



Town of Vienna

Charles A. Robinson Jr. Town
Hall
127 Center Street South
Vienna VA, 22180

Meeting Minutes - Draft Town Council Work Session

Monday, November 17, 2025

7:00 PM

Vienna Police Department Community
Room, 215 Center St. South

1. Regular Business

Roll Call

*Council Present: Council Member Chuck Anderson; Council Member Roy Baldwin;
Council Member Ray Brill; Council Member Jessica Ramakis, Council Member
Springsteen and Mayor Linda Colbert.*

*Staff Present: Mercury Payton, Town Manager; Steven Barlow, Deputy Director,
Finance; David Levy, Director, Planning and Zoning*

A. [25-5328](#)

Boards and Commissions: Annual Reports and Discussions, Part 2

*Mayor Colbert called the Work Session to order at 7:00 PM stating that Agenda Item
1A (04) Windover Heights Board of Review Report will be moved to December 8,
2025.*

Town of Vienna Board of Architectural Review

*Patti Hanley, Chairman, presented a brief overview of items that did not appear in
the report. Primary among these was the lighting ordinance and how it pertains to
the commercial district.*

*The lighting consultant review is nearing completion, which will include design
standards for commercial sign lighting. The final product will include code for
Council consideration and guidelines for BAR.*

*The Town adopted new outdoor dining standards in April 2025. Since that time, only
three restaurants have taken advantage of this option, suggesting the need to get the
word out to the business community.*

Town of Vienna Planning Commission

*Mathew Glassman, Chairman, provided an overview of the work completed by the
Commission. Comments from Council are summarized as follows:*

- Reduction of Commission from nine to seven members does not appear to have
affected value of work;*
- Council depends on work of Planning Commission; Work has been exemplary;*
- Memos to Council consistently helpful;*
- Suggest seeking ways to further draw in Town with regard to the Comprehensive
Plan and its vision; Will require further distillation of key information;*
- Consider highlighting those issues (housing diversity, commercial residential
mix) that generated struggles and discussion among Commission - helps Council
understand critical outstanding issues; Will include a memo in document that
highlights issues not evident in final product.*

Town Business Liaison Committee

*Jen Morrow, Chairman, reminded Council that the TBLC is a committee and not a
commission, which connotes a difference in role. Due to this distinction, the report*

contains fewer hard numbers, but rather focuses on Committee efforts to enhance business policy engagement, education and recognition.

Comments from Council are summarized as follows:

- TBLC no longer involved in ribbon cuttings; Continue to make contact with all newly licensed businesses through postcard campaign;
- TBLC involved with providing support for Economic Development business retention and attraction;
- Policy contribution from TBLC have been valuable; Urge feedback from businesses who prefer interaction with fellow business owner;
- Urge correspondence with Council when discontent expressed among business owners.

B. [25-5340](#)

Fiscal Year 2027 Town Council Budget Guidance

Mayor Colbert called Steven Barlow, Director, Finance to present the Item for discussion.

Director Barlow noted that this session in the budget process was conceived to provide an early bigger picture discussion. Town Manager Payton reminded Council that the forecast based on information from the County is not available until February 28, 2026, but the Town has a fairly accurate idea of those figure prior to that time.

Comments from Council are summarized as follows:

- Anecdotally, assessments could range 2% higher for FY27 which would affect the budget; Vienna tends to track a little higher;
- Meals tax receipts have remained strong; Best opportunity to assess effect of meals tax increase will be late spring/early summer 2026;
- Request time to review meals tax data for January/February 2026 and assess effect on local restaurants; Want to assure residents that time on the agenda has been set;
- Infill development has been trending downward since peak of 2021/2022; Last year figure stood at 80, while current figure ranges 60-70 for single family detached; Provides Town 2% revenue;
- Some Council Members expect softening in local economy; want to keep tax burden (rate times assessed value) as close to flat as possible;
- Residents request ability to pay both Town and County real estate taxes on line simultaneously; Could be accomplished by giving Town collection to County; Would require two to three year set up;
- Request memo to include tables illustrating why real estate tax rate continues to be so high given all the tear downs and higher valued homes; Inquiry by residents;
- Vienna has lowest tax rate in area; Maintained or reduced over the last ten years;
- Recognize that Vienna is not a low cost place to live;
- Can pay taxes through ECH auto pay which does not include a fee;
- Concerned about the request for new Staff positions at the January meeting; Urge Department heads to recognize need for conservative approach;
- Staff pay must stay competitive with neighboring jurisdictions to maintain services and service quality;
- Equalization rate has not been addressed; Request information on increased assessments due to tear downs and replacements, as well as how that is distributed across those homes not newly built (five year data);
- Fairfax and Falls Church do not pay County taxes, so while Vienna is lower than Herndon, it is still higher than Falls Church and Fairfax;
- Request more than one scenario for budget (i.e. budget with a decrease in taxes

to include how Town would handle the resultant changes);

- Request information on feasibility of cutting tax rate; Would provide sense of what community is getting for that difference and awareness of use of resources; Illustrate effect of tightening resources; Must bear in mind that bulk of budget is personnel;
- Expenditures on consultant services should be assessed for cost effectiveness; Caution against using these as place holder "just in case" when dollars could be utilized for something more targeted; Should consider if there is a better way to acquire needed information;
- New initiatives traditionally are built into base budget; Should reassess these against current needs to determine viability;
- Important to describe to residents where dollars are spent within communications division; Consider using Vienna Voice as means of communicating synopsis of expenditures; Consider including link to full report;
- Popular Annual Financial Report is a ten page condensed version of full budget targeting residents; Will provide additional transparency options;
- Town of Vienna is one of ten localities (total of 323 localities in State) to have earned AAA bond rating by both the S&P and Moody's.

Mayor Colbert called for additional comment by Council.

Council Member Anderson thanked Town Staff for their effort at the Ken Burns showing on Friday night. The next scheduled Vienna 250 event will be held January 4, 2026 on the Town Green, entitled Ring in the New Year with Love.

Council Member Springsteen urged greater use of the new Police Station Community Room. Can be addressed through publicizing availability.

Mayor Colbert noted that she and Council Member Anderson will speak at the Board of Supervisors Public Hearing Tuesday evening November 18, 2025. They will be addressing the issue of placing No Casino on the County legislative agenda, potentially as #1.

She wished Council a Happy Thanksgiving and reminded all of the Church Street Stroll.

Council Member Ramakis requested that the Town's #4 legislative priority (managing utilities on public land) be included in the Board of Supervisors Public Hearing presentation. The issue has generalized support as the Town of Vienna passed a resolution on the matter, as did the Board of Supervisor and several other jurisdictions.

2. Meeting Adjournment

With no further comments, Mayor Colbert closed the work session at 8:35 PM.

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