



# COUNCIL

## Communicates

### Highlights from City Council Meetings

**January 20, 2026**

Petersburg Public Library

#### City Council Members

Ward 1

**Marlow Jones**

[mjones@petersburg-va.org](mailto:mjones@petersburg-va.org)

Ward 2

**Darrin Hill**

**Vice Mayor**

[dhill@petersburg-va.org](mailto:dhill@petersburg-va.org)

Ward 3

**Samuel Parham**

**Mayor**

[sparham@petersburg-va.org](mailto:sparham@petersburg-va.org)

Ward 4

**Charles Cuthbert**

[ccuthbert@petersburg-va.org](mailto:ccuthbert@petersburg-va.org)

Ward 5

**W. Howard Myers**

[whowardmyers@petersburg-va.org](mailto:whowardmyers@petersburg-va.org)

Ward 6

**Anette Smith-Lee**

[alee@petersburg-va.org](mailto:alee@petersburg-va.org)

Ward 7

**Arnold Westbrook**

[awestbrook@petersburg-va.org](mailto:awestbrook@petersburg-va.org)

#### Please Note:

These are not the official minutes of the City Council meeting.

The official minutes and agendas can be accessed on the city website:

[www.petersburg-va.org](http://www.petersburg-va.org)

Please note that the official minutes are not posted until approved by City Council.

#### Closed Session

4:00 pm

1. Roll Call  
Councilors Smith-Lee, Cuthbert, and Jones were not present at roll call.
2. Closed Session  
The purpose of this meeting is to convene in the closed session pursuant to:
  - a. §2.2-3711(A)(3) of the Code of Virginia for the Purpose of Discussion or Consideration of the Acquisition of Real Property for a Public Purpose and the Disposition of Publicly Held Real Property Where Discussion in an Open Meeting Would Adversely Affect the Bargaining Position or Negotiating Strategy of the Public Body, Specifically Including But Not Limited to the Acquisition and Disposition of Real Property; and
  - b. §2.2-3711(A)(7) and (8) of the Code of Virginia for the Purpose of Receiving Legal Advice and Status Update from the City Attorney and Legal Consultation Regarding the Subject of Actual or Probable Litigation and Specific Legal Matters Requiring the Provision of Legal Advice by the City Attorney, Specifically Including But Not Limited to Discussion Regarding the Legal Requirements of Certain Federal Criminal Justice Grant Conditions; 8 USC § 1373; O.B.B.A. Public Law 119-21, and Other Probable Litigation and Legal Matters Requiring the Advice of the City Attorney; and
  - c. §2.2-3711(A)(1) of the Code of Virginia for the Purpose of Discussion Pertaining to Performance, Assignment, and Appointment of Specific Public Employees of the City of Petersburg, Specifically Including But Not Limited to Discussion of the Performance, Assignment, and Appointment of Specific Public Officers of the City of Petersburg

3. Adjournment

**City Council Regular Meeting**

5:00 pm

1. Roll Call  
**All present.**
2. Prayer  
**Led by Vice Mayor Hill.**
3. Pledge of Allegiance  
**Led by Mayor Parham.**
4. Determination of the Presence of a Quorum  
**Quorum present.**
5. Proclamations/Recognitions/Presentation of Ceremonial Proclamations  
**None.**
6. Responses to Previous Public Information Posted  
**Council Communicates.**
7. Approval of Consent Agenda (to include minutes of previous meetings):
  - a. Minutes of Previous Meeting(s):
    - January 6, 2026 City Council Closed Session Minutes
    - January 6, 2026 City Council Work Session Minutes**Approved.**
8. Presentations
  - a. Presentation of the 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR)
    - David Foley, Robinson Farmer & Cox
    - \$8.6 M+ Added to Fund Balance for FY24/25**No action taken.**
  - b. Potential Refunding Opportunity – Davenport  
**A motion was approved to enter the process of finding lower interest rates.**
9. Official Public Hearings
  - a. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 Petersburg City Public Schools Budget  
Public Hearing  
Barb Rudolph  
Ms. Rudolph inquired whether the \$2.9 million allocated to the schools in the previous year's budget, but unspent, is intended for capital projects. The City Attorney stated that there had been a discussion about categorical funding for

future planning.

A motion to table was approved until Schools make a presentation on how money will be spent. Schools will present at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting in February.

b. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Amendment to the FY26 Grants Fund

No public comments.

Approved.

c. A Public Hearing for Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the Intention of the Petersburg City Council to Authorize the Issuance of Not to Exceed \$21,462,462 Principal Amount of General Obligation Water and Sewer Revenue Bonds for the Purpose of Financing Improvements to the City's Public Sewer Systems Facilities - Virginia Resources Authority Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund

No public comments.

