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The Second July meeting of the Danville City Council was held on July 21, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers located on the Fourth Floor of the Municipal Building, 427 Patton Street, Danville, Virginia. The following Council Members were present: Vice Mayor James B. Buckner, Bryant Hood, Mayor Alonzo L. Jones, Daniel W. Marshall, Barry P. Mayo, Gary P. Miller, Sherman M. Saunders, and J. Lee Vogler, Jr. (8). L.G. "Larry" Campbell Jr. was absent. (1)

Staff Members present were: City Manager Ken Larking, Deputy City Manager Earl B. Reynolds, Jr., Assistant City Manager/CFO Michael Adkins, Assistant City Manager Briana Evans, City Attorney W. Clarke Whitfield, Jr., and City Clerk Susan M. DeMasi.

Mayor Jones presided.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council Member J. Lee Vogler, Jr., gave the Invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

<u>Building Brighter Futures:</u>	<u>The Danville Schools Transformation Initiative</u>
<u>Presented by:</u>	<u>Dr. Angela Hairston, Superintendent, Danville Public Schools</u>

Dr. Hairston thanked Council for the opportunity and noted she was joined by school board members, staff from the Danville Public Schools, and students. *When they began their work, they weren't simply trying to improve the school division five years ago, they were rebuilding confidence in an entire community. The Memorandum of Understanding and Corrective Action Plan did not define them, it challenged them. Rather than viewing state intervention as a limitation, they choose to see it as an opportunity to design how they would lead, how they would work together and how they would serve students. They reframed their accountability system as a catalyst for transformation. Their first realization was that their greatest challenge was not a lack of effort; people were working very, very hard in the Danville Public Schools and the community; it was a lack of coherence. Across the division, people were working hard, but too often, they were working in different directions. Instruction, operations, human resources, governance and support services operated in a parallel fashion instead of a unified system. They understood that sustainable improvement would only happen if every part of the organization moved together around a common purpose. They began rebuilding their system, not isolated initiatives, but a system. They established clear operating procedures, strengthened governance, clarified expectations when vested in leader and teacher development through partnerships. Our goal was to build capacity that will remain long after the MOU and Corrective Action Plan. The systems don't change organizations alone, people do. Transformation requires principals to become instructional leaders, central office staff to become service leaders and if a teacher was needed in a classroom, central office staff needed to be there. And every other employee needed to be there to support student success, and teachers. We shifted from compliance to continuous improvement, we learned to use data not as judgement but as information to help them grow. Then there is the City Manager and his staff, the Mayor, City Council, at every turn, they could have said no when we made requests; they actually had every reason to say that. They continue to stick by our side, support our children and make investments in the work around our community. Today, our work is no longer driven by an MOU or corrective action plan, it is by creating a high performing division, one of excellence. One where excellence was not the exception, it is the rule. They were there to build a culture, they were there to stay and support people, support the children, the community, the parents and the families. Will it improve outcomes for students, most certainly; our journey was still unfolding, through the strategic plan, academic audits, graduation*

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audits, employee handbooks, policies for the board and operational systems. Again, these only represent documents, but they were evidence that a fragmented system was now cohesive and focused on continuous improvement. We are moving from a community of hope, a community of dreams to a community of opportunity. This was their story, a story of courage over comfort; it was not easy to be criticized but change does bring criticism and they must all understand that if they were to grow, there will be critics, they must endure but they cannot allow that to stop them from improving. A story of coherence versus compliance, a story of capacity versus dependence. We now see our parents and our students empowered to make a difference in their own lives. A story of people who chose to transform a school division so that every child has the opportunity to thrive. We are simply not recovering, we are meeting the challenge. We are building a school system, one system, one leader and one classroom at a time. One student at a time, and this was their story. I came here tonight with our team to thank you, because without a positive relationship between our school board and our city council and our staff, this work would be impossible. It takes all of us to invest in our children. Students approached and presented Council and staff with Danville Public Schools challenge coins. Council Members thanked Dr. Hairston and staff for the work they have done with the schools.

Presentation of Danville City Council Priorities

Presented by City Manager Ken Larking and Assistant City Manager Briana Evans

City Manager Ken Larking presented City Council Focus Areas – 2026, noting earlier this year, Council and staff had a retreat, which focused on Council's priorities. They were revised slightly to address what they were facing now, as a city that in a lot of ways has achieved the priorities that were set forth those many years ago, Growing Danville, Reducing Violent Crime and Improving Education. They want to sustain that, build on that, and the work will always continue.

