached the school discussion and the holiday calendar.

Treasurer's Report: Ms. Batson stated that the Town was tracking near 25% in all categories, with nothing unusual to report.

Infrastructure Report: Mr. Schneider said the new generator had been installed, and the electrician tested the system; they cut the main power, and the generator activated five seconds later. He stated the generator would cycle for about 20 minutes every Saturday morning, and Ms. Batson had received a quote from the provider for a maintenance contract, and the provider also sent a remote cellular monitor that would issue notification if the generator failed to start. He stated that the Council would review the numbers because notification would be useful if the system failed on a Sunday night.

Mayor Whited said the public should be reassured that with the tank full, the Town could continue operating it for an extended period even if the generator did not activate.

Mr. Schneider said when the tank reached the designated level, it could run down for about two and a half days without restrictions. He stated that notification capability would be useful, whether to Ms. Batson, ESS, or another party. He said the pump management system was pending installation, and he had contacted Jim Patterson to do the installation.

Mayor Whited clarified for the public that this is an additive to the Town's water. He pointed out that there is no lead piping in the Town system, but some homes still had lead pipes and this additive was intended to reduce erosion in pipes inside residents' homes.

Town Attorney's Report: Martin Crim reported that Mr. Crim said he had two items to report, beginning with Rose River Commons Phase 2. He stated that he and Seth Turner had a productive meeting with Black Kettle representatives about the upcoming special use permit, which would go to the Planning Commission on September 22 and to Council on October 13. He said the permit would extend planned unit development (PUD) zoning to the Phase 2 area, and the two of them had discussed landscaping, lighting, and related issues.

Mr. Crim reported stated that filling the Council vacancy now required two meetings per the Commonwealth of Virginia—including a public hearing with notice of all proposed names and access to each person's resume and required materials. Mr. Crim said Town Council could make an interim appointment seven or more days after that hearing, a process that applied only to council vacancies and not to ARBs, planning commissions, or other bodies. He said because the vacancy occurred so close to the fall election and the next year's term, State Code did not provide for a special election; he had notified the Circuit Court and copied the registrar.

Mayor Whited stated that Council members have all received a note from Ms. Batson about scheduling that special meeting so they can move forward quickly in October to fill that seat.

Ms. Goodine asked if the position had been advertised.

Mayor Whited said they would be handling it as part of the official agenda at this meeting and would call for individuals to submit their letters of interest.

Planning Commission Report: Zoning Administrator Steve Gyurisin reported that the next Planning Commission meeting would be September 22 and that three items were being prepared following passage of the ordinance, with a fourth item reduced through consolidation that he hoped to approve administratively. He said the theater rezoning would add about 20 or 21 feet to the rear of the building on land fronting Main Street, with no additional auditorium seats planned and the space intended to improve backstage functions. He stated that a special use permit for the Washington School Annex would convert the vacant commercial building to apartments and that another special use permit would address Rush River Commons. Mr. Gyurisin noted that the Commission would make recommendations to Town Council in October. Mr. Schneider said the system would be installed before the end of the month, and generator wiring still needed to be completed for the variable frequency drive—which they have and just need to mount and wire. Mr. Schneider stated that the next project was the aerators at the treatment plant, but otherwise everything was in good condition. He confirmed that long-range planning was underway, and he was working with engineers to include a sludge dewatering option that could save the Town money over time.

Mayor Whited said it also allows them to process additional wastewater and keep it out of the current system.

Mr. Schneider said the Town currently pays a company to pump the sludge and haul it to Remington at roughly $2,000 per month. He explained that the proposed system would dewater sludge on site into a roll-on container, reducing the amount of water hauled away. He said Page County would pick up the container, likely every six months, which could generate significant long-term savings.

Ms. Goodine asked whether he had gotten a price for the remote monitor.

Mr. Schneider said Ms. Batson had spoken with the provider about the price.

Ms. Batson said she did not recall the numbers.

Mayor Whited said the information would be organized for discussion when available, including how it might fit into the budget.

Planning Commission:

Ms. Anstey said the Planning Commission had met the previous month for public hearings on the matters before Council. She stated that the Commission had unanimously recommended forwarding the Mount Salem special use permit and the RAAC rezoning request for the theatre extension to Council. She said the Commission also unanimously requested that Black Kettle table, or at least defer, its special use permit request for an overlay of the existing village commercial area until a revised application was submitted.

