



Town of Bowling Green, Virginia
Town Council Strategic Planning Retreat Summary
January 7–8, 2026
Facilitated by the Virginia Institute of Government

Notes

Mayor Tina Gambill called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. In addition to the Mayor, Vice Mayor Valarie Coyle, and Council members John Chinault, Jean Davis, David Storke, Randy Hageman and Jeff Voit were present on January 7. David Storke and Dr. Chinault were absent on January 8 and Dan Webb was absent on January 7 and 8. Also present were Town Manager/Clerk India Adams-Jacobs; Mark Inboden, Inboden Environmental Services; Sarah Neiderer, Moonshot Missions; Andy Koester, Moonshot Missions; Bryant Mountjoy, Stantec; Jason Early, Stantec; Ted Cole, Davenport & Co.; Jeff Gore, Town Attorney, and Charles Hartgrove of the Virginia Institute of Government, who served as retreat facilitator.

After calling the meeting to order, Mayor Gambill turned the meeting over to the facilitator. Mr. Hartgrove thanked the Council for inviting him to serve as facilitator for the retreat. He then referred to the agenda and reviewed suggested goals for the retreat as follows:

- Work as a team and develop consensus
- Review progress on the work plan developed at last year's retreat
- Review the Town's mission, vision, and values statements.
- Review major strategic goal areas
- Receive a briefing on the Town's infrastructure projects and project updates
- Receive a briefing from the Town's financial advisors
- Craft a work plan for the next 18 to 24 months
- Identify longer term issues
- Understand constraints to progress and identify means to overcome them

He mentioned some themes that might run through the day's discussion including Council roles and responsibilities dynamics and processes, Council/Manager roles and relationships, public engagement, and potential limitations that might have to be overcome to address the Council's

priorities, including an overview of handout for Mayor & Council with some highlights regarding governing in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Mr. Hartgrove then offered some ground rules to guide the Council's discussion:

- Everyone participates; no one dominates
- Engage
- Be honest
- Listen to each other
- Respect different opinions
- No idea is too outlandish
- Seek to understand
- Ask questions
- Seek consensus (formal action at a future Council meeting)
- Silence means consent – speak up if you disagree
- Use the parking lot for issues that may evade consensus or require more background
- We will take breaks when it seems appropriate

Review of Progress in Addressing Action Items Identified at the Previous Year's Retreat

- ✓ FY 22 & FY23 audit was completed
- ✓ Awarded \$6.2 million grant for water quality and well improvements
- ✓ Awarded \$2.7 million low-interest loan through VCWLRF for wastewater treatment plant (belt press)
- ✓ Completed PER for wastewater treatment plant grant
- ✓ Completed nearly \$1.2 million of sewer repairs on Main Street and Courthouse
- ✓ CCTV of sewer lines began for proactive planning
- ✓ Launched internal GIS for asset management through partnership with SERCAP

Key Themes and Discussion Areas

Economic Development & Community Vitality

- 1) Preserve Bowling Green’s “small-town vibe” while embracing thoughtful growth and modernization.
- 2) Clarify and articulate what makes Bowling Green unique, including:
 - a. Historic assets
 - b. Town Green and Main Street
 - c. Community traditions and special events
- 3) Identify a clear “tagline” or narrative that communicates the town’s identity to residents, visitors, and prospective businesses.
- 4) Recognize progress toward a thriving downtown, including new and expanding businesses.
- 5) Emphasize the importance of:
 - a. Special events as economic drivers
 - b. Customer-friendly town services
 - c. A welcoming and well-maintained public realm
- 6) Continue focus on tourism and economic development as mutually reinforcing strategies.
- 7) Evaluate long-term opportunities related to:
 - a. Hotel feasibility
 - b. Parking needs
- 8) Downtown redevelopment and infill

Strategic Partnerships

- 1) Strengthen Town–County liaison and communication efforts through regular meetings.
- 2) Expand regional partnerships to leverage shared services, tourism, and economic development opportunities.
- 3) Maintain and build strong relationships with:
 - a. Local business community
 - b. Caroline County Public Schools
 - c. Civic and nonprofit organizations

- 4) Explore how the existing Main Street organization can support downtown vitality through a part-time director.
- 5) Use comparable communities as benchmarks for best practices.

Infrastructure

- 1) Celebrate improvements to the town's water and utilities systems.
- 2) Reinforce the importance of budget sustainability through:
 - a. Proactive infrastructure investments
 - b. Long-range financial planning
- 3) Discuss development along the Route 301 corridor, with attention to:
 - a. Business growth
 - b. Balanced residential development
- 4) Explore multi-modal transportation opportunities, including trails and connectivity.

