

May 12, 2025

A work session of the Town Council of the Town of Grottoes was held on Monday, May 12, 2025, at the Grottoes Town Hall, Grottoes, Virginia.

Mayor Plaster called the work session of May 12, 2025, of the Grottoes Town Council to order at 6:01 p.m.

Mayor Plaster welcomed Melissa Alger to the meeting, who will be joining the Staff this month and will be appointed Clerk of the Council at the next meeting.

Mayor Plaster turned the meeting over to Town Manager Kyle O'Brien who spoke about the FY 2025-26 proposed budget. He stated that tonight's public hearing will be a time to hear feedback, that the final will not be adopted until the June 2025 meeting.

Town Manager O'Brien asked for Council's approval to move forward with the purchase of an excavator. It will allow town employees to handle much more of the workload vs. having to hire outside contractors. Council member Bailey asked about the previous excavator that was purchased; Town Manager O'Brien explained that one is great for smaller jobs and digging up meters but this is a much higher capacity. The highway funds must be spent and this is a good investment.

On a motion by Council member Justis, seconded by Council member Bailey, and carried by a vote of 6-0, voting recorded as follows: CHITTUM – AYE; BAILEY – AYE; KOHL – AYE; JUSTIS – AYE; RAYNES – AYE; TAYLOR – AYE; the Council approved the purchase of the larger excavator, not to exceed \$90,000.

Council Member Chittum asked about the increased cost of tipping fees and the decreased cost in the waste removal services by Meridian. Town Manager O'Brien spoke about using any excess fees collected to continue infrastructure upgrades. Rockingham County tipping fees are expected to be raised from about \$50/ton to about \$70/ton. Council Member Bailey questioned where we would find additional funds if the trash fees were kept at cost. Town Manager O'Brien responded that funds could be found through trimming the budget, using reserve funds, or possibly a larger increase in Year Three with Meridian. Discussion continued among Council with Councilmember Justis questioning if we should lower trash fees but increase water rates; Council member Taylor has concerns over dropping rates now with a significant increase later; Council member Bailey offered that the town might increase water/sewer and lower trash service rates; Council member Kohl mentioned that the excess funds are an opportunity to cover the costs of more infrastructure upgrades and that it makes more sense to leave them as proposed; Council member Chittum feels it isn't transparent to use these costs to residents for anything but trash services; Town Manager O'Brien commented that just being a pass-through will be moving backwards, but will put numbers together for the Council.

Town Manager O'Brien also spoke of the Conditional Use Permit that was requested for Dogwood Avenue. He explained that Kenny May wants to build similar to what he did at the corner of 7th Street and Dogwood Avenue. There were questions by Council members and Town Manager O'Brien recommended that they ask questions of Mr. May during the meeting.

Town Manager O'Brien also asked Council to speak up about changes to the Comprehensive Plan before the Planning Commission meeting on May 26, 2025. He requested that any changes, questions, or concerns be sent to him or Assistant Town Manager Tara Morris before then.

At 6:33 p.m. Mayor Plaster adjourned the work session.