

TOWN COUNCIL
PUBLIC HEARING
JULY 13, 2026
6:00 P.M.

PRESENT

Mayor:	Roy M. Gladding
Vice Mayor:	Anita J. Latane
Council Members:	Katherine “Kay” B. Carlton
	Carolyn Barrett
	A. Fleet Dillard, III
	Kenneth A. Gillis
	Troy L. Balderson
Town Manager:	Steve Wright
Assistant Town Manager:	James Knighton
Town Clerk:	Patsy K. Scates
Town Treasurer:	Tina F. Brock
Chief of Police:	Thomas Carter

VISITORS

Danny Layman, Citizen	Brad Barners, Citizen
Sandy Hill, Citizen	Bill Youell, Citizen
Patrick Stone, Warsaw Chamber	Glenn Spiegler, Citizen
Jeans Owens, Citizen	Jovita Kelly, Citizen
Anne Griggs Allen, Citizen	Myra Dickinson, Citizen
Straton Beamer, Citizen	Yvonne Vaughan, Citizen
Herb Sebren, Citizen	Cassy Lord, VDOT

A Public Hearing of the Town Council was held on July 13 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Tappahannock Municipal Building. The hearing was advertised in the Rappahannock Times for two weeks on June 24 2026 and July 1 2026, as required by Title 15-2-2204 of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended.

The purpose of the public hearing was to provide an opportunity for the citizens of Tappahannock to voice their opinion regarding the following items:

An ordinance pursuant to Virginia Code § 17.1-279.1, authorizing the collection of a fee to support the implementation and maintenance of an Electronic Summons System.

An ordinance amending Sections 38-51 and 38-56 of the Code of the Town of Tappahannock relating to temporary parking restrictions and temporary tow-away zones.

An ordinance pursuant to Virginia Code § 46.2-873, as amended by Chapter 337 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, relating to the operation of school crossing zone signs and school crossing zone active periods.

To share potential improvements proposed for Round 7 of VDOT’s SMART Scale program for Route 17 (Church Lane), Route 360 (Queen Street) between Wright Street and Marsh Street, primarily focusing on reducing the number of lanes on Church Lane from four (4) to two (2) with a two way left turn lane in between the north and south bound lanes, removing the traffic signal at Prince St. and various intersection improvements along this same stretch.

CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Gladding called the meeting to order.

Mayor Gladding stated the purpose of the meeting.

Mayor Gladding stated the first item for discussion was an ordinance pursuant to Virginia Code § 17.1-279.1, authorizing the collection of a fee to support the implementation and maintenance of an Electronic Summons System.

Mayor Gladding recognized Chief Carter.

An ordinance pursuant to Virginia Code § 17.1-279.1, authorizing the collection of a fee to support the implementation and maintenance of an Electronic Summons System.

Chief Carter stated the first proposed ordinance would be to implement an electric summons system. He stated there will be a fee assessed for each case of five dollars for each case that goes through General District and Circuit Court. He stated the Virginia State Police has transitioned to the electronic summons system and they are using the system along with multiple other localities. He stated the Virginia State Police did a study regarding the transition to an electronic summons system and their study indicated that it cut down the amount of time officers spend on a traffic stop from about twenty minutes down to eleven minutes.

Chief Carter asked for any questions.

Council Member Barrett asked Chief Carter about the process of obtaining the funds.

Chief Carter explained that court clerks in the General District and Circuit Courts would assess applicable fees, and the court clerks and the town treasurer would establish a process for periodically transferring the town's share of those funds. He stated the Town Treasurer would manage the associated account, while the Town Council would determine how the revenue is allocated for the electronic citation program.

Chief Carter stated that if implemented the officers would no longer handwrite summonses, instead citations would be generated electronically using a laptop, making traffic stops more efficient. He explained that officers would scan a driver's license to automatically populate the driver's information, eliminating the need to manually write citation details and the driver would receive a small, printed receipt containing their citation information. He added that the new system would reduce the time spent during traffic stops, improve officer safety, and decrease the town's expenses for paper summonses and equipment calibration associated with the current citation process.

Mayor Gladding asked for any public comments.

There were none.

Mayor Gladding stated the next proposed item is an ordinance amending Sections 38-51 and 38-56 of the Code of the Town of Tappahannock relating to temporary parking restrictions and temporary tow-away zones.

Mayor Gladding recognized Chief Carter.

An ordinance amending Sections 38-51 and 38-56 of the Code of the Town of Tappahannock relating to temporary parking restrictions and temporary tow-away zones.