Mr. Larking stated the retreat helped set the tone for how Council and staff could continue building on the positive momentum in the city. Council reviewed the casino and ARPA spending and looked at how those investments have aligned with the existing City Council priorities and from there, Council updated their priorities and identified several big ideas that could move from discussion into action. Several of the big ideas from the retreat were already moving forward including enhanced communication through a Know Your City newsletter, Youth Engagement through the Danville Police Department's Youth Advisory Board, a citizen satisfaction survey that was currently out for bid, Council's approval to reduce the curbside recycling fee and a dedicated webpage focused on senior services. Mr. Larking noted the retreat was not just a planning exercise; staff have already identified practical steps that can be, and have been taken.

Council's new priorities were to Strengthen Education, Grow Danville and Reduce Poverty; all impact each other in some way, and undergirding all of that was Partnerships. In order to be successful in all of these areas, the city needs the partners to help them move that forward. Mr. Larking noted under Grow Danville, it was about growing a robust, resilient local economy, supporting a stronger middle class, building more homes and expanding affordability throughout the community. Strengthening Education includes sustaining the momentum of accreditation. It was not a goal to be achieved, it was a milestone that has been achieved, they need to keep moving forward and sustaining that effort. They want to support youth career-readiness, academic excellence and invest in workforce education beyond the classroom and for all ages. Reducing Poverty was a new goal and something that will be critical to the City's overall success; if they do not reduce poverty, not everybody can participate in the growth and the opportunities that were coming their way, they will not be able to claim success. They want to lower the percentage of residents, including children, living in poverty. They want to have specific attention on the priority population and coordinate workforce development, social services, housing,

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transportation, education and more. With Partnerships, none of this happens alone, they need to work with their partners, to work with agencies and organizations to achieve shared goals.

Assistant City Manager Briana Evans continued the presentation noting a few months ago when she started, Council affirmed its investment in Economic Mobility. They discussed the value of making sure every resident was able to meet their basic needs, able to have stable housing and employment and able to save for their own and their families' future. Council's priorities set in the retreat reaffirmed that approach to governing and to working together as a community. Strengthening Education means equipping residents with the skills and credentials needed to thrive in the community and to get stable employment. Reducing Poverty was about removing the barriers that prevent people from getting housing and employment that works for them. Growing Danville creates the jobs and the investments that they need to sustain a community that was resilient in the long run. All of this happens when they work together with the other institutions and organizations here in Danville. Those priorities were already in action in this year's budget; staff have already identified ways to move the priorities forward. Strengthening Education includes working through Project Imagine to connect youth with part time and full time apprenticeships, and bringing earning and learning to the forefront for youth across the community. In Reducing Poverty, the Community Development team was working with developers, both private and non-profit, on building more homes in the community, and making sure there was more affordable and safe housing for all. In Growing Danville, the Economic Development and Tourism team was working with partners across the city to identify the needs of small businesses and work together to adjust those needs, ensuring every entrepreneur has a shot here, that everyone was able to build a sustainable future.

Some of the next steps include working on the Fiscal Year 2027 budget. In this year's budget, staff will consider how to prioritize the three areas that Council named. They will also be working on a capital projects priority system to help guide the way that land and buildings were purchased and managed through the city. Third was a resident survey and strategic plan; this was about taking the priorities and turning them into clear action that was long-looking. They want to make sure that not only did they hear the priorities, but checked with residents, are these the things, were they were understanding what was really needed in each of these areas. Then, how do they turn their understanding into change that lasts for a long time.

Ms. Evans noted she was going to briefly speak on strategic planning because this community has been through a lot of planning and just to remind them why they might be doing this. Strategic plans were again about turning priorities into results. They were trying to align City Council and staff on the things that matter most. Dr. Hairston talked about the experience of Danville Public Schools and making sure that every part of the school system was working together, that they weren't just in parallel processes, but their work was building into something greater than the sum of their parts. That was what they were talking about with alignment through a strategic plan. On Focusing Resources, they know their resources were limited, both in terms of people, time, and money, so making sure they spend those resources in places where they can have the greatest impact, that they know what to say yes to and what to say no to. Next was Encouraging Accountability, when they have a plan and were clear about what they were trying to do, they can also tell the public, here was how they were doing, here was where they were in the progress. Last was Responding and Adapting, when they were clear on what they were trying to do, they were also able to say, this was not working or this was working. Something has changed and they need to try something different.

