

TOWN OF RICHLANDS
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING

The Richlands Town Council held a “Special Called Meeting” on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at 6:15pm in the Richlands Council Chambers with the following present:

Mayor: Rod Cury
Town Manager: Ron Holt
Town Attorney: Mike Thomas
Finance Manager: Ronnie Campbell
Project Manager: Absent
Town Clerk: Amanda Beheler
Council Members: Seth White, Rick Wood, Jordan Bales, Jan White, and Laura Mollo.

The Special Called Meeting was called to order at 6:15pm and opened with the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance by Mayor Cury.

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

The following additions/deletions were made to the agenda:

Mr. White requested the following changes be made to the agenda:

- Remove I/EDA

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, 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: Scheduled Public Comments

Ellen Elmes, 7902 Pea Patch Road, Jewell Ridge, VA

- Stated the Council would break many hearts if they decided to close the Teen Center, including its founders, volunteers, etc.
- Spoke on the many artistic touches that she has put on Teen Venture over the years; including a project she worked with Doug Branton and Micheal Smith on.
- Advised the teens’ hearts will be broken also, teens who are looking for a community and other teens that they can relate to. Stated that some kids come to Teen Venture to be safe and have a hot meal.
- Advised the hearts of the community would also be broken if Teen Venture is closed because it is important to so many people. Stated the Council has not openly addressed rumors that have been circulating about Teen Venture, only going into closed sessions to discuss Teen Venture and are not letting the community in to tell them how they feel.
- Advised that the four faces that were painted in the four corners of the Teen Center Café represent the four winds that came from a world atlas that was given to her mother in 1937 by her grandfather and in the inside cover was the four winds, and had nothing to do with the devil, it was a way to honor her mother.
- Asked that the Council open their minds, their hearts, and their doors.

Mrs. Mollo advised Mrs. Elmes that the Council only goes into Closed Session due to potential lawsuits and that they were holding a Public Hearing regarding Teen Venture next month and she would be giving a presentation that would answer a lot of her questions.

Mrs. Elmes asked if that presentation would be given before or after the decision has been made about Teen Venture. Mrs. Mollo advised that the decision has been made. Mrs. Elmes stated that was why she was here tonight and it didn’t make sense.

Mr. Holt advised that it is a requirement that Council holds a Public Hearing before they can take a vote on the final sale of Teen Venture.

Mr. Thomas advised there has not been an official decision, that it would have to be made after the Public Hearing next month.

Mr. White advised that Council has only approved an RFP to hire an Auctioneer.

Mayor Cury advised the Public Hearing would be on October 14 at 4:45pm and encouraged anyone who is interested to attend.

Henry Stiltner- Not Present.

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
 - RFP Discussion for Generator Financing

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to go into Executive Session.

Mayor Cury advised that Mr. Kooch, Financial Advisor from Davenport would be in attendance of the Executive Session.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to return to Open Session.

Upon a motion by Jan White, seconded by Seth 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
 - RFP Discussion for Generator Financing

IN RE: R-2025-09-02

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Rick Wood and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to adopt R-2025-09-02.

IN RE: Spearhead Trails

Mr. Holt read a letter that he wrote to Council, that was included in their Council Packets titled “Request for amended ATV Route Access in the Town of Richlands”.

Steve Pike, Government Relations Director with the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority, spoke to the Council regarding the proposed amended ATV Route Access.

Mr. Pike advised the following:

- History- Southwest Regional Recreation Authority was created in 2008 by the General Assembly and was put in place to emphasize outdoor recreation in seven coalfield counties in Southwest Virginia.
- Economic Impact of Trail System- There are currently 400 miles of motorized and non-motorized trail systems within these counties. Pocohontas, St. Paul, Coeburn, and Southern Gap are some of these trail systems.
- VA Tourism recently commissioned a firm out of Chicago to look at the many points of interest in the Commonwealth as far as tourism goes, and the Trail System in Southwest Virginia ranked in the top 5. Mr. Pike advised people drive from all over the United States to utilize the Trail System.
- Advised he recently sat down with the Presidents of Southwest Virginia Community College and Mountain Empire Community College and talked with them about Workforce Development opportunities and how they can partner with the colleges to generate opportunities for area youth.
- Stated one of the main goals is for the Trail Systems to create a stronger economy with increased tourism activity.

