

Town of Onancock

Town Council Meeting

Monday, April 28, 2025

7:00 PM

- 1) **Call to order and roll call.** – Mayor Fosque called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and roll was called. Councilmembers Lisa Fiege, Omar Grubb, Cindy Holdren, Joy Marino, Sarah Nock, Maphis Oswald and Mayor Fletcher Fosque were present. Town Manager Matt Spuck and Town Clerk Debbie Caton were also present.
- 2) **Pledge of Allegiance**
- 3) **Vote on March 24, 2025, meeting minutes** – Councilmember Fiege moved to approve the meeting minutes. Councilmember Oswald seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.
- 4) **Public Hearing 2026 Budget** – The budget hearing opened at 7:02 PM. Town Manager Spuck stated the primary goal of the FY2026 budget was to add a fifth police officer to town staff and the associated training. This is a \$91,000 cost and that is what we reduced other expenditures by and increased other revenues to achieve this goal. There will not be an increase to real estate taxes but there is a minor increase in personal property taxes along with an increase to meals and tax on transient tax (TOT).

Budget Hearing Public Comments

- Kasey Grier – Ms. Grier stated the budget ads published in the Eastern Shore Post was opaque and thinks it would make sense to know what the categories mean to make it more intelligible for people. Ms. Grier is in favor of a budget expenditure for the engineering study for Historic Onancock School (HOS). She feels strongly given the value of the property and that it belongs to the town, we really need to know what is going on there.
- Priscilla Hart – Ms. Hart suggested the town eliminate mosquito spraying this year mainly because it is harmful to wildlife, and it is a known carcinogen to humans. Ms. Hart asked if there was a fee to use a credit card as the budget item shows an expenditure of \$23,000? Town Manager Spuck explained all businesses are charged a percentage of credit card charges. Ms. Hart wanted clarity on what expenses the town pays for HOS and asked specifically if the Town paid for the shallow well. Town Manager Spuck stated the town pays the liability insurance for the school. Mayor Fosque stated HOS paid for the shallow well.

The budget hearing closed at 7:12 PM.

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5) Public Presentation

- a. None scheduled.**

6) Council Action

- a. Farmer's Market location** - Councilmember Fiege updated the audience with the conception of the Farmer's Market and its importance to the downtown area. She also outlined why the suggested alternate locations will not work. Councilmember Holdren presented the timeline for the relocation of the summer market's and winter market's permanent location.
- Councilmember Grubb stated he would like to see the permanent location be moved to the Peninsula Center.
 - Councilmember Nock stated her preference for the markets' permanent location is the Queen Street parking lot. The upgrades planned for the Queen Street parking lot are being done regardless of the location of the market.
 - Councilmember Oswald stated she thinks the Saturday morning downtown traffic is because of the Corner Bakery not necessarily the Farmer's Market. She recommended the relocation be on the grounds of the Historic Onancock School.
 - Councilmember Holdren supports the relocation being the Queen Street parking lot. Statistics have proven the farmer's market brings people into town.
 - Councilmember Marino is concerned the Town Council is putting the "cart before the horse." She thinks the upgrades to the Queen Street parking lot should be completed before the decision is made to allow for the lot to be the permanent location for the market.
 - Councilmember Fiege responded to Councilmember Marino's comment that if the decision is delayed until completion of the Queen Street parking lot is the Farmer's Market board has a grant on the table now and will run the risk of losing the grant.

Mayor Fosque allowed for public comments regarding the relocation of the Farmer's Market.

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7) Public Comments

- a. **Angela Faraguna** – Ms. Faraguna is a vendor at the Farmer’s Market and feels the market is valuable to the residents and businesses of Onancock. She supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- b. **Joel Simpson** – Mr. Simpson supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- c. **Glenn Smith** - Mr. Smith supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- d. **Donna Mareno** -Ms. Mareno supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- e. **Jim McGowan** - Mr. McGowan supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot. (see full statement attached)
- f. **Mark Sinclair** - Mr. Sinclair supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- g. **Maggie Grant** – Ms. Grant supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- h. **Maura Davis** – Ms. Davis supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- i. **John Fiege** –Mr. Fiege supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- j. **Toni Nelson** – Ms. Nelson would like to see the decision delayed after learning of the drainage issues in the Queen Street parking lot. She is not opposed to the Farmer’s Market being in the parking lot but thinks the other issues need to be resolved first.
- k. **John Simpkins** – Mr. Simpkins supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- l. **Linda Nolan** – Ms. Nolan supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- m. **Bill Kretzer** – Mr. Kretzer supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- n. **Tiara Tracy** – Ms. Tracy supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- o. **Dawn Simpson** – Ms. Simpson supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- p. **Sheila Sheppard Vera** - Ms. Vera supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- q. **Adrian Granstead**– Ms. Granstead supports the relocation of the Farmer’s Market in the Queen Street parking lot.
- r. **Joe Hill** – Mr. Hill thinks there might be a missed opportunity by not moving the Farmer’s Market to the Historic Onancock School.

