HURT TOWN COUNCIL 2026
MEETING MINUTES

MONTHLY BUSINESS MEETING

Date: August 4, 2026	Location: TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS 533 POCKET RD. HURT, VA
Time: 6 PM	Adjournment: 8:35 PM
Meeting called to order by:	MAYOR GARY HODNETT

COUNCIL MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE ESTABLISHING A QUORUM

Alice Bond
Gary Poindexter
Jimmy Harding
Steve Worley

Council Members Absent:

Vice Mayor Bob Majure – work related
Paul Johnson – work related

TOWN STAFF IN ATTENDANCE:

Shannon Race, town clerk
John Eller, town attorney
Joe Smith, Public Works Director
Paul Watlington, Public Works Assistant
Bob Williamson, Waterworks Operator
Jason Lovelace, Chief PD

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hodnett called meeting to order at 6:04 pm and presided.

CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Hodnett requests a motion to move into closed session.

- Councilman Poindexter moves that the council convene a closed session in accordance with Virginia Freedom of Information Act as amended. Siting Authorization: § 2.2-3711 A (1) Personnel, (3) Real Estate, (5) Prospective Business, (8) Legal Counsel (as applicable).
- Councilman Harding seconds the motion for the closed session.
- Clerk calls for individual votes on the motion with Hurt Town Council voting 4-0 in favor of the closed session.
- The motion is passed, and the Hurt Town Council moves into a closed session at 6:05 PM.

CERTIFICATION OF CLOSED SESSION, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

- Mayor Hodnett calls for motions to return and certify a closed session.
- Councilman Poindexter makes a motion for the certification of the closed meeting, citing the Virginia Freedom of Information Act **(Requirement: VA FOIA § 2.2-3712 (D))**
- Mayor Hodnett calls for a second, which is given by Councilmember Bond, council voted 4-0 in favor and approves the certification of the closed session.
- Councilman Worley leads the invocation.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. July Expenditures
2. July 7th & 24th Meeting & Workshop Minutes.
3. Additions to the Agenda

Councilman Poindexter made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented, second by Councilman Harding, and the Hurt Town Council voted in favor 4-0, and approved the August 4, 2026, Consent Agenda as presented.

PUBLIC COMMENTS – 2 speakers

Carolyn Allen – Door-to-Door Solicitation / Solar Sales

- **Issue Raised:**
  - Increasing door-to-door solicitation, especially solar panel sales, with some aggressive/persistent behavior.
  - Carolyn Allen:
    - Lives alone and feels unsafe, particularly since the death of her dog.
    - Reported a recent solicitor who refused to leave until she finally slammed the door.
    - Wants relief without having to post "No Solicitation" signs or keep her door closed.
- **Discussion & Points Raised:**
  - **Ordinance / Licensing:**
    - **John Eller:**
      - Town can adopt or use an ordinance to regulate solicitation and require a license.
      - Town already has a peddler's license requirement; people may be going to Chatham for county licenses instead of to Town.
    - **Question by Councilmember Bond:** Why is Chatham issuing licenses that are being used in Town?
    - Discussion that Town should be issuing licenses for activity within its limits.
  - **Enforcement / Harassment:**
    - **Councilman Worley:**

        - Noted that refusing to leave after being told multiple times could rise to harassment / trespass, appropriate for police involvement.
        - Encouraged residents to contact the Town Police Department.
    - **Chief Jason Lovelace:**
        - Confirmed that solicitors often come with a Chatham license but may not realize when they leave the county.
        - Encouraged residents to call the police when they feel unsafe.
- **Practical Advice to Resident:**
    - Suggestions included:
        - Posting "No Solicitation / No Trespassing" signs (though Ms. Allen dislikes the unwelcoming look).
        - Calling Mayor, Chief Lovelace, or Town staff (including Shannon) immediately if solicitors become aggressive.
        - Use of signage and contact with police if individuals refuse to leave.
- **Outcome:**
    - General agreement that the Town may need to better enforce its peddler's license requirement and consider if additional ordinance language or enforcement guidance is needed.
    - No formal motion taken during this portion.

