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HOUSE BILL NO. 657

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A BILL to provide a new charter for the Town of Louisa in Louisa County and to repeal Chapter 68 of the Acts of Assembly of 1972, as amended, which provided a charter for the Town of Louisa.

Patron—Fowler

Committee Referral Pending

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1.

**CHARTER
FOR THE
TOWN OF LOUISA.
Chapter 1.**

Incorporation and Boundaries.**§ 1.1. Incorporation.**

The inhabitants of the territory within the present limits and future boundaries of the Town of Louisa, hereinafter referred to as the "Town," shall continue as a body politic and corporate under the name "Town of Louisa." The Town shall have perpetual succession, may sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded, contract and be contracted with, and may adopt, alter, or renew a corporate seal at its pleasure.

§ 1.2. Boundaries.

The boundaries of the Town shall be as established in the Acts of the General Assembly approved on March 8, 1873, and any subsequent amendments. These boundaries are further defined by the order of the Circuit Court of Louisa County dated November 1, 1955, recorded in Law Order Book 14 at Page 178 et seq., and as depicted on the plat by J. Temple Waddell recorded in Plat Book 2 at Page 134 in the Clerk's office of the Circuit Court of Louisa County.

Chapter 2.***Powers.*****§ 2.1. General Grant of Powers.**

The Town shall have all powers that are conferred upon towns under the Constitution of Virginia and other laws of the Commonwealth. All powers set forth in Chapter 11 of Title 15.2 of the Code of Virginia (§ 15.2-1100 et seq.), as may be amended from time to time, are hereby specifically conferred upon the Town of Louisa.

Chapter 3.***Governing Body.*****§ 3.1. Composition of Town Council; Election, Qualification, and Term of Office of Town Council Members.**

The Town shall be governed by a Mayor and a Town Council composed of five members, elected at large by the qualified voters of the Town. The Mayor shall be elected to a four-year term. Town Council members shall serve four-year staggered terms, with elections held in accordance with the general laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

§ 3.2. When Terms of Office to Begin.

The terms of office for the Mayor and Town Council members shall commence and continue as provided by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

§ 3.3. Oath of Office.

Before assuming office, the Mayor and each Town Council member shall take an oath or affirmation to faithfully and impartially discharge the duties of their office to the best of their abilities. This oath shall be administered by a person authorized under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

§ 3.4. Election and Term of Vice-Mayor.

The Town Council shall elect from among its members a Vice-Mayor, who shall serve a term of two years or until a successor is so elected.

§ 3.5. Powers and Duties of Mayor and Vice-Mayor.

The Mayor shall preside over Town Council meetings and shall have the same right to speak as other Town Council members. The Mayor shall vote when the Town Council is equally divided. The Mayor shall be recognized as the head of the Town government for ceremonial purposes and military law. In the Mayor's absence or inability to act, the Vice-Mayor shall assume the Mayor's powers and duties.

§ 3.6. Absence or Disability of Mayor and Vice-Mayor.

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If both the Mayor and Vice-Mayor are unable to perform their duties, the Town Council shall, by a majority vote of those present, elect an Acting Mayor from among its members. The Acting Mayor shall serve until the Mayor or Vice-Mayor is able to resume their duties. In such circumstances, the Town Clerk shall call the Town Council meeting to order and preside until an Acting Mayor is elected, without assuming any powers of the Mayor.

§ 3.7. Town Council a Continuing Body.

The Town Council shall be a continuing body, and no measures pending before such body, or any contract or obligation incurred, shall abate or be discontinued by reason of the expiration of the term of office or removal of any of its members.

§ 3.8. General Grant of Powers to the Town Council.

In addition to the powers granted herein, the Town Council shall have all powers and authority that are now or may hereafter be granted to councils of towns by the general laws of the Commonwealth and by this Charter, and the recital of special powers and authorities herein shall not be taken to exclude the exercise of any power and authority granted by the general laws of the Commonwealth to town councils, but not herein specified.

§ 3.9. Meetings of the Town Council.

The Town Council shall fix the time of their stated meetings, and they shall meet at least once a month. Special meetings may be called at any time by the Mayor or by two members of the Town Council, provided that all members shall be duly notified a reasonable period of time prior to any special meeting.

§ 3.10. Quorum; Reconsideration of Action.

Except as otherwise provided by state law, three members of the Town Council shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

§ 3.11. Rules of Order and Procedure.

The Town Council shall establish its own rules of order and procedure. The rules of order shall be consistent with recognized parliamentary procedures, such as Robert's Rules of Order, to ensure consistency and efficiency in meetings.

§ 3.12. Town Council to Fix Salaries.

The Town Council is hereby authorized to fix the salaries of each of the members of the Town Council, members of boards or commissions, and all appointed officers and all employees of the Town, at a sum not to exceed any limitations placed by the laws and Constitution of the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Town Council may establish an employee pay scale and delegate its authority to set non-Town Council appointed employees' salaries to the Town Manager in accordance with the Town budget and applicable policies as the Town Council may adopt.

Chapter 4.
Appointive Officers.

§ 4.1. Appointment.