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- s. **Laura McGowan** – Ms. McGowan stated there is not a lot of crossovers between the foot traffic at the Historic Onancock School and downtown.

Mayor Fosque shared that he has also received twenty-five emails from residents, business owner's and vendors in support of the relocation of the Farmer's Market in the Queen Street parking lot.

Councilmember Holdren moved Town Council approve locating both the summer and winter markets in the Queen Street parking lot and authorize Town Manager Spuck and the police department to provide signage and enforce parking lot restrictions on Saturday mornings. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

- **Councilmember Grubb – aye**
- **Councilmember Fiege – aye**
- **Councilmember Holdren - aye**
- **Councilmember Marino – aye**
- **Councilmember Nock – aye**
- **Councilmember Oswald – nay**

The motion carries with a 5-1 vote.

Council discussion

- Budget 2026 – Second Pass** – The presented budget was not changed. Town Council will vote on the budget at the May 19, 2025, meeting.
- Fire Department Extractor** – Town Manager Spuck suggested the Onancock Volunteer Fire Department (OVFD) to submit three bids for review before voting on donating the money for the washer and dryer.
- Discuss HOS Engineering Report** – Councilmember Marino stated the Town Council has been waiting six months for an engineering report. Town Manager Spuck asked the Town Council if they are willing to approve a loan for the repairs and upgrades required before spending \$50,000 for the engineering report. After council discussion, Town Manager Spuck will work on a financial plan to fund the repairs for the school that will be presented to the Town Council members.

8) Committee Reports

- Planning Commission (Cindy Holdren)** – Since Councilmember Holdren missed the meeting due to illness, Chairperson Grier reported the Planning Commission met on

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April 8, 2025. The bylaws draft is still being reviewed by the town attorney. At the next Planning Commission meeting, the commissioners will begin updating the

comprehensive plan. Councilmember Marino stated there is an open seat on the Planning Commission.

- b. **Economic Development Authority (EDA) (Lisa Fiege)** – Councilmember Fiege reported the EDA did not meet.
- c. **Personnel Committee (Lisa Fiege)** – Councilmember Fiege reported the Personnel Committee did not meet.

9) Community Reports

- a. **Onancock Main Street (OMS) (Lisa Fiege)** – Councilmember Fiege welcomed Michael Hartman to the OMS board. OMS submitted a Downtown Investment grant to Virginia Main Street. The scope of the grant is for façade improvements for existing downtown businesses. OMS plans to hire a consultant to work with businesses on how to keep the storefronts looking fresh while looking inviting to customers. OMS asked for money for the “Open for Business” program which would allow for digital display ads, public relations, and social media to promote the dedicated website page for the available commercial properties in town. The two finalists for uptown murals have been selected and the mosaic for the new Welcome Center will be soon. Two seasonal rack cards are in production to be distributed in Welcome Centers throughout Virginia which will promote the entire town of Onancock.
- b. **Historic Onancock School (HOS) (Sarah Nock)** – Councilmember Nock introduced the new Executive Director of HOS, Corey Kavulich. Councilmember Nock commented to the irrigation well that was installed by the Performance Pavilion. The well was funded by HOS and permitted by DEQ and Accomack County. HOS is sponsoring the upcoming events:

- i. Field Day Fiesta – Saturday, May 3, 2025, from 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM.
- ii. Blooms and Brushes – Saturday, May 31, 2025, from 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM.
- iii. OBCA Ice Cream Social – Thursday, July 3, 2025, from 5:30 PM to 7:30 PM.

10) Public Comments:

- **Joe Devaney** – Mr. Devaney emailed a capital expenditure breakdown on the HOS that goes back fourteen years. He stated if you adjust that report for inflation, it should give an estimate of what the repairs will cost. This cost will come at taxpayer’s expense. (see full statement attached)

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- **Dana Simson** – Ms. Simson would like the option to opt-out of mosquito spraying. She discussed the chemistry of the spray and the effects on wildlife. She would like the spraying to stop for a period of 1-3 years.
- **Peter Holt** – Mr. Holt believes his beehives have died from the mosquito spraying. He thinks the town should pause on the spraying.
- **Glenn Smith** – Since Mr. Smith’s comments last month regarding the extractor for the OFVD, the County has purchased two additional extractors and are being stationed at the Painter Firehouse. OVFD should investigate having one stationed in their house. Mr. Smith also thinks mosquito spraying should be paused.
- **Mark Sinclair** –The former Executive Director was instrumental in the amount of money she raised for HOS. Mr. Sinclair stated one issue with getting larger donations is that foundations do not like to give money to non-profits when they do not own the building. This is why HOS came to the town for a loan because they exhausted all other avenues. There are multiple engineering reports available without spending the money for a new one. Mr. Sinclair supports the loan to help the school.