- Advised he had been in contact with Pocohontas Land Company, who owns a tract of property that is over 4,700 acres adjacent to the Town and would like to have conversations with them about creating trail systems on the land that would eventually allow riders to come into the Town of Richlands.

Mr. Bales asked Mr. Pike why he made the decision to switch over to outdoor recreation with a law enforcement background.

Mr. Pike advised he retired from Capital Police in 2022 and was asked to come to the Southwest Regional Recreation Authority to help them move along as a State Authority, in which he agreed. Mr. Pike stated that he wasn't looking for a job at the time, he was looking forward to retirement and building his home in Scott County, but after several members of the General Assembly and others had reached out to him regarding the job, he made the decision to take it. Mr. Pike also advised he has been in public service his entire career, beginning with serving in the military when he was eighteen years old and thirty-four years of law enforcement. Mr. Pike stated when someone needs his assistance, he tries to step in and help.

Mr. Bales asked if he had seen good economic impact on the communities that he has served.

Mr. Pike stated he absolutely had, that in communities like Pocohontas there are no houses for sale, they have all been turned into Airbnb's, In St. Paul there is a new hotel and businesses that have come along, and the facilities at Southern Gap.

Mr. Pike advised the trail systems have very strict rules that are enforced by Trail Rangers and riders are required to sign a waiver and have a permit. The trail systems are family friendly.

Mr. Pike also advised the trails are maintained by maintenance operators.

Mrs. Mollo asked if they had a Trail Ranger to enforce anyone who is on the trails after sunset. Mr. Pike advised that they don't have personnel out twenty-four hours a day, so they monitor localities for complaints and adjust their staffing accordingly and work with local law enforcement.

Mrs. Mollo asked who is responsible for paying for the signage. Mr. Pike said they recently purchased a machine to create the signs.

Mrs. Mollo asked if they owned the property that they are asking to put the trails on. Mr. Pike advised not at this time, they are talking with Pocohontas Land Company.

Mrs. Mollo asked what happens if Council approves this and they don't buy the property. Mr. Holt advised the first step would be getting approval and then they would work with Spearhead to see if that property acquisition took place.

Mrs. Mollo advised she had posted a picture of the proposed route on Facebook and a lot of the people from outside the neighborhood supported it, but not residents from inside the neighborhood. Mrs. Mollo asked if there were any other alternatives to come into Town, other than coming through a neighborhood. Mr. Pike stated that was the best route to date that they found after working with VDOT.

Mrs. Mollo asked if they could hold a Public Hearing in November to allow citizens in that neighborhood to give their opinions. Mr. Pike stated he thought that was a great idea and he wants citizens to ask questions, so they fully understand and he's more than willing to take part in those discussions.

Mr. White stated this will pass by 20-25 houses and thinks it is the best option to minimize the impact on citizens as much as possible while getting riders access to the businesses.

Mrs. Mollo asked if staff could send letters to the residents that the route affects notifying them of the Public Hearing, Council agreed.

Mr. Wood advised the residents that own property along this proposed route turns to gold.

Mr. White asked Mr. Pike if he could attend the Public Hearing, Mr. Pike advised he could attend and would also bring some of his colleagues.

Mr. Pike spoke to the Council regarding all the trash and illegal dumps sites that they have cleaned up while building the trail systems.

Mrs. Mollo asked what happened with the Jawbone Trail Head in Raven, and why did they pull out of it. Mr. Pike deferred the question to Mr. Wood because that was before he was hired. Mr. Wood advised they had a right of way with CNX and after a minor thing came about, they had to do a reroute to get back to the trail and they were mining on the other side of that property. Mrs. Mollo asked if they were worried with that happening with the Pocohontas Land, and Mr. Pike advised that they were very supportive and willing to work with them.

