

TOWN OF RICHLANDS

REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

The Richlands Town Council held a “Regular Monthly Meeting” on Tuesday, July 8, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the Richlands Council Chambers with the following present:

- Mayor: Rod. D. Cury
- Town Manager: Ron Holt
- Project Manager: Susan Whitt
- Town Clerk: Amanda Beheler
- Town Attorney: Mike Thomas
- Finance Manager: Ronnie Campbell
- Council Members: Seth White, Gary Jackson, Jordan Bales, Jan White, and Laura Mollo.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Mayor Rod Cury and opened with the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance by Jan White.

IN RE: Additions, Deletions, or Corrections to the Agenda

Mayor Cury made the following additions/deletions to the agenda:

- Move Recognition of Little League 6, 7, and 8 year old Girls Coach Pitch Team to the August Agenda
- Move Enterprise Zone Update to the August Agenda
- Move McGill Associates Update to 1st on this Agenda
- Add (c) Budget Amendment under Finance Directors Report
- Add Resolution R-2025-07-03 to Agenda Items

Upon a motion by Gary Jackson, seconded by Seth White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5-0 to approve the agenda as amended.

IN RE: Authorization to Pay Bills (June)

There were no questions regarding the Bills for June.

Upon a motion by Gary Jackson, seconded by Jan White, and the unanimous the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5-0 to approve paying the bills for June.

IN RE: Minutes

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Jan White, and the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 3-0, with Laura Mollo and Gary Jackson abstaining (due to not being present at the June Meeting), to approve the June 10, 2025, Regular Scheduled Meeting Minutes.

IN RE: Scheduled Public Comments

There were no Scheduled Public Comments.

IN RE: Unscheduled Public Comments

There were no Unscheduled Public Comments.

IN RE: McGill Associates- Update w/ Wes Fleming (via Zoom)

Wes Fleming from McGill Associates presented a PowerPoint presentation regarding updates to the Wastewater Plant Project to the Council (via Zoom).

Mr. Fleming advised they had received several bids, and all came back higher than what was budgeted for the project. Mr. Fleming stated that his firm has been trying to reduce the scope of the project to the most critical items and advised that the proposed schedule that McGill is presenting to the Council will be dependent upon the DEQ’s approval.

Mr. Fleming presented the following proposed schedule to the Council.

- July 1, 2025- Submitted the amendment to the PER to DEQ for approval
- Hope to have the DEQ approval for the amendment by July 25, 2025
- Will proceed forward with revising the drawings and contracts that were previously established and submit the amended bid documents to DEQ by September 19, 2025
- Hope to have approval from DEQ by October 10, 2025
- Will be prepared to advertise for bids by October 13, 2025
- Planning a pre-bid meeting on October 28, 2025
- Plan to open bids on November 25, 2025
- Hope to provide the Town with a recommendation of award by December 5, 2025
- Plan to have a pre-construction meeting on January 5, 2026
- Plan to have a substantial completion date of October 31, 2026
- Plan to have a final completion date of November 30, 2026

Mayor Curry thanked Mr. Fleming for the update.

Mr. Holt stated that this project had been around for several years and that it was an exciting time for Richlands to see this project coming to fruition, it was much needed.

Mr. Holt advised that both staff and consultants from McGill have worked tirelessly in the last several months to make this happen.

Mr. Holt stated he is also working with Mr. Thomas regarding the loan with VRA and would need to have a Public Hearing to accept it soon.

IN RE: VRA Resolution R-2025-07-03

Mr. Thomas advised that this Resolution gives Mr. Holt the ability to work with Davenport to apply on the Towns behalf for the VRA funding.

Mr. Holt stated that Davenport will apply on the Towns behalf by August 1, 2025.

Mr. Holt advised this is not additional funding, only consolidating short-term financing.

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve Resolution R-2025-07-03.

IN RE: FEMA Updates- Susan Whitt

Mrs. Whitt advised that the staff is still working with FEMA on the Flood of February 2025.

Mrs. Whitt stated that the staff is identifying damage from the flood and the costs of the materials to fix those damages.

Mrs. Whitt advised that one of the two main projects that they are working on and gathering information for FEMA is the Maple Lane Culvert. The Town plans to purchase the property as previously discussed and reroute the road to come out a different way and eliminate the use of the Maple Lane Culvert. However, FEMA has asked that the Town get a quote on the cost of replacing the culvert as well.

Mrs. Whitt advised that the other main project the staff is working on with FEMA is the Laramie Road Culvert, located down by the Wastewater Plant. Mrs. Whitt stated this has been identified as a flood contributor as it is too small for the volume of water that passes through there in a flood event. Mrs. Whitt advised the primary solution that they would like to see funded is a span bridge that would open up the clearance for water and hopefully eliminate the throttling of the debris that contributes to the flooding.

