

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
WORK SESSION MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 19, 2025 – 6:30 P.M.**

A WORK SESSION MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD AT CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN HALL, 100 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA, ON FEBRUARY 19, 2025, AT 6:30 P.M.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor D. Michael Barber; Samuel M. Bishop; Kim Bowman; Johana Hicks; Tanya Hockett; Casey Jenkins; Vice-Mayor Tim Wilson

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Scot Shippee; Clerk of Council Tracy Heinline; Public Relations Director Christina Bolt; Planning Director Retta Jackson; Planner I Daria Chicosky

WORK SESSION

I. Call To Order

Mayor Barber called the meeting to order.

II. Adjustment of the Agenda

None.

III. Discussion and Action by Mayor and Council

A. Façade Grants

Planning Director Retta Jackson spoke briefly concerning the history of the Façade Grants Program and the grant process. Mrs. Jackson explained the program was created in 2019 and helped property or business owners improve their building facades and encourages investment in the historic central business areas. She noted that early on the first round of applicants was geared toward Downtown and Cambria stakeholders and older commercial buildings. She explained that now the program is not limited by specific areas and is instead offered to participants in the Town limits. Mrs. Jackson touched on façade grant requirements for applicants and explained the applicant must be willing to commit to and

demonstrate equal match of the awards in the project investment. She added that applicants are required to supply sketches of the proposed work with their applications, and detailed descriptions of the repairs they are requesting. Mrs. Jackson explained that award funds could be requested in different categorical sums leading up to \$5,000. She stated that once a selection committee was formed the committee would score applicants based on certain categories and award the funds appropriately.

Mayor Barber questioned if the other surrounding localities had included information on landscaping within their application process. Mrs. Jackson explained there was information on funds for landscaping, but that landscaping work came with certain restrictions.

Councilwoman Hicks read a conflict-of-interest statement and noted she owned businesses that may be affected by downtown grants and expressed the possibility of conflict of interest and that there were more than three other affected. She expressed that grant information had been provided thoroughly to the businesses, noting the hard work of staff, and did not feel that was the concern. She stated that several businesses that had been awarded the façade grants in the past have yet to do the work at their place of business. She suggested that if businesses were not applying or doing the work, then the Town should take a break and spend the money elsewhere.

Mayor Barber suggested a workshop be required prior to applying for façade grants, noting this would demonstrate commitment from the applicants. Councilwoman Hockett agreed with Mayor Barber and noted that workshops could help support the process and set the applicants up for success as well as identify challenges beforehand. Mrs. Hockett stated the Central Business Committee had discussed the façade grants and felt that since there had been interest shown in the last four years, it should continue. She added that targeted marketing for the grant, workshops, and the adjustment of criteria were just a few things that could potentially help the program. She felt the intent of the program should be in line with improving the look and feel of areas. Mayor Barber agreed with Mrs. Hockett and stated that if Council were to pause the program it may not get picked up again. Public Relations Director Christina Bolt expressed that if the Façade Grant Program continues, she felt Public Relations could market the program better moving forward and that the new Small Business Solutions Manager would be an asset to the program.

Councilwoman Bowman referenced information from the last four years and noted 66.66% utilization of the program. She added that 21 grants had been approved within those 4 years and only 14 businesses had completed the work. Mrs. Bowman suggested there were other areas in the Town that could use the funds such as the beautification of Downtown. Councilwoman Bowman expressed that business owners time was valuable and potentially may not have the time for a workshop.

Councilman Jenkins agreed with a mandatory workshop for applicants beforehand and felt if workshops were provided the Town may receive improved applications. He agreed that the Small Business Solutions Manager could aid in the process and felt that in time the program could grow.

Mayor Barber asked Councilman Jenkins, Councilwoman Hockett, and staff to provide a recommendation to Council by the March 19th work session as to what the program could look like moving forward.

IV. Adjournment

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Tracy Heinlein
Tracy Heinlein, Clerk of Council

D. Michael Barber
D. Michael Barber, Mayor