Approved.

d. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing the City Manager to Execute the Purchase Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and I AM POWER to Purchase the City-Owned Properties at 35 and 17 Bank Street, Located in Petersburg, VA

Removed from the agenda. The project will go back to EDA for further consideration.

e. A Public Hearing for Consideration of an Ordinance to Authorize the Execution of a Deed of Easement at 3101 Johnson Road

No public comment.

Approved.

10. Public Information Period

A public information period, limited in time to 30 minutes, shall be part of an Order of Business at each regular council meeting. Each speaker shall be a resident or business owner of the City and shall be limited to three minutes. No speaker will be permitted to speak on any item scheduled for consideration on the regular docket of the meeting at which the speaker is to speak. The order of speakers, limited by the 30-minute time period, shall be determined as follows:

a. First, in chronological order of the notice, persons who have notified the Clerk no later than 12:00 noon of the day of the meeting,

b. Second, in chronological order of their sign up, persons who have signed a sign-up sheet placed by the Clerk in the rear of the meeting room prior to the meeting removed from consent agenda

Ajani Sekou

Mr. Sekou announced the Gateway Art Center's February 13 opening on Sycamore Street. He then began drawing an allegorical comparison between the City government and the layers of Hell in Dante Alighieri's Inferno. However, he exceeded his allotted time before finishing the analogy.

#### Claudette Stewart / Patty Hurst

Ms. Stewart and Ms. Hurst discussed the history of the former Peabody School, highlighting numerous prominent Black leaders from Petersburg who were alumni. They advocated for the Peabody complex to be transferred to PALDC.

#### Ninfa Amador Hernandez

Ms. Hernandez, the daughter of immigrant homeowners on Augusta Avenue, expressed her concerns about the safety and rights of immigrant families in Petersburg. As a graduate of Maggie L. Walker Governor's School and a public policy professional, she shared her personal connection to the issue, recounting the recent abduction of a family member by unmarked vehicles without cause or warrant. She revealed that a family member had been taken out of the country and that they had been unable to contact him for 12 days. Ms. Hernandez highlighted the fear and harm caused by ICE's actions, including incidents in Petersburg. She urged the City Council to take action to protect immigrant families, ensure residents know their rights, and prevent warrantless ICE operations within city limits.

#### Dr. Kenneth Lewis

Dr. Lewis expressed his ongoing hesitation about the casino, hoping it would amount to more than just a "Billy Graham tent." He noted that he had seen casino advertisements that failed to mention Petersburg. Additionally, he expressed frustration with the Council's apparent lack of understanding of the Peabody campus.

#### Barb Rudolph

Ms. Rudolph emphasized the need for caution regarding federal programs coming to Petersburg, specifically referencing the "Make Petersburg Healthy Again" initiative (HHS). She noted that President Trump is unpopular in the area and that slogans like "MAHA" or "MAGA" carry negative connotations for many, discouraging participation in federal programs. She criticized photo opportunities with Governor Youngkin, suggesting they do not benefit Petersburg, and expressed concern about ICE's presence in the city. Additionally, she pointed out that a former delegate has been making negative remarks about the General Assembly's actions, and she fears that Petersburg is being positioned as a demonstration site.

#### Lela Thompson

Ms. Thompson asked to see the RFP for the I Am Power project. Wants an experienced developer. When will construction begin fixing the Bank Street bridge? **Engineers are developing the design plans for repairs to the Bank Street bridge and to address future flooding issues in the area. Repairs should begin this year. The grant funding for this project does not expire in June.**

### Dolly Holmes

Ms. Holmes mentioned that numerous groups have provided advice to Petersburg over the years. In 2007, the RuDat study emphasized that no building should obstruct the view of Lady Justice. However, there is no indication that these recommendations are being implemented. Rather than considering random proposals, the focus should first be on revisiting and adhering to past guidance.

### Kevin Newby

Mr. Newton shared that he attended the City Council meeting to listen and observe. He acknowledged residents' passion for their city and noted the valuable comments being made. While he sees blighted buildings, he also notices significant construction activity. He questioned the focus on building new houses instead of rehabilitating existing ones. As a military veteran and a resident with an income above Petersburg's median, he has also worked in local businesses. He emphasized that the city's true strength lies in its people, who vote for their leaders in trust.

### Teresa Brown

Ms. Brown shared that years ago, she was assured that the rainwater fees she and others paid would benefit the community. However, over time, the flooding has only worsened, with water levels rising year after year. She pointed out that the trenches dug have proven ineffective, leaving flooding a persistent and significant issue.

### Pam Newton

Ms. Newton stated that there is citizen discontent, citing perceived disregard by Council members. She noted frustration over the lack of an elected Mayor, despite past efforts to change this. As a newcomer, she has encountered troubling comments about unfulfilled promises and inaction. While she initially planned to discuss the "I Am Power" initiative, she emphasized the importance of prioritizing the renovation of existing homes, as "old bones last." Ms. Newton also mentioned keeping an eye on the actions of the DC government while observing Petersburg's approach.

