# TOWN OF LOUISVILLE, TN
# BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN
October 14, 2025
6:00 p.m.

**Present:** Jill Pugh – Mayor, Daniel Franklin – Vice Mayor, Steven Kelley – Aldermen, John Loope – Aldermen, Lysia Vaught – Aldermen

**Absent:** None.

**Others Present:** Rob Goddard – Town Attorney, Debbie Walsh- BMA Assistant, Barry Ottinger – Building & Codes Official, Don & Julie Tefeteller – Town Accountants, & 23 Citizens.

Mayor Pugh called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m.

**MOTION** by Vice Mayor Franklin to temporarily appoint BMA Assistant Debbie Walsh to act in place of the Town Recorder during the October 14, 2025 meeting. Second by Aldermen Kelley. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES**.

Vice Mayor Franklin led the Invocation

Mayor Pugh led the Pledge of Allegiance

## Mayor's Report

Mayor Pugh provided updates on several ongoing matters:

Ambulance Service Location

The Mayor reported ongoing efforts to find a suitable location for the town's ambulance service. Initially, the service anticipated relocating to the Nazarene Camp; however, the camp's board voted not to allow that use. The ambulance currently operates from part of the fire hall, which is not an ideal long-term solution due to the need for a dedicated bay.

The mayor has spoken with the family of Jesse Anderson regarding the property located across the street from Town Hall, specifically about the possibility of using the garage portion for the ambulance service when it becomes available. The property does not currently have a septic system, but there may be potential to connect to town services if the property becomes part of town holdings. The estate is presently in probate due to the lack of a will, but the next of kin has agreed to notify the town when the property becomes available.

The mayor emphasized the importance of keeping the ambulance service located within the center of town to maintain accessibility for residents and avoid relocation outside of town limits.

Fall Festival

The Mayor reported that the recent Fall Festival was a great success despite some morning rain. Attendance was strong, with numerous vendors participating and several food carts selling out. The Daily Times published a positive article highlighting the event.

Upcoming Town Event
On October 20, the town will host a community history night at Town Hall, featuring Phil Mummert, the town's resident historian and author of a forthcoming book on the history of Louisville. Mr. Mummert will give a talk about the town's beginnings, answer questions from attendees, and share insights into Louisville's 35th anniversary. Light refreshments will be provided.

Holiday Parade
The Mayor announced that the annual Ring in the Holidays Parade will take place on November 23. The event will celebrate all upcoming holidays and continue the town's festive tradition.

Tourism Grant Award
The Mayor shared that the town has been awarded a $100,000 tourism grant from the Tennessee Department of Tourism. The grant, which requires a matching contribution from the town, will support improvements to Poland Creek Campground. Planned projects include upgrading campsites, enhancing the bathhouse, and moving forward with the master plan for a fishing pier. Louisville was one of only 35 communities statewide to receive this full award amount.

Additional Grant Funding
Debbie Walsh, BMA Assistant, added that the town has also received an additional $1,000 safety grant, a reimbursement grant for safety equipment purchased for the maintenance crew, including boots and other protective gear. The town is also working toward another $1,000 property conservation matching grant which will go towards the new fencing at Beal Park. These funds serve as reimbursements for prior expenditures.

## Administrative & Building/Codes Report

Mayor Pugh reported on administrative matters, noting that Hailey (Russell) is on vacation this week but left notes for the update.

- Public Records Requests
  Four (4) public record requests have been received since the last meeting.
- Employee Insurance Open Enrollment
  Employee open enrollment for insurance is scheduled from October 3 through October 31.
- Festival Merchandise
  Festival T-shirts, purchased through Accurate Image, have continued to be very popular, reflecting strong sales similar to the past three years. The mayor noted that several residents who did not attend the festival have requested shirts. There have been some issues with not being able to accept debit card payments for these purchases, which may need to be addressed moving forward.
- Hometown Hero Banners
  The Hometown Hero banners will be taken down following November 11. New orders for

the 2026 banners can be submitted beginning January 1. The program continues to receive very positive feedback from the community.

Barry Ottinger, Building & Codes Official, provided an update regarding ongoing code enforcement and public safety concerns within the Town of Louisville.

Homelessness and Squatting Concerns

Mr. Ottinger reported an increase in complaints related to individuals experiencing homelessness within town limits and described several recent incidents:

- Louisville Point Park: A complaint was received regarding an RV parked overnight at the park, occupied by an individual who caused concern among residents. Hailey (Russell) contacted the Blount County Parks and Recreation Department, and Mr. Ottinger coordinated with park maintenance to have the RV removed.
- Allison's Boat Plant Area: Maintenance staff, including Barry Loope (Highway & Streets Supervisor), reported a couple living in their vehicle across from Allison's Boat Plant. They left behind a large amount of garbage, which had to be cleaned by the town's maintenance team after the Sheriff's Department removed the individuals.
- Local Business Incident: A business owner reported that homeless individuals were parked in front of her establishment while she was present with her child, causing distress.
- Bridge Area near the Marina: Deputies removed squatters from beneath the bridge across from the marina, where tents and debris had accumulated. Their presence was deterring patrons from fishing and visiting the area.
- Abandoned Home on Hardy Boulevard: Mr. Ottinger, along with the late Mr. Porter, worked to remove squatters from an abandoned home located on church property near the cemetery. The individuals lacked water and electricity, used a generator at all hours, and expelled sewage behind the property. Their condition created health and safety concerns for nearby residents and businesses.
- Friendsville Store Incident: Mr. Ottinger also assisted a Friendsville business owner, Mr. Patel, in addressing two men living in their car in a store parking lot. After being asked to vacate, the individuals refused, and the Blount County Sheriff's Department was called for assistance. One of the men was found to be a convicted sex offender using the store's address for parole purposes. He was taken into custody, and local residents helped repair the car so the second individual could move on.
- George's Creek Area: Campers have been parking and setting up temporary living arrangements in the George's Creek area. The Sheriff's Department has been called multiple times to remove them.

Mr. Ottinger concluded that the town continues to experience ongoing challenges with unauthorized camping and squatting, and recommended further discussion on long-term solutions.

Legislative and Enforcement Efforts Related to Waterway Issues
Mayor Pugh added that the town has also dealt with abandoned and unauthorized houseboats moored along local waterways. Senator Tom Hatcher has been actively working on this issue, and assistance was provided by U.S. Representative Tim Burchett, who helped coordinate efforts with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). Two abandoned houseboats, which were being used intermittently by squatters, were successfully removed.

Senator Hatcher has been collaborating with TVA to develop legislation addressing this ongoing concern. The proposed act, to be added to Tennessee Code Annotated Title 69, Chapter 9, would include the following provisions:

1. A recreational vessel may not moor for more than 14 consecutive days at any one location along a reservoir or within one mile of the water's edge.
2. Temporary moorage may not occur within primary or secondary navigation channels of the Tennessee River system.
3. Mooring lines may not be placed in a manner that blocks or hinders boating access to any portion of a reservoir.
4. Violations of these provisions would constitute a Class C misdemeanor, unless the vessel has been issued a permit for permanent or extended mooring under federal law.

Mayor Pugh explained that this legislation is designed to close existing regulatory gaps, as there are currently no state laws preventing individuals from mooring boats indefinitely in front of private docks. Under current TVA policy, boats may remain in place for up to 90 days, which has caused issues for homeowners. The proposed legislation aims to provide municipalities and TVA greater authority to remove abandoned or illegally moored vessels and to prevent related squatting activity.

## Approval of the Minutes

Mayor Pugh presented the minutes from the Public Hearing on September 9, 2025.

**MOTION** by Vice Mayor Franklin to approve the minutes from the Public Hearing on September 9, 2025 with the addition of an explanation under the item for the Ordinance Amending the Budget for FYE 2026. Second by Aldermen Kelley. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES.**

Mayor Pugh presented the minutes from the regular scheduled meeting on September 9, 2025.

**MOTION** by Aldermen Kelley to approve the minutes from the September 9, 2025 meeting as written. Second by Aldermen Loope. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES.**

## Public Input on Agenda Items (5 Minute Limit)

Anna Gibson addressed the Board with comments on several agenda items.

Credit Card Transactions
Ms. Gibson commented on the agenda item regarding credit card transactions with Pinnacle

Bank, suggesting that the Town consider passing credit card transaction fees on to the payer in the future. She noted that many local governments handle such fees in this way to avoid the municipality absorbing significant costs, particularly in cases involving large permit payments (e.g., $10,000 permits).

Rezoning Procedures

Ms. Gibson expressed concern regarding the administration of the rezoning process for certain property proposed to change from R-1 to C-1. While she stated that she did not oppose the proposed business use itself, she raised issues about procedural compliance. Specifically, she cited the requirement that applicants provide a list of affected property owners and proof of notification by letter, along with the posting of a sign on the property.

She noted that the letter from the Planning Commission did not include the list of notified property owners, and that she had not observed a sign posted on the subject property. Ms. Gibson emphasized that consistent enforcement of rezoning procedures is important to ensure fairness and prevent perceptions of bias. She encouraged the Town to verify compliance with notice and signage requirements for all rezoning requests.

Ethics Complaint and Building Department Concerns

Ms. Gibson also referenced ongoing ethics complaints previously submitted to the Town. She provided additional documentation and expressed concerns about the actions of the Building Department.

She referred to a letter sent to the Planning Commission that, according to her, specifically referenced John Loope and alleged that he had presented erroneous information during a statement to the Commission. Ms. Gibson stated that the letter itself was erroneous and that the Building & Codes Official's involvement in producing or distributing such material was inappropriate.

Ms. Gibson asserted that the Building Official was spending time on such matters for the benefit of a developer rather than for the benefit of the community, and urged the Board to take corrective action. She stated that no action has been taken regarding the Cloud properties and noted that the individual in question had recently received a 5% raise, despite her belief that such performance did not merit it.

