

COLONIAL BEACH TOWN COUNCIL

Audience & Email Questions — Candidate Responses

Public Information Document

About this document. These responses were submitted by the candidates in response to audience and email questions that could not be addressed during the candidate forum because of time constraints. The responses are organized by question so readers can easily compare the responses to each question. Candidate responses are presented as submitted; only the organization and formatting have been changed for readability.

Question Directed Specifically to Jeff Eisensmith

Why did Greenspace decide to build a rain garden at the CB Community Center?

Jeff Eisensmith

We noticed that, after a hard rain, the entrance to the Community Center would flood. It flooded to a point where people were walking through 2 inch puddles to get to the entrance. CB Greenspace approached the Community Center and asked if we could build our first rain garden on town property at the Center to give our residents an example of what a working rain garden looks like. The installed rain garden diverts the water away from the entrance and feeds a rain garden next to Marshal Ave.

Colonial Beach Greenspace hopes that, by bringing a rain garden to Colonial Beach, the residents can see a way forward for solving our rain water inundation problem. If residents choose to keep their rain water on their property, the town would see a significant reduction in flooding. This is important for many reasons, but first and foremost: I want to see our sidewalks repaired...and not fall victim to repeated flooding.

Questions for All Candidates

1. Medical Care

What are your thoughts and plans for getting medical care closer to CB? Any incentives?

Will Nuckols

Let's start off with some basic facts about our community: the federal government recognizes that we are a "Medically Underserved Area/Population" or MUA/P. And this is not new news. We have had that label since 1978 – almost 50 years ago.

There are a range of strategies employed by other communities with small populations like ours, some of which could prove to be applicable now and others would be useful only if modified. When I testified before Town Council for two consecutive months this summer about needs for improvements in their "Legislative Agenda," health care is the sort of topic that could be helped by more sophisticated advocacy by the town's leadership.

Programs like those in the federal Health Resource & Service Administration (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, may prove useful if we can access programs that are designed to help communities such as ours. HRSA helps people access health care and other services, especially those who are geographically isolated or economically or medically vulnerable.

While not a source of immediate direct assistance in our case, the HRSA Rural Hospital Provider Assistance Program, a federal program which seeks to support rural healthcare by supporting rural hospitals with assistance which aims to support rural communities. The Rural Hospital Provider Assistance Program (RHPA) is a federal grant initiative that distributed nearly \$25 million in fiscal year 2026 to help small, struggling rural hospitals retain medical staff and prevent closures. Unfortunately, this support is meant to target the hospitals themselves, leaving out the areas that don't have a hospital. Colonial Beach is better poised to have clinics, or individual providers rather than a full hospital. And while the RHPA isn't itself perfect fit, its existence, and the funding that has been pushed through that program, does show that there is interest in providing federal support to underserved areas with smaller populations like Colonial Beach. What would be needed is to meet with the healthcare Legislative Liaisons in the U.S. House of Representatives member and both of our Senate member's offices, to explain that the next time the Rural Hospital Provider Assistance Program (RHPA) is up for funding or reauthorization, we contend that while the program is well intended, in its current form it largely leaves out communities like ours which lack hospitals altogether. Support for individual practice groups and clinics would make more of an impact in our area, and as such arguing for changing authorizing language is a worthwhile part of our federal outreach efforts.

Perhaps a better fit is HRSA's interest in supporting telemedicine as, in the immediate term, that program could be a better match if we're to look for quicker ways of bring federal resources to bare faster. Altering authorization language that targets rural hospital support is an important longer term goal, and we should be paying attention to long and short term strategies at the same time.

The Town of Colonial Beach already seeks support in expanded broadband connectivity, and the interplay between that public interest and the services that can be brought to Colonial Beach via telemedicine are seemingly obvious, although its not clear that those connections have been a priority for Town Council

historically. If HRSA's vision statement for telemedicine is "telehealth access for all" we should be leveraging that policy goal to bring better, and more affordable, internet connectivity to all of our citizens.

At the local level, the Town Council could consider property tax abatements to offset some of the cost of moving a new practice group to Colonial Beach.

The most effective partnerships concerning health care are federal/state/local government collaborations. As such, having leadership familiar with building broad coalitions which start with local needs connected to state and federal resources. Building coalitions is precisely the sort of multi-agency project that I championed for years in my work around the country, and you'll find info about some of those projects on my website and on my campaign Facebook page.

Rebecca Stuart

Residents should not have to drive to King George, Fredericksburg, or Richmond for basic urgent care or specialty appointments. I would work with regional health systems to bring an urgent care clinic or multi-specialty satellite office to Colonial Beach. That means showing providers the year-round demand and considering targeted grants or tax incentives that make opening here practical.

Jeff Eisensmith

I would very much like to see a health care facility closer to the town. I believe there have been several studies looking into the plausibility of having a health care provider build here. I'm certainly amenable to offering incentives, but the health care providers need a viable business case to warrant their investment.

