

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 22, 2025
SEWANEE COMMUNITY COUNCIL MEETING

The Community Council meeting was held in person in September with an option to also participate online via Zoom.

Members present: Rob Pearigen, Scott Wilson, Ben Beavers, Michael Payne, Phil White, Robert Benton, Marilyn Phelps, John Gilmer, Rhea Bowden, Ben Tarhan, Walker Adams, Delores Jelks, and Sallie Green

Members via Zoom: Ed Hawkins

Absent: Katie Gohn, Evelyn Patton, Laura Willis, Kevin Cummings, and Aidan Goulding

Minutes taken by: Carey Fulmer (attending via Zoom)

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m.

(1) Approval of the May Minutes

The minutes for the May 2025 Community Council were approved as circulated.

(2) Introduce the New SOT Student Member- Wilson

Scott Wilson extended a warm welcome to new School of Theology student, John Gilmer who will serve through May 2027.

(3) Traffic Related Issues- Adams

Speeding was an issue discussed by the Council and several issues were presented as:

- How are speeding issues being addressed by the Sewanee Police Department
- Speeding reported in Wiggins Creek and Roark's Cove Road
- Motorized scooters – high speeds and safety issue
- Additional funding needed for more speed humps
- Community Council should approve Grants Committee to cover cost of more speed humps
- Speed hump earmarked for Kennerly Road

(4) Road Paving Issues- Phelps

Marilyn Phelps addressed an issue where the county paved Morgan's Steep Road without notifying the community. A constituent was unable to leave for an appointment in a timely manner. Marilyn expressed the need for better public notification regarding road-paving schedules and that Sewanee Police Department typically sends notifications, but did not this time. Sallie Green offered that the SPD may not have received notification of this paving project in order to let the community know and recommended reaching out to Johnny Hughes, Franklin County Road Commissioner for any questions.

(5) Fire Hydrants in Sewanee- Wilson

Fire Chief Terry Smith expressed concerns about the lack of up-to-date flow rate information for local fire hydrants. He confirmed that hydrants must meet a 500 gallons-per-minute flow rate to support firefighting equipment; this data is not consistently available. He also discussed hydrant cap colors, which are meant to indicate flow rate, were noted to be unreliable in some cases and a drop in the Fire Department's hydrant-related ISO score could impact insurance rates for the community.

While the Fire Department is not authorized or equipped to perform formal flow tests, Chief Smith offered to assist with:

- Hydrant painting
- Flow testing support
- Covering related costs for water loss (estimated at \$1,500–\$2,000).

Sewanee Utility District (SUD) Manager Ben Beavers, also a council member, clarified that hydrant flow testing is not required by regulation for SUD and that hydrants are flushed every five years on a rotating schedule. Performing annual flow tests would require a significant time investment, potentially up to half of one employee's workload, and would also result in considerable water loss. He emphasized that the ISO rating is based on multiple factors, not just hydrant performance.

Ben also stated that it would have been common courtesy for the Fire Department to address concerns about hydrant flow testing to the SUD Board first, rather than the Community Council.

Vice-Chancellor Rob Pearigen expressed gratitude for both the Sewanee Fire Department and the Sewanee Utility District, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between the two. He noted that these are critical services for the community and should maintain open communication.

The council voted to approve a resolution encouraging direct coordination between the Fire Department and SUD to address hydrant maintenance and flow rate concerns.

(6) Announcements and/or Questions

Provost Scott Wilson provided an update on the ongoing review of the University's dog control policy, which had been discussed in previous meetings (March and May).

A committee tasked with recommending revisions proposed the following changes:

- Change the language from "may" to "will" regarding law enforcement's duty to issue citations.
- Increase fines for violations.
- Direct victims to contact law enforcement or animal control, rather than approaching the dog owner directly.

The University attorney reviewed the draft revisions and advised that any new fines beyond those allowed by state law would require changes to the University leasehold policy.

Residents and council members expressed frustration over lack of police enforcement following reported dog attacks. Marilyn Phelps introduced former ADA and community member Steve Blount to speak to the council from a legal aspect.

Steve Blount clarified:

- Tennessee's dog-at-large law is enforceable in Sewanee (even without being a municipality).

- Citations can be issued without witnessing the incident.
- Victims may seek a citation directly from a magistrate using a police report.

Vice-Chancellor Rob Pearigen confirmed he will meet with Chief Financial Officer and Vice President for Administration, Isabelle Love who oversees both the Sewanee Fire Department and the Sewanee Police Department to discuss the issues presented in tonight's meeting.

Ben Beavers extended an invitation from the Sewanee Civic Center's ribbon cutting at the newly opened Sewanee Welcome Center on Wednesday, October 1 from 2-4 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carey Fulmer