Mrs. Whitt also advised they are identifying the emergency response work that was conducted during this disaster. Fire, Rescue, and Police were essential to providing rescue and safety measures for the citizens. The Line Maintenance Department was called out for a sewer line break at Hill Creek during the flood that had to be fixed right away. The Electric Department had to restore the transformers that were knocked out by the flood waters behind the Ramey's/Rose's area. Mrs. Whitt advised these hours, as well as equipment hours, must be accounted for the event.

Mrs. Whitt advised that everything is still on-going, and staff will continue to meet with FEMA. Mr. Holt advised that Mrs. Whitt has been the point of contact on this project and has done a tremendous job.

IN RE: National Incident Management System Resolution R-2025-07-01

Mr. Holt advised that after the last Council meeting, they had a discussion, and it was their desire to move forward with the Town having its own Emergency Management System. This would give the Town the ability to work directly with state and federal partners who provide assistance in times of emergency. Mr. Holt stated that this Resolutions and R-2025-07-02 both are the next steps in achieving this.

Matt Whited gave a brief back story on how the Town got to this point and the next steps.

Mr. Whited also advised that Chief Holt will serve as the Emergency Management Director and he would be the Emergency Management Deputy Director.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve Resolution R-2025-07-01.

Mrs. Mollo stated that she is very excited about this and that it's a very positive thing. Mrs. Mollo also stated that she has full confidence in the people of Richlands.

IN RE: Emergency Operations Plan resolution R-2025-07-02

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve Resolution R-2025-07-02.

Mr. Holt thanked Mr. Whited for all his time and effort in getting these documents ready.

IN RE: Detour Update

Mr. Holt advised he initially had a lot of reservations about the detour, but there had been no collisions at this time.

IN RE: Ratify Phone Vote for Tobacco Commission Loan Closure

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Jordan Bales and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to ratify the phone poll taken in September regarding the Tobacco Commission Loan Closure.

IN RE: Update on Tobacco Commission Loan and AMLAR Grants

Mr. Campbell advised that the \$2M Tobacco Commission Loan closed and will reimburse for the upfront costs.

Mr. Campbell also advised staff are still working on the AMLAR Grant, and it should wrap up by the end of the year.

IN RE: Monthly Financial Report

Mr. Campbell gave a brief overview of the Monthly Financial Report for May as follows:

- General Fund- Year to Date Net Income Loss is -\$1,298,946
- Water- Year to Date Net Income Loss is \$50,810
- Sewer- Year to Date Net Income Loss is \$366,222
- Water and Sewer Line Maintenance Year to Date Net Income Loss -\$596,166
- Electric w/o Generator Year to Date Net Income Loss -\$1,141,049
- General Fund- Reserved Cash Balance \$2,410,553
- General Fund- Unreserved Cash Balance \$1,676,784
- Water Department Reserved Cash Balance \$1,116,588

- Water Department Unreserved Cash Balance \$2,074,483
- Sewer Department Reserved Cash Balance \$458,490
- Sewer Department Unreserved Cash Balance \$599,946
- Electric Department Reserved Cash Balance \$1,800,123
- Electric Department Unreserved Cash Balance -\$1,499,382

Mr. Campbell advised that once they close June, they would like to hold a workshop to go back through the financials in depth and discuss shortfalls and make plans, etc.

Mr. Jackson asked when the new rates went into effect, and Mr. Holt advised July 1.

Mr. Holt stated they are not comfortable with where the balances are at this time and that the rate increases was a good first step in getting the balances back to where they need to be. Mr. Holt also stated once they are able to pull over the Tobacco and AMLAR funds they will be able to pay back the Fund Balances on the electrical side.

Mr. Holt advised he would like to hold the workshop in September.

Mr. White inquired about there being no sales tax listed on page 2. Mr. Campbell advised he had contributed it to timing but would get clarification for Mr. White.

Mrs. Mollo stated that some departments are very high in Miscellaneous and asked why, specifically the Fire Departments Equipment. Mr. Holt advised this was because the town had received a \$100k grant from the county to purchase the air packs with.

IN RE: Budget Amendment

Mr. Campbell advised the purpose of this amendment is to appropriate funds to the Public Works Street Department Infrastructure Depreciation Capital Account and the Fund Balance Allocation Revenue Account (Unrestricted Funds) in the amount of \$50,000 for the Town of Richlands purchase of the Maple Lan Property and associated road improvements.

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to approve this Budget Amendment.

IN RE: Electrical Committee Report

Mr. White gave a brief update on the Electrical Committee to the Council.

Mr. White stated that the Town must at least break even on the power costs, selling it cheaper than they are purchasing is not sustainable.

Mr. White advised stated that he pays electric bills in Town and to AEP, and that his AEP accounts have continuously increased over the past few years, whereas his Town accounts have not, causing the Town to buy the power at higher rates than they are selling it for to its customers. Mr. White stated that unfortunately the Town must pass that cost along to its customers.