Bobby Duke

When I was younger, Colonial Beach had two primary care physicians and a dentist, despite having a smaller population than we do today. I would support any policy that incentivize more healthcare providers to establish practices in our community. However, as we see in many rural areas, there are limits to what local government can accomplish. It is an uncomfortable reality, but healthcare providers, like other businesses, must consider the economics of operating in a smaller community. (In the past few years Montross saw the opening and closing of a regional cancer center in a relatively short period of time). I would also remind folks that as County taxpayers, other resources may be available, such as the health department, and sliding scale doctors and dental care, down in Montross.

2. Short-Term Rentals

What is your position on short-term rentals in Colonial Beach? Do you believe the current system strikes the right balance between property owners, residents, long-term housing availability, tourism, and neighborhood quality of life?

Will Nuckols

Being a native Virginian, I am sympathetic to the idea that a property owner should be able to decide the fate of their own properties, operating within the boundaries of the zoning in any particular neighborhood. That property rights view, however, doesn't cover the full breadth of this topic. As with many things in governance, there are nuanced implications of having a large proportion of short term rentals (STRs). Some of those problems are reported to result in impacts on our availability of housing, but thus far it's not apparent that we've done the real work to determine if the housing stock is having an impact on otherwise affordable, lower cost housing, or if the impact is greater on higher price second homes or higher end year-round residences. At this point we lack the data that truly lets us understand if there is a problem, and if it does exist, what is the core of the problem and then how can it be mitigated. We need more information and less opinion without data if we're going to make the right decision as a government.

I do believe that even with as little as we understand about STRs in Colonial Beach, there are a few things about rentals that could be improved, be it short or longer term rentals. We should be ensuring that if a property generates income, the appropriate tax proceeds actually make it into the town's coffers, and that starts with complete compliance on business registration. Some communities have passed provisions forcing sites like AirBnB or VRBO to successfully link a short term renter's business license to a government provided list of truly registered local businesses. We should look into the steps required for Colonial Beach to similarly require an STR owner to prove that they are currently registered in order to list their properties on those national STR websites.

Another aspect I'd welcome is a deep discussion on whether companies who rent collections of STRs are actually operating essentially as hotels but lack the requirements of operating as a hotel. That means lower overhead for the STR operator. In this sense, the way we have thus far allowed STRs may be creating an unfair competition between STRs and hotel operators, or even bed & breakfasts, due the higher regulatory burden on our hotels and bed and breakfast business. If we're putting our fingers on the scale, our government rules may create an unfair competition. If government is to be seen as business friendly, that starts with making sure it is not favoring one business over another. Fairness is a requirement for any successful government/business relationship.

Regarding quality of life, this also may go back to whether, in some cases, STRs are more akin to hotels or whether they are more like regular residential neighbors who simply are different people on different days. If we are to understand these nuanced aspects of STRs in Colonial Beach, we need to begin with open and transparent two-way listening sessions with residents and business owners to better understanding the real conditions in town. We can't responsibly govern in a vacuum. As such, the way Town Council engages with the public needs to change, and I commit to calling for exactly that – a robust transformation on how we gather and distribute information about how our government impacts our town.

Rebecca Stuart

Short-term rentals support our tourism economy, but they also have to work for the people who live here year-round. I support reasonable limits in established neighborhoods, consistent enforcement of parking and noise rules, and registration fees that help pay for the code enforcement residents expect.

Jeff Eisensmith

I only own one home; my own. There is a short-term rental property next door to my property, but the owner is very strict about the maximum number of people that can be in the home and I haven't had any noise problems. I can appreciate that not all short-term rental owners show that same level of commitment to protecting the neighboring residents. I would be agreeable to looking into this more closely if I was elected to Town Council. I know that, nationally, the issues revolve around over crowding, noise, competition with housing for residents, and ensuring that taxes get paid.

Bobby Duke

I am comfortable with short-term rentals as they currently exist in town. I'm not comfortable "limiting" them for example. The taxes collected from these rentals help offset costs that have historically been passed on to local taxpayers. Additionally, those visitors spend money in town. That said, I would love to see more housing opportunities made available to long-term renters, particularly because we have a desperate need for workforce housing. While I support exploring ways to encourage that, I also respect private property rights and those who choose to invest their hard earned money and run short-term rentals.

3. Water & Sewer

What should be the Town's long-term strategy for maintaining and improving the water and wastewater systems while keeping user charges affordable?

Will Nuckols

The strategy needs to be two-fold.

One strategy needs to be developing and retaining technical competency in wastewater engineering. Current real-world conditions show we own a system that cannot handle our current load of sewage when combined with stormwater – ie when we flush on a day it rains the system currently struggles or fails to keep up. Beyond the need for engineering there needs to be a strategy relating to the cost implications of operating and improving our infrastructure. Our goal needs to be to find a path that is characterized by a safe and healthy environment without financially crippling the town.

From what from what I've been able to see so far, it appears that we are looking at an overly narrow set of choices. On the operations side we have been offered a choice between choosing government trained operators or having those facilities operated by companies whose costs are higher because they pay for the employee expertise well as adding on profit. In reality a hybrid system would be more effective. Hopefully such a hybrid system would allow us to eventually eliminate the for-profit company and switch to services coming from our public employees possibly enhanced by limited contractor support, with an eventual orderly return to a fully government-run facility.