Ms. Anstey explained that the Commission's concerns included wastewater and sewer capacity (particularly with new demands), the lack of a landscaping plan, the Town gateway, and the size and use of the proposed space in relation to the comprehensive plan. She stated that the proposal included a 90,000-square-foot office building, a community center, and more than 100 parking spaces, and she said those features could affect the viewshed and the Town's architectural character. She stated that the Commission has asked Black Kettle to return with a revised proposal.

Architectural Review Board: Ms. Batson stated that there was no report, and the only thing on their agenda for the following week was a sign at the Washington Apartments on Main Street.

Old Business: There was none.

New Business:

A. Appointment of Town Treasurer: Mayor Whited said they would start with the appointment of a new Town treasurer, as Gail Swift had moved out of Town. He stated that there were two candidates who had volunteered to serve: one individual with a strong finance background, Maria Darie, who was new to Town but willing to serve; and the current ARB chair, Deb Harris.

Mayor Whited said he would cast his vote for Ms. Harris.

Mr. Catlin said he was impressed with both candidates and he would vote for Ms. Harris.

Mr. O'Connell said the Town was fortunate to have two well-qualified candidates, stating that he would cast his vote for Ms. Harris.

Mayor Whited announced that Ms. Harris would be appointed as Town treasurer and would need to report to the clerk of the court to be sworn in prior to taking her seat. He thanked Ms. Darie for her willingness to serve and stated that the Town would find another way for her to serve the community if she remained willing.

B. Special Use Permit Application – 603 Mount Salem Road: Mayor Whited said the next item is an application from Seth Turner and David Pennington requesting a special use permit to create a two-family residence at 603 Mount Salem Road. He stated that the property was located in the Rural Residential Zoning District and the Historic District, ordinance reference 1-4-1, Item A.

Mr. Seth Turner reported that he and Mr. Pennington had just closed on the property a few weeks earlier and were excited about the opportunity. He stated that the building was commonly known as the old FFA building or annex, a red one-story building beside the Washington School. He said the building was currently zoned Rural Residential, and they were applying for a special use permit to convert it into two apartments, which would be long-term rentals. He stated that the project would provide housing for the Town, as there was demand from people seeking to stay in Town. He stated that the plan included one one-bedroom, one-bath apartment; and one two-bedroom, one-bath apartment.

Mr. Turner said the building had been used as offices for the last few decades, most recently by Harris Hollow Foods, Chuck Akre's office, and the food pantry. He said the property was in the Historic District, and no exterior changes were planned. He said the building had about six parking spaces, with even less parking likely to be used under the apartment configuration. He noted that the property already had Town water and sewer, with this being a straightforward conversion and a positive addition to the Town.

Mr. Schneider asked whether the water and sewer would need to be separately metered, and separate meters had been used for each apartment in Rush River.

Mr. Turner confirmed that he would pay the bill.

Mr. Catlin said the building had not been fully used despite its prior office use, and it would be nice to have some residential units there. He said he had already spoken with Mr. Turner and knew of at least one person who was born in Town, wanted to return, and was interested in the property.

Ms. Judy Pesaro stated that she endorsed the project and looked forward to it, and anything Mr. Pennington had done had been first class.

Mayor Whited said if there were no further comments, he would entertain a motion.

Mr. Beard **moved** to approve the Special Use Permit application for 603 Salem Road. Mr. O'Connell **seconded** the motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following vote: Mayor Whited–yes; Ms. Goodine–yes; Mr. Schneider–yes; Mr. Catlin–yes; Mr. Beard–yes; Mr. O'Connell–yes.

C. Rezoning Application – RAAC: Mayor Whited said the next action concerned a request from the Rappahannock Association for Arts and Community (RAAC) for rezoning approximately 4,300 square feet behind the existing theatre at the intersection of Main and Jefferson Street from Village Residential to Village Service for theatre improvements. He stated that the lot was identified on the tax map and the application had been received and was complete.

Mr. Matthew Glenn said he was president of RAAC, which had recently purchased an empty lot behind the theatre running along Jefferson to Main Street and wanted to extend the theatre about 21 feet. He said the land was currently zoned residential, and RAAC requested rezoning to Town Service so it would be consistent with the theatre zoning. He noted that the extension would occupy about 25% of the empty lot, leaving about three-quarters open.

