

July 21, 2026

A Regular Work Session of the Danville City Council convened on July 21, 2026, at 8:14 p.m. in the City Council Conference Room 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 Mayo, Dr. 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 F. Larking, Deputy City Manager Earl B. Reynolds Jr., Assistant City Manager/CFO Michael L. Adkins, Assistant City Manager Briana Evans, Deputy City Attorney Alan Spencer and City Clerk Susan M. DeMasi. City Attorney W. Clarke Whitfield, Jr., was absent.

Mayor Jones presided

WORK SESSION ITEMS

Meeting Minutes

Upon **Motion** by Vice Mayor Buckner and **second** by Council Member Mayo, Minutes of the Special Retreat Work Session held on March 13, 2026, were approved as presented. Draft copies were distributed to Council Members prior to the Meeting.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

Recommendation of Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Vice Mayor Buckner noted the Committee on Appointments met earlier that evening and made the following recommendations:

Social Services Advisory Board:	Appoint:	Jasmine Lipscomb
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Danville Utility Commission:	Appoint:	Kalil Khan
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Council had no objections to the recommendations.

Discussion on Summer Research on Small Businesses

The Department of Economic Development and Tourism summer interns introduced themselves: Genesis Hollingsworth, Ellie Harvey, Cori Brown, and Temilade Agboola (Lade).

Ms. Hollingsworth explained there were two different projects in the Economic Development office and Ms. Agboola and her worked on the Private Black Business Impact; they were there to present their report. Their project was a continuation of a project, Hispanic Horizons, from last summer; their team worked on black businesses in the city. The primary task was to discover what were the needs, gaps and challenges that the black-owned businesses were facing, how could the city be more present to bridge those gaps and be of more help to city residents who own local businesses. They were at the Juneteenth event last month as well as in different places such as Links or Barber Shops, meeting with those people and bridging those gaps. They also wanted to take the unbiased feedback approach by making sure the survey they launched was able to get the full scope of whatever it was they wanted to see from Economic Development as well the City, that they may not have felt as comfortable expressing in the one-to-one interviews. The survey

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was very successful, and they were able to get a total of fifty different responses that expressed over sixteen different business sectors and industries across the region. This Saturday they will conclude their program by having their community connectivity portion where they look for the residents to express what they want alongside what they have heard from business owners.

After their initial meetings with the local business owners they determined that communication, as well as clear feedback from the City, was their primary concern. Ms. Agboola noted they used two main tactics to reach the businesses, face to face interviews and surveys, and reviewed some of the feedback from businesses across the city. Top challenges for businesses were access to capital and marketing; the outlook from businesses were largely optimistic but only a small percentage felt their voice was fully heard. Some of the community proposed solutions included a business directory and increased social media promotion, expand the small business network events, increase awareness of and access to grants and funding, create a centralized resource hub and dedicated space, and encourage partnerships and collaboration.

Ms. Hollingsworth noted despite their many successes there were a few challenges they ran into repeatedly such as businesses were posted as active but when they went to do their site visit, they were closed. Even though there were a lot of different businesses and business owners, there can be a lack of accountability and a lack of consistency with their presence in the city at their own site. It was also voiced that there was limited access to the City's communications, which was mainly digital. In the newsletter, including the different resources from the ED office would be a good step to emphasize the city was willing to offer a method of connecting with them and also getting them what they need and not leaving them out. Ms. Hollingsworth stated one part of their project was to make a black business directory; it would be up to date to show businesses that were active so that when people were looking, they were not led to the locations that were closed. In response to Mr. Saunders, Samantha Bagbey from the Economic Development office noted currently, there was not a directory of all the businesses in Danville, but along with Ms. Evans their office was working on that.

