

**CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL
CHRISTIANSBURG, MONTGOMERY CO., VA.
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 21, 2025 – 6:00 P.M.**

A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN COUNCIL, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, CHRISTIANSBURG, VA. WAS HELD AT CHRISTIANSBURG TOWN HALL, 100 EAST MAIN STREET, CHRISTIANSBURG, VIRGINIA, ON MAY 21, 2025, AT 6:00 P.M.

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

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Town Manager Randy Wingfield; Assistant Town Manager Scot Shippee; Clerk of Council Tracy Heinline; Director of Public Works Jim Lancianese; Assistant Director of Public Works - Streets Travis Moles; Human Resources Director Alicia Dials; Police Chief Chris Ramsey; Finance Director Katie Miano; EMS Deputy Chief Joshua Settlage

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. Fiscal Year 2025-26 Budget

Water Increases

Mayor Barber explained the Town was facing a 19% water increase from the Water Authority which would total an anticipated increase of 4.5% (\$0.19/1,000 gallons) for FY25-26. He stated there were several things the Town's Enterprise Fund was responsible for, such as the cost of waterline maintenance and funding of Public Works employees to maintain water infrastructures. Town Manager Wingfield reminded Council that 2013 was the last year the Town's water rates were increased. He explained the water increase

would generate \$1.5 million the first year for reserves and approximately \$200,000-\$250,000 next year. Mr. Wingfield noted that a Leak Detection Study was currently in the beginning stages and would provide Town staff locations of issues with water loss. Assistant Town Manager Scot Shippee added that the Town purchases 37-38% more water than the Town provides. Mr. Wingfield explained although that percentage could be lower, it would never be zero due to issues like water evaporation, but mentioned there was a lot of room for improvement.

Councilwoman Hicks expressed concern for raising water rates and questioned if funds from other Town projects could be transferred over to the Enterprise Fund instead. Mr. Wingfield explained that would be at Town Council's discretion but if money is transferred from the General Fund over to the Enterprise Fund, then essentially you are subsidizing water and sewer service.

Councilwoman Bowman stated she was not in favor of the water rate increase and suggested transferring funds over as well. She expressed the current economic environment was declining and citizens needed a break from additional expenses.

Councilwoman Hockett expressed the Town needs to stay conscience of where the savings goal is for larger repairs. She noted that saving for multiple future repairs makes sense and placing funds aside for one issue only would be a mistake. Councilwoman Bowman disagreed with Mrs. Hockett and expressed there were several things lacking in Town infrastructure and there needed to be priorities for those issues. Councilwoman Hicks suggested proposed reserve funds go in the General Operating Fund, giving the Town more borrowing power as well as making the Town look more financially stable.

Town Employee COLA and Merit Increases

Mayor Barber referenced a handout showing what other surrounding localities are providing their employees pertaining to COLA and merit increases. Councilwoman Hicks suggested a 3% COLA, but no merit increase for Town employees. She spoke about the state of the economy and the importance of the Town's image to citizens. Mrs. Hicks further suggested merit increases could be observed as political gain for Council or even manipulation of employees.

Mayor Barber suggested that when Council votes for budget approval, the budget can be broken down into several items: the water rate increase, COLA, merit, and the remaining budget items. Mayor Barber mentioned he had trust in administrators and department heads as far as merit increases were concerned and one of the positives of both increases was to keep the Town competitive with surrounding localities.

B. Fire and EMS Staffing

Councilwoman Bowman questioned why Council was not made aware of a recent staff reduction at EMS. Mrs. Bowman felt the chain of command and lack of Council and staff interaction potentially prohibited her from being made aware of the situation. She noted that EMS part-time staff had their working hours reduced which has cause disgruntled employees. Mrs. Bowman expressed confusion due to Council suggesting additional paid EMS staff at a previous work session but later seeing advertisement for volunteers. She

also expressed concern for EMS call times and asked if the Town was meeting the standards according to the Town's 2024 Emergency Response Plan. Mrs. Bowman noted that she understands human error but has a problem with the lack of transparency and felt that Council should have been made aware of the issue.

Mr. Wingfield explained there had been changes in the new Tyler-Munis software and unfortunately a coding entry error within the system impacted where wage charges were recorded. He added that once the internal error was reconciled internally, it was discovered that the Town was over-running its wage budget for EMS. He explained that to minimize wage overruns part-time hours needed to be reduced. Mr. Wingfield added that in addition to over-running its wage budget, EMS had other budget challenges such as the setup of an in-house pharmacy, an approximately \$45,000 unfunded federal mandate. He explained that this has caused additional staff time, equipment, and consumable purchases. Mr. Wingfield noted that new internal oversight procedures have been implemented and will result in more organizational efficiency with future budgets. He added that Town staff proposes shifting \$20,000 from savings in the operating wage lines to Rescue-Wages in the current FY 2024-25 Budget to allow additional scheduling of part-time employees for the remainder of the fiscal year.

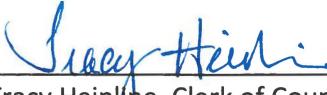
Councilwoman Hicks inquired if there had been calls for mutual aid recently due to the reduction in staff hours and questioned how many employees the reduction affected. EMS Deputy Chief Josh Settlage explained that mutual aid was a common occurrence during any year for both the Town of Christiansburg and Montgomery County. Mr. Settlage explained that hours were reduced across the board for employees and positions were not eliminated due to the error. He added there was one resignation that could be contributed to the error, although the employee had plans to resign before the reduction of hours.

Council agreed the proposal for \$20,000 from operational wage lines should be transferred to Rescue-Wages to aid in paying EMS staff and asked for the item to be placed on the next Town Council agenda for a vote.

Mr. Wingfield noted a public hearing for the water rate increase would need to be advertised and that after the public hearing for the increase, Council could then vote to approve the budget.

IV. Adjournment

There being no further business to bring before Council, Mayor Barber adjourned the meeting at 7:40 p.m.


Tracy Heinline, Clerk of Council


D. Michael Barber, Mayor