

Town of Onancock
Town Council Meeting
Monday, March 24, 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 February 24, 2025, meeting minutes.** – Councilmember Fiege moved to approve the meeting minutes. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.
- 4) **Public Hearing**
 - a. **None scheduled.**
- 5) **Public Presentation**
 - a. **Tourism – Welcome Center** – This presentation was rescheduled.
- 6) **Council Action**
 - a. **Queen Street Project** – Councilmember Holdren explained the Town Council has been discussing parking and other issues for a long time. The town needs more parking which was part of the Hill Studio study. Hill Studio presented the final plan in January 2024. Part of these discussions was a permanent home for the Farmer’s Market. In May 2023, the Farmer’s Market requested to be permanently relocated to the Queen Street parking lot. The subject was revisited in April 2024, when Theresa Van Dessel gave a presentation on a Winter Farmer’s Market being in the Queen Street parking lot. At that time, the town council suggested to Ms. Van Dessel to bring back a specific plan for approval. In June 2024, the Town Council voted to accept the concept plan which passed with a 3-2 vote. Also in June 2024, the parking lot committee met with adjacent landowners and business stakeholders to discuss the final plans for the parking lot. Councilmember Holdren shared results from an Onancock Main Street (OMS) survey and the participants indicated the Farmer’s Market as the main reasons for visiting downtown Onancock. Councilmember Holdren continued her discussion stating in August 2024, the Farmer’s Market approached the Town Council about a grant from Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to help purchase the winter market building with town staff support to administer the grant which was passed by the Town Council. In October 2024, after the completed construction on the

Town of Onancock Town Council Meeting Monday, March 24, 2025 7:00 PM

Welcome Center, it was determined the original placement of the winter market would not work because of equipment behind the building. Also in October 2024, it was approved with a 5-0 vote to allow the Winter Farmer's Market to be located somewhere in the Queen Street parking lot. Hill Studio delivered the final schematics last week for review by the committee. Councilmember Holdren stated for tonight's council action, the Farmer's Market need a decision from the Town Council if the Queen Street parking lot can be the permanent location for both the Summer and Winter Farmer's Market. Town Council decided to table any decision until the next meeting which will allow for public comments and give the residents the opportunity to weigh in on the issue.

7) Council discussion

- a. **Budget 2026 – First Pass** – Town Manager Spuck explained the goal of the FY 2026 budget was to get a fifth police officer back and to give a moderate cost of living raise to all town staff. To balance the budget, the following tax rates would need to increase by the following rates.

Real Estate	.242/\$100 to .253/\$100	4.5% increase
Personal Property – Non-Vehicles	\$2.10/\$100 to \$2.29/\$100	9% increase
Personal Property-Vehicles	\$1.75/\$100 to \$1.80/\$100	3% increase

Water rates would increase by a straightforward 3%.

Police Chief Eric Williams spoke to the Town Council as to his request for a pickup instead of replacing his regular vehicle. This pickup style truck will help with the cleaning, maintenance, and adjustments to the security cameras without having to depend on DPW staff and vehicles for this work.

Town Manager Spuck fielded questions from Town Council members about specific expenses and other budget items. A special meeting for Budget 2026 – Second Pass is scheduled for Monday, April 14, 2025, at 7:00 PM.

Mayor Fosque moved Public Comments before the Community Reports.

Town of Onancock

Town Council Meeting

Monday, March 24, 2025

7:00 PM

8) Public Comments

- **Glenn Smith** – Mr. Smith worked as a professional firefighter as well as a volunteer for the Onancock Volunteer Fire Department (OVFD) in past years. Mr. Smith commented on last month's request from the OVFD for \$35,000 for a gear washer and dryer. There are fourteen fire and EMS stations in Accomack County. Each station receives approximately \$160,000 from the Accomack County generated by your tax dollars. As for the gear washer and gear dryer, there is a washer and dryer available 10 minutes away from the station. There are many places in the county with this equipment. This is a duplication of services at the taxpayer's expense. (Mr. Smith's full statement is attached.)
- **Robert Munson** - Mr. Munson expressed concerns over the water runoff in the Queen Street parking lot. He also expressed his concerns to the parking lot committee at the meeting held earlier today. He also disagrees with the one-way direction being proposed for the parking lot. The water runoff is already a problem and if the pavement is built up higher, this will continue to compound the issue. This is why he does not want the farmer's market moved to the Queen Street parking lot.
- **Dana Simson** – Ms. Simson is a downtown business owner and Saturday mornings are a busy time. She would like to see the Farmer's Market stay in downtown. Ms. Simson suggested hiring a police officer with tenure to help offset the cost of training at the police academy.
- **Joe Devaney** – Mr. Devaney thanked Mayor Fosque, Town Manager Spuck and the parking lot committee for holding the meeting earlier today. The small stakeholder meeting reviewed the final parking lot plan designed by Hill Studio. The proposed changes are straightforward in that the plan does nothing to address storm water runoff. Secondly, there is some activity around safety that Town Manager Spuck can give details if necessary. Mr. Devaney thinks other locations should be evaluated for a permanent location for the Farmer's Market. The greatest concern was how public participation process was conducted. Until the meeting this morning, the last meeting was eight months ago. The Farmer's Market website formally announced the relocation of the market which was a surprise.
- **Glenn Smith** – Mr. Smith was allowed more time to continue his comments about the fire department \$4,000,000 expansion. (Mr. Smith's full statement is attached.)