Ms. Hollingsworth noted they visited over fifty local black businesses for their one-on-one interviews, received a total of fifty responses from the city wide survey including Danville and Pittsylvania County region and they proposed two different program concepts for future use for continued outreach efforts. Ms. Agboola reviewed the steps moving forward including strengthening business visibility, making sure the entrepreneur networks established this summer continue, improve access to capital or making sure citizens or business owners know there was capital or resources they can use, centralize business resources, encourage collaboration and strengthen city community relationships, letting entrepreneurs know the City was there for them.

Entrepreneur Enterprise Engine Building Danville's Small Business Network

Ellie Harvey and Corrie Brown presented to Council on Danville's entrepreneurial eco-system; the small business network was part of that, connecting small business owners with each other as well as with the resources the City offers. The Small Business Network was to advocate for those voices in the community, particularly working with SWaM businesses. There will be a board of voting members specifically focusing on entrepreneurs, and what flows through it was funding resources, a resource directory, workshops and peer connections. They created bylaws, an application process, onboarding and member packets. Ms. Harvey reviewed the deliverables of the survey, discussing next steps, how do they make sure they were being proactive, how do they continue to have that safe space for continued conversations to keep the good things going.

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Ms. Brown explained what they got back from the community survey was that the number one challenge was access to capital; they proposed a tracker/website. Another challenge was businesses, in two to three years, having outgrown microloans but are yet bankable, the tracker can help with that as well. Ms. Harvey explained another suggestion was a directory that shows who the stakeholders involved were, what organizations provide marketing tools, and social media tools. The directory starts with a navigation quiz to help streamline the process of knowing who to call. Ms. Brown noted they visited Richmond to see how their ecosystem operated, and visited Start Up Virginia and Blackstreet, to see what tools they used, how they organized resources, how Richmond organizations refer entrepreneurs to each other. The network will launch on July 25, the tools will be in place to start advocating for the small business network with applications coming soon, to seat board members and start programming.

DISCUSSION OF PLAN MECHANICSVILLE

Dylan McKnight, Director of Urban Design with Benchmark, noted he has been working with the City on Plan Mechanicsville for the last several months. This plan was an extension of the original River District Plan, to cover that piece of the River District known Mechanicsville; there were a lot of vacant properties and underutilized land. Mr. McKnight noted they did a lot of different types of engagement with mailers, marketing communications, and workshops which yielded priorities of Economic Development, streets and public space improvements, preserving history and culture, and the character and place, and leverage the area's history and culture.

They established three goals which drive the recommendations of the project moving forward: celebrate Mechanicsville's history and culture by making Mechanicsville history more visible, highlight important places and landmarks, including creation of an interactive history trail and establish a cultural and performing arts district. There were old buildings such as the old Ritz Theatre, which was a gathering place and entertainment venue for a lot of African Americans in the district, which could be revitalized. The second goal was to create a safe and memorable River District Neighborhood which ties to streets and public places, by creating more walkable streets, reinvest in North Union Street and develop spaces where neighbors can gather. Mr. McKnight discussed Ridge Street and Poplar Streets which have more lanes than necessary, and excessive lane width with narrow sidewalks, no bicycle facilities and limited pedestrian crossings. The solutions included widening sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, and landscaping; these were the things people asked for, probably more than anything else. Mr. McKnight noted other residential streets could be improved incrementally by adding on street parking and tree islands. The third goal was following a tailored approach on how they grow. In the North Union Street area, now that the park and White Mill were completed, may be the first thing people see when they come visit and park at the parking deck; that area needs a lot of attention. They feel the blocks facing the Mill, and on the other side of Floyd Street have the opportunity for mixed use, but the historic district and the blocks between Floyd and Ridge were really more sensitive to adaptive reuse, infill development and historic context sensitive redevelopment. Mr. McKnight reviewed a visual of the conceptual master plan for that area, and stated they should encourage adaptive reuse; there were a lot of buildings that could be actively reused for coffee shops, distilleries or breweries, with the apartments and offices across the street in the mill. The Morotock Lofts redevelopment was in progress; when that opens there will be new residents out walking, and new activity on the streets. One suggestion was to create a Mechanicsville neighborhood group; they spoke to a lot of people who moved out of the area, but were born there or worked in the area, or family had worked there. Also, encouraging new business and adaptive reuse in some of these buildings that were under utilized, place making and public space improvements. Mr. McKnight noted he was impressed with what the City was doing, looking at the potential of the Mechanicsville area, with a river across the street, and the park. The potential for the area was huge.