The second part of the strategy relies on a financial management component. I contend we have not sufficiently examined how the sewer plant upgrades and repairs is funded. The current use of flat rate sewer bills which lurch forward with unexpected rate increases is unsustainable. For example, pricing sewer and water rates can occur in a variety of ways including flat rate, variable rates based on usage, or a hybrid thereof. Another option could include mitigating the regressive nature of the water and sewer taxes by infusing funds from other part of the town's budget into the water and sewer lines.

A key aspect of a cost control strategy would link water usage meters to that are still only partially functional to the utility rates. Disturbingly, elected town council officials have said in open meeting that they have no interest in using the water meters for cost control, which demonstrates a lack of understanding about both the engineering behind the sewer and water services as well as the range of billing options other communities utilize.

Rebecca Stuart

We need a long-term plan that combines regular maintenance with an aggressive search for outside funding. Residents should not have to carry the full cost of aging infrastructure, so the Town should keep pursuing federal and state grants, including USDA Rural Development and Virginia DEQ funding. A clear Capital Improvement Plan will help us fix problems before they become expensive emergencies and keep rates as affordable as possible.

Jeff Eisensmith

I would ensure that future town budgets addressed water and sewer infrastructure costs and investments. Water and sewer are not shiny items that grab a lot of attention on budgets, but they are critical investments.

As water security becomes a greater concern, the town must make sure that it has the capacity to provide this critical service in the future.

I believe that the town should continue to pursue federal and state grants. In the recent past the town has been very successful in getting grants that deliver a lot of funding for waste water treatment, as well as, infrastructure that helps deal with rain water infiltration into the sewer lines.

Bobby Duke

I support exploring every reasonable option to reduce the likelihood of another spill and minimize the need for future fee increases. This could include more staff training, utilizing more outside consultants when appropriate, and pursuing grants and state and federal funding opportunities. As our community anticipates growth, our infrastructure capacity will become even more important. Proactive planning today can help us prepare for tomorrow's demands and avoid costly problems down the road.

4. Vacant & Neglected Properties

How do you think we should address vacant and neglected homes throughout Colonial Beach to prevent neighborhood decline?

Will Nuckols

Over the last several years, the town has had widely inconsistent enforcement of basic property maintenance codes, stemming in part from significant turnover in both the Planning Department leadership and its staff. While that department appears to have stabilized, smart oversight of the department is needed.

The Planning Commission is the town's advisory body, and as such it may be reasonable to ask them if they have the capacity to tackle vacant and neglected homes and provide the town council with recommendations for ordinance changes, if needed. Using advisory bodies for advice is smart governance.

Using property tax rates to disincentivize vacant properties is currently not allowed in Virginia. We could the state legislature to consider adopting the District of Columbia's approach, which is to provide a different tax rate for vacant properties, thus motivating owners to fully utilize them.

Rebecca Stuart

We need to hold property owners accountable while also helping people bring neglected homes back into use. I support rehabilitation tax exemptions that encourage owners and buyers to invest in repairs instead of relying only on fines. For low-income or older residents who are struggling with upkeep, the Town should also help connect them with local volunteer groups, civic organizations, and student groups that can assist with repairs.

Jeff Eisensmith

I know that the town lawyer is preparing a presentation to the Town Council for their next meeting. There are both civil and criminal penalties that the town can adopt (staying within Virginia code). I would be in favor of an escalating penalty policy: formal warning, escalating fines, leading to criminal penalties as a last resort.

Bobby Duke

The last thing I want Colonial Beach to become is a giant HOA. However, homeowners and renters alike should be held to reasonable standards when it comes to issues such as grass height, abandoned vehicles, and property maintenance. I am comfortable with appropriate fines and legal action when necessary, provided residents receive proper notice and enforcement takes into account individual circumstances, including income, age, and disability. We can maintain a clean, attractive community while treating our residents with fairness and respect.

5. Conditional Use Permits & Development Decisions

When a proposed development or business requires a Conditional Use Permit, what factors should carry the most weight in your decision—property rights, economic development, traffic, parking, neighborhood impact, environmental concerns, the Comprehensive Plan, or something else?

Will Nuckols

When a Conditional Use Permit, usually referred to as a CUP, comes before decisionmakers, my inclination is to start by examining the broad vision explained through the comprehensive plan, as an unending series of CUP approvals effectively means we have no plan at all. After that the next step should be honest listening to neighbors about the impacts the proposed use would have. That doesn't mean making the decisions ahead of time and asking for input at a public hearing whose timing is geared towards not actively listening. There is not one factor that should be the most important simply because each proposal is site specific. We should arrive on the decision based on dialogue with the community.

Rebecca Stuart

I would weigh the full picture rather than let any one factor decide the outcome. Property rights and economic development matter, but so do traffic, parking, infrastructure, environmental concerns, and the effect on nearby residents. I would also look closely at the Comprehensive Plan. A proposal should move forward only if it fits the community and does not undermine the safety or daily quality of life of the people already living nearby.

