

**TOWN OF ABINGDON
COUNCIL MEETING
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2026 – 2:30 pm
COUNCIL CHAMBERS – MUNICIPAL BUILDING**

The meeting of the Abingdon Town Council was held on Thursday, September 17, 2026, in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building.

- A. WELCOME – *Mayor Anderson***
B. ROLL CALL (VIDEO 5:25 – 5:35)

Members of Council Present: Mr. Webb
 Mrs. Quetsch
 Vice Mayor Austin
 Mayor Anderson

Member of Council Absent: Mrs. Pillion

- C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
D. APPROVAL OF AGENDA (VIDEO 6:38 – 7:06)

On motion by Mrs. Quetsch, seconded by Mr. Webb, to amend the agenda to hear Item L-1 immediately following the Public Comment section.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye
Mayor Anderson	Aye

- E. PUBLIC COMMENTS (VIDEO 7:06 – 10:57)**

- Tom Wise
- Teddy McClure

- F. PROCLAMATIONS (VIDEO 42:28 – 48:54)**

1. Proclamation recognizing October 4 – 10, 2026 as Fire Prevention Week, “Charge into Fire Safety: Safe Charging Is a Superpower”

Vice Mayor Austin read a proclamation recognizing October 4–10, 2026, as Fire Prevention Week in the Town of Abingdon. The 2026 theme, “Charge into Fire Safety: Safe Charging is a Superpower,” emphasizes the safe use and charging of lithium-ion batteries.

Fire Chief Tim Estes thanked Council for recognizing Fire Prevention Week and discussed the increasing incidence of fires involving lithium-ion batteries. He encouraged residents to properly use, charge, inspect, and dispose of lithium-ion batteries and advised residents to contact the Fire Department for information regarding proper disposal.

Chief Estes announced that the Abingdon Fire Department would hold an Open House on October 10 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., including fire-safety information, equipment displays, and refreshments sponsored by the Abingdon Firefighter Foundation.

Chief Estes also recognized Larry Bales State Farm for providing approximately \$3,000 in fire-safety educational materials and banners.

G. PUBLIC HEARING

H. RESOLUTIONS

I. FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES (VIDEO 49:11 – 52:10)

1. An Ordinance to amend Chapter 10, Animals, Article I, In General, to prohibit the feeding or attraction of deer.

Town Manager Mike Cochran presented the proposed ordinance and explained that feeding wildlife can encourage deer to congregate in developed areas and become less fearful of humans. Given the Town's concerns regarding its deer population, the ordinance would prohibit the feeding and attraction of deer within the Town.

On motion by Vice Mayor Austin, seconded by Mrs. Quetsch, adopt the ordinance as presented and waive the second reading.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye
Mayor Anderson	Aye

2. An Ordinance to provide for deer management and population control, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. (VIDEO 52:10 – 57:05)

Town Manager Cochran presented the proposed ordinance establishing a framework for deer-management activities in cooperation with DWR.

Mr. Cochran discussed the possibility of limiting urban archery activities to properties of five acres or more, which would generally concentrate such activity around the Town's perimeter. Council reviewed maps identifying properties meeting that acreage threshold.

Mr. Bernhardt discussed considerations associated with property size, neighboring properties, retrieval of harvested deer, and proximity to homes and other structures.

Town Attorney Cameron Bell explained that the ordinance establishes the necessary findings and framework for the Town Manager and Police Chief to work with DWR regarding specific deer-management measures. Adoption of the ordinance would not immediately authorize hunting throughout the Town; subsequent DWR approvals, requirements, and applicable safety restrictions would continue to govern any program implemented.

Council discussed the need to begin the process promptly due to DWR's April deadline for participation in the following urban archery season.

On motion by Mrs. Quetsch, seconded by Mr. Webb, to adopt the ordinance as presented and waive the second reading. Vice Mayor Austin requested that the Chief and Town Manager communicate on how to forward this matter.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye
Mayor Anderson	Aye

J. SECOND READING OF ORDINANCE (VIDEO 57:05 – 58:39)

1. Ordinance to enact Chapter 18- Businesses, Article VIII, Exemption of Food Booths at Certain Fairs from Restaurant Regulations

Town Manager Cochran explained that the ordinance reenacts provisions that had previously existed in the Town Code but were inadvertently removed during an earlier Code update. The ordinance provides applicable exemptions for certain community, civic, school, and similar groups operating food booths at qualifying events.

