



CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

Monday, July 14, 2025, at 6:30 PM

Regular Session, 6:30 PM, City Hall, 114 North Broad Street, Salem, Virginia 24153

WORK SESSION

WORK SESSION IS CANCELLED FOR JULY 14, 2025

REGULAR SESSION

1. Call to Order

A regular meeting of the Council of the City of Salem, Virginia, was called to order at 6:30 p.m., there being present the following members to wit: Renée Ferris Turk, Mayor; Anne Marie Green, Vice-Mayor (participated remotely); Councilmembers: Byron Randolph Foley, Hunter Holliday, and John Saunders; with Renée Ferris Turk, Mayor, presiding together with Chris Dorsey, City Manager; Rob Light, Assistant City Manager and Clerk of Council; Rosemarie B. Jordan, Director of Finance; Will Simpson, Assistant Director of Community Development and City Engineer; Mike Stevens, Director of Communications; and Jim Guynn, City Attorney.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Turk requested that Mr. Light read a request from Vice-Mayor Green to participate remotely in this meeting.

Mr. Light noted that Vice-Mayor Green asked him to read the following request on her behalf: "In accordance with Section 2.2- 3708.3 B(4) of the Code of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the Remote Participation Policy of the City of Salem, I hereby request to participate remotely due to a personal matter, specifically that I am out of town."

John Saunders motioned to accept the remote participation of Vice-Mayor Green. Hunter Holliday seconded the motion.

Ayes: John Saunders, Hunter Holliday, Randy Foley, Renee Turk

Nays: None

Abstaining: Anne Marie Green

3. Bid Opening, Awards, Recognitions

Mayor Turk recognized Officer C.A. Hayth from the Salem Police Department and asked the following new officers in attendance this evening, currently in the Field Training phase, to come forward: Cheri Overstreet, Christopher Pugh, Colon Miller, Hunter Bayne, Nicholas Akers, and Sestilio Tiberi. She expressed appreciation to them on behalf of the City of Salem and those present for being part of the protective force in the City of Salem and for deciding to give and sacrifice of themselves to care for the citizens of Salem. Mayor Turk excused the officers to return to work and thanked them for their service.

4. Consent Agenda

A. Citizen Comments

Comments from the public, limited to five minutes, on matters not already having a public hearing at the same meeting.

John Breen, 142 Bogey Lane, expressed concern regarding Salem's planning and zoning practices. He criticized the draft comprehensive plan as well as the process for lacking detailed data, clear objectives, and meaningful community engagement. Mr. Breen called for a pause to reassess the plan to ensure it is truly comprehensive and citizen focused.

Stella Reinhard, 213 N. Broad Street, questioned whether Salem needs a new development model, emphasizing the need for a broader discussion on increasing density and the use of remaining open space. She expressed concern that current residential development is not producing affordable housing and may place a financial burden on city services. Ms. Reinhard supported focusing dense development on underutilized or previously developed commercial and industrial areas—particularly “gray and brown” spaces—rather than building on open land in residential neighborhoods. She advocated for a cohesive long-term planning vision and encouraged the City to engage developers in a new urban model centered on revitalization over expansion.

Barbara Bell, 523 E. Burwell Street, spoke regarding the city-owned property at the corner of Main Street and Thompson Memorial Boulevard, expressing appreciation that it is currently being maintained as green space. She, speaking on behalf of nearby neighbors, emphasized the importance of thoughtful planning for any future development on the site, as it directly impacts their homes and serves as a visual entry point into the city for travelers from I-81. Ms. Bell requested City Council to consider the historical significance and aesthetic value of the location when determining its final use.

Samuel Williams, 824 Red Lane, expressed concern about proposed high-density

development in Salem. His specific focus was on the HopeTree property, citing its historical and residential context, challenging terrain, and lack of proximity to major roads. He urged Council to prioritize thoughtful, collaborative planning that preserves Salem's character and considers more suitable locations for dense development.

B. Minutes

Consider acceptance of the June 23, 2025, Work Session and Regular Meeting minutes and the June 25, 2025, Special Meeting/Joint Work Session with the Planning Commission minutes.

The minutes were approved as written.

5. Old Business

6. New Business

A. Special Exception Permit

Hold a public hearing and consider the request of R & S Investments LLC, property owners, for the issuance of a special exception permit to allow a retail sales, smoke shop for the property located at 132 Electric Road (Tax Map #80-2-1). (Advertised in the June 26 and July 3, 2025, issues of *The Salem Times-Register*.) (Planning Commission recommended denial by a 3 to 2 vote.)

Mayor Turk asked Mr. Simpson if he had any information that he would like to share on this item.

Mr. Simpson indicated that he did not have any further information to share. He did note that the Planning Commission was split on the matter.

Mayor Turk opened the public hearing.

Stella Reinhard, 213 N. Broad Street, asked to confirm if there were other vape shops in this vicinity. Mayor Turk confirmed this fact. Ms. Reinhard noted that she felt a better mix of shops would be suitable to enable them to be successful as a collective group.