Some of the key points that they will be bringing was a city-wide mission/vision statement to Council for approval along with a set of outcomes related to each of the priorities that Council set.

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These will be informed by community, so there will be community engagement attached to that. Eventually, departments will work with the City Manager on developing departmental action plans that say more specifically, this was how this department was contributing to the priorities of Council. Danville has PLAN Danville, a big plan that had a lot of community engagement; that comprehensive plan was a twenty year plan for the city, it says where they want to be twenty years from now. The strategic planning effort was to help the city figure out, how do they move forward in the next three to five years; what were the things they were going to do to make PLAN Danville come to fruition and what were the things they were going to do to make sure Council's priorities guide the things they chose to do. The strategic plan gives them some specific goals, it was moderated by and guides the budget; every year, there was a budget process where they pick what they were going to fund for that year and Council approves. The budget also puts some limits on what they can do; they were choosing things in the strategic plan that were possible to complete with the money and resources they have. Lastly, planning processes enable performance management; they were able to look more regularly on a quarterly basis for instance, to see what their progress looked like. Sometimes, if they don't have a plan, it can take many years to figure out if they were moving forward on the thing they were trying to do or not.

Mr. Larking explained for departments, the strategic plan clarifies how their work fits into a bigger picture. It gives staff clear guidance on what was a priority and what was not, which helps departments know what to say yes to and what to say no to. It also creates measurable goals that support communication with the public. For Council, the plan helps sustain momentum on shared priorities, supports partnership building and ensures that future decisions were informed by representative community voices. In short, this work helps council, staff and the public see how individual decisions connect to the larger direction of the city. The focus areas give them a practical way to organize their work, grow Danville, strengthen education, reduce poverty and build the partnerships needed to support all three. Most importantly, this keeps the focus on improving economic mobility, strengthening community well being and making sure Danville's momentum benefits the people who live here.

Mayor Jones noted the retreat was one of the best they have had, and this was the outcome. Mayor Jones and Council thanked the City Manager and staff for putting together a great presentation, and were glad that parts of it have already been put into motion. Mr. Larking thanked the Council for the opportunity to get together for the retreat, to discuss these priorities and refocus their attention on things that were important to them. Danville was at an inflection point, they were seeing growth for the first time in many years, and with growth comes change which can be hard. Change comes with criticism and they must endure through that criticism to continue that momentum going forward. The priorities that were set by Council to really focus in on the things that were presented earlier with Education, Growing Danville and Reducing Poverty were unique for a community of this size. Mr. Larking stated his hope for the City was that they provide prosperity across to everyone who lives here, the opportunity to grow themselves and their families, and that the jobs that they were bringing lead to them have higher household incomes.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Jones opened the floor for a Public Hearing regarding Budget Items on the Consent Agenda. Notice of the Public Hearing was published in the *Danville Register & Bee* on July 14, 2026. No one present desired to be heard and the Public Hearing was closed.

Vice Mayor Buckner **moved** to approve the Consent Agenda items:

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Consideration of Amending the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Appropriation Ordinance for Airport Terminal Area Plan Funding

An Ordinance Entitled, Ordinance No. 2026-07.05, an Ordinance of the Council of the City of Danville, Virginia Amending the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Appropriation Ordinance to Provide for Additional State Aviation Funding for the Purpose of Completing a Terminal Area Plan in the Amount of \$89,100 and for the Local Share in the Amount of \$9,900 for a Total Appropriation of \$99,000 and Appropriating Same.

Consideration of Amending the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Appropriation Ordinance to Provide Funding for Construction of the new Substation at the Former Morgan Olson Facility

An Ordinance Entitled, Ordinance No. 2026-07.06, an Ordinance of the Council of the City of Danville, Virginia Amending the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Appropriation Ordinance to Provide Funding from Unassigned Electric Fund Balance to Fund the Construction of a Substation at the Former Morgan Olson Building in the Amount of \$8,000,000 and Appropriating Same.

Consideration of Amending the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Appropriation Ordinance to Provide Funding for the Payment of a One-Time Bonus to City Retirees

An Ordinance Entitled, Ordinance No. 2026-07.07, an Ordinance of the Council of the City of Danville, Virginia Amending the Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Appropriation Ordinance to Provide Funding from Unassigned General Fund Balance for the Payment of a One-Time Payment Bonus to City Retirees in the Amount of \$400,000 and Appropriating Same.