On motion by Vice Mayor Austin, seconded by Mrs. Quetsch, to adopt the ordinance as presented.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye

Mayor Anderson Aye
K. CONSIDERATION OF BIDS
L. NEW BUSINESS

- 1. Continued discussion with Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources regarding conflicts between deer and residents, including damage to landscaping and property, increased risk of deer-vehicle collisions, and other public safety and wildlife-management concerns. (VIDEO 11:04 – 42:26)**

Brandon Bernhardt, District Wildlife Biologist with the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR), appeared before Council to continue the discussion regarding conflicts between deer and residents, including property and landscape damage, deer-vehicle collisions, public safety, and wildlife-management concerns.

Mr. Bernhardt explained that DWR annually establishes deer-population objectives for each county in Virginia. Washington County is currently classified as having a moderate-to-high deer population, with DWR's management objective being to reduce the population to a moderate level. He clarified that DWR does not maintain a separate population estimate specifically for the Town of Abingdon.

Mr. Bernhardt discussed the importance of harvesting antlerless deer, particularly does, as a population-management strategy because of their reproductive capacity. He reviewed historical harvest data for Washington County and advised that, despite increased harvest opportunities, the deer population has continued to trend upward.

For the previous hunting season, Washington County achieved approximately 68.7 percent of DWR's female-deer harvest goal, placing the County among those jurisdictions falling significantly below DWR's desired antlerless harvest.

Council discussed the decline in the number of hunters, opportunities to encourage youth participation in hunting and hunter-education programs, and the increasing reluctance of some private landowners to permit hunting on their property. Mr. Bernhardt advised that DWR would be willing to partner with the Town on educational programs and community events designed to increase awareness and participation.

Mr. Bernhardt outlined potential deer-management options available to the Town, including an Urban Archery Program. He explained that participation would require an application to DWR by certified letter by April 1 for the following hunting season. The Town could establish additional restrictions regarding property size, shooting locations, distances from neighboring properties, and other safety considerations. Applicable Town restrictions concerning the discharge of archery equipment would also need to permit the activity.

Mr. Bernhardt also discussed DWR's deer population-control program for publicly owned property, noting that similar programs have been utilized by other Virginia localities. Such programs may involve trained personnel or sharpshooters and generally require continued management over multiple years before significant population reductions are realized.

Council discussed Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), other diseases affecting deer, and the ecological consequences of allowing deer populations to exceed appropriate levels. Mr. Bernhardt advised that CWD had not been detected in Washington County and that the nearest prior detection had occurred in Tazewell County. He explained that higher deer densities can increase opportunities for disease transmission.

Public Works Director Kevin Worley asked whether the Town could petition the Commonwealth to increase the antlerless deer bag limit in Washington County. Mr. Bernhardt advised that DWR would soon begin its regulation-review process and that a public comment period was scheduled to begin October 5. He noted, however, that existing bag limits are not necessarily the primary constraint because many hunters do not currently harvest the maximum number of antlerless deer permitted.

Mr. Bernhardt also discussed DWR's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP), through which participating private landowners may receive additional antlerless-deer tags while providing biological data to DWR regarding harvested deer.

Council thanked Mr. Bernhardt for his presentation and assistance.

2. Discussion regarding donation of used fire truck to Sandy Ridge Fire Department, 8013 Dr. Ralph Stanley Highway, Coeburn, Dickenson County, Virginia. (VIDEO 58:45 – 1:12:47)

Town Manager Cochran and Fire Chief Tim Estes discussed the proposed donation of a 1995 fire truck owned by the Town to the Sandy Ridge Fire Department in Dickenson County, Virginia.

Chief Estes advised that the truck was the Town's first modern custom fire apparatus and has approximately 50,000 miles and 4,000 operating hours. Although the vehicle remains serviceable, it has exceeded the recommended life cycle for the Town's needs and is no longer necessary given the Town's current apparatus.

Chief Estes explained that the truck has been well maintained throughout its service life and that maintenance records dating to its purchase are available. The vehicle could be returned to active service if necessary but is currently maintained primarily as reserve equipment.

Chief Estes advised that Sandy Ridge Fire Department has a demonstrated need for the apparatus. Its newest pumper is a 2005 model, and the department serves a rural area with limited financial resources.

Council discussed whether other departments in Washington County or Southwest Virginia might have a greater need. Chief Estes advised that, to his knowledge, Washington County departments generally have newer apparatuses and no identified need for this particular truck. He also discussed requests received through the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, noting that many departments seeking apparatus require a water capacity greater than the Town's truck provides.

Chief Estes estimated that comparable used fire apparatus were currently selling for approximately \$22,000. The Town originally purchased the truck in 1995 for approximately \$185,000.