9) Committee Reports

- **Planning Commission (Cindy Holdren)** – Councilmember Holdren reported the Planning Commission met in March and discussed draft bylaws. The new committee is getting organized under the new Chairperson Kasey Grier. Chairperson Grier is planning to attend training in July 2025.
- **Economic Development Authority (EDA) (Lisa Fiege)** – Councilmember Fiege reported the EDA met in March where they amended the bylaws to allow for quarterly meetings. They

Town of Onancock

Town Council Meeting

Monday, March 24, 2025

7:00 PM

also discussed the creation of a mission statement and scope which will guide our revolving loan procedures. Town Manager Spuck heard back from Brandon Archer at DHCD who shared the criteria for lending money back out does not have to be as stringent as it was with the Lilliston building. Jake Dillon was elected the Treasurer. The EDA has an open seat.

- **Personnel Committee (Lisa Fiege)** – Councilmember Fiege reported the personnel committee met in March and discussed the need to rewrite the job descriptions for all town positions. Town Manager Spuck expressed concerns that the job descriptions should be written by the town management as staff is hired, termed, and managed by the town manager and not the town council. The matrix and frequency of Town Manager’s Spuck performance evaluation is being reviewed.

10) Community Reports

- **Onancock Main Street (OMS) (Lisa Fiege)** – Councilmember Fiege introduced the new program manager Maggie Grant. The uptown locations for murals have been solidified. OMS currently has five artists who will submit concept drawings by April 14, 2025. The National Main Street conference is scheduled for April 6th – 9th, 2025. The board members and staff are paying out of pocket to attend the conference. OMS also had presence at the ESVA tourism summit. OMS submitted the VTC Marketing Leverage Program grant which was due on March 14, 2025. The proposal included continuing the relationship with Advanced Travel and Tourism along with new funds for 15-30 second video clips.
- **Historic Onancock School (HOS) (Sarah Nock)** – Councilmember Nock reported HOS has applied for several grants to help complete the pavilion construction. The goal is for a soft opening in late Spring. The search for a new executive director is ongoing. The board is relieved that the aging boiler made it through another winter season. HOS will be hosting the following upcoming events:

- Wine Wednesday, April 2, 2025
- 2nd annual Field Day – Saturday, May 3, 2025
- Bloom and Brushes – Saturday, May 31, 2025

- 11) **Mayor’s Report** – Mayor Fosque stated the time limit for public comments was established two years ago. His role is to enforce the time limit, if the Town Council prefers to change the time limit that needs to be discussed and agreed upon by the next meeting.

12) Town Manager’s Report

- **Financial** – see full report in the Town Council packet.

Town of Onancock

Town Council Meeting

Monday, March 24, 2025

7:00 PM

- **Manager's Report** – Town Manager Spuck gave updates on the following:
 - The water leaks have created more expenses for street repairs which now has surpassed the budget. Town Manager requested a portion of the utility reserve be used to cover the overage.

Councilmember Fiege moved to allow the Town Manager to use the utility reserves to pave the areas disrupted due to water leaks. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

- Town Manager Spuck stated several of the restaurants have not submitted their meals tax. One restaurant has not submitted in the last twelve months. The town attorney suggested we file a warrant in debt, and have it filed with a judge so we can make claim against the assets if the business fails.

Councilmember Holdren moved to allow Town Manager Spuck to file a warrant in debt for the restaurants that have not paid meals tax. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote.

- **Police Report** – Police Chief Williams gave a report on a few pertinent items and updated that four people were arrested in the car break-ins.