Mr. White explained the benefits of the Generator project.

Mr. White stated the Electrical Committee recommends increasing by .0209 to the PCA.

Mr. White suggested that the Council monitor these costs, discuss it at every meeting, and adjust costs when necessary.

Mr. Holt advised this was a unanimous recommendation from the Electrical Committee and that they recognized that the Town can't keep absorbing all of the cost increases.

Mrs. Mollo advised that Richlands is the 9th lowest in the state for electrical rates.

Mrs. White asked Lynda Mitchell if her agency offered any assistance to citizens who cannot pay their electrical bills.

Mrs. Mitchell and the Council briefly discussed several options that were available to the citizens.

Mr. Bales suggested giving DSS and/or HUD space to set up once a month to allow citizens to talk with them about their programs that are available for energy assistance.

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Jordan Bales and the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 4-1, with Laura Mollo voting no, to approve the PCA increase of .0209.

Council requested to add this as a monthly Agenda Item to continue monitoring.

Mr. Holt advised that in the coming weeks he would be discussing with Council and the Electrical Committee about possibly bringing a consultant onboard to help the Town navigate the complex world of buying fuel once the generator is operational.

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Jordan Bales and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to allow Mr. Holt to write an RFP for an energy consultant and a contract attorney, with the help of Bluebridge and Mr. Thomas.

IN RE: Attorney Report

E/IDA Appointments

Mr. Thomas advised there were two open vacancies on the E/IDA Board, Jeff Casey's expired and Mr. Buskill resigned.

Upon a motion by Jan White, seconded by Seth White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to reappoint Jeff Casey to the E/IDA Board.

Mayor Cury advised that he had received a message from Robbie Elswick late this afternoon advising he was interested in serving on the E/IDA Board.

Mr. White advised the Council will take that into consideration and add it to the August Agenda.

Planning Commission Appointment

Mr. Thomas stated there was one opening on the Planning Commission due to Elaine Holmes resigning. Mayor Cury advised he had spoken with Mrs. Holmes, and she advised she resigned due to a personal issue, but loved the Town and would love for the Council to keep her in mind in the future, would like to serve again when she is able.

Mr. Jackson requested this be put on the August Agenda as well.

Zoning Board of Appeals Appointment

Mr. Thomas advised that Barry Alley rotated off the Zoning Board of Appeals this year, there is a five-year term rotation on this Board, and he does not wish to serve another five years.

Mr. Thomas advised Greg Horn is interested in serving on the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Seth White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to allow Mr. Thomas to prepare a petition and order to send to the Circuit Court, to appoint Greg Horn to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Ordinance O-2025-08-01

Mr. Thomas advised that he was asked to draft this Ordinance at the last meeting and is ready to present it to Council.

Mr. Thomas advised the Ordinance is to restrict any current employee from running for Town Council that would be concurrent with their employment.

Mrs. Mollo advised this was something that she had brought up because she has personally witnessed Town employees being Council members in the past and it did not go well.

Mrs. Mollo spoke briefly about the potential for disaster and the conflict of interest that could arise if an employee were to be appointed to the Council.

Mr. White stated that he agreed with Mrs. Mollo.

Mr. Thomas presented Ordinance O-2025-08-01.

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to acknowledge the first presentation of Ordinance 2025 O-2025-08-0.

Mayor Cury asked Mr. Thomas if this was constitutional and legal to do in Virginia. Mr. Thomas advised this certain concept was presented to VRSA and they advised it was their opinion that this could be done. Mayor Cury stated that it was fine, however he stated his biggest concern was that they were limiting people's ability to participate in their own government, particularly the government in which they work.

Mr. Thomas advised the Council that he had just received an e-mail stating there may be another Opioid Settlement, but that he would have to see what the terms of it were and would be able to update the Council on this at the August meeting.

Mr. White and Mrs. Mollo both asked Mr. Thomas if the Town could negotiate something with the County this time, so that Richlands receives something for their participation, because they received nothing from the first settlement. Mr. White asked if Mr. Thomas could ask the other Town attorneys if they could all go to the county as a unified force to ask for a portion of the opioid settlement.

Mr. White also asked Mr. Thomas if they could go to the County and ask for a portion of the revenue from the Casino. Mr. White advised that most Towns across Southwest Virginia are receiving these revenues that are being distributed to them by the County, except Tazewell County.

IN RE: Town Manager Report

Chief Holt gave the following updates to Council:

Electoral Board

Mr. Holt advised the Council that he had spoken with Brian Earls and some of the Electoral Board Members regarding Richlands Police Department being the current polling location. Mr. Holt advised that since he took over as Chief of Police he has moved as many public activities as he could away from the police department, due to safety reasons. The last thing that he hasn't moved is using it as a polling location. Mr. Holt briefly spoke to the Council about the safety concerns he has and the possibility of using Town Hall as the new polling location. Mr. Holt requested direction from Council.