Mr. Glenn stated that RAAC was working with neighbors [Michael Lohan] and Gary Jankowski to coordinate landscaping for the remaining open space, as both parties cared about the appearance of the area. Mr. Glenn said the plan was about 90% accurate because design work was still underway. He stated that the extension would align with the change in the roofline, that some window details would change, and that a staircase would soften the side of the building. He said the goal was for the addition to look similar to the existing theatre and fit architecturally within the neighborhood.

Mr. Glenn reported that RAAC had become steward of the theatre about two years earlier after Nancy Raines gave it to RAAC. He stated that the 80-year-old former movie house needed improvements, especially for theatrical productions. He said RAAC had moved productions from the old Tea Theatre, formerly RAAC Theatre, to Little Washington Theatre and had presented productions such as *Endgame*, *Always…Patsy Cline*, and *12 Angry Jurors*.

Mr. Glenn said the building was a movie house rather than a theatre, and it lacked space for building sets, storage, props, and production logistics. He said the extension would create a backstage room on the same level as the stage and approximately the same size, allowing sets, rehearsals, and performances to be managed more effectively. He stated that storage would be added below the backstage area. Mr. Glenn said RAAC also needed storage, a dressing room, a performer bathroom, and an improved green room.

Mr. Glenn stated that the second major driver was the audience experience, noting that the theatre had essentially no lobby and left patrons without an indoor gathering space after movies, talks, or plays—especially when it rained. He stated that RAAC planned to create a real lobby four or five times larger than the current space. He said the theatre had one inadequate bathroom with a 10-inch step, and RAAC planned to add three bathrooms and retain an office that could be rented or used as needed. He noted that RAAC would not increase the number of seats or the stage size, and they also wanted to improve acoustics with an acoustical engineer so movies and events would sound clearer. He added that RAAC would try to improve seating comfort if budget and timing allowed. Mr. Glenn said RAAC wanted to retain the theatre's charm and avoid over-modernizing it, with the goal of preserving the character people valued while improving function and the theatergoer experience.

Mr. Glenn said the effort was expected to cost $2 million and would be supported by donations. He stated that RAAC was a nonprofit steward of a community asset, and the renovation was intended to benefit the community rather than a private company. Mr. Glenn said the community would raise the funds for the renovation, and RAAC would manage the resources to make that happen. He stated that RAAC hoped to start work in March or April, begin excavation outside, and have the theatre go dark in June, subject to Town approvals. He said RAAC was moving along three tracks—design, construction planning, and approvals—with fundraising going extremely well and gaining momentum.

Mr. Glenn invited questions from the Council.

Mayor Whited thanked RAAC for operating the theatre and its programs, stating that he appreciated the talks and the other opportunities provided. He asked if there were any public comments.

Mr. Catlin asked about the square footage of the new space.

Mr. Glenn responded that the backstage floor level would be approximately the size of the current stage, around 400-450 square feet, and the total building area between the current and new space would probably be less than 2,000 square feet. He said the extension would add about 20 feet to the side.

Mr. Catlin said he wanted to confirm whether the project required a special use permit, and they do because it is over 1,000 square feet after rezoning.

Mayor Whited said he wanted to know whether there were any other comments from the panel or questions from Council.

Mr. Glenn said Steve Gyurisin had been extremely helpful and had guided RAAC through the process.

Mr. Beard **moved** to approve the rezoning application as presented for the RAAC property at 291 Gay Street. Mr. Schneider **seconded** the motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following vote: Mayor Whited–yes; Ms. Goodine–yes; Mr. Schneider–yes; Mr. Catlin–yes; Mr. Beard–yes; Mr. O'Connell–yes.

D. Planned Unit Development – Rush River Commons (Warren Avenue/Lee Highway): Mayor Whited stated that this application was currently under review by the Planning Commission, and Council would take it up for action at the November meeting based on the Planning Commission's recommendations. He said any questions could be directed to Ms. Batson, but public comment would be accepted now because the matter was also a public hearing.

Mr. Catlin said he had attended the Planning Commission meeting and appreciated its due diligence but was concerned that some of their objections might not be germane to their scope—particularly architectural issues, which may fall under the ARB. He noted that the Town's architecture was eclectic, and he was concerned about objections based on architecture; size, when other large buildings had been approved or were pending; and landscaping concerns. Mr. Catlin said some of their concerns exceeded the Planning Commission's role, although he appreciated their attention to sewer capacity.