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Mr. Marshall questioned if they have a timeline and budget and Mr. McKnight explained in the back of the plan there was an implementation table and the recommendation timeline.

Mr. Vogler noted when they started on the River District they focused on some anchor projects to get started and it has continued to grow from there. Was there a particular area they would start with and Mr. McKnight stated from the City's perspective, public works could work on the streets and those highly visible, public grown elements together with Parks & Rec, that would be a low cost, high visual impact way for people to start seeing change. There was already private development interest in the area, and the City could let them take care of the larger development things. There were incentive zones in the area so the City will be a key partner to help those developments to start. What the city controls was the roads and sidewalks; people can see impact quickly in the public spaces like that; that was what the City could do quickly.

Ms. Bagbey explained they were intentional as well with their stakeholder groups; anybody that does development within the River District, was invited to the listening sessions for this. There were two or three right now that were anxious for this to be completed. As soon as staff checks this and can make it public, they will see immediate responses. Mr. Marshall questioned if there were Federal dollars to help move this forward and Ms. Bagbey noted in certain sectors they could get VDOT funds and if parts of it were in an Enterprise Zone.

COMMUNICATIONS

Mr. Vogler questioned the status of the street repaving on North Main Street and Mayor Jones noted it would be between August and September.

Mayor Jones noted the Gratitude Tour was Thursday.

Dr. Miller questioned the status of the white-water facility and Mr. Larking explained they have had to do some value engineering; it went out to bid, the bids came in extremely high and they were looking at funding opportunities to bridge the gap.

CLOSED MEETING

At 9:00 p.m., Vice Mayor Buckner **moved** that this meeting of the City Council of the City of Danville, Virginia be recessed and that Council immediately reconvene in a Closed Meeting for the following purposes: the discussion or consideration of the acquisition or disposition of real property for a public purpose where discussion in an open meeting would adversely impact the bargaining position of the City as permitted by Subsection (A)(3) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended and more specifically to consider discussion regarding the sale and/or potential purchase of a specific parcel of property for use by the City of Danville and/or specific parcels of property for prospective recreational, industrial, commercial, and mixed use projects looking to locate to the City, and parking facilities, and an Economic Development discussion and update concerning prospective businesses or industries where no previous announcement has been made and/or the expansion of an existing business or industry where no previous announcement has been made as permitted by Subsection (A)(5) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended and more specifically to consider an update on multiple prospective commercial, mixed use, hospitality, and industrial projects considering locating within the City and/or locating within the region in cooperation with the City's regional partners, and consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members, law enforcement or emergency officers regarding reports or plans related to the security of government facilities or

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buildings or structures and the safety of persons using such facilities, building or structures as permitted by Subsection (A) (19) of Section 2.2-3711 of the Code of Virginia, 1950 as amended.

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)

Upon unanimous vote at 10:14 p.m., Council reconvened in open session and Vice Mayor Buckner **moved** for adoption of the following Resolution:

CERTIFICATE OF CLOSED MEETING

WHEREAS, the Council convened in Closed Meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, Section 2.1-344.1 of the Code of Virginia, 1950, as amended, requires a Certification by the Council that such Closed Meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia Law;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council hereby certifies that, to the best of each Member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements of Virginia Law under Section 2.2-3711 were heard, discussed or considered, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the Motion by which the Closed Meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered by the Committee.

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)

MEETING ADJOURNED AT 10:15 P.M.

APPROVED:

MAYOR

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK