



August 12, 2025
Martinsville City Council
Meeting Minutes

5:00pm, Call Open Session to Order -

Martinsville Municipal Building; Council Chambers

A Closed-Session Meeting was held at Martinsville Municipal Building, on August 12, 2025 at 5:00 PM.

Council Members participating included Vice Mayor, Kathy Lawson; Julian Mei, Aaron Rawls; Rayshuan Gravely, and Mayor, LC Jones.

Call Open Session to Order: Mayor Jones called the meeting to order in Council Chambers and advised Council would go into Closed Session beginning at 5:00 PM. In accordance with the Code of Virginia, Title 2.2 Chapter 37, Freedom of Information Act and upon a motion by Council Member Lawson and seconded by Council Member Mei with the following 4-0 recorded vote: Council Member Gravely, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Rawls entered at 5:05 PM.

Council convened in Closed Session to discuss the following matters:

- a. 2.2-3711 A (1) Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; In regards to the Acting City Manager Position.
- b. 2.2-3711 A(7) Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. In regards to Retirees Litigation.



- c. 2.2-3711 A(7). Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. In regards to threatened employment law litigation.

5:00 PM, Closed Session -

Martinsville Municipal Building; Room 208

Council convened in Closed Session to discuss the following matters:

- a. 2.2-3711 A (1) Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; In regards to the Acting City Manager Position.
- b. 2.2-3711 A(7) Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. In regards to Retirees Litigation.
- c. 2.2-3711 A(7). Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. In regards to threatened employment law litigation.



7 PM, Return to Open Session and Certification of Closed Session -
Martinsville Municipal Building; Council Chambers

With a Motion by Lawson and Second by Mei, City Council certifies that only those matters permitted by the Code of Virginia Sec. 2.2-3711 and specifically referenced in the motion to enter closed session were discussed during the closed session. Approved with the following 5-0 vote:

Councilman Rawls, aye;
Councilman Gravely, aye;
Councilman Mei, aye;
Vice Mayor Lawson, aye;
Mayor Jones, aye.

Martinsville City Council certifies that only business matters under the following:

- a. 2.2-3711 A (1) Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body; In regards to the Acting City Manager Position.
- b. 2.2-3711 A(7) Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. In regards to Retirees Litigation.
- c. 2.2-3711 A(7). Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body. In regards to threatened employment law litigation.



7 PM Regular Session

Martinsville Municipal Building; Council Chambers

1. Call to Order
 - a. Mayor Jones called the meeting to order beginning at 7PM.
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Invocation
 - a. Led by Ross Allen
4. Action Taken Out of Closed Session
 - a. Motion made by Vice Mayor Lawson to appoint Rob Fincher as Interim City Manager and Second by Julian Mei.
 - i. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote: Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.
 - b. Motion made to approve Resolution, in accordance with City Charter, removing City Manager Aretha R. Ferrell-Benavides and authorizing and directing the City Attorney to provide a written notice of specific reasons for her removal and her removal shall be final and effective 60 days from the written notice. Also that Ms. Benevides be suspended in accordance with City Charter effective immediately and relieved of all duties and authorized authority as City Manager. The Action of Council terminating her employment on August 7, 2025 is ratified and confirmed, including the reasons cited in said prior action. Motion made by Vice Mayor Lawson and second by Aaron Rawls.
 - i. Approved with the following 3-2 recorded vote: Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, no; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, no.
5. Presentations and Proclamations
 - a. Fayette Area Historical Initiative (FAHI): Sponsorship Acknowledgment and Appreciation
 - i. Charisse Hairston, FAHI Executive Director
 1. Thank you for Sponsorship for Annual Juneteenth Celebration. 550 participants.



6. Consent Agenda

- a. Discuss and Consider the Following Meeting Minutes: July 7, 2025; July 22, 2025; July 23, 2025
 - i. Motion to approve made by Kathy Lawson and second by Julian Mei.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.
- b. Discuss and Consider 1st Reading of Budget Appropriations for Debt Service, School Capital Projects, and Streets Funds
 - i. Motion to approve on first reading made by Kathy Lawson and second by Julian Mei.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.

7. Regular Agenda or New Business

- a. Discuss and Consider Rescheduling September 9th Council Meeting Due to Chamber of Commerce's Annual Meeting
 - i. Motion to approve Rescheduling meeting to September 16th made by Julian Mei and second by Kathy Lawson.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.



- b. Discuss and Consider Request for Rezone Ordinance -- First Presbyterian Church
 - i. Motion to approve on second reading by Kathy Lawson and second by Julian Mei.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.
- c. Discuss and Consider Request for Street Abandonment Ordinance --1009 E. Church Street
 - i. Motion to approve on second reading made by Kathy Lawson and second by Julian Mei.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.
- d. Discuss and Consider Arts and Cultural Committee's Request to Apply for Harvest PUP Grant
 - i. Motion to approve made by Kathy Lawson and second by Aaron Rawls.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.
- e. Discuss and Consider Sunsetting of Emergency Housing and Community Support Commission as Requested by Board Chair
 - i. Motion to approve made by Aaron Rawls and second by Julian Mei.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.



- f. Discuss and Consider Approval of Matching Funds (5%)
Commitment for West Piedmont Planning District Commission,
Regional Generator Project – Hazard Mitigation Grant Application
 - i. Motion to approve made by Kathy Lawson and second by Aaron Rawls.
 - 1. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member Mei, aye;
Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson, aye; Council
Member Gravely, aye.
- g. Discuss and Consider Piedmont Community Services' Request to
Purchase 605 Fourth St.
 - i. Piedmont Community Services will also remain a voting
precinct.
 - 1. Motion to approve the sale and authorize the Interim
City Manager to sign the documents made by Kathy
Lawson and second by Julian Mei.
 - a. Approved with the following 5-0 recorded vote:
Council Member Rawls, aye; Council Member
Mei, aye; Mayor Jones, aye; Vice Mayor Lawson,
aye; Council Member Gravely, aye.

Business From the Floor

- a. Ural Harris

Adjournment

- a. Mayor Jones made the motion to adjourn at 8 PM.