She further referenced interactions involving developer Jesus Yanez, stating that the Building & Codes Official had initiated contact with the developer, and expressed concern that such actions could create potential liability for the Town. Ms. Gibson urged the Board to address these issues and ensure that all Town officials act transparently and in accordance with ethical and procedural standards.

She concluded by offering to provide additional copies of related documentation, including correspondence regarding the Jesus Yanez matter, to any Board members who wished to review them.

Barry Ottinger, Building & Codes Official, responded to Ms. Gibson's comments regarding the rezoning process from R-1 to C-1. He explained that the property owner, Dan, was present at the meeting and that this matter was currently at its first reading, as it involves an ordinance change.

Mr. Ottinger clarified that, should the ordinance pass on first reading, he would assist in ensuring that letters are sent to all adjacent property owners, and that a sign will be posted by the Town at least 10 days prior to the public hearing held before the next Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BMA) meeting. He confirmed that the rezoning process is being handled correctly and in accordance with Town procedures.

Mayor Pugh and Alderman Loope both agreed that Mr. Ottinger is following the correct rezoning process.

## Financial Report

Vice Mayor Franklin reviewed the financial report for September 2025.

**MOTION** by Aldermen Kelley to approve the financial report for September 2025. Second by Aldermen Vaught. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES.**

## Old Business Items:

### ORDINANCE AMENDING THE TEXT OF THE ZONING ORDINANCE SECTION 11-406, INGRESS/EGRESS REQUIREMENTS

Mayor Pugh presented the ordinance and advised it was passed on the first reading and there was a public hearing held before the current meeting. She also advised that the Planning Commission approved this ordinance on September 16, 2025.

**MOTION** by Aldermen Kelley to approve the ordinance amending the text of the zoning ordinance section 11-406 ingress/egress requirements. Second by Aldermen Loope. VOTE BY ROLL CALL: Mayor Pugh: Aye, Vice Mayor Franklin: Aye, Aldermen Loope: Aye, Aldermen Kelley: Aye, Aldermen Vaught: Aye. **MOTION PASSES.**

### ORDINANCE REGARDING THE MAINTENANCE OF ABANDONED COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES

Mayor Pugh presented the ordinance and advised that it had been passed on first reading on August 12, 2025. The ordinance was discussed during the workshop held prior to this meeting, and the Board conducted a public hearing following the workshop and before the start of the regular meeting. Mayor Pugh reviewed the changes recommended during the workshop, which included the following:

- Section 2, Subsection 3 – Exterior Building Maintenance: Removal of the requirement to paint the exterior façade.
- Section 4, Subsection 1 – Fines and Liens: Addition of the wording, "Once the fine has reached $500.00 or more, a lien may be placed on the property."

**MOTION** by Vice Mayor Franklin to approve the ordinance regarding the maintenance of abandoned commercial properties with the suggested changes. Second by Aldermen Vaught. VOTE BY ROLL CALL: Mayor Pugh: Aye, Vice Mayor Franklin: Aye, Aldermen Loope: Aye, Aldermen Kelley: Aye, Aldermen Vaught: Aye. **MOTION PASSES.**

### RESOLUTION ADOPTING MEETING RULES OF ORDER PURSUANT TO TENNESSEE CODE ANNOTATED § 8-44-112

Mayor Pugh presented the Resolution adopting Meeting Rules of Order pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated §8-44-112, noting that the proposed rules were discussed during the workshop held prior to this meeting.

Mayor Pugh highlighted the following additions and clarifications to the rules:

- Rule 6: To include a reminder, following the Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation, for any individuals wishing to sign up for public comments.
- Rule 7: To clarify that an employee should be called upon by the Chair before speaking, unless that employee is a member of a committee.

Vice Mayor Franklin added the addition to rule 18 of the wording "one more time"

In response, Mayor Pugh addressed the Town Attorney and read the proposed language for Rule 18, stating: "Rule 18 on the Resolution for Meetings — that in the event of a motion, resolution, or ordinance resulting in a tie of the Board or subcommittees, the item shall be automatically postponed and placed on the agenda for the next regular meeting for further consideration and revote — one more time."

Town Attorney Rob Goddard confirmed the wording and stated he thought that addition was fine to add.

**MOTION** by Aldermen Vaught to approve the resolution adopting meeting rules of order pursuant to Tennessee Code Annotated § 8-44-112 with the recommended changes. Second by Vice Mayor Franklin. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES.**

## <u>New Business Items:</u>

### RESOLUTION TO REPEAL AND ADOPT A NEW PERSONNEL POLICY TO INCLUDE A DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING POLICY

Mayor Pugh presented a Resolution to repeal and adopt a new Personnel Policy to include an updated Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy.

Mayor Pugh noted that she had asked Debbie Walsh to reach out to Hailey Russell for clarification on why this item was being presented as a *resolution* rather than an ordinance and requested that Ms. Walsh share that explanation with the Board.