Jeff Eisensmith

As the process stands now, the Planning Commission reviews the permit applications and holds public hearings. The Planning Commission then makes a recommendation to Town Council. If I were elected, I plan to consider the Planning Commission's recommendation carefully, and more than likely follow their recommendation.

There will always be exceptions: late breaking changes, an issue that was not addressed during the Planning Commission review, or if I felt that there would be an unacceptable change to the local residents' neighborhood.

Bobby Duke

We desperately need economic development. And that would precede anything else. I have some familiarity with the CUP and it sometimes seems to discourage potential business growth. We need job opportunities, small-business growth, and a stronger tax base that includes revenue beyond real estate and personal property taxes. A thriving local economy can help support essential services, reduce pressure on taxpayers, and create opportunities for residents and businesses alike. One of my first goals, if elected, would be to find ways to make life easier on existing businesses and those who want to open up new opportunities in the future. Taking a hard look at the process/cost of a CUP would be one example.

6. Comprehensive Plan vs. Individual Projects

When considering a controversial development proposal, should Council give greater weight to the Town's Comprehensive Plan and long-term vision, or to the specific circumstances and merits of the individual project?

Will Nuckols

Development proposals need to give the greatest consideration to the comprehensive plan. If we look at individual proposals there is no way to adhere to a Comprehensive Plan, therefore we have no way to ensure the long-term vision for Colonial Beach. If in the future Colonial Beach strays from the essence of what makes this town special, we have failed as stewards of this town.

Rebecca Stuart

The Comprehensive Plan should be our starting point, but it should not prevent us from considering a strong proposal the plan did not anticipate. I would look at each project on its merits, including its jobs, economic value, and community benefits, while guarding against spot-zoning and decisions that weaken the Town's long-term vision. We should be consistent without being rigid.

Jeff Eisensmith

In order to bring about the best possible experience for our residents and tourists the town should regularly update the Comprehensive Plan. When considering a controversial development proposal I'm going to lean into the long term plan. There may be exceptions, but I strongly feel that careful planning and oversight lead to the best outcomes for the town.

Bobby Duke

I believe in using the comprehensive plan as the roadmap it was intended to be. While the plan is nonbinding, it provides important guidance for the Town's future growth and development. At the same time, circumstances may arise that do not fit neatly within the plan. I would remain open to discussion and consider those situations on their individual merits, while ensuring that decisions are made thoughtfully and with the community's long-term interests in mind.

7. R-2 / Missing-Middle Housing

What housing problem do you believe Colonial Beach is trying to solve, and what zoning or other policy changes, if any, would you support to address it?

Will Nuckols

Affordability is the problem that is often discussed but frankly, it's just lip service. If the town wanted to solve for affordability, the Town Council should be asking the Planning Commission to provide them with a set of policy choices on zoning that would allow for affordable housing that is not currently permitted. Density is typically a necessary part of affordability. This is not new to the town. We have had times when things as simple as duplexes were allowed. Over time the rules have changed and there is little to no flexibility under the current code.

Rebecca Stuart

Colonial Beach needs more housing that teachers, hospitality workers, and other members of our local workforce can afford. Although the Town has an R-3 high-density residential zoning category, no properties are currently zoned that way. I would use the tools we already have more strategically—looking at appropriate transition areas for duplexes, accessory dwelling units, and other missing-middle options rather than making broad changes to established R-2 single-family neighborhoods.

Jeff Eisensmith

As I stated at the Candidate Forum, I would like to see the Planning Commission and Town Council get a little playful with allowing single lot, small footprint housing to help bring affordable housing to Colonial Beach. The Pastel Place properties are a great example of what is possible. Of course, the location for one-lot housing should be in areas that don't disrupt the nature of the surrounding houses.

Bobby Duke

I would support changes that encourage more multifamily housing opportunities. After 30 years or more of discussing this issue, we need to make meaningful progress. We need more younger families in our community, particularly as we look to staff our schools, police department, town departments and hopefully new businesses. Expanding housing options can help us attract and retain the workforce necessary to support a thriving community.

8. Downtown & Waterfront

What role should the Town play in the continued revitalization of downtown Colonial Beach and the waterfront? Should the Town primarily provide infrastructure and let private businesses drive development, or should the Town take a more active role?

Will Nuckols

The town's responsibility to providing infrastructure is crucial to drive development and redevelopment throughout the town. While this certainly applies to the downtown area, the current focus solely on the downtown corridor is likely inappropriate. Picking winners and losers in the business community based on whether or not they are located inside or outside of an arbitrary line is not an appropriate role for government. Government should be in the business of supporting businesses, that is certain. We just need to do it in an equitable.

Rebecca Stuart

The Town should set a clear direction for downtown and the waterfront, invest in the public infrastructure, and then work with private businesses and local arts groups to bring that vision to life. I support pursuing revitalization grants, developing arts and entertainment districts, and improving public spaces so they are easier and more inviting to walk through. The goal is a downtown that serves residents, attracts visitors, and still feels like Colonial Beach.