Town Attorney Bell advised Council regarding the applicable provisions of Virginia law governing the donation and associated liability protections.

On motion by Mr. Webb, seconded by Mrs. Quetsch, approved the donation of the fire truck to Sandy Ridge Fire Department and authorized the Town Attorney to prepare or finalize all necessary documentation associated with the donation.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye
Mayor Anderson	Aye

N. OLD BUSINESS

**O. MISCELLANEOUS BUSINESS/COMMUNICATIONS FROM TOWN MANAGER
(VIDEO 1:12:52 – 1:14:14)**

Town Manager Cochran reported that staff have made significant progress during the week working with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) regarding necessary repairs associated with the Town's project. He stated that the Town's goal was to complete the work by March 31 and that discussions with FEMA had been productive.

Mr. Cochran also reported that Public Works employees were nearing completion of cleanup efforts associated with the significant amount of tree debris generated during the previous month and thanked employees for their efforts.

P. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS (VIDEO 1:14:14 – 1:22:26)

Mayor Anderson thanked Mr. Bernhardt for assisting the Town with its deer-management concerns and congratulated Sandy Ridge Fire Department regarding the donated apparatus. Mayor

Anderson noted the Washington County Fair and events at Bristol Motor Speedway and encouraged residents to exercise patience due to increased visitor traffic in the area.

Vice Mayor Austin discussed the recently installed sign recognizing Abingdon High School state championship achievements. He stated that residents appreciated the Town's effort to recognize student athletes but expressed concern that the lettering and individual recognition panels were difficult to read from a passing vehicle. Vice Mayor Austin suggested relocating the existing sign to a pedestrian-oriented location, such as near the Visitor Center, where individuals could stop and read it more easily. Council also discussed retaining the existing sign at another location while potentially installing a second sign with larger lettering at the current site or another entrance corridor.

Town Manager Cochran agreed to consult with the sign company regarding options for relocating the existing sign, enlarging the lettering, or creating an additional sign.

Councilmember Quetsch had no additional comments.

Councilmember Webb noted that he was approaching the conclusion of his tenure on Town Council and expressed his appreciation to Town employees for their work and service during his eight years on Council.

Q. APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMITTEES (VIDEO 1:22:26 – 1:37:30)

1. Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator
 - appointment to fill the vacancy of Kent Peterson, who did not wish to be reappointed
 - appointment to fill the vacancy of Catherine Mantooth, who did not wish to be Reappointed
2. Abingdon Redevelopment and Housing Authority
 - appointment to fill the vacancy of Dorothea Frazier, who was ineligible to serve an Additional term
 - appointment to fill the vacancy of Katlin Kazmi, who is ineligible to serve an additional term
3. Economic Development Authority
 - appointment to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Allison Mays
4. Veterans Advisory Board
 - appointment to fill a vacancy
5. Sinking Spring Cemetery
 - appointment to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Kari Tudor

On motion of Vice Mayor Austin, seconded by Mrs. Quetsch, moved that Council convene in Closed Session pursuant to Virginia Code § 2.2-3711(A)(1) for the purpose of considering applications for appointment to the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator Board, Abingdon Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Economic Development Authority, Veterans Advisory Board, and Sinking Spring Cemetery Committee.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye
Mayor Anderson	Aye

On motion of Vice Mayor Austin, seconded by Mrs. Quetsch, reconveyed in open session.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye
Mayor Anderson	Aye

Vice Mayor Austin moved to certify that, to the best of each member's knowledge, only those matters lawfully exempted from the open-meeting requirements and identified in the motion convening the Closed Session were heard, discussed, or considered.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	I so certify
Mrs. Quetsch	I so certify
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	I so certify
Mayor Anderson	I so certify

On motion of Mr. Webb, seconded by Mrs. Quetsch, make the following appointments.

The roll call vote was as follows:

Mr. Webb	Aye
Mrs. Quetsch	Aye
Mrs. Pillion	Absent
Vice Mayor Austin	Aye
Mayor Anderson	Aye

Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator Board

William Denton
Larry Foster

Abingdon Redevelopment and Housing Authority

Jeff Hurst
Kelly Robinson

Economic Development Authority

Brian Rasnake

Veterans Advisory Board

Trevor Harrison

Sinking Spring Cemetery Committee

Noralie White

R. CLOSED SESSION

Having no further matters, Mayor Anderson adjourned the meeting.


Dwyane Anderson, Mayor


Kimberly Kingsley, Clerk