Mr. Catlin stated that Black Kettle was requesting an overlay for Planned Use Development, and he was uncertain whether the approximately 30 conditions in the original overlay would extend to the new Rush River 2 property or whether the PUD concept would be extended and new provisions contemplated.

Mayor Whited clarified that the provisions would extend, as per the recommendations of counsel.

Mr. Catlin said he had also heard that they couldn't do a PUD because it doesn't have residential, but his understanding was that there could be residential uses—with the Town's ordinance perhaps needing updating.

Mayor Whited assured Council that those items would be discussed in November, once they received a recommendation from the Planning Commission.

Mayor Whited said he wanted to know whether there were other comments from Council, stating that the public hearing would remain open and continue to the next meeting.

Ms. Anstey said the Planning Commission had checked diligently with the code regarding what it could address. She stated that the Commission did not comment on architecture but did comment on size and use in relation to the comprehensive plan, especially regarding the Town gateways. She said she believed that everything they discussed was legitimately connected to the comprehensive plan, and this touched on landscaping, viewshed, and size. She added that they were willing to continue the discussion.

Mayor Whited said he looked forward to a full and frank discussion at the next meeting.

A member of the public said the Town should remember that people moved here because of the Town's charm and local character, but they also need to remember that they have buildings that serve people. She said they need buildings and commerce that serve people, and Washington as the County seat should ensure residents were served.

Mr. Sullivan said he had spoken at the Planning Commission meeting and would not repeat all of his remarks. He stated that the PUD issue was complex, but he would leave that to the lawyers and Council. Mr. Sullivan said he understood the purpose of the theatre project because it served community life; by contrast, he questioned the need for a very large community center and a sizable office building. He said the Town did not need additional office space based on availability, and the purpose of the proposed buildings should be examined. Mr. Sullivan said the proposed PUD development was too large and would affect the view into Town, and more than 100 parking spaces was unnecessary for Washington. Mr. Sullivan said the Planning Commission had asked the applicant the previous year to return with changes or responses, and that had not yet occurred, to his knowledge. He said he hoped further responses might occur before December, and the fundamental question remained why the project was being pursued.

Mayor Whited said the discussion would continue when all members were present.

E. Sewer Service District Ordinance: Mayor Whited said this item is for Council to consider expanding the Town of Washington Sewer Service District to include the previously identified acreage commonly referred to as Rush River 2 (Black Kettle property). He stated that the action would make the sewer district contiguous with the new property, and the matter was being considered as an option rather than as an immediate connection approval.

Mr. Beard asked if there were any preliminary estimates for this from when the first introduced the Rush River 2 extension.

Mayor Whited responded that there have been several different studies and estimates, and this is just an option and not a next step.

Mr. Catlin a fairly comprehensive study had been completed by someone who installed the wastewater system, around 2020.

Ms. Batson said she had an updated study.

Mayor Whited said several studies and company input had been received, and Council wanted to review the information carefully.

Mr. Schneider said the system had some capacity as it stood, but he stated that the actual pressure and connection details would need to be studied. He emphasized that they can say the district would be extended, but there may be other limitations to the actual connections.

Ms. Goodine clarified that the language says the Council would "consider" expanding, not that they will.

Mr. Catlin **moved** to approve the Wastewater District to include the Rush River 2 parcel. Mr. Beard **seconded** the motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following vote: Mayor Whited–yes; Ms. Goodine–yes; Mr. Schneider–yes; Mr. Catlin–yes; Mr. Beard–yes; Mr. O'Connell–yes.

Authorized Signers: Mayor Whited stated that he needed a motion to add Ms. Deb Harris to the list of authorized signers for the Town.

Mr. Catlin **moved** to add Ms. Deb Harris to the list of authorized signers for the Town. Ms. Goodine **seconded** the motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following vote: Mayor Whited–yes; Ms. Goodine–yes; Mr. Schneider–yes; Mr. Catlin–yes; Mr. Beard–yes; Mr. O'Connell–yes.

Town Holiday Party: Council agreed that the Town Holiday Party would be held in Town Hall on December 14, 2025 at 6 p.m.

Adjournment:
At 6:51 p.m., Mr. Schneider **moved** to adjourn the Town Council meeting. Mr. O'Connell **seconded** the motion. Roll was called, and the motion passed by the following vote: Mayor Whited–yes; Ms. Goodine–yes; Mr. Schneider–yes; Mr. Catlin–yes; Mr. Beard–yes; Mr. O'Connell–yes.