Debbie Walsh explained that the original Personnel Handbook was adopted by ordinance; however, that same ordinance specifies that any future changes to the Personnel Policy may be made by resolution.

Mayor Pugh stated that the Town's current Personnel Manual contains only a brief and limited section regarding drug and alcohol use. The proposed policy provides a more detailed framework outlining testing procedures and expectations, which is particularly important given that some Town employees operate equipment and vehicles owned by the Town. She concluded by noting that the proposed document represents the MTAS Drug and Alcohol Policy, which will serve as the new standard within the Personnel Policy.

Mayor Pugh stated that she was aware Vice Mayor Franklin had expressed concerns regarding the proposed Drug and Alcohol Testing Policy, but noted that she believes the Town needs to have such a policy in place. She suggested that the Board could adopt the policy now and make revisions later, if necessary, while also acknowledging that the Board could choose to delay adoption if members preferred additional review time.

Vice Mayor Franklin responded that he would prefer to adopt a well-developed policy rather than approving one quickly. He stated that the proposed policy had not been included in the documents distributed to the Board for review, and as such, he had not had the opportunity to read or evaluate it. For that reason, he indicated that he could not vote in favor of adopting the policy at this time.

**MOTION** by Vice Mayor Franklin to move the resolution to repeal and adopt a new personnel policy to include a drug and alcohol testing policy to a workshop before the next month's meeting. Second by Aldermen Vaught. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES.**

## A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMAN OF THE TOWN OF LOUISVILLE, TENNESSEE TO SECURE AN EXPERIENCED AND QUALIFIED ENGINEERING FIRM TO ASSIST IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE TOURISM ENHANCEMENT GRANT

Mayor Pugh introduced the resolution to secure an experienced and qualified engineering firm to assist in the implementation of the Tourism Enhancement Grant.

Mayor Pugh stated that Kimley-Horn was the only engineering firm that expressed interest in providing these services and noted that the firm is a good fit, as they are already involved with the Town's Parks and Recreation grant.

She explained that this is a matching grant, with the Town providing half of the funding toward the project. The engineering services will support the implementation of the fishing pier, which is part of the Town's Parks and Recreation Master Plan, as well as improvements to the campground and campsites to enhance safety and organization for campers, including better site layout and delineation.

Vice Mayor Franklin agreed with Mayor Pugh that Kimley-Horn appears to be a good fit for the Town. However, he expressed confusion regarding the $57,000 amount listed under

Section 1 of the resolution compared to the $100,000 referenced at the beginning. He also requested clarification on the total cost of the project.

Mayor Pugh explained that the $57,000 payment to Kimley-Horn would cover the administration, implementation, and engineering design services associated with the project. Mayor Pugh and Alderman Kelley both stated that the total cost of the project is $200,000.

Alderman Loope noted that the resolution does not explicitly state that Kimley-Horn would provide engineering drawings, but instead indicates they would evaluate applications for the engineering. He questioned whether he was misreading the resolution or misunderstanding its intent. Mayor Pugh clarified that the work pertains to the implementation of the grant but stated she was willing to seek further clarification and **would** bring the resolution back for consideration at the next meeting if necessary.

Vice Mayor Franklin then sought confirmation that the Town had received a $100,000 grant from the State of Tennessee, which would be matched by the Town with an additional $100,000, and asked whether the $57,000 for the engineering firm was an additional expense beyond that match. Mayor Pugh clarified that the $57,000 is part of the Town's 50% match funding, not an additional cost beyond the total project amount.

Mayor Pugh stated that she would reach out to Chris Oelgoetz with the East Tennessee Development District, who is assisting the Town with the grant, to determine if he could answer questions from the Board **or** attend the workshop prior to the next meeting to address the Board's concerns directly.

**MOTION** by Aldermen Kelley to move the resolution to secure an experienced and qualified engineering firm to assist in the implementation of the tourism enhancement grant to a workshop before the next monthly meeting. Second by Vice Mayor Franklin. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES**.

## A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE TOWN OF LOUISVILLE, TENNESSEE, TO APPROVE AND AUTHORIZE THE TOWN'S BANKING INSTITUTION, PINNACLE BANK, TO ESTABLISH CREDIT CARD TRANSACTION SERVICES FOR THE TOWN

Mayor Pugh introduced a Resolution authorizing the Town's banking institution, Pinnacle Bank, to establish credit card transaction services for the Town. She requested that Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger provide additional information left by Hailey Russell regarding this item.

Barry Ottinger explained that Hailey Russell had provided notes indicating that the proposed credit card services would allow the Town to accept payments for various transactions, such as permits and merchandise. He noted that, as Anna Gibson had mentioned earlier during public input, credit card transactions typically carry a 3% processing fee.

Mr. Ottinger stated that while the fee is minimal for small purchases, such as T-shirts, it becomes significant for larger transactions—particularly for permits exceeding $5,000 to $6,000. He suggested that the Town consider establishing a policy to recoup the 3% transaction fee on higher-value payments, possibly by adding a service fee for credit card use on transactions exceeding a certain threshold (e.g., $1,000).