Mrs. Mollo stated she reached out to their office and requested an environmental study, but it came with a high charge. Mrs. Mollo asked Mr. Pike if he could make that available to the residents before the Public Hearing, due to the residents in that area being prone to flooding. Mr. Pike advised that it would come at a later point once all of the properties are acquired and agreements are executed, they typically set up a meeting with DEQ and take them onto the properties to point out any adjustments that need to be made.

Mr. Pike advised the Council of their process of keeping the roads cleaned, by using Geotech materials, etc.

Mrs. Mollo asked how far out they would be to opening the trail system if approved in November. Mr. Pike advised he could not answer that until the landowners agree to it, roads are decided upon, and after they get input from the public. Mr. Pike stated they just work their way through the process to get to that point and if there are other issues that come up, they adjust accordingly to those things. Mr. Pike advised they did not have to be in a hurry, they want people to be actively involved and it is here to help the community of Richlands.

Mr. Bales asked if they help organized events once the trail system is here, or are they generally handled by outside entities. Mr. Pike advised most localities create the events, but they have a new Marketing Director who's been onboard for about a year, and she helps the localities market their events to help bring tourism to the communities. Mr. Pike stated they like to partner with communities and are glad to assist with marketing.

Mr. Wood advised the trails are already pretty much built and people are riding on them, so getting the trails built won't be a big issue, the biggest issue will be them going in and cleaning up all the trash and straightening everything out to look better.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Seth White, and the unanimous the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5-0 to approve scheduling a Public Hearing on November 11, 2025, at 5:30pm and sending a self-addressed stamped envelope to all residents on the route.

Mr. Wood thanked Mr. Pike for all of the help he's given the Town, including helping Amanda, the Police Department Accreditation Manager and Chief Holt.

IN RE: PCA Update

Mr. White advised the Electrical Committee had held a meeting and reviewed the receivables and expenditures for the past month. Mr. White advised they were around \$104k to the good for the past month and after discussing it, they decided they wanted to help people, especially in the coldest months of the year. Mr. White advised they are suggesting leaving the PCA charge where it is right now and reevaluate it again next month, and if the mild patterns continue, they will look to make a reduction to the PCA sometime in December or January.

Mrs. Mollo wanted to point out that they have an active Electrical Committee, to dispel rumors circulating on Facebook.

Mrs. Mollo stated the Towns' electric rate is lower than AEP, however, with the PCA the all-in rate ends up being one penny more.

Mr. White stated that during the colder months, citizens can apply for heating assistance, and they would create time for Town Staff to help citizens with the applications, if needed.

IN RE: 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan R-2025-09-03

Shiloh Brooks, Community Resilience Coordinator for the Cumberland Plateau District, spoke to the Council regarding Disaster Recovery Relief and the 2025 Hazard Mitigation Plan. Mrs. Brooks advised that the Hazard Mitigation Plan has to be renewed every five years and its main purpose is for long-term action to reduce risks to people and property and to receive any FEMA assistance.

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Jordan Bales, and the unanimous the roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5-0 to approve R-2025-09-03.

IN RE: Late Fee

Mrs. Mollo advised she has had a lot of discussions with citizens regarding late fees and stated that the 10% late fee is to high and would like Council to discuss possibly lowering it.

Mr. Holt stated there must be some sort of late fee or punitive measure in place for citizens who don't regularly pay their bills on time.

Mr. Thomas advised this was found in Town Code and if Council changed it, they would need to make an Ordinance change also.

Mr. Wood advised he prefers a flat rate.

Mrs. Mollo advised AEP has a 1.5% late fee.

Mrs. White advised she would prefer a percentage rate, would like to at least cut it in half.

Mr. Campbell stated they need to look at how many customers are regularly late and try to come up with a number that works.-

Mayor Cury stated that everyone was right, there was no wrong, and stated that the current rate would make it impossible for some people to overcome. Mayor Cury advised he agrees with Mrs. White that a flat fee doesn't balance and is unfair.