Chief Carter stated this proposed ordinance would give the authority to post temporary parking signs because in the past there have been issues with getting citizens to move their vehicles during events such as parades. He stated this would give the authority to post the signs and if the residents do not move their vehicles, then it would allow the officers to tow the vehicle after giving the residents a forty-eight hour notice prior to towing.

Mayor Gladding asked for any public comments.

There were none.

Mayor Gladding stated the next proposed item is an ordinance pursuant to Virginia Code § 46.2-873, as amended by Chapter 337 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, relating to the operation of school crossing zone signs and school crossing zone active periods.

Mayor Gladding recognized Chief Carter.

An ordinance pursuant to Virginia Code § 46.2-873, as amended by Chapter 337 of the 2026 Acts of Assembly, relating to the operation of school crossing zone signs and school crossing zone active periods.

Chief Carter stated this proposed ordinance would increase the time of the flashing lights at the school zones from thirty minutes to up to an hour for when the children are traveling to and from school to ensure the safety of the children traveling to and from school.

Mayor Gladding asked for any public comments.

Danny Layman, citizen asked is the hour was in total for the morning and afternoon traveling or was it one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. He also asked if there was an occurrence that happened to make the change necessary from thirty minutes to one hour.

Chief Carter stated this proposed ordinance would increase the time of the flashing lights at the school zones from thirty minutes to up to an hour for when the children are traveling to and from school to ensure the safety of the children traveling to and from school.

Chief Carter stated there has not had any direct accidents in the school zone but town side there has been an increase in crashes thought the Town.

Mayor Gladding stated that the next item was is receive comments regarding potential improvements proposed for Round 7 of VDOT's SMART Scale program for Route 17 (Church Lane), Route 360 (Queen Street) between Wright Street and Marsh Street, primarily focusing on reducing the number of lanes on Church Lane from four (4) to two (2) with a two way left turn lane in between the north and south bound lanes, removing the traffic signal at Prince St. and various intersection improvements along this same stretch.

**VDOT'S SMART
SCALE PROJECT**

Mayor Gladding recognized Assistant Town Manager Knighton.

Assistant Town Manager Knighton stated there have not been any changes to the VDOT Smart Scale proposed project since the VDOT representative was present at last month's council meeting. He stated that for tonight's meeting the public hearing will allow the citizens to make comments and ask questions regarding the project and the VDOT representatives are present to answer any questions.

Danny Layman, Sandy Hill, Patrick Stone, Jeans Owens, Anne Griggs Allen, Straton Beamer, and Brad Barnes all expressed the overwhelming sentiment of opposition to the proposed road diet.

The speakers' key concerns were increased traffic congestion, removal of the prince street traffic signal, safety concerns, impact on local business, traffic diversion into the neighborhoods, future development not considered, and possible limited access to neighborhoods and public facilities

The Speakers urged Town Council to ask VDOT to reconsider the proposal, retain the Prince Street traffic signal, and explore alternative traffic improvements that would enhance safety without reducing roadway capacity or limiting access to downtown, neighborhoods, and local businesses.

Cassy Lord, VDOT representative explained the proposed Route 17 lane reduction ("road diet") and its anticipated benefits. She stated the project is expected to improve safety by reducing crashes by approximately 13 per year, lowering vehicle speeds closer to the posted limit, and adding a two-way left-turn lane. She stated the center turn lane would allow vehicles making left turns to move out of the travel lane, reducing rear-end collisions and improving visibility for drivers crossing or entering Route 17, which could also reduce angle crashes.

Cassy Lord, VDOT addressed the proposed removal of the traffic signal at Prince Street, noting that the decision was made after careful analysis. She stated because of the close spacing between the Prince Street and Queen Street signals, keeping both signals would create traffic backups once the roadway is reduced to a single through lane in each direction.

Cassy Lord, VDOT stated that the traffic modeling indicated that Route 17 would continue to operate at a Level of Service C or better, even with projected traffic growth of 0.5% annually. She stated most side streets would also function well, although Duke Street could experience slightly longer wait times, potentially up to one minute for left turns. However, she noted that the simulation software does not accurately account for drivers using the two-way left-turn lane as a refuge before merging into traffic, meaning actual operations may be better than the model suggests.

Cassy Lord addressed concerns that motorists would divert onto Wright Street and Water Lane to avoid Route 17. She stated the intent of the project is to create a more continuous flow on Route 17 between Wright Street and Queen Street by eliminating intermediate traffic signals, making it more efficient than using neighborhood streets. She stated while VDOT cannot address local traffic diversion through the Smart Scale project the agency recognizes the concern and is working with Town staff to identify future funding opportunities to address those issues.

Cassy Lord concluded by emphasizing that the proposal is intended as the first step in improving safety and traffic flow along the corridor while maintaining accessibility, and she invited additional questions from the Commission.