Vice Mayor Franklin interjected during discussion, agreeing with the need to allow credit card transaction fees to be passed along to the payer. He stated that this practice is common, noting that in his own experience, whenever he makes payments by credit card, he is charged a corresponding fee. He recommended that the Town implement the same practice, regardless of transaction type.

Vice Mayor Franklin then raised an additional concern regarding the Town's banking services. He stated that after reviewing the Town Charter, specifically Section 6-4-402 (Depositories), he found that the Town may not have recently reviewed its banking contracts as required. He read from the Charter, noting that:

"The Board, at a regular meeting, shall adopt a resolution to contract with a bank or banks making the best proposal to become the depository of municipal funds. Notwithstanding any law to the contrary, at least once every four years, the Board shall re-evaluate the contracts entered into pursuant to subsection (A). The Board shall base its evaluation on proposals obtained from at least two banks. The Treasurer or an officer appointed by the Treasurer shall prepare a written evaluation of the proposals and preserve the evaluations for at least three years."

Vice Mayor Franklin stated that, based on this provision, the Town needs to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) for banking services to ensure compliance with the Charter. He recommended that when Treasurer Caleb returns, he should solicit proposals from local banks and evaluate them to determine which offers the best terms. He added that he has no objection to continuing with Pinnacle Bank if it proves to offer the best arrangement.

He further noted that the Town is not currently receiving any interest income on excess funds held in its checking account, despite typically maintaining a balance of $200,000 to $300,000 at various times during the year. He explained that many banks offer sweep accounts or similar interest-bearing options that could generate income on idle funds.

Vice Mayor Franklin also pointed out that the Town currently maintains two banking relationships, one with Pinnacle Bank and another with CBBC Bank for room rental deposits. He observed that the Town had not reviewed its banking services in a long time and that fee structures across banks tend to be high. Drawing on his experience as a retired bank auditor and current bank advisor, he remarked that many banks use these service fees as a "loss leader" — offering basic services to attract accounts and then charging additional fees.

He recommended that the Town consolidate its accounts with one bank, if possible, both for efficiency and convenience, noting that staff members must currently make frequent trips to the bank due to the three-day deposit rule. He observed that Pinnacle Bank is farther away than CBBC, which adds to the burden, and suggested that a competitive proposal process could address these operational concerns while ensuring the Town receives the best available terms.

Mayor Pugh asked Vice Mayor Franklin if he would get with Caleb Wheeler and advise him on the discussion and have him start working towards getting RFPs for banking services.

**MOTION** by Vice Mayor Franklin to table the resolution and have the town treasurer review the town charter and take action to ensure the town is incompliance with the banking services. Second by Aldermen Vaught. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES.**

## ORDINANCE REZONING CERTAIN TERRITORY FROM R-1 RESIDENTIAL AND AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT TO C-1 GENERAL COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Mayor Pugh introduced the Ordinance to rezone certain territory from R-1 Residential and Agricultural District to C-1 Commercial District, noting that the materials were included in the Board's binders along with an accompanying map. Mayor Pugh then asked Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger if he had any comments regarding the proposed ordinance. Barry Ottinger stated that the rezoning request is consistent with the Town's Land Use Plan and he saw no issue with it.

Mayor Pugh informed the Board that the property owner, Mr. Dan McCarthy, was present and invited him to address the Board.

Dan McCarthy, property owner, stated that he and his family intend to develop the property to add value to the neighborhood by opening a grocery store, ice cream shop, and coffee shop aimed at serving the local community.

Libby Young asked for clarification that the property being discussed is located on the corner of Samples Road and Topside Road. Mayor Pugh confirmed that this is correct.

Aldermen Kelley noted for the record that the Planning Commission reviewed and recommended approval of the rezoning at its meeting held on September 16, 2025.

**MOTION** by Aldermen Kelley to approve the ordinance rezoning certain territory from R-1 Residential and Agricultural District to C-1 General Commercial District on the first reading. Second by Aldermen Vaught. VOTE BY ROLL CALL: Mayor Pugh: Aye, Vice Mayor Franklin: Aye, Aldermen Loope: Aye, Aldermen Kelley: Aye, Aldermen Vaught: Aye. **MOTION PASSES.**

## Discussion from Alderman Loope About Ordinance 2025-11 Protect Municipal Property and Regulate Certain Uses of Public and Private Spaces Within the Town Limits

Alderman Loope discussed Ordinance 2025-11, adopted in September, noting that when the Town was first established, former Mayor Geraldine Anderson allowed individuals experiencing homelessness to stay temporarily in the maintenance building where her office was located. He shared that, historically, some residents in the community had also offered assistance by allowing individuals to park vehicles or sleep on their private property, such as behind barns or in unused trailers.