Mr. Holt suggested reducing it by half and staff could bring back the financial impact to Council.

Mr. Thomas advised he could have the amendment to the Ordinance ready at the next meeting.

Mrs. Mollo requested they leave it blank and asked staff to check on 1.5%, 3%, and 5%.

Mr. Bales asked Mr. Campbell to do the math on the financial impact of each percentage.

Mr. Holt advised staff would bring back financial support regarding all three percentage rates at the next meeting.

IN RE: CPROP Farmers Market Resolution R-2025-09-04

Mr. Holt advised they would like to redesign the area to be more of a Town Center with a Farmers Market, that would include in it some flood resilient fixtures, because every time it floods it carries the tables and fixtures off.

Mr. Holt advised the first round of CPROP money would be for the soft cost of engineering and the next fiscal year they could get an additional \$50k to start adding the flood resilient fixtures, lighting, etc.

Mr. Holt advised they need this supporting Resolution before they could submit the application.

Upon a motion by Rick Wood, seconded by Laura Mollo and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to approve R-2025-09-04.

IN RE: Monthly Financial Report

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

- General Fund- Year to Date Net Income Loss is -\$848,654
- Water- Year to Date Net Income Loss is \$375,217

- Sewer- Year to Date Net Income Loss is \$68,476
- Water and Sewer Line Maintenance Year to Date Net Income Loss -\$57,983
- Electric w/o Generator Year to Date Net Income Loss \$121,263
- General Fund- Reserved Cash Balance \$1,479,827
- General Fund- Unreserved Cash Balance \$938,735
- Water Department Reserved Cash Balance \$1,083,499
- Water Department Unreserved Cash Balance \$545,532
- Sewer Department Reserved Cash Balance \$495,583
- Sewer Department Unreserved Cash Balance -\$426,215
- Electric Department Reserved Cash Balance \$1,800,123
- Electric Department Unreserved Cash Balance -\$1,022,198

Mrs. Mollo asked if the MCNB account name had been changed, Mr. Holt advised it had.

Mrs. Mollo inquired about the Pop-up Richlands account. Mr. Campbell and Mr. Holt advised they will bring back information on this account at the next meeting.

IN RE:

Attorney Report

Enterprise Zone Ordinance (O-2025-10-01)- Mr. Thomas advised this was originally approved in 2016 and has to be updated at least every ten years. Mr. Thomas advised they have added three additional incentives to this Ordinance.

Mr. Craig Earls spoke to the Council regarding the additional incentives to help grow business here.

Mr. Earls stated the existing requirement is ten full-time employees for the Business License Fee Abatement, their recommendation is to change that to five.

Mr. Earls advised the first new incentive is the LTR (Lodging Tax Refund). The LTR is for a portion of the lodging tax collected by the Town for a qualifying business which will be refunded for a three-year period. The first year would be 80%, second year 60%, and third year 40%.

Mr. White inquired if this would only be for new businesses that come into Town after the Ordinance is approved, Mr. Earls advised that was correct.

Mr. Earls advised the second new incentive would be the Meals Tax Refund for new businesses where they would have a portion of their meal taxes collected by the Town that would be refunded for a three-year period. The first year would be 80%, second year 60%, and third year 40%. Mrs. Mollo asked if this was for existing businesses also, and Mr. Earls advised only if they were expanding and increasing their occupancy area by an additional 20%

Mr. Earls advised the third new incentive was the Rehabilitated Real Estate Tax Exemption that is a three-year partial exemption from taxation and details on the specifics are stated in the Ordinance.

Mr. Thomas advised that the Council needs to let him know prior to the October meeting if they have any changes to this Ordinance.

Mr. Wood stated that as a new business it is hard to keep five full-time employees, and suggested it be changed to two employees. Mr. Earls advised that it would be a great economic driver.

Council had a brief discussion regarding the number of employees and came to an agreement on it being set at two employees.

Mrs. Mollo inquired if the Meals Tax Refund includes food trucks. Mr. Thomas advised it would not.

The Council thanked Mr. Earls for all his work.

Opioid Resolution (R-2025-09-05)- Mr. Thomas spoke briefly to Council regarding the Opioid Settlement and advised it was similar to the previous one they had been a part of.

Mr. Wood inquired why the Town continues to participate in the Opioid settlements when they don't receive anything from it.

Mrs. Mollo stated she will be voting no on this Resolution as well, until they have an agreement with the County that they receive something for the Towns Fire, Rescue, or Police from the settlement. Mr. Thomas advised that prior to him being the Town Attorney, there was an MOU executed by the Town of Richlands to participate in the settlements. The AG's office was the ones who decided that the Counties would be the ones who get the money.

Mr. White advised he was going to make a motion to approve the Resolution because at the end of the day he hates the Sackler Family and what they have done to our area and region was devastating and wants them to pay every penny they have to pay for it. Mr. White stated he also thinks the Town should ask the County if there is something they need.

Mr. Holt advised he would call a meeting with the Public Safety Committee to determine what is needed and what their request would be.

Mrs. Mollo advised if that's how Council was moving forward, she would vote yes but stated if their request was denied this would be the last time she votes yes on one of these resolutions.

Upon a motion by Seth White, seconded by Jordan Bales and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to approve R-2025-09-05

RE: Town Manager Report

Mr. Holt thanked the staff for all their hard work over the past several months.

Mayor Cury declared a ten-minute recess.

IN RE: Council Member Reports

Laura Mollo-

- Stated that her and her family are Messianic Jewish and today is the Rosh Hashanah, which is the Jewish New Year, so she wanted to say "Happy New Year" to everyone.
- Stated she has some concerns with the Food Truck Ordinance and would like for Council to look into amending the current Food Truck Ordinance to require them to have a business license if they are here over a certain number of days. Mr. Holt suggested calendar days and not consecutive days. Mr. Wood advised there was a rule on this with the Health Department. Mr. Holt advised staff would research this.

Jan White- No Report.

Jordan Bales-

- Thanked staff for their hard work and advised he had received several compliments on how good the Town looks.
- Inquired if the Council could set Trick-or-Treat for October 31, 2025, from 5:30pm - 8:00pm, Council agreed.

Upon a motion by Jordan Bales, seconded by Rick Wood and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to set Trick-or-Treating in the Town for October 31, 2025, from 5:30pm-8:00pm

Rick Wood- No Report.

Gary Jackson- Absent.

Seth White- No Report.

IN RE: Mayor Comments

Mayor Cury-

- Wished everyone a Happy First Day of Fall.

IN RE: Executive Session

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

- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(3) – Property Acquisition
 - East 1st Street
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(6) – Contract Negotiations
 - Enbridge
 - Quantum
 - Utility Contract Attorney and Energy Consultant
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(8) – Consultation with Legal Counsel
 - Teen Venture Update
 - RFP for Auctioneer
 - PSA

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

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

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Rick Wood 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)(3)- Property Acquisition
 - East 1st Street
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(6)- Contract Negotiations
 - Enbridge
 - Quantum
 - Utility Contract Attorney and Energy Consultant
- VA Code Section: 2.2-3711(A)(8)- Consultation with Legal Counsel
 - Teen Venture Update
 - RFP for Auctioneer
 - PSA

IN RE: East 1st Street Property

Upon a motion by Rick Wood, seconded by Seth White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to purchase the property on East 1st Street for \$2,500.

IN RE: Auctioneer Contract

Upon a motion by Laura Mollo, seconded by Seth White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the Council voted 5/0 to award the Auctioneer Contract to Twin City Auctioneers for the sale of 217 Railroad Avenue.

IN RE: Adjournment

Upon a motion by Rick Wood, seconded by Jan White and the unanimous roll call vote of all members present, the meeting was adjourned.


 Rodney D. Curt, Mayor


 Amanda Beheler, Town Clerk