Council briefly discussed each location and came to the consensus to not move the polling location to the Town Hall.

Animal Control Issues

Mr. Holt advised Council that the police department has had no luck hiring an Animal Control Officer and dog calls continue to be a real issue. Mr. Holt stated that going forward, if the animal is not a public safety issue or injured, they are going to give the animal time to locate its home on its own before taking any action. Mr. Holt wanted to let the Council know in case they start receiving calls from unhappy citizens.

Power Outage Staff Recognition

Mr. Holt spoke to the Council about the recent power outage caused by a semi-truck that took out a pole in Town and how the staff handled it so well. Mr. Holt stated he wanted to brag on staff and let them know how proud he was of their hard work and team effort during the outage.

Cleverly's

Mr. Holt advised that Matt Whited has created a Security & Safety Plan for this event, as part of their contractual obligations. Mr. Holt also advised that Mrs. Whit has been the Point of Contact for this event.

Mrs. Mollo advised they are selling VIP tickets for \$20 each for the Cleverlys.

TACS

Mr. Thomas advised that at last month's meeting the Council voted to accept a real estate property donation of the McCall property and when he reached out about the taxes, he learned that the property had back taxes that had been turned over to TACS for collection. Mr. Thomas asked what the Councils desire is to move forward.

Council asked if Mr. Thomas could get the amount owed and advise them.

IN RE: Council Member Reports

Laura Mollo-

- Stated that a lot of people have reached out to her about Teen Venture and she has learned that they have opened to the public and are breaking the agreement that the Town has with them. Mrs. Mollo advised that there were children who have made complaints of being assaulted at Teen Venture and some of the sitting Board Members of Teen Venture are currently on a police investigation video that is public record and have admitted that they knew children were being taken in and out of the building by adults at random and it is very unsettling to know that they have went back on their agreement.
- Thanked Jan White for all her hard work on the Freedom Festival and advised of several instances where she has donated money for things, such as candy for a Christmas Float, and never wanting recognition or credit for it.
- Thanked Susan Whitt and all the staff for their hard work during events also.

Jan White-

- Thanked all the employees for their help during Freedom Festival.

Jordan Bales-

- Gave a shoutout to the following Little League Teams that went to state
 - Coach Pitch Girls won District & Sectionals
 - Girls 11 & 12 Softball won District and went to State

Rick Wood- Absent

Gary Jackson-

- Thanked the Town for the Road Detour change, and even though he voted against it, it has turned out better than he anticipated and the citizens are happy.
- Inquired about the yellow curbing and asked if it is on the list to be painted once the paving is complete. Mr. Holt advised that it is not at this time, but he is bringing this issue to Council in September and would like to include it in next years budget.

Seth White-

- Stated the paving and striping looks great.
- Advised the Town is looking good
- Stated that the Freedom Festival was great and thanked Mrs. White for all her hard work.
- Encouraged everyone to come out and see the Cleverlys.

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to suspend Roberts Rules of Order.
Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to amend the Agenda to add the following 3 items to Executive Session:

- VA Code Section 2.2-3711 (A3)- Property Acquisition- Spearhead Trail and a Parcel on Railroad Avenue.
- VA Code Section 2.2-3711 (A1)- Personnel- Legal Services

IN RE: Mayor Comments

Mayor Cury-

- Thanked Mrs. White and staff for their work on the Freedom Festival.
- Advised he looks forward to all the events, including the Cleverlys.

Mayor Cury declared a ten-minute recess.

IN RE: Executive Session

Mayor Cury advised the Council would be going into Executive Session pursuant to:

- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(6) – Contract Negotiations
 - Kents Ridge/Front St. Intersection VDOT Project
 - Spearhead Trails Discussion
 - PSA Contract Discussion
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(3) – Property Acquisition
 - Railroad Avenue
 - Spearhead Trails
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(1) – Personnel
 - Legal Services Conflict

Upon a motion by Jan White, seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to go into Executive Session.

Upon a motion by Gary Jackson, seconded by Seth White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted to return to Open Session.


Upon a motion by Gary Jackson, seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council certified that only the following VA Code Sections were discussed during the Executive Session.

- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(6) – Contract Negotiations
 - Kents Ridge/Front St. Intersection VDOT Project
 - Spearhead Trails Discussion
 - PSA Contract Discussion
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(3) – Property Acquisition
 - Railroad Avenue
 - Spearhead Trails
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(1) – Personnel
 - Legal Services Conflict

IN RE: Adjournment

Upon a motion by Gary Jackson, seconded by Seth White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the meeting was adjourned.


Rodney P. Cury, Mayor


Amanda Beheler, Town Clerk