Jeff Eisensmith

I would support some business incentives to very targeted areas in town that effect the town's desirability as a tourist destination. I would also support efforts that support bringing tourism to the town during the off season. These actions could bring needed tourism into Colonial Beach thus insuring the success of our local businesses and keeping resident tax rates flat.

Bobby Duke

I support the success of all businesses in Colonial Beach, whether they are located downtown or elsewhere in the community. Downtown has advantages, including its proximity to our beaches and parking, but we should take a broader approach that encourages small-business growth throughout the Town. Local government can play a role by adopting pro-growth policies and reviewing regulations that may unnecessarily restrict business development. Our goal should be to create an environment where businesses have the opportunity to succeed wherever they operate.

9. Emergency Services

What do you believe should be the Town's responsibility in supporting Colonial Beach's fire, rescue, and emergency services, and how should those needs be funded?

Will Nuckols

The town's obligation is clear – we help our citizens in time of need. Traditionally in colonial beach that means a lot of our support comes from volunteers. That has been changing over the past several decades as people's interest and abilities to participate and a volunteer capacity have decreased. Government needs to step in and fill those gaps. There is no future in which the town can be viable if between the combination of volunteer and professional services all the needs of the community are not covered. This may, in time, require an infusion of public funds, but ideally there is an offsetting cost saving at the individual rate payer level. In some communities that have an increasing proportion of professional services, the insurance rates on individual properties have a corresponding decrease. More research needs to be done as to whether or not that will apply in Colonial Beach.

Rebecca Stuart

Public safety is a basic responsibility of local government. Since the volunteer rescue squad dissolved, the way emergency services are delivered has changed. Colonial Beach taxpayers already contribute to Westmoreland County, and the county Department of Emergency Services now operates from the Town-owned Dennison Street station.

I see the Town's role in two parts:

1. County accountability: We should make sure the tax dollars Colonial Beach residents send to the County result in dependable response times, fully staffed shifts, and the equipment our community needs.
2. Local support: We should maintain a strong partnership with the volunteer fire department and keep our Town-owned safety facilities modern, safe, and ready for both volunteers and county staff. Funding should combine state safety grants, general fund support, and close coordination with Westmoreland County so we use every dollar well..

Jeff Eisensmith

Westmorland contributes to our fire, rescue, and emergency services. Colonial Beach contributed \$25k in our 2027 fiscal year budget. I expect that funding from the federal government is going to continue to decline. I am supportive of continuing to make sure that the these services get what they need.

Bobby Duke

The Town should always be willing to support and invest in our volunteer public safety organizations. It was concerning to see the challenges facing the rescue squad over the past several years. I have many friends who put their heart and soul into the Squad. As we grow, the demand for these services will only increase. At the same time, a stronger local economy can expand the Town's ability to support and invest in these organizations. Economic development and public safety should go hand in hand as we plan for the future.

10. Committees & Citizen Participation

If elected, would you advocate for additional Town committees to address major ongoing issues such as infrastructure and beach erosion, and should those committees provide meaningful opportunities for citizens to participate?

Will Nuckols

As I have mentioned in responses to other questions, I believe the current structure of town council which avoids committee work and lacks public participation in a meaningful and timely manner should be completely changed. We need standing committees as well as ad hoc committees as the issues before us are complex. I completely agree that infrastructure deserves a dedicated committee and topics such as beach erosion would fall within its jurisdiction.

Rebecca Stuart

Colonial Beach has residents with valuable experience in infrastructure, beach erosion, and other major issues, and the Town should make better use of that knowledge. At the same time, formal committees require staff time for notices, meetings, and records. I would use focused task forces and volunteer working groups when that approach makes sense, giving residents a real way to contribute without creating more administrative work than our small staff can reasonably support.

Jeff Eisensmith

There will always be major issues that the town has to deal with. I like the model where the town does its job and presents the Town Council with either a concerning issue that requires further study, or a proposal to address the issue. If Town Council feels it doesn't have enough information (resident concerns or buy in), the Town Council can stand up an additional committee. I do not feel that creating additional committees should be done until a triggering event has happened: like Town Council needing more information.

Bobby Duke

I am open to discussing the committee option, but I would not commit to it without first considering how it would work in practice. From my recollection of the committee system, albeit approximately 25 years ago, it created scheduling challenges for Council members and the Town Clerk. It also added responsibilities related to public comment, monthly advertising, FOIA requests, and meeting minutes. At that time, committees consisted of three Council members. I would welcome a thorough discussion of the potential benefits before making a decision.

11. Water-Meter Grant

The Town received a grant to install water meters on properties. If elected, would you advocate for completing the installation of water meters on all applicable residential and commercial properties in accordance with the grant requirements?

Will Nuckols

If elected I would advocate for complying with the requirements in the water meter grant, as well as any other grant we received. I have not seen evidence that we pay nearly enough attention to grant compliance. If we are to succeed securing grant funds a lack of follow through on the grant's requirements could potentially put us in legal harm's way, it also affects the town's reputation more generally when seeking funding from other grant sources. Once in office I would call for a review of all of our grants, and I will be specifically asking for explanations of who within town government is monitoring for grant compliance.