Herb Sebren and Bill Youell questioned the amount of time it would take to implement the project.

Cassy Lord explained that the traffic analysis included projected traffic growth for both an interim year (2033) and a long-term year (2057). She stated the proposed road diet was evaluated under both scenarios to ensure it would function effectively not only in the near future but also over the long term. She reported the goal is to implement roadway improvements with a lifespan of more than 20 years, ensuring that any proposed changes remain effective and appropriate as traffic volumes increase over time.

Sandy Hill asked what the impact of the proposed road diet would be on the emergency vehicles trying to navigate negative traffic in order to get to a scene.

Cassy Lord, VDOT responded that she believes it would be easier for emergency vehicles because they would be able to use the two-way left turn lane to get through the traffic.

During the discussion, VDOT was asked whether they had current traffic data for Water Lane and Main Street.

Cassy Lord, VDOT explained that while the study included peak-hour traffic counts for Wright Street, it did not include Water Lane. She reported that however, VDOT maintains average annual daily traffic counts for most roadways and could obtain that information from its database.

During the discussion, concern was expressed that nearby side streets, particularly Earl Street, are essentially one-lane roads and cannot accommodate additional traffic.

Cassy Lord, VDOT acknowledged those concerns, noting that she would never recommend large trucks, such as tractor-trailers, use Earl Street as a cut-through route. She emphasized that the proposed Route 17 road diet is not intended to divert traffic onto neighborhood streets. She explained that the addition of a northbound right-turn lane would improve traffic flow between Wright Street and Queen Street, allowing motorists to reach Warsaw more efficiently. She stated that VDOT's goal is for the improved travel times on Route 17 to reduce the incentive for drivers to use Wright Street or Water Lane as shortcuts.

During the discussion it was suggested that adding stop signs along Water Lane would be more effective in discouraging traffic. Cassy Lord, VDOT noted that VDOT had already discussed that possibility with the Town.

Mayor Gladding asked for any comments or questions from the Town Council.

Council Member Balderson stated there was some discussion that if the town denies this Smart Scale Project, then there will be a loss of funds. He asked Cassy Lord, VDOT to clarify.

Cassy Lord, VDOT reassured the Town that choosing not to move forward with the proposed project at this time would not result in the loss of funding or negatively impact future opportunities. She emphasized that their goal was to provide the information needed for the Town to make the decision it believes is best.

Cassy Lord, VDOT explained that the corridor remains a strong candidate for future Smart Scale funding due to its regional transportation needs, and those funding opportunities are not expected to disappear after the current application cycle. She noted that the transportation issues in the area will continue to require collaboration between VDOT, the Town, and Essex County, regardless of whether the project advances now.

Jovita Kelly and Myra Dickinson expressed their concerns that the proposed Smart Scale Project would deter consumers from visiting Tappahannock and shopping and making Tappahannock a "pass through" Town.

Cassy Lord, VDOT suggested that since the vehicles would be slowing down then it would give them a chance to see the business while driving by.

Cassy Lord, VDOT explained that the proposed road diet is intended to improve safety, not simply move traffic through Tappahannock more quickly. She noted that the project is designed to reduce crashes caused by rear-end collisions, speeding, and turning conflicts, making the roadway safer for motorists, pedestrians, and the community as a whole.

Cassy Lord, VDOT reported the study ends at Queen Street because VDOT had to define a manageable project area, emphasizing that the proposal is intended to be the first step in a larger, phased approach to

improving transportation in the area. She explained that VDOT often implements projects in stages, allowing improvements to build upon one another while aligning with available funding.

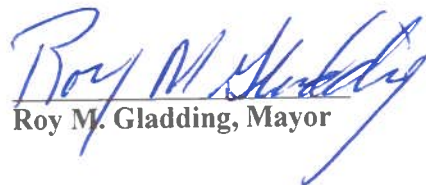
Cassy Lord, VDOT acknowledged that other transportation improvements could be explored outside of the Smart Scale program, but many would likely be cost-prohibitive or otherwise infeasible. She emphasized that the road diet was identified as the most practical safety improvement that could be implemented without significantly affecting businesses along the corridor. She stated while additional issues, such as neighborhood connectivity and cut-through traffic, remain, she said those would need to be addressed through future studies and projects.

Glenn Spiegler expressed his concerns regarding traffic concerns he has encountered while riding his bike on the other side of Water Lane.

Mayor Gladding thanked everyone for their comments and thanked the VDOT representative for attending and addressing concerns.

ADJOURNED

There being no further business, the public hearing was adjourned.


Roy M. Gladding, Mayor


Patsy K. Scates, Town Clerk