The Town Council has the authority to appoint officers essential to the administration and operation of the Town government. These offices shall include, but not be limited to, a Town Manager, a Town Clerk, a Town Attorney, a Town Treasurer, and a Chief of Police. The appointment of these officers is at the discretion of the Town Council and does not constitute a mandatory requirement.

The Town Manager shall hire such officers and employees as may be necessary for the proper administration of the affairs of the Town, with the power to suspend and remove any such officers or employees.

Officers appointed shall perform duties as prescribed by this Charter, the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia, or directives issued by the Town Manager. The Town may enter into agreements for shared services with county or regional entities to fulfill certain functions as deemed appropriate.

§ 4.2. Term of Office.

Officers appointed by the Town Council shall serve at the pleasure of the Town Council.

§ 4.3. Appointment of one person to more than one office.

The same person may be appointed to more than one office only as permitted under Virginia law.

§ 4.4. Qualifications and Duties of the Town Manager.

The Town Manager shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Town and shall be responsible for the efficient administration of government under the direction of the Town Council. The Town Manager shall be chosen by the Town Council on the basis of executive and administrative qualifications and need not be a resident of the Town. The Town Manager shall:

(1) Attend all meetings of the Town Council, with the right to speak but not vote.

(2) Provide the Town Council with regular reports on the financial condition and operational status of the Town.

(3) Prepare and submit an annual budget, subject to approval by the Town Council, and oversee its implementation.

(4) Develop and implement policies and procedures to enhance governmental transparency, efficiency, and accountability.

(5) *Ensure compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws.*
 (6) *Oversee personnel matters, including employee hiring, supervision, and discipline.*
 (7) *Present an annual audit conducted by a certified public accountant approved by the Town Council.*
 (8) *Serve as the Town's director of emergency management pursuant to § 44-146.19 of the Code of Virginia.*
 (9) *Perform additional duties as assigned by the Town Council or required by applicable law.*
In all respects, the Town Manager shall be subject to review by the Town Council and shall be accountable to the Town Council only.
In the event that there is no Town Manager, it shall be the duty of the Mayor to see that the functions set forth above are carried out if the Town Council has not acted otherwise.
 § 4.5. *Duties of the Town Clerk.*
The Town Clerk shall be the Clerk of the Town Council, keeping the journal of proceedings and recording all ordinances and resolutions in a book kept for that purpose. As the custodian of the Town's corporate seal, the Clerk is authorized to use and authenticate it. Duties also include performing other tasks specified by the Town Council or required by the general laws of the Commonwealth.
 § 4.6. *Duties of the Town Attorney.*
The Town Attorney shall be the legal adviser of the Town Council, representing the Town in all legal affairs as requested by the Mayor, Town Council, or Town appointed officers. The Town may employ the Commonwealth's Attorney of Louisa County for criminal prosecutions of Town ordinances.
 § 4.7. *Duties of the Town Treasurer.*
The Town Treasurer shall maintain financial records and collect Town taxes and licenses, with powers similar to County Treasurers.
 § 4.8. *Chief of Police and Police Department.*
A Chief of Police shall be appointed by the Town Council and shall have such powers and duties as provided by the laws of the Commonwealth and those imposed by this Charter. The Chief of Police shall oversee law-enforcement operations, public safety, and administrative matters as determined by the Town Manager. The Town Council may establish additional criteria for the position consistent with state law.
The Police Department shall consist of the Chief of Police and such other officers and employees at such ranks and grades as may be established by the Town Council. Except as otherwise provided herein, the Chief of Police and Department shall be under the administrative control of the Town Manager; however, the Chief shall supervise the Department and its officers and other employees regarding all law-enforcement duties, practices, and requirements.
The Chief of Police and all police officers are hereby endowed with all the powers of a constable in criminal cases and all other powers which under the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the ordinances and resolutions of the Town may be necessary to enable them to discharge the duties of their office.

Chapter 5.

Raising of Revenue.

§ 5.1. Assessment and Collection of Taxes and Fees.

The Town Council shall have the authority to assess, impose, and levy all taxes and fees as authorized by state law and shall have the power to collect such taxes in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth.

Chapter 6.

Financial Provisions.

§ 6.1. Fiscal Year.

The fiscal year of the Town shall begin on July 1 of each year and end on June 30 of the following year.

§ 6.2. Creation of Debt; Election on Issuance of Bonds.

In the issuance of bonds and notes, the Town shall have the authority and shall be subject to the limitations prescribed by the Constitution and the laws of this Commonwealth.

Chapter 7.

Miscellaneous.

§ 7.1. Elections Governed by State Law.

All Town elections shall be held and conducted in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

§ 7.2. Bonds of Officers and Employees.

The Town Council may require all or any officers and employees of the Town to provide a bond for the faithful and proper discharge of their duties. The Town may pay the premium on such bonds from Town funds and may establish guidelines for the types of bonds required based on the role, responsibilities, and potential risks associated with each officer or employee's position.

§ 7.3. Present Ordinances Continued in Effect.

All ordinances currently in force in the Town of Louisa, not inconsistent with this Charter, shall remain in effect until they are altered, amended, or repealed by the Town Council.

2. That Chapter 68 of the Acts of Assembly of 1972, as amended, is repealed.