In addition to the meters, we also need to look at the rate structure for water usage. With the current plan, even if you have a water meter it is unlikely that your water use will directly affect your bill. If all individuals are incentivized to waste rather than conserve, we can only anticipate ever increasing utility costs and higher taxes.

When a town taxes its residents more because its own rate structure encourages waste, that's definitely not government at its best. Your government can do better, and I commit to pushing for a better system on your behalf.

Rebecca Stuart

Yes. We should finish the project and meet the grant requirements so the Town is not put at risk of having to repay state or federal funds. Most of the physical equipment is already installed; the next step is to get the software in place and begin actual metering. As we make that transition, I support a hybrid bill with the same base charge for every customer and a usage-based fee on top of it. That approach encourages conservation while keeping costs fair for year-round residents.

Jeff Eisensmith

I would advocate for the completion of the water meter installations and moving to a use-based system for charging town residents. I am taking this stand after looking at the pros and cons.

Pros:

Virginia Senate Joint Resolution No. 25 Report (released September 2026) warns that the Potomac Aquifer (our aquifer) cannot sustain any more industrial draws from industries like data centers/power plants. I always thought that water security wasn't a concern for Colonial Beach...turns out...it is. Metering would let residents understand their own water usage; and hopefully think about conserving water. Without metering, tied to billing, how can residents really understand how much they are using?

Colonial Beach took a grant to install the meters and move to a use-based billing system. I feel that we have an obligation to complete the work associated with this grant money.

If the billing formula is done correctly (flat base billing plus usage), it is more fair to residents that do not use large quantities of water.

The town already is charging business owners for their water usage utilizing a use-based billing system.

Cons:

The town will probably have to increase its staffing levels to cover the added complexity associated with use-based billing.

It will not be a trivial task to come to a fair and equitable rate structure. There has to be a base fee that all customers must share: i.e., shared infrastructure costs. Usage fees would be added on top of the base. Large water users are not going to be happy, but small usage customers won't be over burdened.

Bobby Duke

I am open to discussing the water meters. If turning them on could result in lower costs for taxpayers while also generating resources for debt service , infrastructure improvements and higher electricity costs, for example, I would be more than happy to have that conversation.

12. Development Discounts / Town Code

There have been concerns about deep discounts provided to a development company without Council approval. If elected, what is your position on this type of decision, and would you support a change to Town Code requiring Council consideration of similar decisions in the future?

Will Nuckols

While I understand allowing town administration some minor administrative flexibility, that flexibility should stop it impacts the budget and your taxes. I question the current authority that is said to exist to allow relief from paying various costs irrespective of the scale. At the end of the day, reductions in fees collected have the same impact at raising taxes. If the town's departments have the authority to impact the town's revenue stream, they then claim the same power as the Town Council, which is the entity you elect to set your tax rates.

Beyond the question of what entity in town government has the authority to provide significant discounts, I believe there are two fundamental questions that must be considered when any discount is considered. First is whether the public good is enhanced when a particular discount is provided. If you say the answer is yes, the answer must include a standard for determining if the public good was served. Second, if by providing discounts, examining if the government inappropriately chose specific businesses to receive a cost advantage over their competitors is fair. If you are providing a competitive advantage is there a corresponding public interest creating that disparity?

It may be the case that Town Council can simply provide administrative guidance to the department that limits the type and scale of discounts to be provided. Failing that, I would be favorable to making changes in town code that create and clarify limits for providing significant discounts.

Rebecca Stuart

Significant fee waivers, financial adjustments, or developer discounts should not be approved behind closed doors or through an administrative sign-off alone. If elected, I would support changing the Town Code so that substantial incentives come before the Council for a public presentation, discussion, and vote. Residents deserve to know what is being offered, why it is being offered, and who is accountable for the decision.

Jeff Eisensmith

I would support Town Council approval being required for deep discounts to development permits/projects. There would have to be a considerable amount of work done to identify the proper cut-line for triggering a Town Council review. If the cut-line was too low, this could be a significant impediment to permits being processed quickly. I wouldn't want the Town Council review to leave permit requesters in a lurch.

Bobby Duke

I support the manager-council form of government, which allows a the Town Manager to oversee the day-to-day operations of the Town, including negotiations with potential developers as part of economic development efforts. The Town Manager should operate within the policies and direction established by the Council. If the manager acts outside of those wishes, the Council has the authority to address those concerns.

13. Council Disagreement, Compromise, and Respect

What would you do when you strongly disagree with another Council member on an issue you believe is important? What specifically would you do to demonstrate respect toward fellow Council members with whom you disagree?

Will Nuckols

Disagreements are bound to occur given our differing backgrounds, beliefs and the constituents who might have our ear at any given point in time. Those disagreements are healthy, as it is to some degree a reflection of the range of opinions in our community. Through discussion we learn and we grow as individuals and as a body. Hopefully dialogue also leads toward a shared understanding. But that isn't always the case. Sometimes people have convictions that are not flexible and split votes occur. This is why the parliamentary process is important. If we follow the rules set out in the system everyone can have their time to speak, ask questions and speak further.

