



REGULAR MEETING OF STAUNTON CITY COUNCIL
Thursday, April 9, 2026
7:00 p.m.
Rita S. Wilson Council Chambers

PRESENT: Mayor Michele D. Edwards
Vice Mayor Brad D. Arrowood
Adam F. Campbell
Jeff L. Overholtzer (Remote Participant)
Corrie R. Park
Blake N. Shepherd
Alice L. Woods

ABSENT: None

ALSO PRESENT: Leslie Beauregard, City Manager
John Blair, City Attorney

Mayor Edwards called the meeting to order: Mayor Edwards called this meeting of Staunton City Council to order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited in unison.

The invocation/moment of silence was given by Reverend Edward Scott at the invitation of Councilor Shepherd.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Edwards stated that she had little to report as she is preoccupied with her daughter's upcoming wedding in nine days.

ADDITIONAL ITEMS BY MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

Councilor Shepherd stated that he and the City Manager and various City staff members as well as Economic Development Authority Director Suzie Dull attended the inauguration of the seventh President of James Madison University on April 8, 2026.

REGULAR MEETING**A. Consent Agenda (Note: A copy of all Ordinances and Resolutions approved on the Consent Agenda shall appear at the conclusion of these minutes.)****A.1. Approval of Minutes****Work Session and Regular Meeting of March 26, 2026****A.2 Consideration of Proclamation to be Presented in Council Chambers Recognizing Arbor Day 2026****A.3. Consideration of Proclamation to be Presented in Council Chambers Recognizing Economic Development Week****A.4. Consideration of Virginia Department of Transportation Blanket Resolution for Signature Authority and Funding Commitments**

Mayor Edwards made the following statement:

“Per Procedure Memorandum No. 14, it is the policy of City Council to have routine, non-controversial items placed on a Consent Agenda. All items on the Consent Agenda will be voted on in one motion. If separate discussion of an item is requested by any member of Council, that item shall be removed and considered separately at the end of the regular meeting agenda.”

Mayor Edwards asked if any Councilmembers desired to remove any item from the Consent Agenda to be placed on the regular meeting agenda for separate consideration.

Councilor Campbell moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

The motion was seconded by Vice-Mayor Arrowood and carried as follows:

Ms. Woods	aye	Ms. Park	aye
Mr. Shepherd	aye	Vice Mayor Arrowood	aye
Mr. Campbell	aye	Mayor Edwards	aye
Mr. Overholtzer	aye		

B. Discussion Followed by Public Hearing on Water User Fee, Sewer User Fee, Refuse User Fees, and Landfill Fees as Included in the FY 2027 Proposed Budget

Jessie Moyers, Chief Financial Officer, presented the following information to Council:

The FY2027 budget proposes fee increases in three areas in order to fund critical infrastructure projects now and in the future: Water Fund, Sewer Fund and the Environmental Fund. A preliminary report on these proposed increases was provided to City Council at the March 12, 2026 Work Session, followed by the introduction of the FY 2027 Proposed Budget on March 26, 2027.

Details of each of these proposals are below:

Proposed Changes to the Water Usage Fee

The FY2027 budget proposal includes a 5.4% water rate increase, effective July 1, 2026, for water consumption. Residential bi-monthly customers will be billed at the new rate beginning with utility bills issued on September 10. Monthly customers will be impacted with the new rate beginning with the July utility bills. The increase will generate \$208,000 in additional water user fee revenue. The rate is proposed to increase to \$4.28/100 cubic feet from \$4.06/100 cubic feet. The minimum charge per two months by each regular user of City water is proposed to increase from \$20.30 to \$21.40. The bulk water rate is also proposed to increase from \$10.50 to \$11.00 per 750 gallons of water purchased in bulk quantities from the treatment plant. The minimum charge for bulk water purchases of less than 1,500 gallons during a month is proposed to increase from \$21.00 to \$22.00. The proposed increase would cost a family of four an additional \$2.64 per bi-monthly billing cycle, based on an average bi-monthly consumption of 12/100 cubic feet, or \$15.84 annually. Rates were last increased effective July 1, 2024, for fiscal year 2025.

The increase is necessary to cover the increasing operating costs and to unfreeze two equipment operator positions that were frozen in FY2023. Even the 5% rate increase does not generate sufficient revenue to cover the total capital expenditures for the Water Fund. The total FY2027 Water Fund budget is \$8,318,365, a decrease of \$1,888,610 over the FY2026 adopted budget. FY2027 budget includes capital expenditures of \$3,240,000 including \$450,000 for water line replacements, \$2,500,000 for the construction phase of the Richmond Ave phase I project, and \$290,000 to paint the Franklin Hills #1 water storage tank.

Proposed Changes to the Sewer Usage Fee

The FY2025 budget proposal includes a 7.14% sewer rate increase, effective July 1, 2026, for sewage disposal services. Residential bi-monthly customers will be billed at the new rate beginning with utility bills issued on September 10. Monthly customers will be impacted with the new rate beginning with the July utility bills. The increase will generate \$309,000 in additional water user fee revenue. The rate is proposed to increase to \$6.00/100 cubic feet from \$5.60/100 cubic feet. The minimum charge per two months by each regular user of City water is proposed to increase from \$28.00 to \$30.00. Rates have only been increased twice over the last 13 years.