Alderman Loope acknowledged that individuals cannot park or sleep overnight on public or private property without permission but suggested that the Town consider helping establish a network of residents willing to provide temporary shelter or safe spaces for those in need. He asked Vice Mayor Franklin if he would be willing to assist in forming such a network. Mayor Pugh responded that private property owners have the right to decide whether to allow individuals to stay on their property. She clarified that Ordinance 2025-11 prohibits individuals from sleeping on Town-owned property, as the Town does not have the staff or resources to monitor such activity. Mayor Pugh also referenced a letter from a concerned citizen regarding individuals sleeping on Town property. She expressed support for Alderman Loope's idea of establishing a network of willing property owners and offered to assist in the process. Alderman Loope replied that he appreciated the support but did not need her help in this initiative.

Vice Mayor Franklin stated that he would be happy to assist and noted that he knows several individuals who might be able to help. He referenced previous community efforts to provide housing support similar to programs in Knoxville, specifically noting a women's and children's facility there that is currently at capacity and expanding due to high demand. He suggested creating a private consortium of volunteers and faith-based partners to assist individuals in need, proposing that local churches could be engaged to identify available spaces—such as missionary housing—that could temporarily shelter those in crisis. He emphasized the importance of vetting participants carefully while recognizing the community's capacity to help.

Citizen Jillian Ottinger requested to speak on the matter and was permitted to do so by Mayor Pugh, provided her comments pertained to the agenda item. Ms. Ottinger stated that individuals previously removed or displaced by law enforcement were not families or couples in need, but rather individuals whose behavior had caused concern among business owners. She noted that it is important to distinguish between addressing public safety issues and assisting those who are genuinely in need, emphasizing that the situations discussed involve two separate concerns.

Alderman Vaught suggested that the Town could partner with Officer Sexton to assist in identifying and coordinating resources for individuals in need.

Mayor Pugh agreed, noting that private coordination could be beneficial. She stated that if an official organization, such as Family Promise or another community-based group, wishes to assist, they could help connect individuals in need with existing support programs already available within the community. Mayor Pugh added that if members of the community are interested in starting a new charitable organization, the Town would be supportive of that initiative.

Alderman Loope concluded the discussion by inviting community members to contact him directly if they would like to be involved in the effort, noting that participation would be voluntary and service-oriented, without expectation of recognition or reward.

## Discuss the Recommendation from the Recreation Advisory Board for the Disc Golf Bid Proposal

Mayor Pugh went over the recommendation from the Recreation Advisory Board for the Disc Golf Bid Proposal.

**MOTION** by Vice Mayor Franklin to approve the recommendation from the Recreation Advisory Board and the bid for the Disc Golf Proposal. Second by Aldermen Kelley. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES**.

## Discussion of Date Change for November Meeting From 11/11/2025 (Veterans Day)

Mayor Pugh advised the board that Town Hall is closed for Veterans Day, a Federal Holiday, on November 11, 2025 which is when the next board meeting is scheduled for and advised that the meeting could either be moved to Monday, November 10, 2025 or Wednesday, November 12, 2025. The board unanimously decided to move the meeting to Monday, November 10, 2025.

## Rebuttal for Alleged Ethics Complaints

Mayor Pugh stated that the final item on the agenda was the rebuttal to the alleged ethics complaints, one of which was filed against her. She provided copies of her written rebuttal to the Board members and summarized its contents.

Mayor Pugh explained that the rebuttal addresses each allegation according to the Town's Code of Ethics and stated that, after reviewing the claims, no violations have occurred. She affirmed that she holds no personal, financial, or employment interest—nor do any members of her family—in Patrick O'Hara's properties or development projects, and therefore no disclosure requirement or conflict of interest existed.

Regarding improper use of information, Mayor Pugh stated that she has never disclosed confidential or protected information as defined under Section 1-606. All information referenced in meetings was publicly available through planning documents or municipal proceedings, and at no time did she act with the intent to secure financial gain for herself or her family.

On the matter of misuse of position (Section 1-608), she stated that she has not used her office to secure privileges or exemptions for any individual, noting that all planning and exemption requests were processed through the appropriate governing bodies with staff review, legal oversight, and formal votes.

Mayor Pugh also addressed statements related to the Cloud property, explaining that her comments were based on her understanding of planning history and staff and counsel discussions that became part of the public record. She clarified that differences in interpretation do not constitute intentional misinformation or ethical misconduct.

In conclusion, Mayor Pugh stated that no evidence has been provided demonstrating personal investment, financial gain, or misuse of confidential information. She affirmed that she has acted in good faith and in full compliance with her duties as Mayor and therefore requested that the complaint be dismissed in its entirety as without merit.

Town Attorney Rob Goddard provided clarification regarding the procedure for handling ethics complaints under the Town's adopted Ethics Policy.

Mr. Goddard stated that, pursuant to Section 1-610-2(c) of the policy, when an ethics complaint is lodged against a member of the municipality's governing body, the Board must take one of the following actions:

1. Determine that the complaint has merit;
2. Determine that the complaint does not have merit; or
3. Determine that the complaint has sufficient merit to warrant further investigation.