The Motion was **seconded** by Council Member Mayo and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 8-0-1
AYE: Buckner, Hood, Jones, Marshall
Mayo, Miller, Saunders and Vogler (8)
NAY: None (0)
ABSENT: Campbell (1)

NEW BUSINESS

CONSIDERATION OF THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-27 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM – ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN

Mayor Jones opened the floor for a Public Hearing regarding Community Development Program One Year Action Plan. Notice of the Public Hearing was published in the *Danville Register & Bee* on July 7, 2026, and July 14, 2026. No one present desired to be heard and the Public Hearing was closed.

Council Member Vogler **moved** for adoption of a Resolution entitled:

RESOLUTION NO. 2026-07.04

A RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DANVILLE, VIRGINIA AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO SUBMIT TO THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT (HUD) A ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN.

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The Motion was **seconded** by Vice Mayor Buckner and carried by the following vote:

VOTE: 8-0-1
AYE: Buckner, Hood, Jones, Marshall
Mayo, Miller, Saunders and Vogler (8)
NAY: None (0)
ABSENT: Campbell (1)

**CONSIDERATION AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET APPROPRIATION
ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO DANVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Upon **Motion** by Council Member Saunders and **second** by Council Member Miller, an Ordinance entitled:

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-07.08

AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DANVILLE, VIRGINIA AMENDING THE FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET APPROPRIATION ORDINANCE TO INCREASE GENERAL FUND REVENUES FROM VARIOUS SOURCES TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL FUNDING TO DANVILLE PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$824,000 AND APPROPRIATING SAME.

was presented by its **First Reading**, as required by City Charter, to lie over before final adoption.

COMMUNICATIONS FROM VISITORS

Mayor Jones recognized Alex Barella who spoke about a business being closed, noting he appeared before Council in March, May and June.

Mayor Jones recognized Kathryn Reinhardt who spoke about the condition of the Danville City Jail.

COMMUNICATIONS

There were no communications from the City Manager, Deputy City Manager, Assistant City Manager Adkins, Assistant City Manager Evans, Deputy City Attorney or City Clerk.

Council Member Hood noted his congratulations to Danville native Angela Mecca Redmon who performed with Sean Jay-Z Carter at Yankee Stadium. Mr. Hood also recognized a group of young citizens named Vibes Direct who had a community backpack giveaway at the American Legion; free food, free school supplies and entertainment. This Saturday, at 609 King Street, Changing Lives Outreach Center will be helping families put food on the table, with a curbside, mobile stabilization program from noon to 1:30 p.m.

Council Member Marshall noted he was not a soccer fan but was a big fan of the FIFA fans from all over the world who came to the USA during the last forty days. They all showed pride in representing their countries and a lot of enjoyment experiencing things Americans take for granted everyday such as large retailers, free refills on drinks and ranch dressing. They also showed great sportsmanship whether their team won or lost, seemed to enjoy themselves and were welcome to return.

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Council Member Mayo noted Mr. Larking and Ms. Evans put on a great presentation, and encouraged citizens, if they have a concern, to reach out to Council or city staff.

Council Member Miller welcomed the City Manager back and noted last week he was invited to the Otterbots game and spoke to the players in the dugout. He asked how they liked being in Danville, and they all said they loved it here and that there was plenty to do.

Council Member Saunders noted the City Manager, and his staff, did a great job on the presentation; the city was in great hands, and he was very proud of what they do every day. Mr. Saunders thanked public safety for what they do every day, and thanked Dr. Hairston, the Council Members, city leaders and citizens.

Council Member Vogler noted the residents of Noel Avenue, a dead-end street, have some safety concerns; big trucks have to back up the street, and there was nowhere for them to turn around. There was an empty lot on the street and asked if the city would consider some type of turnaround area. Mr. Vogler stated the new issue of *Play Danville VA*, which was the Parks and Rec publication was out, and has information about youth leagues and fall festivals coming up.

Vice Mayor Buckner noted also inside the Play Danville VA was a calendar of events for August, they can also be looked up online at PlayDanvilleVA.com. There were a lot of things going on at the Riverfront Park in August. Mr. Buckner welcomed the Commissioner of Revenue Jack Thompson, and thanked Dr. Hairston for the outstanding job they have done.

Mayor Jones thanked Dr. Hairston, staff and students, the Gratitude Tour open house was on July 30th, and they will be touring the schools during that time.

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 8:08 P.M.

APPROVED:

s/Alonzo L. Jones
MAYOR

ATTEST:

s/Susan M. DeMasi, CMC
CITY CLERK