### Javon Guerrier

Mr. Guerrier, a teacher at Petersburg High School, spoke about the potential capital infrastructure funds available to schools and emphasized the importance of including teachers and students in decisions about how those funds are used. Highlighting the future impact of the AI revolution, he stressed that students are more likely to engage when their learning environment is well-maintained and not falling apart.

### Vernal Gannaway

Mr. Gannaway stated that he attended Peabody before transferring to Petersburg High School to complete his studies, a decision made by his father. He remarked that he has received more communication from Peabody than from his alma mater. He also expressed frustration over waiting nearly a decade for his streetlight to be repaired. He urged the Council to prioritize fixing and improving the city's infrastructure before focusing on smaller tasks, such as street sweeping.

### 11. Business or reports from the Mayor or other Members of City Council Councilman Cuthbert

Councilman Cuthbert praised Code Enforcement, led by Deputy City Manager Ken Miller, for their impactful work. He highlighted a renovated house on Sycamore Street with before-and-after photos, as well as similar images of a Dumpster behind Mayton Lofts, showcasing the improvements. Councilman Cuthbert emphasized the importance of Mr. Miller's efforts to the city and expressed his support for categorical school funding.

### Councilman Jones

Councilman Jones expressed frustration with newcomers who criticize Council decisions, noting that the City is tackling issues that should have been addressed decades ago. He highlighted significant progress being made today compared to the past and emphasized the need for the City to be self-reliant, rather than depending on federal or state funds. Councilman Jones acknowledged the high costs of meeting citizens' demands and questioned where the money would come from. He warned against outside influences trying to divide Petersburg and encouraged unity among all residents, regardless of race or background. He also urged citizens to speak up when they see issues and emphasized that Council members serve not for money, but to improve the City, which he believes is making great strides.

### Councilman Westbrook

Councilman Westbrook expressed gratitude to Councilman Jones for his passion and reminded everyone to understand the current style of government, noting that the ward system was established by Council 40 years ago. He mentioned the importance of preparing for the upcoming snow and highlighted the availability of the Comfort Station. He also announced a Ward 7 meeting scheduled for March.

### Councilman Myers

Councilman Myers reflected on his 15 years of service, noting that those who voiced negativity at the Council meeting have left. He questioned the criticism of the current mayor, emphasizing that only negatives are highlighted. Councilman Myers shared that 200 houses in Ward 5 were removed and replaced because they needed to come down, and he pointed out the City's positive financial standing. With election season approaching, he acknowledged the surge of negativity. He reaffirmed his love for the City.

### Vice Mayor Hill

Vice Mayor Hill acknowledged that much has already been said, noting that election season often brings heightened activity. He encouraged open conversations with Council members and highlighted the casino's soft opening, describing it as beautiful while emphasizing that the City is much more than just the casino. The Vice Mayor pointed to ongoing infrastructure projects across the City and reassured residents that Peabody remains a priority for Council. He explained that Peabody was previously managed by alumni but had to be reclaimed by the City due to upkeep challenges. He also reminded residents that new people are observing not just City Council but also how the community behaves, urging everyone to "speak life, not death."

### Mayor Parham

Mayor Parham acknowledged Paul Mullin, the City Treasurer, for his election as president of the Petersburg Democratic Committee. He also extended a warm welcome to Jeff Stoke, the new Deputy City Manager for Community Development.

12. Items removed from Consent Agenda  
**None.**
13. Finance and Budget Report
  - a. Department of Finance Monthly Update  
**It was reported that the City's spending is on target with the budget. No action was taken.**
14. Unfinished Business
  - a. A Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Amend the Development Agreement Between the City of Petersburg and NUWAVE DEVELOPMENT LLC for the Properties at 851 E. Bank Street, 1420 Ferndale Ave, 1162 Hinton Street, 417 S. Jefferson Street, 921 Priam Street, 1150 Rome Street, 201 Terrace Ave., Petersburg, Virginia 23803 to Extract the Reverter Date  
**Approved. Councilman Cuthbert voted no.**
15. New Business  
**None.**
16. City Manager's Report and Special Reports  
City Manager March Altman urged citizens to prepare for a potentially severe snowstorm. He thanked the City Council for their support during a recent family emergency, sharing that his mother-in-law had successfully received a long-awaited kidney transplant and was recovering well. Altman expressed gratitude for working with a supportive team that felt like family.

Councilman Jones commended the City's public safety teams for their proactive storm preparations and highlighted the critical role of Public Works. He proposed a 3% raise for Public Works staff, similar to first responders, and made a motion to formally recognize the Department of Public Works as first responders.

Approved.

18. Business or reports from the City Attorney

None.

19. Adjournment