TOWN COUNCIL
Public Hearing
Cape Charles Civic Center, 500 Tazewell Avenue
June 5, 2025
6:00 p.m.

At 6:00 p.m., Mayor Adam Charney, having established a quorum, called to order the Public Hearing of the Town Council. In addition to Mayor Charney, present were Vice Mayor Buchholz, Councilmen Butta, Grossman and Newman, and Councilwomen Ashworth and Holloway. Also, in attendance were Town Manager Rick Keuroglian, Treasurer Marion Sofield, Assistant Treasurer Adrian Oei, Capital Projects Manager Bob Panek, Planning Administrative Assistant Jack Steinmayer, and Town Clerk Libby Hume. There were 7 members of the public physically in attendance, and 17 viewers on Facebook.

A moment of silence was observed which was followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Charney read the public hearing notice.

Town Manager Rick Keuroglian stated that he wanted to make sure that the public was aware that Council held multiple meetings to discuss the budget. The budget was built including the purchase of the Meatland property. The spreadsheet which was available at the back of the room reflected the removal of this purchase. Finance Department staff were in attendance this evening to help with any questions.

PUBLIC HEARING PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Claudette Lajoie, resident & President of the Historic District Civic League

Ms. Lajoie thanked her predecessors for all their hard work to get to this point. The Civic League strived to be a partner with the Town to move forward. Several committees were formed to assist the Town – Sidewalk Committee, Beautification Committee and Tree Committee. Ms. Lajoie thanked the Council for allotting $20K for tree stump removal. The $20K would only remove approximately 10 tree stumps and she asked for consideration to add an additional $10K for plantings. They had volunteers to support that effort. The Civic League could assist with writing a request for proposals (RFP) for a company to remove the stumps. She asked that the town management provide them with more of the process and timeframe for the permitting reform committee and hoped that by the next budget cycle, language would be in place. There was no question what Festive Fridays, and the tree lights, did to bring people into the Town, but she requested that the topic be reopened since $110K could be utilized for other uses which would benefit everyone. She understood that the $50K grant would be relinquished but the Civic League was willing to assist in study groups, etc. to help the Town.

There was some discussion as follows: i) Councilwoman Ashworth asked whether the additional $10K was for stump removal or for plantings. Ms. Lajoie stated that it would be for plantings and the Civic League would provide volunteer support for those plantings. The cost for stump removal would be about $2,500 to $3K per stump so the 10 or 12 most visible would be done first; ii) Councilwoman Ashworth noted that there were about 36 tree stumps needing to be removed. Ms. Lajoie stated that if they showed that progress had been made, they would come back next year with another request to resolve the problem. There were a variety of trees, some small, others probably in advance decay so might not be worth removing. It was useful to look at them. She thought it would be better to ask for a planned approach. Ms. Lajoie assumed they would have to go through an RFP process and could provide a priority list of stumps; iii) Councilman Newman stated that he had spoken to two contractors who quoted him much better rates. He had a list with about 40 stumps and knew licensed

people who would love to do the work on a slow day to come grind them, probably for a better price.

Elise McMath, resident
Ms. McMath addressed Council as a representative of the Historic District Civic League Sidewalk Committee. Some other members of the committee included Sam Jones, Dianne Davis, and Emily Gentry. She expressed her appreciation of Council's consideration of adding sidewalks as a third priority on the strategic plan and the inclusion of $100K in the budget. They measured along Fig Street, Washington Avenue and one side of Jefferson Avenue and there were roughly 3,960 feet in need of a sidewalk. Rounding up the area to 4K feet multiplied by a baseline of $150 per linear foot came out to $600K just for those sections. She understood the higher priority items on the list, but sidewalks were identified by the citizens as a priority. The Civic League would like to assist the Town, so she would coordinate the updating of the map from the 2020 Comprehensive Plan to provide staff with a launch point. She understood phasing, implementation and the logistics of getting property owners to comply. Over the course of a year, the committee could make some progress to provide staff with information to help ease some of the burden of this project.

Sam Jones, resident
Mr. Jones stated that Council would hear similar themes this evening. He thanked Council for revising the Community Strategic Plan Appendix B to include sidewalk infill which allowed funding to be included in the budget. He thanked Council for also including funding for the tree canopy. As Council looked to finalize the budget, he asked Council to reconsider the prioritization of the Mason Avenue lighting project versus the sidewalk infill and beach accessibility. These two projects would provide more to the citizens and visitors in terms of safety, accessibility and walkability. He concluded by thanking Council for the opportunity to speak.