Mayor Pugh stated that she was fully supportive of a complete investigation into the ethics complaint, emphasizing that she has no financial interest in the matter. She said she welcomes a full review of all parties involved and reiterated her desire to have her name cleared. Mayor Pugh added that she did not appreciate being accused of having a financial interest in a situation where none exists.

Vice Mayor Franklin stated that he had reviewed the ethics complaint and observed that it contained language such as "maybe" and "possibly," which he noted were not conclusive. He emphasized that while ethics violations are serious matters, they must be supported by clear evidence.

Vice Mayor Franklin stated that, based on the material provided, he found no proof that an ethics violation had occurred. He explained that an ethics complaint, by its nature, is a submission of allegations, and that without definitive proof of personal or financial benefit to the Mayor or her family, the complaint did not appear to rise to the level of an ethics violation.

**MOTION** by Aldermen Kelley that the complaint filed against Mayor Jill Pugh has no merit. Second by Aldermen Loope. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. ABSTAIN: MAYOR PUGH. **MOTION PASSES.**

Mayor Pugh then advised the Board that she would turn the floor over to Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger to present his rebuttal to the ethics complaint that had been submitted against him.

Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger stated that he would provide his rebuttal to the ethics complaints submitted by John and Anna to a third-party investigator or through a deposition in court.

Mayor Pugh asked Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger whether he had any financial interest in the property in question, to which Mr. Ottinger stated that he had none whatsoever.

Mayor Pugh then shared that she has, from time to time, received letters from residents commending Mr. Ottinger for his assistance in helping property owners navigate Town requirements and processes. She mentioned one such letter from the Homeowners Association President at Jackson Bend, expressing appreciation for Mr. Ottinger's help with a property matter in that neighborhood.

Mayor Pugh stated that she does not believe Mr. Ottinger has any financial interest related to the matter and noted that, at times, he may simply be "a little too helpful" in trying to assist residents with accomplishing their goals, even when such efforts may involve unpopular or contentious issues. She concluded by reiterating her belief that Mr. Ottinger has no personal or financial interest in the matter at issue, as he had confirmed during the meeting.

Alderman Loope asked Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger to clarify his earlier statement and requested that he repeat his rebuttal.

Mr. Ottinger reiterated that he was providing a rebuttal to the ethics complaints filed by Alderman Loope and Anna to a third-party investigator for deposition in court.

Mr. Ottinger further stated that the reason Alderman Loope's name appeared on the rebuttal was because he believed Loope had assisted Anna in preparing the ethics complaint against him. He referenced a recent occasion in which he had seen Alderman Loope and Anna reviewing information together and claimed that another committee member had suggested the matter was rehearsed prior to being brought before the meeting. Mr. Ottinger added that he appreciated Alderman Loope's willingness to help others but maintained that, in his opinion, the complaint bore both of their names equally.

Alderman Loope questioned that Mr. Ottinger was referring to him again. Mr. Ottinger confirmed he was referring to him.

**MOTION** by Alderman Loope to have the complaint investigated and to have depositions.

Town Attorney Rob Goddard provided clarification regarding the procedure for investigating ethics complaints against non-elected personnel. He explained that the process differs from that of complaints filed against aldermen or elected officials.

Mr. Goddard stated that, in order for an ethics complaint involving a non-alderman employee to proceed, there must be a written request submitted by an official or employee who is potentially affected by the provisions of the Ethics Policy. He further noted that such investigations do not require a motion or formal action by the Board, but rather depend upon a written request for investigation from the appropriate party.

Mr. Goddard concluded that while the language in the policy could be interpreted as somewhat unclear, this is the procedure outlined in the Town's Ethics Policy.

He further clarified that if an employee or an official—defined as any member of the Board—submits a written request for an investigation, and that individual is affected by the provisions of the chapter, then an investigation may proceed accordingly. Mr. Goddard emphasized that the request must be in writing in order to meet the policy's procedural requirements.

Mayor Pugh stated that the discussion regarding the ethics complaints was concluded. She noted that, in accordance with the Town's Ethics Policy, if any Board member or employee wishes to submit a written request for an investigation, they may do so following the proper procedure.

Alderman Loope asked Anna Gibson to confirm whether the two had ever spoken outside of a public meeting. Ms. Gibson confirmed that they had not.

Alderman Loope stated that, to his recollection, there had only been two occasions on which they had spoken, both during meetings, and that they had never communicated by phone.

Ms. Gibson explained that any prior interaction between them was limited to her providing dates and information related to Planning Commission documents and site plans that she had independently researched. She clarified that she conducted the research on her own initiative after reviewing past materials and noticing inconsistencies that concerned her.

Alderman Loope continued by asking Anna Gibson to reconfirm that they had never spoken outside of the meeting room, including at her home or elsewhere. Ms. Gibson confirmed that they had not spoken outside of meetings, noting specifically that they had not even spoken in passing, such as at the post office.

