



CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

March 16, 2026 at 4:00 PM
Council Chamber

The Charlottesville City Council met on Monday, March 16, 2026. Mayor Juandiego Wade called the meeting to order, and Clerk of Council Kyna Thomas called the roll, noting the following councilors present: Mayor Juandiego Wade, Vice Mayor Natalie Oschrein and Councilors Jen Fleisher and Michael Payne. Councilor Lloyd Snook requested to join the meeting electronically. He confirmed that he was in New Delhi, India for a family wedding. On motion by Fleisher, seconded by Oschrein, Council voted 4-0 to allow electronic participation by Councilor Snook.

On motion by Payne, seconded by Fleisher, Council by a 5-0 vote approved the meeting agenda with amendments to extend the work session to 6:00 p.m., followed by recess instead of a closed meeting, and adding an item during the Business Session to vote on an appointment to the Housing Advisory Committee.

REPORTS

1. REPORT: VDOT STARS Study Update (Ridge Street at West Main Street Intersection)

Ben Chambers, Transportation Planning Manager, presented the VDOT STARS Study update. In 2025, the Virginia Department of Transportation ("VDOT") began work on a STARS Study at the intersection of West Main Street and Ridge Street ("Project"). This Project was aimed at moving the existing statue plinth to a safer location for vehicle, bike, and pedestrian movements through the intersection, improving safety and access for all users. VDOT held public engagement on its recommended design concept in January 2026. This Project is slated as the City's SMART SCALE Application for 2026, due in August, which would put the Project in consideration for state funding and inclusion in the Commonwealth's Six-year Improvement Program. The cost estimate is \$11 million, and Mr. Chambers projected a July 20 date for bringing an item to City Council for approval. Councilors asked clarifying questions.

2. REPORT: Collective Bargaining Impacts

City Manager Samuel Sanders, Jr., presented an update on the impacts of collective bargaining, to allow City Council to make informed decisions as they deliberate tensions and trade-offs for the proposed FY2027 City Budget. The City of Charlottesville approved its Collective Bargaining Ordinance effective January 2023, authorizing up to six bargaining units: Police, Fire, Transit, Labor & Trades, Administrative & Technical, and Professional. Today, there are four active collective bargaining contracts: Police, Fire, Transit, and Labor & Trades. Charlottesville City Schools has an active contract with Licensed Teachers for FY26 - FY28. The pending contract with Professional Support personnel will cover FY27 - FY29. The increased costs resulting from these contracts is a solid indication of the value placed on the existing workforce and prioritizing their needs. The issue now facing both operating budgets is the reconciliation of increasing compensation and benefits costs and how to address other needs and priorities.

Councilors acknowledged the importance of collective bargaining, and they engaged in discussion which included the topics of pay parity for similar positions, cost of living increases, future planning for impacts of collective bargaining, managing strategic priorities, and understanding that trade-offs may need to be considered.

There being no items requiring a closed session, Mayor Wade recessed the meeting from 5:53 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

BUSINESS SESSION

City Council began the business portion of the meeting by observing a moment of silence.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Fleisher provided a reminder about city energy efficiency and support programs for those experiencing high utility bills.

Councilor Payne announced the death of Bob McAdams, a local activism organizer.

RECOGNITIONS/PROCLAMATIONS

- **PROCLAMATION: Social Work Month**

Councilor Fleisher presented the Social Work Month proclamation.

COMMUNITY MATTERS

Mayor Wade opened the floor for comments from the public.

1. Christopher Miles Turner, representing Second Street Gallery, recommended that Council reconsider the funding for Arts and Culture organizations to increase the amount allocated through the Vibrant Community Fund, considering the City's stated priority areas.
2. Emily Smith, housing attorney with the Legal Aid Justice Center, requested zoning amendments to more robustly protect core neighborhoods.
3. Sadhbh O'Flynn, Community Climate Collaborative, spoke in support of and made recommendations to enhance the High Performance Building Standards initiative.
4. John Hall, city resident, spoke about solid waste management and recycling plastics. He complimented local plastic recycling operations, and he made suggestions for employing low income people to help with recycling.
5. Frank Bechter, city resident, spoke about limitations imposed by FOIA for Council to solve issues with limited ability to meet without publicly, providing public notice of meetings of three or more members. He spoke about issues involving development in the Fifeville neighborhood.
6. Jim Sneider, city resident, stated that current zoning patterns, setbacks, and proposed development near the Amtrak station are limiting the ability for Amtrak to implement critical infrastructure for a hub at the Charlottesville station. He requested coordination with Amtrak when planning.

CONSENT AGENDA

Clerk of Council Kyna Thomas read the following Consent Agenda items into the record, and on motion by Payne, seconded by Oschrin, Council by a vote of 5-0 approved the Consent Agenda. (Ayes: Fleisher, Oschrin, Payne, Snook, Wade; Noes: none).