While at times I've been disappointed to see that ideal version of decision making shoved aside, and individual Town Council member's voice effectively silenced during a discussion, I commit to ensuring that all members are treated with respect for their time and participation in the process, no matter if they are speaking in agreement or against a position I am arguing.

Furthermore, I believe in the importance of the minority view. Oftentimes capturing the rationale for dissent is important, as it's not unusual for topics, particularly important topics, to be revisited in the future, and as such the views of the minority are important to capture, both live at the meeting, and at times in writing as a part of the record.

Respecting the voices of those who both win a majority of votes on a topic shows respect, not just for those members of Town Council, it also shows respect for our system of government. While we are ruled by the majority, shows of respect and consideration to those whose views may be, at one moment or another, in opposition to the majority matter. I commit to ensuring all voices being heard and will advocate for my colleagues when I feel their rights as Council members are being overridden. In our version of a Town Council government, we are all equals. We should run our meetings accordingly.

Rebecca Stuart

When I disagree with another Council member, I will keep the discussion focused on the issue rather than the person. I will listen without interrupting, ask questions to understand the other point of view, and explain my own position calmly and clearly. We may not always agree, but we can still look for common ground and work toward a practical outcome for Colonial Beach.

Jeff Eisensmith

Each Town Council member was elected by the residents of Colonial Beach. If I'm elected into a Council position its quite reasonable to assume that, at some point, I will disagree strongly with a fellow Council member on some issue. As a retired executive I have worked in an environment of high pressure board rooms where there was intense competition for scarce resources. I always kept this thought in my head when meetings got heated, "There are always 3 truths: My truth, Your truth, and The truth". Bottom line...no one owns the truth. So, as I pick my way through difficult items on any agenda, decorum has to maintained. Without it, future actions will be more difficult to get through.

Bobby Duke

I would approach disagreements by saying, "I respectfully disagree." It's that simple. Council members should always treat one another with respect, regardless of the issue being discussed. I believe the residents of our town EXPECT their elected officials to work together and seek consensus whenever possible. Following the candidate forum, I made a point of thanking the Chamber, Foundation, and, more importantly, the other candidates in the race. (See attachment). If I am fortunate enough to be elected, I will conduct myself in that same manner. I am not looking to be a disrupter. I want to be someone who works collaboratively, is willing to compromise, and keeps the best interests of our community at the forefront.

14. First 100 Days

If elected, what are the three things you would want Council to accomplish during your first 100 days in office?

Will Nuckols

The first would be to select the priorities that will be the focus of town council in the near term, and to do so in concert with meaningful input from the public. The 100 days timeframe includes the time of year when significant headway is needed to be made on the draft budget for the next fiscal year, so that would be the next major topic area. And of course, the budget topic must be informed by the work conducted during the first goal of establishing priorities in conjunction with real, meaningful public input. And the third would be seeking a restructuring of how Town Council operates. I have appeared before Town Council several times to explain that the “liaison” structure as it is currently implemented by the present Town Council is not only unusual in governments in Virginia, it results in stove piping of information and most importantly, leaves the most important topics crucial to the future of our town understaffed. The town’s budget is not a one person job. Our major problems with our town’s infrastructure is not a one person job. Planning for the future development of our town, and deciding if that means 3 more houses or 3,000 more houses and turning our town into a city – that’s not a one-person job either. Most governments tackle the toughest topics as committees, as it takes the combined work of several elected officials, with the input from citizens and professional staff, to make real headway. There are many other topics to work on during that timeframe as well, but without the three I mention above, I believe that our work will be less productive and less in line with what our citizens want us to do in office.

Rebecca Stuart

In the first 100 days, Council will have only a few regular meetings and work sessions, so my goals would be practical and focused:

1. Listen and learn: Meet with department heads, community groups, and residents to hear what is working, what is not, and which operational concerns need immediate attention.
2. Get to work in my liaison role: Meet with the committees and staff connected to my assignment, learn what they are working on, and bring clear, accurate updates back to Council.
3. Start a youth communication internship: Propose a partnership with Colonial Beach High School that gives students hands-on experience while helping the Town improve its website and social media communication.

Jeff Eisensmith

I would like to begin the process of working with my fellow Council members and the Town Manager to implement metering and billing for town water. After realizing that we do not have water security, that is my number one priority.

Working to understand and stay in front of the waste water treatment plant (WWTP). I think the town has done a good job of recovering from the initial sewage spill that happened two years ago. I would like the Council to get a new in depth brief on the continuing remediation and future funding requirements. Budget wise, if there are very large budget costs still coming, the Council needs as much runway as possible to ensure the town doesn’t get caught in bind.

Working with the non government organizations (NGOs) I would like to find ways to: Increase our tourism numbers throughout the year to help our local businesses, and keep resident taxes flat. Plug into Downtown Colonial Beach, and the Town Manager's Office, help identify available business assistance grants that our small business community could apply for.