Alderman Loope addressed the Board, stating that there was no truth to the statements made by Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger. He affirmed that he would stand by that assertion under oath and would testify to it in a deposition if necessary.

Mayor Pugh then asked the Board if they were ready to proceed to the next agenda item. The Board agreed to move forward, and the meeting continued with the next item on the agenda.

**Public Input Not on Agenda Items (5 Minute Limit)**

**Elizabeth Young** addressed the Board regarding property conditions at 2359 Topside Road, previously owned by Gray and Nancy Elizabeth Hahn. She noted that Mr. Hahn is deceased and that Ms. Hahn has abandoned the property, leaving it unmaintained for the past two to three years.

Ms. Young reported that the yard has become severely overgrown, the garage door has been left partially open, and she recently observed rats on the property while walking back from the Henry Edgar Beal Park. She stated that she had contacted the Blount County Health Department, which referred her to the Environmental Services Department, but was told that since the property is within the Town of Louisville, the matter must be handled by the Town.

Ms. Young stated that she has spoken with Building and Codes Official Barry Ottinger several times regarding the issue and has followed his instruction to submit an email complaint. She emphasized that she and her neighbors maintain their properties and that the neglected home is creating an eyesore and potential health hazard in the neighborhood.

Ms. Young urged the Town to take action to address the situation, expressing concern about public health risks and the potential for the problem to worsen as colder weather approaches. She added that, if necessary, she would pursue legal action to compel remediation.

Alderman Loope added that, to his understanding, one of the property owner's nephews intends to take over responsibility for the property at 2359 Topside Road. He advised that he would check on the status of that situation and report back to the Board.

**Anna Gibson** addressed the Board and offered several comments on different topics.

Ms. Gibson first stated that she had been willing to assist with domestic violence and mental health resources, but expressed concern about being mischaracterized as "too close" to officials following earlier discussions. She recommended that the Town consider establishing a formal plan or protocol for responding to situations in which an individual, such as a battered woman or person in crisis, is found on Town property. She suggested compiling a list of local resources, such as Haven House in Alcoa, and posting that information in visible locations, such as at Town Hall or on exterior signage, to provide immediate help options.

Ms. Gibson then commented on the Town's banking and investment practices, suggesting that the Town explore partnerships with credit unions, which often offer higher interest rates than traditional banks. She specifically mentioned UT Federal Credit Union, which currently offers approximately 4% on money market accounts, and noted that a money market account could function as a checking account to increase the Town's earnings on idle funds.

Next, Ms. Gibson raised concerns regarding the ongoing lawsuit stating that she did not believe the Town had a strong legal basis for the case. She questioned why the Town had retained an outside attorney rather than using its regular legal counsel and expressed concern about the legal expenses, which she stated were approximately $10,000 to date. Ms. Gibson described the situation as appearing inconsistent or discriminatory, given that a permit had previously been issued allowing residential construction on a commercial property, while the current lawsuit involves alleged commercial activity on residential property.

Lastly, Ms. Gibson suggested that the Town's workshop meetings could be made more inclusive and interactive by allowing public participation. She recommended establishing roundtable-style discussions or opportunities for residents to sign up and share feedback on Town matters, stating that such engagement would help ensure community perspectives are heard and considered.

**Diana Morgan** addressed the Board regarding the discussion on homelessness. She shared her perspective based on her prior experience serving for two years on a homelessness commission in Knox County, which included participation from local and state officials, law enforcement, mental health and medical professionals, and sociologists from the University of Tennessee.

Ms. Morgan explained that during that time, the commission conducted surveys and research on the homeless population in Knox County, which initially numbered around 1,100 individuals. The findings indicated that the majority of those surveyed had chosen a homeless lifestyle voluntarily, rather than being forced into it by financial or family circumstances. She noted that over time, particularly as economic conditions worsened, more families with children began to experience homelessness, prompting organizations such as the Salvation Army to establish temporary housing facilities for families in crisis.

Ms. Morgan stated that the homeless population in Knox County has since grown to more than 2,200 individuals, with the area now considered welcoming to the homeless due to the availability of services and assistance networks. She described her experience as one of the most challenging projects she had worked on, noting that despite significant community involvement—including support from church networks—the results had limited impact on reducing chronic homelessness.

Ms. Morgan observed that in her 30 years living in Louisville, she has more frequently seen solitary male individuals experiencing homelessness, rather than families. She cautioned the Board to approach any initiatives to address homelessness carefully, emphasizing that while good intentions and community support are valuable, some individuals may not wish to change their circumstances.

She concluded by stating that her intent was to offer perspective based on her past experience and to encourage thoughtful planning should the Town decide to pursue related initiatives.

**Adjournment**

**MOTION** by Alderman Kelley to adjourn the meeting. Second by Vice Mayor Franklin. VOTE: UNANIMOUS. **MOTION PASSES.** The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Jill Pugh

Jill Pugh, Mayor

Caleb K. Wheeler

Caleb Wheeler, Town Recorder