



Office of the Town Manager
Frank Cassidy

STAFF REPORT

Warrenton Town Council

Carter Nevill, Mayor
Roy Francis, Ward 1
William Semple, Ward 2
Larry Kovalik, Ward 3
Michele O'Halloran, Ward 4
Eric Gagnon, Ward 5
Paul Mooney, At Large
David McGuire, At Large

Council Meeting Date:	November 12, 2025
Agenda Title:	Final report: Columbia Gas of VA - Natural Gas Emergency
Requested Action:	Approve the Resolution
Department / Agency Lead:	Office of Emergency Management
Staff Lead:	Johnny Switzer, Emergency Management Coordinator

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On Wednesday, March 5th, at approximately 11:55 AM, Warrenton, Virginia experienced a natural gas emergency triggered by an over odorization incident. Multiple 911 calls, beginning at 12:55 PM, indicated a widespread strong odor of natural gas throughout the town. In response, the Town Emergency Management Coordinator activated the Emergency Operations Plan, fully activating the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at 1:43 PM. Columbia Gas of Virginia responded to the scene and confirmed the presence of an over-odorization issue, rather than a gas leak. The coordinated response between local emergency services and Columbia Gas mitigated potential risks and ensured public safety. This incident highlights the importance of robust emergency response protocols and effective communication during potential hazardous material events.

BACKGROUND

Following the significant natural gas emergency incident, the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) initiated a comprehensive and detailed cost accounting process. This required extensive collaboration across all Town departments—including Public Works, Police, and Administration—to accurately track and quantify the total resources expended, encompassing personnel hours and benefit costs.

This meticulous review determined the full, verifiable cost associated with the emergency response to be \$19,922.40.

With the documentation formalized, the OEM, working closely with the Town Manager and the Town Attorney, engaged directly with the team from Columbia Gas of Virginia to present the detailed accounting and formally request reimbursement for the incurred expenses. The objective was to secure full financial recovery to mitigate the impact on the Town's General Fund.

This collaborative effort was brought to a successful close with the receipt of the full reimbursement amount on the week of October 13th. The recovery of these funds officially completes the request for reimbursement as directed by the Town Council following the incident.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

- **Approve a resolution to allocate the funds to both community & internal preparedness activities, including, but not limited to, support initiatives such as the printing and distribution of the Community Preparedness Guide, public outreach events, and expanding Alert Warrenton! Notification system advertising and school-based public education campaigns. Internal staff use will be determined by the Human Capital & Risk Management Department.**

Financial Implications:

- The acceptance of the funds will increase the General Fund line-item balances by the amount received.
 - Integrated Alert and Warning Systems (\$9,961.20): These funds are designated for implementing a public warning system to alert residents to hazards and relevant community emergencies. This will specifically expand the Alert Warrenton! notification system with integrated alert and warning capabilities.
 - Community Preparedness Activities (\$4,961.20): This funding will support initiatives such as the printing and distribution of the Community Preparedness Guide, conducting public outreach events, and expanding advertising and school-based public education campaigns for the Alert Warrenton! Notification system.
 - Internal Staff Preparedness Allocation (Human Capital and Risk Management) - \$5,000.00
The amount of Five Thousand Dollars and Zero Cents (\$5,000.00) shall be immediately allocated to the Human Capital and Risk Management Department. These funds will support internal staff preparedness activities, dedicated to essential training programs, specialized safety equipment, and the development and maintenance of robust internal programs to ensure organizational resilience.
- The expenditure is non-recurring and will not create a future financial obligation for the General Fund beyond the current fiscal year.

Conclusion:

- Approving the resolution allows the town to immediately enhance public safety and resilience by funding critical awareness and education programs.
- These expenditures are a direct investment in citizen well-being and disaster mitigation, aligning with the town's strategic goals for public service delivery.

Service Level/Collaborative Impact

The Town of Warrenton's mission, by prioritizing the health, welfare, and well-being of the community during all emergencies and disasters, inherently links to the core principles of emergency management. This connection is evident in their proactive approach to disaster preparedness, encompassing natural gas emergencies and exemplified by Town Code Chapter 20, establishing the Office of Emergency Management, which aligns with the key emergency management functions of mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. This comprehensive approach ensures that Warrenton is equipped to handle any crisis, safeguarding its residents and their welfare.

Policy Direction/Warrenton Plan 2040

Ensuring that the community and our own staff are prepared to endure/respond to an emergency or disaster is a key factor of Governance that affects all aspects of the Warrenton Plan 2040.

Fiscal Impact

- The acceptance of the funds will increase the General Fund line item balances by the amount received.
- The funds will be immediately allocated for the community & internal preparedness activities, affecting the Emergency Management and the Human Capital Budget. The amount dispersed between the two budgets will be \$9,961.20 for a total of \$19,922.40.
- The expenditure is non-recurring and will not create a future financial obligation for the General Fund beyond the current fiscal year.

Legal Impact

The reimbursement process was brought to a successful close with the receipt of the full \$19,922.40 on the week of October 13th. The successful recovery of these funds officially completes the request for reimbursement as directed by the Town Council following the incident, fully closing the Town's financial exposure related to the event.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. March 11th, 2025, Staff Report – Columbia Gas Emergency
- B. 2nd Request – Reimbursement Request Letter
- C. Invoice – 2026-004-Columbia Gas
- D. Resolution – Allocation of Funds – Columbia Gas Reimbursement