I know I was only asked for 3, but I have two more:

After speaking to a number of local businesses I have learned that they are upset with the lack of reasonable workarounds when zoning conflicts occur. I think that this is a two pronged issue: Is there a reasonable exception path for finding a way forward, and is that path generally known by own business owners?, and

After the Council meetings, I will create a digest of important decisions and publish that digest after my fellow Council members have a quick opportunity to identify areas they don't agree with. If its a true disagreement I will note their lack of agreement in the digest - to be fair to my fellow Council members.

Bobby Duke

If chosen to serve, the first 100 days would likely coincide with the development and discussion of a new budget. One of my goals would be to work toward funding our core services without increasing taxes or fees. Many families simply cannot afford more. If we could accomplish that while maintaining the quality of essential services, it would be a gratifying way to celebrate the first 100 days in office.

15. Government Transparency

What could the Town do better to communicate with residents about major decisions, proposed developments, taxes, fees, and infrastructure projects?

Will Nuckols

Far too often the public's role has been crammed into a process that is the absolute minimum required by law. If a decision requires a public hearing too often it is scheduled at the end of real deliberation by decision makers, rather than the public hearing coming first and serving as a way to take public input into account. The way it's done now simply serves as a way to listen to a handful of people vent about what they realize they likely cannot change.

So what to do differently? A minimum improvement would be to allow public participation early and, in many instances often, during a decision-making timeline. If you are to allow public participation in a meaningful way, the public must have access to the same materials that the Council members have with enough lead time to consider those materials and provide thoughtful comment. Materials presented on a website which are not the actual meeting materials the Council members are using to make the decisions on the decision day, makes asking the public for input solely on old materials both insulting of their time and diminishes the value their input could have. If staff isn't prepared for the meeting, Town Council should take the opportunity to slow the decision-making down until all of the proposal and its accompanying background, is fully available to the public.

I also believe all public comments are relevant. While it is a pleasure to see people speak in person, for some citizens that is not their preferred way to communicate. Some have obligations which don't allow their in-person participation, or health issues that make their live participation truly burdensome. Others are effective in writing a message, but struggle with oral communications. The value of a resident's input should not be judged by the method they choose for communication but rather from the substance in the messages they are working to convey. As such I will work to restore respect for comments which arrive in written form rather than orally. All voices matter. Town Council should not be judgmental about the format.

And all of the above presumes that any of the discussion is actually occurring before the public. Our town has a peculiar habit of having a significant portion of its briefings and discussion in closed session. If you look at our Town Council's use of closed meetings verses other jurisdictions around the state, we are in closed session a LOT. You don't even need to look very far away. One can just examine how infrequently Westmoreland County government feels that its discussions need to occur in closed session. It is quite a contrast.

There seems to be a bad habit that if we can have a discussion out of the public's eye, we should. I contend that "can" should not be the standard. The standard should be whether the citizens we represent measurably better off keeping discussions from them. In my experience in government, that is very, very rarely the case. And therefore, I will remain highly skeptical of any call to go into closed session, and if the discussion in closed session do not tightly adhere to the specific justification for that particular night's closed meeting, not just the boilerplate that is cited repeatedly, I will not agree that those topics be discussed away from the public's view. We're doing this business on your behalf, and personally I have great trust in our neighbors, so I want you to be a part of the dialogue, with only the rarest of exceptions.

The common political game has for too long been to say, "I want transparency" and then do nothing to change the status quo. And some members make moves to make it even more opaque. That's not my path. I'm not

simply saying transparency is good, I'm saying I have concrete plans to do something about it. And if you listen to my public testimony about this over the years, when I've been calling for better government, you already know where I stand. I work for real change. It's time to end the empty political promises about transparency in Colonial Beach.

Rebecca Stuart

The Town needs one reliable place where residents can find timely information. Right now, updates are spread across too many social media channels, which makes them easy to miss. I would make the Town website the main source for official updates, keep using utility-bill inserts, and add a predictable weekly email with news and upcoming dates. I also support an online dashboard where residents can track capital projects. A high school communication internship could help with routine updates while giving students useful experience and fresh ideas.

Jeff Eisensmith

Items that concern major decisions should be handled with better communication to our residents. The Town Manager creates briefs for the Town Council that are used to help the Council decide major issues. The discussion that happens at Council isn't captured in the brief, and I'm planning on publishing a digest after the meeting that fills that gap.

Bobby Duke

Democracy and representative government are a two-way street. It is incumbent upon all of us not only to play an active role in our community but also to stay informed and involved. Through social media, the website, CodeRED alerts, and newsletters, I believe the Town does a reasonably good job communicating with residents, although there is always room for improvement. If I am fortunate enough to be elected, I will strive to be another conduit for information, helping connect the community with its local government and encouraging residents to remain engaged. I have personally mentioned quarterly meetings such as town hall events or something like "Coffee with a Councilman " so folks can address their concerns in a less formal setting. I stand by doing this if chosen to serve.