13) Town Councilmember comments –

- **Councilmember Fiege** – Councilmember Fiege thanked the Queen Street residents for attending the meeting and bringing the storm water mitigation to Town Council's attention.
- **Councilmember Grubb** – no comments.
- **Councilmember Holdren** – Councilmember Holdren thanked the police department for charging the four people for the car break ins.
- **Councilmember Marino** – Councilmember Marino asked for current staff salaries for the next budget meeting.
- **Councilmember Nock** – Councilmember Nock mentioned Historic Garden Week is Saturday, May 3, 2025, and is centered in Accomack County this year with exception of Eyre Hall. One of the houses is on the Onancock Creek.
- **Councilmember Oswald** – Councilmember Oswald thanked everyone for attending the meeting and that their comments are appreciated. Councilmember Oswald asked if there are any promotions for the historic oak? She suggested a "Name the Tree Campaign" to bring attention to the tree.

**Town of Onancock
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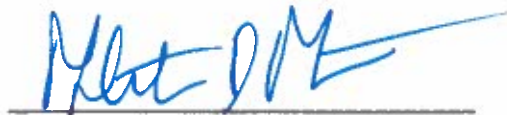
14) Closed Session - Personnel - Councilmember Fiege moved to enter closed session to discuss personnel matters as allowed by State Code Section 2.2-3711. Councilmember Holdren seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 6-0 vote. Closed session started at 9:25 PM.

Councilmember Fiege moved to exit closed session of this regular meeting of the Onancock Town Council and certify by roll call vote that the item discussed in Closed Session align with the purpose stated in the motion made in Open Session. Councilmember Holdren seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken:

- Councilmember Fiege – aye
- Councilmember Grubb – not present
- Councilmember Holdren - aye
- Councilmember Marino – aye
- Councilmember Nock – aye
- Councilmember Oswald – aye
- Mayor Fosque – aye

Open session reconvened at 10:50 PM.

15) Adjourn – Councilmember Fiege moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Nock seconded the motion. The motion passed with a 5-0 vote. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 PM.



Fletcher Fosque, Mayor



Debbie Caton, Town Clerk


Mayor and Council

I was a Firefighter for 43 years, 23 of them a paid professional. I spent 4 years with Onancock Volunteer FD and 4 years with the Tasley Volunteer FD. I was a Chief and Firefighter in both Departments.

I would like to comment on last months presentation / request by the Onancock Volunteer Fire Department of \$35,000 for a Gear washer, a Gear dryer and also comment on the 4-million-dollar expansion of the Onancock Fire Station on Pine St in Onancock.

First some background there are 14 fire and ems stations in Accomack County and every year each station receives approx. \$160,000 from the county generated by your tax dollars, Onancock, Parksley, Oak Hall Rescue Medic units are staffed by 4 county employees in each station 24 hours a day 365 days a year. Painter and Greenbackville are staffed with 2 county employees in each station 24 hours a day 365 days a year. This is all paid for by your county tax dollars. The Council budgets \$25,000 a year for the OVFD, Onancock FD does a letter fundraiser every year to the township residents, along with billing every patients insurance for their ems service, billing your car insurance if they respond an accident that you were involved in. All these costs are paid for by you the unlucky resident that might happen to need their services.

Now as far as a washer and dryer, I worked in a town that had 4 fire houses and a 100-man department and we did fine with one large gear washer at fire Hq. we didn't have a dryer we line dried our gear. Accomack County DPS last year purchased a new gear washer and gear dryer located at the fire training center on Beacon Road in Melfa (10 minutes from here). Tasley Volunteer Fire company (just 2 miles away



from OFD) also last year purchased a gear washer and a gear dryer (that was funded by a grant), there are also other departments in the county that have this equipment. All you have to do is ask to use it. Purchasing the washer and dryer is a duplication of services that the taxpayers don't need to pay for when the equipment is already is easily available.

As far as a \$ 4 million dollar expansion that will likely cost close to 6 million by the time it is done. There is a brand-new fire station 2 miles away at the Tasley Fire House (5 years old) with 8 garage bays and 2 bunk rooms that will accommodate 5 people in each room, bathrooms, showers, offices and training room. Only 4 of the bays are being used and none of the bunk rooms are being used. Tasley is in a more strategic location than Pine St. and only cost 1.6 million to build during covid. Maybe these two departments should work together to come up with a plan to serve the county taxpayers more effectively and be cost efficient to the residents that they serve. Between the 2 Fire Stations there are 3 engines, 2 tankers, ladder truck, rescue truck, 3 support vehicles, 1 highwater rescue truck, 2 brush trucks and 3 ambulances. 16 pieces of equipment. We need to stop duplicating services.

I would ask this council to speak to the supervisors to come up with some type of a plan to make the counties Fire and EMS system work more efficiently and be more cost effective to the taxpayer especially involving these 2 stations.