11) Mayor’s Report – Mayor Fosque took a two-day bus trip of southeastern Virginia with the Chesapeake Bay Group. The tour was about how run off is affecting the bay. The most interesting part of the trip was visiting HRSD SWIFT Research Center. SWIFT is the program that injects treated water back into the water table.

12) Town Manager’s Report

- a. **Financial** – see full report in the Town Council packet.
- b. **Manager’s Report** – Town Manager Spuck gave updates on the following projects:
 - i. **Street Sign Project** –New signs have been installed at two intersections. The next group will be around Town Square.
 - ii. **Liberty Street** – The paving was delayed but Town Manager Spuck is meeting with the contractor this week to discuss the scope of work.
 - iii. **HRSD Meter Replacement** – Town Manager Spuck met with the representative to discuss lead times on the meters and how to stage the switch out of meters.
 - iv. **Three-hour parking signs** – VDOT issued the land disturbance permits. Chief Williams is working on placement of the signs.
- c. **Police Report** – see full report in the Town Council packet.

13) Town Councilmember comments –

- a. **Councilmember Fiege** – Councilmember Fiege reminded Town Manager Spuck to forward the template for job performance evaluations and the job descriptions.

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- b. **Councilmember Grubb** – no comments.
- c. **Councilmember Holdren** – no comments.
- d. **Councilmember Marino** – Councilmember Marino asked if residents could opt-out of mosquito spraying. Mayor Fosque suggested adding the opt-out issue on next month's agenda for discussion.
- e. **Councilmember Nock** – no comments.
- f. **Councilmember Oswald** – no comments.

14) **Closed Session** – None scheduled.

15) **Adjourn** – Councilmember Fiege moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote. The meeting adjourned at 9:53 PM.



Fletcher Fosque, Mayor



Debbie Caton, Town Clerk

From: James McGowan jmcgowan23417@gmail.com
**Subject: April 28, 2025 Onancock Town Council Agenda Item 6:
Onancock Farmers Market**
Date: Apr 28, 2025 at 8:42:29 AM
To: Fletcher Fosque ffosque@onancock.com, **Omar Grubb**
omar.grubb@onancock.com, **Cindy Holdren**
choldren@onancock.com, **Joy Marino**
jmarino@onancock.com, **Sarah Nock**
Snock@onancock.com, **Oswald Maphis**
moswald@onancock.com, **Lisa Fiege**
lisa.fiege@onancock.com
Cc: Matt Spuck matt.spuck@onancock.com, **Debbie Caton**
debbie.caton@onancock.com

Dear Mayor Fosque and Town Council Members,

I've been an Onancock resident for nearly 35 years and an Onancock homeowner for 31 years. While I am a member of the Onancock Planning Commission since January 2025, I am writing today as a private citizen.

I am writing to support Town Council action tonight to allow the Onancock Summer and Winter Farmers Market, including the new Winter Market Building, to be permanently located in the Queen Street parking lot. The Onancock Farmers Market has been a wonderful economic and social asset for the Town, drawing hundreds of people to Onancock on Saturday mornings.

Visitors to the Farmers Market also shop at Onancock stores and eat at our restaurants. As Downtown Onancock has changed over the years, the Farmers Market has provided new vitality for residents and visitors. My wife and I shop at the market weekly and really enjoy the fresh produce, baked goods, eggs and meats grown by our local farmers. We also enjoy running into neighbors and friends and catching up on local

news.

The relocation of the Farmers Market to the Town-owned Queen Street parking lot was requested in May 2023, almost two years ago. In January 2024, Onancock's planning consultant, Hill Studio, included the Farmers Market in the plan for the Queen Street Parking Lot. In September 2024, the Town agreed to administer a Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS) grant to pay for the new Winter Market building. In October 2024, the Town Council voted unanimously to locate the Winter Market building in the Queen Street Parking Lot. In March 2025, Hill Studio delivered the final plan for the Queen Street Parking Lot, including the location of the Summer Farmers Market and the Winter Market building. The VDACS grant has been approved and additional private funds are available to pay for the Winter Market building. The project is ready for approval after two years and many committee meetings.

I would like to thank the Town Council, the Onancock Farmers Market and adjacent property owners for working together during the past two years to plan the relocation of the market, and for providing Onancock residents the opportunity to comment on the project. It has been a real

community effort and

I hope the Town Council approves relocation of the market tonight.

Please include this written request in the this evening's Town Council meeting record.