Government Performance

- 1) Commitment to completing a Comprehensive Plan update by December 2026, with interim Council updates.
- 2) Consider targeted planning efforts such as:
 - a. Strategic zoning updates
 - b. Corridor planning
 - c. SWOT analysis for key areas
- 3) Discuss regulatory issues, including:
 - a. Vape shop and cannabis regulations
 - b. Code clarity and consistency
- 4) Reinforce the importance of civility and composure in leadership and public engagement. The Town Council can help set the tone for the entire community.
- 5) Emphasize excellent customer service as a core organizational value.
- 6) Review Town Hall operations, including:
 - a. Office hours
 - b. Accessibility (in-person and virtual)

- c. Space and workflow considerations
- 7) Identify the need for standard operating procedures (SOPs), particularly for small organizations.
- 8) Town Manager to propose a Town Hall operations plan for Council consideration.
- 9) Discussed the balance between reactive vs. proactive code enforcement.
- 10) Evaluate staffing capacity and alternative incentives for compliance.
- 11) Identify priority Town Code updates, including:
 - a. Administrative functions
 - b. Council policies and bylaws
 - c. Cleanup and modernization of outdated provisions
 - d. Clarifying distinctions between law and policy
- 12) Consider future Charter updates and legislative agenda priorities

Financial Sustainability & Resiliency

- 1) Review the following:
 - a. Bank stock tax
 - b. GASB requirements
 - c. Accrual versus cash accounting approaches
- 2) Align financial policies with long-term sustainability goals.
 - a. Create long-term plans for water and sewer enterprise funds

The Town Council also reaffirmed the Town Vision, Mission, and Values/Operating Principles Strategic Planning Goal Areas:

Review of the Town Vision, Mission, and Values/Operating Principles

Mr. Hartgrove suggested only a quick review of the Town vision, mission, and values statements. Council affirmed the language from the previous retreat.

The Town's Vision Statement identified during the previous retreat:

- ✓ Vibrant, lively, thriving community

- ✓ Sustainable/resilient
 - ✓ Connected regionally
 - ✓ Walkable/connected neighborhoods
 - ✓ A destination for visitors
 - ✓ Small town vibe; a village with historic charm
 - ✓ A cultural & business center of Caroline County
 - ✓ Beautiful public spaces and streetscapes
 - ✓ Land use control
 - ✓ Utilities
 - ✓ Public Safety
 - ✓ Attractive physical assets
 - ✓ Amenities and park
 - ✓ Independence and self-government
 - ✓ Sense of community
 - ✓ Location of services, commerce and culture
 - ✓ Solid waste collection
- Town Mission Statement: “To serve the citizens.”

Values/Operating Principles

- ❖ Transparency
- ❖ Open communications (two-way)
- ❖ Good customer service
- ❖ Honesty
- ❖ Integrity
- ❖ Sound financial management
- ❖ Follow through
- ❖ Staff development
- ❖ Welcoming
- ❖ Facilitative
- ❖ Creative/innovative
- ❖ Efficiency & effectiveness
- ❖ Trust

Retreat 2026 Goal Areas

- 1) **Financial Sustainability & Resiliency**– Provide fiscally responsible, sustainable, and resilient financial management that addresses both current and future needs.
- 2) **Infrastructure** – Improve and maintain the Town’s water and sewer system infrastructure, including water supply, treatment facilities and distribution/collection systems.
- 3) **Government Performance** – Improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery through the adoption of appropriate policies, procedures, and practices; adapt and implement best practice. Foster a Town workforce that is well-trained, appropriately compensated, has development opportunities, and demonstrates a dedication to public service.
- 4) **Economic Development & Community Vitality**– Support business development and expansion that enhances the tax base and provided gainful employment. Support

development that improves community vitality. Act to ensure that the Town remains an attractive, historic, and convenient center for commerce, culture, and services as the County seat.

- 5) **Strategic Partnerships-** Communicate and collaborate with Caroline County for mutually beneficial results.

Next Steps and Follow-Up

- Town Manager to:
 - Develop and present proposed action plans related to Town Hall operations, customer service, and internal processes.
 - Provide Council with updates on Comprehensive Plan progress and key planning initiatives.
- Council and staff continue refining strategic priorities through regular work sessions and annual goal setting.
- Utilize retreat outcomes to guide budget decisions, policy development, and community engagement over the coming months and years.

The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 1:47 pm.

Prepared by:

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