The proposed increase would cost a family of four an additional \$4.80 per bi-monthly billing cycle, based on an average bi-monthly consumption of 12/100 cubic feet, or \$28.80 annually.

The increase is necessary to cover the increasing operating costs, unfreeze one equipment operator position that was frozen in FY2023, and capital costs to replace/ repair major sewer system infrastructure assets. Even the 7.14% rate increase does not generate sufficient revenue to cover the total cash expense of \$5,361,881.

The total FY2027 Sewer Fund budget is \$5,361,881, a decrease of \$1,332,937 over the FY2026 adopted budget. The FY2027 budget included capital projects that totaled \$1,198,024. The FY2027 budget includes capital expenditures of \$250,000 for sewer line replacements, \$150,000

for Lewis Creek PER, \$500,000 for the New Hope Rd evaluation and study, and \$248,024 for plant machinery at the Middle River Waste Water Treatment Plant.

Proposed Changes to the Environmental Fees

The FY2027 budget proposal includes an increase in the environmental fund of 14.5%, which increases the residential refuse fee from \$24.01 per month to \$27.50 per month. The commercial refuse fees will also increase by 14.5%. The fee increases will generate approximately \$450,000 in additional revenue. The proposed increase will allow the city to replace one refuse truck in FY2027 and help to fund the landfill capital needs. The fund will still run a deficit of \$208,484 after the 14.5% increase in revenue.

In addition, the Augusta Regional Landfill have proposed increases to the landfill tipping and disposals fees. The commercial and industrial waste tipping fee will increase from \$52 per ton to \$65 per ton. Other landfill fee increases can be found on Attachment #3.

In summary

The financial impact to the minimum bill (not including stormwater) will be \$10.08 every two months and an average bill of 12 hundred cubic feet (approx. 9,000 gallons) will be \$14.42 every two months.

Mayor Edwards asked if the \$13,000,000 water fund balance is money available to expend on capital needs. Ms. Moyers said that it was.

Mayor Edwards pointed out that there is a large deficit between available funds and future water capital needs.

Councilor Woods asked Ms. Moyers to explain the flat fee charged by other localities. Ms. Moyers explained that other localities have a set charge for every utilities customer in addition to any usage of a utility. Staunton does not have a flat fee, but it has a minimum charge. However, the minimum charge is applied to any usage. Ms. Moyers explained that she anticipates the utility rate study will recommend that Staunton implement a flat fee for its utility services.

Councilor Campbell asked how much landfill revenue comes from commercial tipping fees. Ms. Moyers stated that Staunton has the smallest percentage of commercial tipping fees at the regional landfill. She said the increased commercial tipping fees will help, but it will not solve the landfill capital problem.

Councilor Overholtzer stated that he'd like to see the City's trash collection fees based on usage. He suggested a fee differential based on the size of the cans. He asked Ms. Moyers how that could happen from an operational standpoint. Ms. Moyers stated that there are already some usage-based fees in place for trash collection including the extra can fee and the bag tags. However, in order to implement Councilor Overholtzer's suggestion would require additional staffing hours by the front office staff at the Public Works Department.

Councilor Overholtzer stated that he would be willing to examine such additional operational expenses in a future budget cycle.

Mayor Edwards asked that the upcoming utility fee study examine data to determine if usage-based fees actually decrease the amount of trash produced. Ms. Moyers said she would ask that the study consider that request.

Mayor Edwards opened the public hearing.

No one spoke at the public hearing.

The City Manager stated that a vote on these matters would come before Council at its April 23, 2026 meeting.

C. Discussion Followed by Public Hearing of an Ordinance to Establish a Budget for FY 2027 (July 1, 2026—June 30, 2027) and to Increase Excise Tax Rate on Sale of Cigarettes to \$.40 Per Pack

Jessie Moyers, Chief Financial Officer, presented the following information to Council:

The FY 2027 City Manager's Proposed Budget was presented at the regular meeting on March 26, 2026. A public hearing of the budget ordinance, and the increase in the excise tax rate on the sale of cigarettes, is scheduled for the regular meeting on April 9, 2026. Notice of the public hearing, attached, was advertised in The News Leader on March 25, 2026 and April 1, 2026. Prior to the public hearing, there will be a joint budget work session with Staunton City Schools and a city only review of the FY 2027 Proposed Budget.

In addition, in the FY2027 budget there is a proposed increase in the excise tax on the sale of cigarettes to \$.40 per pack from the current \$.30 per pack. This results in an estimated additional revenue of \$90,000, of which \$15,000 will fund a pilot programs and education geared to reducing refuse and increase recycling.

Josh Knight, Communications Director, also presented on potential expenditures from the proposed cigarette tax increase.