3. MINUTES: January 20 regular meeting; March 5 & March 12 budget work sessions
4. RESOLUTION to Grant \$125,000 for a Small Business Energy Efficiency Incentive Program (2nd reading)

RESOLUTION

ALLOCATION OF CLIMATE ACTION INITIATIVE FUNDS FOR THE DELIVERY OF A SMALL BUSINESS ENERGY EFFICIENCY INCENTIVE PROGRAM IN THE AMOUNT OF \$125,000

WHEREAS, the City of Charlottesville, having established the Climate Action Initiative Fund for projects and programs in support of the City’s Climate Action goals; and

WHEREAS, approximately 95% of Charlottesville’s greenhouse gas emissions are attributable to non-municipal, community-based activities, of which approximately 30% derive from the non-residential sector, including small businesses and non-profits; and

WHEREAS, small businesses and non-profit organizations often operate on very thin financial margins and often lack the technical expertise needed to make energy improvements, even if it could lower their utility bills and positively impact their operating costs; and

WHEREAS, the City’s Climate Program recognizes that this sector can benefit from targeted support in reducing emissions from their buildings through energy saving strategies; and

WHEREAS, the City’s Climate Program issued a notice of funding opportunity seeking a non-profit partner to develop and deliver a pilot Small Business Energy Efficiency Incentive Program, which aims to support businesses and non-profit organizations located in the City of Charlottesville in reducing their energy use through energy audits, technical assistance, and financial subsidies for energy efficiency improvements, thereby lowering utility costs and contributing to the City’s community climate goals; and

WHEREAS, the Climate Action Grant Committee received and reviewed responses to the notice of funding opportunity, and voted unanimously to recommend award of the grant to the Community Climate Collaborative;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Charlottesville, having received and considered the recommendation of the Climate Action Grant Committee regarding award of the grant, that \$125,000 is hereby allocated from the Climate Action Initiative Fund (Fund 426, IO 100028), previously appropriated as part of the FY2026 Capital Improvement Program, as a grant award to the Community Climate Collaborative for the establishment and administration of the Small Business Energy Efficiency Incentive Program.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is hereby authorized to execute a grant agreement consistent with this resolution.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Assistant City Manager Sam Roman announced a Teen Empowerment Expo being conducted by the Department of Human services on March 20 at Carver Recreation Center.

City Manager Sanders announced outreach and cleanup efforts along the Rivanna Trail on March 24 and March 25, in coordination with service providers for the unhoused community.

Courtney Cacatian, Executive Director of the Charlottesville Albemarle Convention and Visitors Bureau, provided an update on local programming in support of VA250, a series of commemorative events celebrating the 250th anniversary of the United States of America.

ACTION ITEMS

5. PUBLIC HEARING on the Charlottesville real property tax rate

Budget Director Krisy Hammill introduced the public hearing as an additional opportunity for public input, with the legally required public hearing scheduled for April 6, 2026.

Mayor Wade opened the public hearing.

1. Frank Bechter, city resident, asked how fundraising fits into the budget.

Mayor Wade closed the public hearing.

6. CITY CODE CHANGES

City Attorney John Maddux introduced three proposals for updates to the Charlottesville City Code.

a. ORDINANCE Amending Chapter 2 of the City Code by Repealing Sections 2-47 and 2-48 Relating to the City Council Finance Committee

On motion by Oschrin, seconded by Fleisher, Council by a vote of 5-0 adopted the **ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2 OF THE CITY CODE BY REPEALING SECTIONS 2-47 AND 2-48 RELATING TO THE CITY COUNCIL FINANCE COMMITTEE**, waiving the second reading (Ayes: Fleisher, Oschrin, Payne, Snook, Wade; Noes: none).

b. Ordinance to amend Chapter 2, Article X of the City Code to repeal outdated provisions pertaining to School Board appointments

On motion by Oschrin, seconded by Fleisher, Council by a vote of 5-0 adopted the **ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE X OF THE CITY CODE BY REPEALING SECTIONS 2-341 AND 2-342 AND RECODIFYING SECTION 2-343 AS SECTION 2-341**, waiving the second reading (Ayes: Fleisher, Oschrin, Payne, Snook, Wade; Noes: none).

c. Ordinance to amend City Code Chapter 19, Article III, Section 19-57 to update city manager representation on the Retirement Plan Commission

On motion by Oschrin, seconded by Snook, Council by a vote of 5-0 adopted the **ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 19-57 OF THE CHARLOTTESVILLE CITY CODE RELATING TO THE COMPOSITION OF THE RETIREMENT PLAN COMMISSION**, waiving the second reading (Ayes: Fleisher, Oschrin, Payne, Snook, Wade; Noes: none).

7. ORDINANCE: Public Art Program Proposal

Deputy City Manager James Freas presented the Public Art Program proposal. As public art is an important component of the city's culture and legacy, with public art displays present in neighborhoods across the community, staff proposed creating a public art advisory commission responsible for making recommendations to City Council on the management, acceptance, placement, or deaccession of public art in Charlottesville. The proposed Ordinance supports and aligns with the imperatives of effective management of city assets, in this case public art, and the Ordinance and follow-on project aligns with the city's strategic initiatives related to Recreation, Arts & Culture, and Partnerships. In addition, the Ordinance and Resolution align with Strategy 8.2 in Charlottesville's 2021 Comprehensive Plan regarding the role of public art in public spaces in the community.

Staff recommended funds of \$100,000 to hire a consultant who will do the work to stand-up the Public Art Commission and the Public Art Program and hand these off to city staff. Going forward, in alignment with other peer cities in Virginia, it is projected that the Public Art Program would require a .50 FTE (full-time equivalent) staff time. It is not clear if that would need to be a new position or if that .50 FTE responsibility could be integrated into existing staff workload.

Council agreed to carry the item to the April 6 consent agenda for a second reading of the ordinance and resolution.

- a. **ORDINANCE to establish the Charlottesville Public Art Program (layover)**
- b. **RESOLUTION to fund the Charlottesville Public Art Program - \$100,000 (layover)**

8. RESOLUTION in support of Charlottesville High Performance Building Standards

Kristel Riddervold, Director of Sustainability, proposed a resolution for the purpose of aligning with state requirements and establishing High Performance Building Standards for the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and renovation process for all municipal buildings. This action reflects strategies found in both the Comprehensive Plan as well as the Charlottesville Climate Action Plan and will replace the City's 2008 Green Buildings Resolution.

In 2008, Charlottesville adopted its first Green Buildings Resolution, making a policy commitment to environmentally sustainable building practices. Since that time, all major City construction projects have achieved certification through the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) green building rating standard. To date, the City has built seven LEED certified facilities and two more (the Bypass Fire Station and Charlottesville Middle School) are in process. More recently, the Virginia General Assembly passed the High Performance Buildings Act of 2021, requiring certain facilities constructed by Virginia localities to meet a state-mandated performance threshold. These requirements went into effect for smaller localities in 2023. Charlottesville has been in compliance with the state law through the existing green building policy as well as the design/construction of new facilities to achieve LEED certification.

Councilor Payne requested a second reading to hear more about which buildings are subject to the Standards, and to bring clarity to subjective language. Several councilors asked for clarification of whether the Standards apply to school buildings.

Council agreed to carry the resolution to the April 6 meeting for a second reading and vote.

9. RESOLUTION to authorize a refund of \$159,947.55 to a taxpaying entity or business

Commissioner of the Revenue Todd Divers presented the tax refund request.

On motion by Payne, seconded by Oschrin, Council by a vote of 5-0 approved the following resolution:

RESOLUTION

Authorizing a Refund of \$159,947.55 to a Taxpaying Entity or Business, for Business License Tax Paid in Error for 2023, 2024, and 2025

WHEREAS, the Commissioner of the Revenue for the City of Charlottesville, Virginia ("COR"), has determined that a taxpaying entity or business paid 2023, 2024, and 2025 Business License Tax to the City of Charlottesville, Virginia ("City"), in error; and

WHEREAS, that taxpaying entity or business has requested a refund of the amount paid in error; and

WHEREAS, the COR has certified that a refund of taxes paid is due in the amount of \$159,947.55; and

WHEREAS, City Code Section 30-6(b) requires City Council approval for any tax refund exceeding \$10,000.00.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council for the City of Charlottesville, Virginia, that it hereby approves and adopts this Resolution authorizing the City Treasurer to issue a refund of \$159,947.55 payable to that taxpaying entity or business.

GENERAL BUSINESS

10. WRITTEN REPORT: Land Use and Environmental Planning Committee Semi-Annual Report

Mayor Wade acknowledged receipt of the LUEPC Semi-annual Report. Councilor Payne asked questions about the committee and its meetings.

COMMUNITY MATTERS (2)

Mayor Wade opened the floor for comments from the public.

- Jim Sneider spoke in support of the Public Art Program effort, and about a good experience that he had working with a similar program in Falls Church, Virginia, working with UVA student planners.
- John Hall, city resident, spoke about new construction using solar panels.
- Frank Bechter, city resident, spoke about development in Fifeville, and requested consistency from the city and zoning practices.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion by Snook, seconded by Fleisher, Council by unanimous consent adjourned the meeting at 8:34 p.m.

BY Order of City Council

BY Kyna Thomas, Clerk of Council