Renata (and spouse) – Cat Overpopulation / Nuisance on Dogwood Lane

- **Issue Raised:**
    - **Severe cat overpopulation on Dogwood Lane, described as:**
        - More cats than people on the street.
        - Property damage:
            - Yard mulch turned into a litter box (replaced at cost of approx. $600–$700).
            - Anniversary birdbath broken by a cat jumping off the porch.
            - Motorcycle seat torn up despite covering and attempts to block access.
        - Constant spraying and feces on her porch, furniture, bike, and back porch.
        - Numerous unvaccinated and likely unaltered cats (estimated 10+ cats nearby, many kittens, some pregnant).
    - **Attempts to seek help:**
        - Contacted animal control, humane societies, and other organizations; was told "nothing can be done" because they are "strays."
        - Found that if residents feed and shelter cats, they cease being "strays" under ordinance definitions.
- **Ordinance & Legal Framework Cited:**
    - **Renata had reviewed and brought copies of Town and County ordinances:**
        - Town Ordinance – Chapter 2 (Animals) and Chapter 10 (Nuisances).
        - Town's adoption of Pittsylvania County's animal ordinance (Chapter 2).
    - **Key provisions highlighted:**
        - Unvaccinated cats are to be impounded.
        - Owner / Custodian definition includes any person who:
            - Keeps, harbors, or has an animal in their care, OR
            - Permits the animal to remain on their premises, OR

        - Feeds and shelters the animal.
    - Lack of control / Habitually at large: animals trespassing and damaging others' property.
    - Nuisance criteria: Devaluing property; interfering with comfort and enjoyment.
- **Discussion – Ownership & Proof:**
    - **Suspected owners / feeders identified by residents:**
        - Neighbors including Mr. Ray, Susan Foster, and others in a nearby trailer park area.
        - Evidence: food bowls, eggs left out, cats regularly on their porches.
    - **John Eller:**
        - Explained that enforcement authority for the animal ordinance lies with the County Animal Warden, as the Town has adopted the County ordinance.
        - The Town can address public nuisances under its own nuisance ordinance.
        - Emphasized legal need for evidence and specific identification:
            - Must be able to identify which person at which address is responsible for specific animals.
            - Need names and addresses; house numbers alone are insufficient without identifying the person.
            - Enforcement requires complainant testimony, photographs, or similar proof linking the cats to specific households (e.g., feeding, harboring).
        - **Outlined two paths:**
            1. Animal ordinance enforcement via County animal control.
            2. Public nuisance action by Town:
                - Town could declare an owner/feeder a public nuisance and direct them to abate (remove or control the animals).
                - Ultimately, Town would still need County animal control's cooperation to physically remove animals.
- **Resident Concerns & Limitations of Current System:**
    - Residents report:
        - County animal control repeatedly telling them they do not handle feral cats.
        - Animal shelter will not take cats unless the person claims ownership and goes through a formal surrender process.
        - Past drop-off boxes at shelters have been removed due to volume.
    - Renata expressed that she feels forced to "either accept it or break the law," which she finds unfair as a law-abiding homeowner.
- **Council / Staff Responses & Ideas:**
    - Councilman Worley:
        - Strongly supported residents, stating citizens should not have to tolerate cats destroying their property.
        - Stressed that existing enforcement is not working, and the Town must "get busy" to protect citizens:
            - Review and, if needed, revise ordinances.
            - Confront the County about animal control not fulfilling its responsibilities.
        - Suggested having animal control come to a council work session to discuss solutions.
    - Councilmember Alice Bond:

        - Noted the Town likely is not the only locality facing this problem; others must have solutions.
    - Mayor Hodnett:
        - Acknowledged the problem is "really, really tough" and that there is no easy solution.
        - Suggested immediate mitigation strategies (non-lethal deterrents):
            - Water "super-soakers" to discourage cats from yards.
            - Consideration of paintball or BB guns was discussed, but concerns were raised about animal cruelty and firearm discharge; no endorsement given.
        - Emphasized that the Town will do what it can but is limited by lack of its own animal control staff and facilities.
    - Chief Jason Lovelace:
        - Indicated he can rely on open source / county property records to identify property owners associated with specific house numbers.
        - Later agreed he could take photos from public vantage points once addresses are supplied, assisting with evidence gathering.
    - Other Practical Suggestions from audience:
        - Use of coyote urine as a deterrent around property (from Ms. Allen).
        - Placing "No Trespassing / No Solicitation" signs.
        - Trapping cats and seeking a place to take them (though no accepting facility was identified).
- **Next Steps – Agreed Actions:**
    - **Resident Actions:**
        - Renata will:
            - Compile a list of names and street addresses of neighbors feeding/harboring cats.
            - Collect photos and/or video, particularly showing cats eating at a neighbor's house then traveling onto her property.
            - Provide this information to the Town by Wednesday of the following week.
    - **Town / Police Actions:**
        - Chief Lovelace agreed to:
            - Visit the listed properties and take photographs related to the nuisance complaint once addresses are provided.
        - Council / Staff:
            - Intend to request that County animal control (or the animal warden) attend a future work session (target: work session two weeks from August 9) to discuss enforcement and responsibilities.
            - Consider using both nuisance enforcement and animal ordinance channels once adequate documentation is assembled.
- **Outcome:**
    - No formal vote was taken at this time.
    - Clear direction was given for evidence gathering, engagement with County animal control, and revisiting the issue at a work session.

New Business

Employee Handbook

- **Status:**
  - Employee Handbook is still being developed/revised.
  - Work is ongoing; no specific draft or adoption timeline announced.
  - No motion taken.

Plaza Lease Discussions

- **Update by Mayor Hodnett:**
  - Administration is:
    - Organizing and updating leases for tenants in "The Plaza".
    - Preparing to work with current occupants to have them sign new leases.
  - This is an ongoing administrative project; no vote taken.

FY 2026–2027 Master List of Rates and Fees

- **Presenter:** Councilman **Gary Poindexter**
- **Context:**
  - Annual update of the Master List of Rates and Fees following the adoption of the budget.
  - Council typically adopts this list each year after budgeting is complete.
- **Changes Highlighted by Poindexter:**
  1. **Mobile Restaurant (Food Truck) Fee:**
     - A $25 fee for mobile restaurants/food trucks was added, corresponding to the recently adopted mobile restaurant ordinance.
     - Currently listed under "Planning and Zoning", but there was discussion that it may be more intuitive to move it to the Business License / Fee section for public clarity.
  2. **New Tax Rates:**
     - Updated to match the tax rates approved with the current budget.
  3. **Water Rates:**
     - Water rates listed reflect those passed in the budget.
  4. **Placement / Clarity:**
     - **Town Attorney John Eller** suggested moving the mobile restaurant fee to a more obvious location on the sheet to make it easier for citizens/business owners to find.
- **Water/Wastewater Connection Fees (Joe Smith input):**
  - **Joe Smith (Public Works/Water):**
    - Recently two water connections were completed for new homes.
    - After adding actual contractor charges and parts, found that the current connection fee (~$7,600) is no longer sufficient to:
      - Cover contractor labor and materials, AND
      - Leave the intended share for infrastructure repair.
    - Recommended that connection fees be increased to reflect actual current costs so that infrastructure funds are preserved.
- **Council Direction / Timing:**
  - **Mayor Hodnett:**

        - Suggested giving Joe time to review and refine water/wastewater connection fee recommendations.
        - Proposed delaying adoption of the updated master list until the next meeting/work session to ensure accuracy.
    - **Councilman Poindexter:**
        - Agreed to:
            - Incorporate any new fee figures and re-position the mobile restaurant fee.
            - Prepare a clean, updated copy of the master list for the next meeting.
        - Noted that passing the master list at the upcoming work session would be acceptable, as long as Council had adequate review time.
- **Outcome:**
    - **No vote** to adopt the master list at this meeting.
    - Agreement to review and adopt at a subsequent meeting (likely the next work session) after Joe and Gary coordinate updates.