Sincerely yours,

Jim McGowan
29 King Street
Onancock, Virginia

**Joseph Devaney
6 Queen Street
Onancock, VA 23417
April 28, 2025**

**Onancock Town Council
Attn: Honorable Mayor and Council Members
Town Hall
15 North Street
Onancock, VA 23417**

Subject: Recommendation to Finance a Comprehensive Survey of the Historic Onancock School in FY 2026

Dear Mayor Fosque and Members of the Town Council,

I am writing to urge the Town Council to appropriate funds in the pending Fiscal Year 2026 budget for a comprehensive structural survey of the Historic Onancock School (HOS).

This survey is essential to ensure the building's preservation, public safety, and continued role as a community asset. Equally critical are the survey's findings and their usefulness to future governmental investments in or decisions about the property. This should be done with dollar-for-dollar offsets in the pending budget.

Built in 1921, the Historic Onancock School has served as an educational and cultural hub, evolving from a prior educational institution (1859) to the current community center managed by the Friends of Onancock School (FOS) under a lease with the Town.

However, the building's age and coastal exposure necessitate proactive maintenance to preserve its historic integrity, prevent costly repairs, and avoid health and safety issues during its use. This includes engineering and other surveys that are aligned with widely accepted practices for historic buildings in similar locations.

A comment made at your last meeting directly challenged the need for such a survey after a member of the public raised the topic. The comment noted that by virtue of prior surveys, we already know what is needed and implied that there's nothing to be gained by another survey now.

Simply put, that viewpoint does not reflect widely accepted standards for historic property management. Nor does it give the current Council Members or other Onancock governmental bodies involved in planning and economic development any up-to-date guidance on the fully-loaded, year-to-year obligations of owning the HOS.

The necessary next step with the Town's ownership of the school property is to define the actual situation and fulfill the obligations that you have accepted in representing the town and its taxpayers after deciding to own the HOS.

The last general survey of the HOS building that I could find occurred in 2011 – a Becker Morgan Group evaluation that projected costs of \$3.47M at that time. Converting those 2011 dollars to 2025 dollars is roughly equivalent to current total costs of \$4M for Onancock to address the recommended steps in the report and adding no other findings or recommendations. Meanwhile, the clock has ticked, the building has aged, and taxpayer liabilities have grown.

Leaving aside any the cost of any direct or indirect Onancock support to FOS, a major capital expenditure is potentially ahead of us. A simple 20-year \$4M loan taken today at 3.5% interest rate would lead to total taxpayer payments of \$5.6M over the life of the loan. Under the likely terms of such a loan, Onancock's annual payment would be \$281,344 for the Town or \$352 per real estate tax unit per year (n=800). [In lieu of a single annual payment for 20 years, a monthly payment schedule would be even more costly (roughly \$320,000 annually.)] Thus, over the life of such a loan, a taxpaying unit in Onancock would pay out between \$7,000 - \$8,000 - strictly for the HOS building and its needs as assessed 14 years ago – and before 11 serious weather events hit Accomack County and the HOS. These financial figures will be unsettling for many households among whom the median yearly income is \$57,500.

We also should consider how out of step Onancock's current approach is as an historic property owner if only to gain perspective. Take the National Park Service (NPS) and the National Trust for Historic Preservation management guidelines for properties that are highly relatable to the HOS. What do those bodies recommend:

1. Annual Condition Surveys:

- Conducted yearly by a preservation professional to inspect the brick facade, roof, windows, drainage, and interior features.**
- Ensures public safety for high-traffic events and monitors moisture risks.**
- Cost: \$1,000–\$5,000/year.**

2. Comprehensive Structural Surveys:

- Performed every 5 years by a structural engineer with historic preservation expertise, assessing the foundation, brickwork, roof, and recent upgrades.
- Uses tools like drones or moisture meters to evaluate settlement, mortar decay, or storm damage.
- Cost: \$10,000–\$30,000 (and may be critical for grant applications).

3. Event-Driven Surveys:

- Triggered by storms, renovations, or grant requirements, ensuring alignment with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.
- Cost: \$2,000–\$15,000 per event, often grant-funded.

4. Specialized Surveys:

- Conducted every 3–5 years for HVAC, electrical, and original features, protecting art studios and museum exhibits from coastal humidity.
- Cost: \$500–\$5,000 per survey.

Note please that the frequency and scope of these evaluations does not follow a wait-til-it-breaks model. These routine surveys put front and center the principle that *if you bought it, you take care of it*.

I respectfully recommend that the Town Council include in FY26 a comprehensive structural survey of the Historic Onancock School to provide for an accurate assessment of the situation. That survey should be conducted by a qualified structural engineer, and provide documentation to guide rehabilitation and funding applications and decisions on the school's future, as others before me have suggested.

I am available to discuss this proposal or provide further details at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Joseph Devaney