Mark Usry, resident
Mr. Usry stated that he would be addressing Council wearing two hats. His first hat was as the chairperson of the Citizens for Central Park (CCP), and he thanked Council for their support of the concerts and improvements to Central Park for the much-needed addition of handicap parking. His second hat was as the chairperson for the Historic District Civic League Tree and Beautification Committee, and he thanked Council for the funding being included in the budget for tree stump removal. If more funding was available, it would be nicer to get the project kickstarted. The other members currently on the committee were Ed Wells, Malcolm Hayward and Evan Ripley. He asked the Town to consider repainting the yellow and blue stripes on the curbs, but he was unsure if this needed to be done by VDOT, the Town or by volunteers. He also lobbied to get a quarterly sweeping of the Town's streets versus once or twice a year. He had heard that the Town of Onancock got their streets swept every month. Next, he brought up the inconsistent lighting in the Historic District which created some dark spots. He was unsure how it was decided where streetlights would be installed, but the dark spots needed to be addressed.

Councilman Grossman noted that some property owners requested the installation of a streetlight on their property. He was looking at his church's electric bill and noticed a $10 charge for a streetlight that was requested by the church in 1989. It might come down to individuals contacting the electric company asking for a streetlight.

Mark Usry added that it would be nice to have the same lights that were currently along Mason and Washington Avenues throughout the Town. He went on to comment on the stop signs, many of which were leaning, adding that they could look better. He concluded by thanking Council for their time and effort.

Mayor Charney stated that he was walking his dog through the playground area and individuals pointed out some rotten areas and exposed concrete. He asked Mr. Usry if CCP had looked into repairing these areas. Mr. Usry stated that he was unaware of it but would contact Ralph Bowen to meet him at the playground to look at the area.

Town Clerk Libby Hume read letters from Jim Granger, Phillipa Wilcox, Kathy Apy, Randy and Marianne Voltin, Tiffany Gelzinis, Susan Burger, Susan Panek, Brent Carpenter, and Dianne Davis. (Please see attached.)

There were no other comments to be heard from the members of the public in attendance, nor any additional comments provided in writing prior to the meeting.

There was some discussion as follows: i) Councilman Newman stated that Council interacted with the in-person comments and did not take the time to address those submitted in writing and some things reached out to him. He did not think Council addressed a long-term lease, just a temporary situation to get staff out of the current building until the new building could be constructed. The church was ceasing to use that space, so he did not think it would be a conflict of interest. Part of the reason he liked the Randolph Avenue location for the new Town Hall was because of the optics, and the Town could build something attractive; ii) Councilwoman Ashworth asked if historically, wasn't the current Civic Center a former church; iii) Councilman Newman stated that he liked to avoid anecdotal statements such as tourism being down. For every person who said that short-term rentals were down, two others stated otherwise. AJ's Bar and Grill just had their biggest quarter, and the new pub was doing fantastic. Sometimes, when the nation was in a downturn, we did better. Vice Mayor Buchholz stated that Cape Charles Main Street tracked the numbers. Mayor Charney added that he checked with businesses after Memorial Day and many told him that they had the best day ever. Councilwoman Holloway stated that we also got a lot of day trippers so meals tax would grow. She did not think the Town was in a doom and gloom situation. Vice Mayor Buchholz stated that a lot of new businesses were popping up. He had his all-time record month last month. He dealt with new businesses, tourism, old businesses, etc. Everything seemed to still be happening; v) Councilwoman Holloway wanted to clarify the comment regarding the Visitor Center/Restroom which had been on the priority list for four years. It was delayed due to the increased quotes and issues with the Canonie-owned property. The Town was looking at a long-term lease with an option to purchase. Funding was still allocated for this project the same as before. Although the Town works to guide people to go to the museum, the restrooms were the key, and this location was closer to the commercial area. Councilwoman Ashworth expressed her agreement with Councilwoman Holloway, adding that the Town was not trying to usurp visitors to the museum, but this visitor center and restroom facility proposal was an opportunity. Councilwoman Holloway noted that national research data showed that if you provide restrooms, the people would stay longer; vi) Councilman Newman stated that he had been told that the Mason Avenue Electrical Upgrade was not just about the twinkly lights for the holidays, but he would like more information on the project. Council had been told that the streetlights tripped all the time and the streetlights were part of the electrical upgrade. Another part is the elimination of extension cords for the tree lights. This was an upgrade to our infrastructure. There were things a contractor could do temporarily to bury the extension cords, making them invisible. Councilwoman Ashworth asked if this project was included in the strategic plan. Councilwoman Holloway stated that it was not included as part of the capital improvement plan (CIP). Councilman Grossman felt that the project should come out of the budget until Council could discuss it at a work session and possibly add it to the CIP. Vice Mayor Buchholz stated that this could be done at the June 18th Town Council Regular Meeting. Councilwoman Ashworth added that we cannot do this project just because we had a grant for a portion of it. The cost was more significant than what was allocated toward sidewalks. It was presented as a project for the Christmas lights, and an added bonus was safety, etc. It should have been presented as an infrastructure improvement with an added bonus of helping with the twinkly lights. Councilman Grossman stated that more research and discussion was needed, adding that it was better to remove the project from the budget, research it and discuss it and revisit it during the mid-year budget review. It can be added to the Capital Asset Management Program on June 18th since it should be on the list before it was funded.