New Treasurer Position – Hiring

- **Report from Closed Session & Motion:**
    - Following discussion in the earlier closed session, Council considered the treasurer position in open session.
    - **Initial Motion (Later Amended):**
        - **Mover:** Councilman **Gary Poindexter**
        - **Motion (as first stated):**
            - Extend an offer of employment to Mr. Brian Sisk for the position of Town Treasurer, at:
                - **Annual base salary: $65,000**
                - **Effective date: August 10, 2026**
            - Contingent upon:
                - **Council approval** (given via this motion), and
                - The prospective employee accepting the position.
        - **Second:** Councilmember **Bond**
        - **Roll-Call Vote (by Shannon):**
            - Steve – Yes
            - Jimmy – Yes
            - Alice – Yes
            - Gary – Yes
        - **Result:** Motion carried.
- **Clarification & Amendment (Effective Date):**
    - After later closed session #2 and return to open session, **Shannon** noted:
        - Evelyn wished to begin training Mr. Sisk the next day, which would require him to be considered an employee immediately, not starting on the 10th.
    - **Councilman Poindexter** then amended the motion:
        - **Amended Motion:**
            - Change the effective date of Mr. Sisk's employment from **August 10, 2026** to **Wednesday, August 5, 2026**.
        - **Purpose:**

        - Allow him to begin training with the current accountant (Evelyn) immediately and be on payroll.
    - **Roll-Call Vote (by Shannon):**
        - Steve – Yes
        - Jimmy – Yes
        - Alice – Yes
        - Gary – Yes
    - **Result:** Amendment carried; **effective start date is August 5, 2026**.
- **Summary Decision:**
    - Council **hired Mr. Brian Sisk as Town Treasurer** at **$65,000/year**, **effective August 5, 2026**, contingent on his acceptance.

TOWN STAFF DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Treasurer – (Position Vacant)

Clerk, Shannon Race

- **Key Tasks Completed / In Progress:**
    - **Payroll:** Assisting **Evelyn** with payroll processing.
    - **Taxes:**
        - Working toward getting **taxes ready to go out**.
        - Completed the **conversion/setup** with the Southern software vendor; system is now ready so she can run taxes "at any point in time."
    - **Minutes & Website / ADA Compliance:**
        - All **2026 minutes** have been made **ADA compliant**.
        - Updated those minutes on the Town website.
    - **Treasury Support:**
        - Making bank runs and covering numerous tasks typically handled by the treasurer.
- **Council Response:**
    - **Councilman Poindexter** publicly acknowledged that Shannon has had "a lot on her shoulders" and thanked her for essentially **carrying both clerk and treasury duties**, emphasizing appreciation for her work.

Public Works / Utilities – Joe Smith

- **Report by: Joe Smith**
- **Water & Utility Operations:**
    - Conducted routine work, including:
        - Collections for late water bills; only a few cut-offs remain outstanding.
        - Completed **two under-bores** and **two new water connections** for new homes.
    - **Mowing / Grounds:**
        - Grass cutting has been ongoing but challenging due to frequent rain, affecting appearance.
- **Pumping Station / Water System Projects:**
    - **Pump Station Work:**
        - Significant repairs and maintenance at the pumping station:

        - New motor controller installed.
        - Two voltage regulators replaced.
        - A relay (or similar component) rebuilt.
    - Aim is to keep the existing system functional while the Town prepares for a new build station.
- **New Tank & Plant Project:**
    - Pumps, fire hydrant, and mixing systems for the new water tank have been ordered.
    - A construction meeting is anticipated around the end of August or early September as part of starting that project.

Water Plant – Bob Williamson (Water Plant Operator)

- **Report by: Bob Williamson**
- **Recent Power & Weather Issues:**
    - In **June**, multiple **storms (wind, lightning)** caused **power loss** at the **water filter plant** several times.
    - Problems were largely due to **overgrown right-of-way and aging lines**.
- **Corrective Steps Taken:**

    1. **Assessment:**
        - **Elliot** (outside company) inspected the **power lines**, identified trees and brush interfering with lines, and confirmed that the wires are **stretched and sagging**.
    2. **Right-of-Way Clearing:**
        - A company was hired and **completed clearing the right-of-way**, removing trees and brush so the lines are now fully visible.
    3. **Dominion Power Coordination:**
        - Dominion returned and **reconnected power** after clearing.
        - Since then, power has been stable "knock on wood."

