



City of Hampton

22 Lincoln Street
Hampton, VA 23669
www.hampton.gov

Council Approved Minutes - Final City Council Special Session

Mayor Jimmy Gray

Vice Mayor Steven L. Brown

Councilmember Randy C. Bowman, Sr.

Councilmember Carolyn S. Campbell

Councilmember Michelle Taylor Ferebee

Councilmember Hope L. Harper

Councilmember Martha M. Mugler

STAFF: Mary Bunting, City Manager

Courtney R. Sydnor, City Attorney

Katherine K. Glass, MMC, Clerk of Council

Wednesday, December 10, 2025

9:00 AM

**The Grey Goose, 10
South Mallory Street,
Hampton, VA**

Legislative Breakfast

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Gray called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. All members of the City Council were present.

Present 7 - Councilmember Randy C. Bowman Sr., Vice Mayor Steven L. Brown, Councilmember Carolyn S. Campbell, Councilmember Michelle T. Ferebee, Councilmember Hope L. Harper, Councilmember Martha Mugler, and Mayor Jimmy Gray

JIMMY GRAY PRESIDED

READING OF THE CALL FOR THE SPECIAL MEETING

This special meeting has been called in accordance with Section 3.04 of the City Charter to discuss the upcoming Virginia General Assembly legislative session with Hampton's General Assembly representatives.

Katherine K. Glass, Clerk of Council, read the call for the special meeting.

Mayor Gray gave a few opening remarks and thanked the state legislators for attending. Mayor Gray indicated that next year it is planned to start this process earlier to prepare information on

the bills and who will carry each of those. He then asked Vice Mayor Brown to give the invocation. Breakfast was served.

AGENDA

1. [25-0350](#) Discussion of Upcoming General Assembly Session

At 9:26 a.m., Ed Reed, Two Capitols Consulting, opened the discussion. He reported that the upcoming General Assembly will be a 60-day long session, inclusive of the budget, and will include a new Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General. Key dates noted were:

- Session begins: January 14
- Budget request filing deadline: January 16
- Inauguration: January 17

Mr. Reed outlined several new state-level funding requests, including:

- Department of Environmental Quality proposals related to state recycling
- \$2.5 million for safer communities and gun violence prevention
- \$770,000 to reestablish the Hampton Health District
- \$4.4 million for the Fort Wool project

He reiterated that the City's priority positions include resiliency, protection of local zoning authority (notably short-term rentals and accessory dwelling units), and efforts to offset local revenue losses resulting from the Veterans' Tax Relief Program. He also noted interest in enabling localities to create pop-up zones to increase enforcement authority.

Hampton Health District

Councilwoman Harper asked about the timeline for reestablishing the Hampton Health District.

Mr. Reed stated that the budget component would take effect July 1, 2026, but operational implementation would likely require additional months.

City Manager Mary Bunting noted Hampton previously operated its own health district and expressed preference for returning to that structure. She commented that participation in the larger "mega district" had been challenging and that a combined Hampton-Newport News district could be workable, with the upper Peninsula separated out.

Disabled Veterans Tax Relief Program

Ms. Bunting reported the Disabled Veterans Tax Relief Program has grown to \$55 million statewide and currently impacts Hampton by approximately \$10.4 million, equal to 6.4 cents on the real estate tax rate. She noted Hampton Roads

communities are disproportionately affected due to the region's high veteran population.

Councilwoman Mugler asked whether Hampton is the second most impacted locality. Ms. Bunting responded Hampton may not be second but is within the top five most affected.

Vice Mayor Brown asked about veteran eligibility. Ms. Bunting stated that some veterans rated 100% service-connected disabled have high incomes and high-value homes. The standards have become more lenient since the exemption was implemented. Virginia is one of the few states without qualifiers. She noted that surviving spouses retain eligibility, causing continued long-term local impacts.

Mayor Gray referenced cases where disability ratings have been lowered upon review, underscoring the need for process evaluation. Ms. Bunting cautioned that any retroactive adjustments could significantly affect the City's fund balance. There was discussion concerning the impact of any proposal to mandate a broader retrospective application than the current three years.

Councilwoman Mugler added that eligibility criteria originally aligned with past VA standards, but VA standards have since changed, creating inconsistency.

Fort Wool

Councilwoman Mugler stated that Fort Wool has been an active issue for at least three years and has been affected by the HRBT project. The City's goal is to restore the island so visitors can again access this historic site. She noted that a coalition exists to support its protection.

State Budget Priorities

Senator Locke reported that statewide budget priorities this year include Medicaid, Pre-K-12 education, and SNAP, each with very large impacts. She stated she would carry bills related to safer communities, the Hampton Health District, and Fort Wool but emphasized awareness of overall budget constraints.

Collective Bargaining and Minimum Wage

Mayor Gray raised concerns regarding mandated collective bargaining, characterizing it as an unfunded mandate. Ms. Bunting explained Hampton's "meet and confer" model, under which employee compensation and benefits are discussed collaboratively, along with implementation of a step plan. She stated that mandates should remain a local policy choice, as healthy communication already exists without additional cost burdens.

Delegate Ward reported that expanding collective bargaining is a stated priority of the Governor-elect and that House Bill 1, which addresses minimum wage, has already been drafted and filed. Ms. Bunting noted Hampton adopted a \$15 minimum wage two or three years ago and asked that, if mandated, collective bargaining implementation include adequate planning time.

Affordable Housing

Senator Locke stated that the upcoming session will include numerous affordable housing bills and observed that many localities and their advocacy organizations (VML and VACO) have been viewed as adversarial. She encouraged local engagement, noting her own background in local government.

Ms. Bunting outlined Hampton's challenges with "by-right" development due to BRAC implications and noted Hampton already exceeds the region in percentage of multi-family housing. She expressed willingness to serve as a resource. She added that while ADUs offer opportunity, localities need flexibility to determine workable approaches.

City Attorney Courtney Sydnor asked whether the proposed legislation would allow localities to regulate development standards for multi-family housing, even if there is a by-right zoning mandate. Senator Locke replied that VML remains opposed to certain elements, and the environment is not currently locality-friendly. Mr. Reed stated that no resolution emerged on this issue last year. Ms. Bunting recommended a study commission, citing wetlands and coastal regulatory concerns that require additional time. Councilwoman Harper asked whether "affordable housing" has been clearly defined.

Traffic Enforcement

Mayor Gray asked about support for expanded photo enforcement for traffic violations, noting speed cameras apply consequences uniformly. Vice Mayor Brown observed that some drivers appear unfazed by current fines and suggested that higher penalties might improve effectiveness.

Scheduling Considerations

Senator Locke recommended consideration of procedural resolution deadlines when scheduling a similar meeting next year.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Jimmy Gray
Mayor

Katherine K. Glass, MMC
Clerk of Council

Date approved by Council _____