Motion made by Councilman Grossman, seconded by Vice Mayor Buchholz, to adjourn the Town Council Public Hearing. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Mayor Charney

Town Clerk

FY 2026 Proposed Budget Public Hearing Notice

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
MUNICIPAL CORPORATION OF CAPE CHARLES
FISCAL YEAR 2026 PROPOSED BUDGET

Proposed 2026 Budget

GENERAL FUND		
Revenue	$	7,855,107.62
Expense	$	7,855,107.62
GENERAL CAPITAL FUND		
Revenue	$	6,767,456.46
Expense	$	6,767,456.46
GENERAL DEBT SERVICE FUND		
Revenue	$	3,953,103.00
Expense	$	3,953,103.00
PUBLIC UTILITY FUND		
Revenue	$	80,000.00
Total Expenditures	$	80,000.00
HARBOR		
Revenue	$	1,000,630.98
Expenditures	$	1,000,630.98
SANITATION		
Revenue	$	361,177.00
Expenditures	$	361,177.00
Total Town Budget	$	20,017,475.06

Following are the estimated receipts and expenditures of the Municipal Corporation of Cape Charles for the Fiscal Year 2026. The Town Council will hold a Public Hearing on June 5, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. at the Cape Charles Civic Center, 500 Tazewell Avenue, to receive verbal and written comments on all proposed disbursements, as well as all tax and trash service rate changes. Written comments can be submitted prior to the hearing via email to **clerk@capecharles.org** or hand delivered to Town Hall. Verbal comments can be provided during the public hearing. The proposed Fiscal Year 2026 budget and all tax and rate changes will be discussed and brought to a vote at the regular council meeting on June 18, 2025. For additional detail and explanation please visit the Town website at **www.capecharles.org**, under Agendas and Minutes / Town Council.

There are no proposed changes to any of the Town's tax rates. The listing of all tax rates can be viewed on the Town's website under Agendas and Minutes / Town Council.

The Trash Collection fee will increase to $21.25 per month per receptacle, and billed on a quarterly basis.

There are proposed changes to the Building, Planning and Zoning fee schedule, which may be viewed on the Town website under Agendas and Minutes / Town Council.

Adam Charney, Mayor

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Jim Granger, resident
All,
We are in a difficult economic period for our town. We put almost all of our eggs into the tourist basket, and that basket is running low. I'm sure there's hard data to back me up in Cape Charles, but Northampton County is already planning a tax increase to make up for the shortfall in Transient Occupancy Tax revenues. Anecdotally, STR rentals are down. Many STRs have been forced into 3 and 4 day bookings, and that is causing problems for the B&Bs. There are lots of houses for sale, and many are just sitting, even after "price improvements" (love that phrase!!). Taxes are already hurting the people of Cape Charles - we really need to cut back on spending and give them a break!! I know that we have kicked the can on things for too long, but if we're spending, spend wisely, and if we don't need to take on an expensive project right now, don't.

Budget Priorities - In my opinion, we desperately need sidewalks, which would benefit residents and tourists alike. We should be able to walk the length of Fig Street on a sidewalk, and from Fig Street along every East-West avenue to the beach. We only need to do one side of the street. I understand the dilemma of the ordinance which requires all homeowners to provide a sidewalk in front of their house. My recommendation is that all new construction provide a sidewalk, and the town take care of the rest. If there are issues with

residents who were forced to pay for a sidewalk even if they weren't new construction, my suggestion is to pay them back - at the amount they paid for the sidewalk, not at current rates.

We can't build an expensive town hall, execute a $25M beach plan, and potentially buy a Welcome Center, without massive tax increases. We are Cape Charles, not Virginia Beach, Hilton Head, OBX, or Ocean City. Who are we building all this stuff for? Not the full-time residents who have to pay for it!

Welcome Center - I have heard that there is discussion about buying a property on Peach Street for use as a Welcome Center. I am VEHEMENTLY opposed to that idea. We already have a welcome center, on the outskirts of town where it should be, that even has a name - the Cape Charles Museum and Welcome Center. I have heard that there might be some hard feelings between members of Town Council, Cape Charles Main Street, and the Museum and that has led to the concept of a Welcome Center on Peach Street. If that's the case, I say "get over it, work the problems out without making residents pay for it".

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Phillipa Wilcox
I think spending money on electric for Christmas's lights for 8 weeks is not appropriate.

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Kathy Apy, resident
As a citizen of Cape Charles, I understand there is a budget line item that is close to being approved for the installation of permanent power for the twinkling lights in the trees on Mason Avenue. Given these trees are only lit for the winter holiday season I am opposed to spending this money and feel the set up with extension cords is good enough.

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Randy and Marianne Voltin, residents
Good afternoon,

We would like to express our disapproval for allocating budget funds for underground electrical connections regarding the lighting of the Festive Friday trees on Mason Avenue. The proposal seems high for a four-week celebration. There are alternatives to trenching conduit and burying the wiring. ULINE, (800)295-5510, offers much more affordable, alternative solutions. The 2-channel heavy duty cable protector is one such item.

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Tiffany Gelzinis, property owner
I do not agree that we should spend $165,000 to install permanent electrical for Christmas lights in town. I believe there is a more cost-effective solution.

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Susan Burger, resident
To Town Council Members and Mayor Charney,

I am writing to address the budget item to put electric underground on the south side of Mason Ave for safety reasons. I believe this to be an unnecessary expense at this time, particularly on the south side which has less pedestrian traffic than many other areas in town. If pedestrians' safety is a priority maybe the Council should concentrate on and direct more funds to sidewalk infill throughout town so that existing sidewalks are safe and continuous and pedestrians do not need to walk in the street where sidewalks now randomly end.

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Susan Panek, resident
Line item 110-4430-7020:
Infrastructure Mason Ave electrical

The cost to provide underground electricity to light 17 trees for a few months out of the year does not seem cost effective. Budgeting $164,000, and subtracting $50,000 for a Northampton County infrastructure grant, still leaves the town with a cost of approximately $6,700 per tree. Even considering the pros of underground electric, this seems excessive. I believe there are less expensive and safe alternatives for lighting trees and would like the town to reconsider this line item.

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Brent Carpenter & Libby Gray
Good afternoon, everyone.

I have just read the weekly activity report from the town manager, and would like to voice an opinion on something I saw in that communication.

The Town Manager reported on the discussions/progress of the new town hall. Myself and my wife disagree with both of the options that were stated as going forward.

The idea of putting a town hall on the 7 lots coming into CCVA is a terrible option. The Meatland building is ugly enough, do we really want a municipal building right beside a derelict grocery store as the entryway into town?? Second, we both abhor the idea of putting our town hall in the Methodist Church…

Though I trust each of you to make fair decisions, the optics are terrible. A government (town council, etc) meeting in a church??? We are setting ourselves up as a town for a first amendment lawsuit as soon as the council votes on something a constituent deems incorrect due to any morality or religious reasons. And a long term lease?? For a town hall??This is a terrible idea.

According to a previous communication from the town the Cassatt Parkway option was cheaper, provided ownership, room to expand, was in the geographic center of town, and the plans were already completed. Why are we changing now???

In our opinions, the ONLY 2 choices were rehabbing the Meatland building or Cassatt Parkway. And maybe someday, the Meatland building will actually be used for something else, and will continue to pay taxes, this reduces the choice to Cassatt Parkway as the only logical choice.

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Dianne Davis, resident
I think that even though the electrical underground upgrade might be needed, there are more safety and pressing problems that need to have attention given to at this time. Our sidewalks should be given top priority. We are in the tourist season now, and with all the traffic that we have, people should not have to walk in the street when they get to certain sections of the town. The residents that live here year round should not have to walk in the streets also.

If sidewalks are not one of your priorities, try walking around this entire town in the summer and other times.

May God bless you as you make decisions that will help all mankind.

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