- **Longer-Term Needs:**
    - Some **power lines remain stretched** and will need repair or replacement (normal wear/age).
    - Potential for larger future changes as part of the **new plant design**, including:
        - Possible **change in pump sizes**, which would change power needs.
        - Likely **elimination of certain above-ground control lines** as functions move into new **computerized control systems**.
        - Possibility of moving power **underground** and having **Dominion assume full responsibility** for the lines.
- **Discussion with Council:**
    - **Mayor Hodnett** & **Councilman Worley**:
        - Discussed the desirability of having **Dominion maintain** the power lines rather than Town maintaining its own distribution.
        - Recognized this will be a **significant expense** and must come with a **formal plan** from Dominion; Council expects to review and decide once a proposal is presented.
    - **Bob Williamson:**
        - Recommended, in principle, **Dominion control and underground wiring** as the best long-term solution and "one less headache" for the Town.

Police Department – Chief Jason Lovelace

- **Report by: Chief Lovelace**
- **Grants & Funding:**
  - **HEAT Grant:**
    - Re-applied for and received the HEAT grant for Automatic License Plate Readers (ALPRs).
  - **599 Funds:**
    - Applied for and awarded § 599 state funding (public safety funds).
    - Funds will be disbursed to the Town in multiple payments over the year (Treasurer/Clerk will see these line items).
- **Budget Impacts / Equipment Needs:**
  - **Taser Replacement:**
    - One taser broke; current tasers are older.
    - Chief is obtaining pricing on a new taser (sales rep currently at conference).
    - Anticipates an increase in the maintenance/equipment line item.
  - **Vehicle Maintenance:**
    - Expectation of needing **new tires** this year, further impacting that budget line.
- **Council Questions:**
  - **Councilman Worley** asked about prior 60-day compliance periods and 90-day time frames for some enforcement/cleanup issues.
  - Chief noted he would need to review the specific files and follow up, as he had been focusing on state-level matters and grants.

Town Attorney / Zoning – John Eller

- **Special Use Permit Application:**
  - Received application from a resident **requesting a Special Use Permit** for a **small market stand** on her property (below her house).
  - Classified as a **Major Home Occupation** under Town zoning, requiring a **Special Use Permit**.
  - **Joint Public Hearing:**
    - To be held by **Planning Commission and Town Council** at the **September 1 meeting**.
- **Ordinance & Administrative Updates:**
  - Confirmed that the **mobile restaurant ordinance** (food truck ordinance) and **draft drought ordinance** have been sent in for codification/website posting.
  - Not yet visible on the Town website, but Town's part is complete.
- **Right-of-Way at Water Plant:**
  - Investigated documentation and found the access is referred to as a **right-of-way on the plat**, but there may be **no separate written grant document**.
  - Further review is needed.

Items Arising / Closed Session #2 – Prospective Business

- New Item Arising:
  - Mayor Hodnett indicated receipt of new information requiring another closed session related to economic development / prospective business.

CLOSED SESSION 2

Mayor Hodnett requests a motion to move into closed session.

- Councilman Poindexter moves that the council convene a closed session in accordance with Virginia Freedom of Information Act as amended. Siting Authorization: § 2.2-3711 A (1) Personnel, (3) Real Estate, (5) Prospective Business, (8) Legal Counsel (as applicable).
- Councilmember Bond seconds the motion for the closed session.
- Clerk calls for individual votes on the motion with Hurt Town Council voting 4-0 in favor of the closed session.
- The motion is passed, and the Hurt Town Council moves into a second closed session.

CERTIFICATION OF 2nd CLOSED SESSION

- Mayor Hodnett calls for motions to return and certify the 2nd closed session.
- Councilman Poindexter makes a motion for the certification of the closed meeting, citing the Virginia Freedom of Information Act **(Requirement: VA FOIA § 2.2-3712 (D))**
- Mayor Hodnett calls for a second, which is given by Councilmember Bond, council voted 4-0 in favor and approves the certification of the closed session.

- **Clarification after Return (Treasurer Start Date):**
  - This is where Shannon raised the training timing question and Council amended the treasurer motion as detailed in Section above.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, Mayor Hodnett adjourned this meeting at 8:35 pm.