Steve Hartman, one of the property owners at 132 Electric Road, addressed Council in support of the proposed tobacco shop. The speaker stated they have owned the property for approximately 30 years and have had multiple tenants over time. He expressed confidence that the proposed business would be a positive addition to the area, citing a longstanding relationship with the applicants and their proven track record of responsible business operations. Mr. Hartman noted that the applicants also operate a tobacco shop in Daleville, Virginia, across from Lord Botetourt High School, and have not had any issues or violations at that location. He emphasized that the prospective owner, Amanda, is trustworthy and plans to expand the business to include local products and other offerings beyond tobacco. Mr. Hartman

acknowledged the presence of other nearby tobacco shops, suggesting that healthy competition could improve the overall business environment and potentially displace less reputable operators. He also pointed out the high vacancy rate in the surrounding shopping center and expressed the belief that the proposed shop would help revitalize the area.

In closing, Mr. Hartman urged Council to consider the quality and intentions of the new business owners, stating that not all tobacco shops operate the same way, and encouraged them to visit the Daleville location as an example of responsible ownership.

Amanda Akers; 1220 Walnut Shell Drive, Vinton, Virginia; prospective business owner; distributed to staff and Council a one-page overview of their business and proposal for a Salem location. She addressed Council to express her commitment to establishing a clean, professional, and community-oriented retail store in Salem. She noted that this would be her first business ownership experience and emphasized her dedication to operating responsibly, drawing from her prior experience managing affiliated stores. Ms. Akers outlined plans to differentiate her business from typical smoke shops by focusing on high-quality, locally sourced products. These include hand-blown glassware from local artists, Virginia-produced honey, and locally roasted coffee. She emphasized the store would not be a late-night operation and that loitering would not be permitted. She also cited a strong customer service record. Ms. Akers stated that the decision to open in Salem was in response to local customer demand and that her goal is to contribute positively to the community by supporting small businesses and elevating standards for similar retail establishments.

Mayor Turk closed the public hearing.

Randy Foley motioned to deny this Special Exception Permit request and noted that he did not believe this was the highest and best use for this property. Anne Marie Green seconded the motion.

Councilman Holliday asked how long the building had been vacant.

Mr. Hartman responded that the building had been vacant for three or four months. He added that the owner had purchased and opened in another location.

Ayes: Randy Foley, Anne Marie Green, Renee Turk

Nays: John Saunders, Hunter Holliday

Abstaining: None

Mayor Turk noted that the motion was to deny.

B. Resolution 1505 - Stormwater Advisory Committee

Consider adoption of Resolution 1505 allowing staff to establish a Stormwater Advisory Committee.

Mayor Turk shared that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Virginia Department of Environmental (DEQ) are federal and state agencies who oversee stormwater and erosion control compliance. The City of Salem is tasked with meeting certain mandates required by these agencies to remain in compliance with the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. These mandates are unfunded by EPA and DEQ, but are still mandatory. She noted that this means that the locality has to take care of all expenses involved. The City of Salem does not currently have a dedicated funding source for its stormwater program, as many of the other surrounding localities have. Many localities throughout the Commonwealth have already been through this process and have come to the conclusion that a stormwater utility fee would be needed to fund their programs. In order for the City to begin this process of establishing a funding source, it must first appoint an advisory committee. The purpose of the advisory committee is to meet with City staff and its consultant to discuss the needs and make a recommendation to Council. Mayor Turk emphasized that these mandates are required with no funding or support from the state. She also noted increased storms and flooding over the years. This resolution will allow staff to establish this committee.

Hunter Holliday motioned to adopt Resolution 1505, allowing staff to establish a Stormwater Advisory Committee. John Saunders seconded the motion.

Councilman Foley asked to verify for the benefit of the public that this motion was just to establish the committee and that the details would be determined once the committee was established.

Mr. Simpson responded that once the committee was established, staff would meet with the committee and determine what kind of resources are necessary and other details. That would be reported back to Council at that time for further action.

Councilman Holliday noted that Salem is one of the last Cities to establish a Stormwater Advisory Committee.

Ayes: John Saunders, Hunter Holliday, Randy Foley, Anne Marie Green, Renee Turk

Nays: None

Abstaining: None

C. Boards and Commissions

Consider appointments to various boards and commissions.

Randy Foley motioned to reappoint Betty Waldron for a three-year term ending July 1, 2028, to the Fair Housing Board. John Saunders seconded the motion.

Ayes: John Saunders, Hunter Holliday, Randy Foley, Anne Marie Green, Renee Turk

Nays: None

Abstaining: None

7. Adjournment

Mayor Turk noted that the City has just finished twelve days of the Salem Fair and encouraged citizens to check the City's website for activities. She noted the "How Can I.." tab that citizens could use on the website to look up information.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:07 p.m.

Submitted by:



H. Robert Light
Clerk of Council

Approved by:



Renée Ferris Turk
Mayor