Mayor Edwards asked if implementing the hazardous duty pay multiplier would affect all employees. Ms. Moyers stated that only sworn law enforcement officers would benefit from the hazardous duty multiplier, but each City employee's annual VRS multiplier would increase.

Councilor Campbell asked Ms. Moyers to clarify that the annual expenditures on the hazardous duty multiplier would come from non sworn law enforcement employees. Ms. Moyers confirmed that.

Councilor Overholtzer stated that since the City was already expending \$250,000 on an increased pay plan for the Police Department, he would prefer to consider the hazardous duty multiplier when considering the Fiscal Year 2028 budget.

Councilor Campbell agreed with Councilor Overholtzer that he would prefer to spread out the increased expenditures over two years.

Councilor Woods said that she wanted to support the hazardous duty pay this year because there might be new needs that displace it if the Council waited until the Fiscal Year 2028 budget cycle.

Mayor Edwards and Vice-Mayor Arrowood as well as Councilors Woods, Park, and Shepherd expressed their desire to vote in favor of the hazardous duty multiplier for the Fiscal Year 2027 budget.

Councilor Campbell pointed out the increased mowing expense and asked about the contract. Ms. Moyers stated that it was an on-demand contract.

Vice-Mayor Arrowood expressed support for better sorting equipment at the recycling center and asked if it might lead to the return of curbside recycling. Mr. Knight said no.

The City Manager clarified that the market was simply too volatile to return to curbside recycling. However, the new sorting equipment would help the City better meet the rapidly changing market for recyclable materials.

Vice-Mayor Arrowood asked if the Lake Tams continuous monitoring system is a flood mitigation measure. Ms. Moyers said that it was.

Councilor Shepherd mentioned the possibility of raising the transient occupancy tax in the future to address utility needs.

Mayor Edwards opened the public hearing.

No one spoke.

The City Manager asked if the Council wanted to cancel its April 16, 2026 Budget Work Session Special Meeting. The Council indicated that it did want to cancel the meeting.

MATTERS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

Ms. Beauregard presented updates and information on the following items:

- There will be an April 15th community meeting on the draft Flood Resilience Plan at the Staunton Public Library at 6:00 p.m.
- The Staunton Public Library Terrace Project continues to proceed.
- On April 11th, there will be a 20th anniversary celebration of Fire Station 2 at 302 Grubert Avenue from noon to 4 p.m. that will feature refreshments, tours, and free smoke detectors.

MATTERS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mayor Edwards read the following statement:

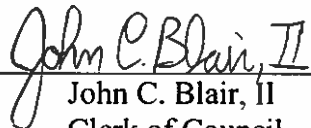
“This part of City Council’s agenda is entitled matters from the public. It is a time that Council sets aside to hear from citizens and others about a wide variety of subjects. A copy of the Staunton City Council's ‘Matters from the Public’ rules is available in paper form at the Clerk’s desk and online at the City of Staunton webpage. You are asked to familiarize yourself with those rules before commenting. Please come to the podium or raise your hand, identify yourself, and complete your remarks within five minutes.”

Cindy Connors asked that the Council examine tweaks to its current yard waste collection policies so that alternative receptacles and practices could be used by citizens to dispose of yard waste in addition to the current required cans.

Lee Ann Whitesell gave the Council an overview of the Valley Career and Technical Center’s recent accomplishments including the addition of aviation and firefighting programs, success in statewide competitions, and the recognition of over 400 students receiving a certification this Spring. She thanked the Council and local businesses for their support of Valley Tech. She stated that the copper pen found at each Councilor’s chair was made by the precision machinery class at Valley Tech.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:29 p.m.



John C. Blair, II
Clerk of Council

**RESOLUTION
OF THE
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF STAUNTON, VIRGINIA
FOR BLANKET PROJECT FUNDING COMMITMENT AND
FOR BLANKET SIGNATURE AUTHORITY FOR TRANSPORTATION
PROJECTS UNDER AGREEMENT WITH THE VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF
TRANSPORTATION**

Recitals

A. The City of Staunton administers transportation projects under agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation;

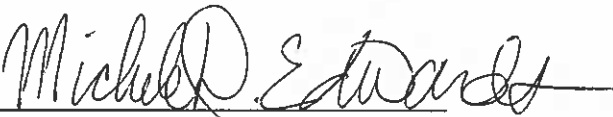
B. The City of Staunton desires to provide clear commitment for funding these transportation projects and clear signature authority for signing the Project Administration agreements.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Staunton, Virginia, that:

1. the City of Staunton hereby commits to fund its local share of preliminary engineering, right-of-way and construction (as applicable) costs of the project(s) under agreement with the Virginia Department of Transportation in accordance with the project financial document(s); and
2. the City Manager or Acting/Interim City Manager is authorized to execute all agreements and/or addendums for any approved projects with the Virginia Department of Transportation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, this resolution shall be in full force and effect upon its passage.

Introduced: *April 9, 2026*
Adopted: *April 9, 2026*
Effective Date: *April 9, 2026*



Michele D. Edwards, Mayor

ATTEST: *John C. Blair, II*

John Blair,
Clerk of Council