

# TOWN HALL NEWSLETTER

## Hello neighbors,

Welcome to 2026!

I hope everyone had a joyous and restful end-of-year 2025 holiday. Personally, it was delightful to experience the beautiful decorations and holiday cheer throughout our town, reminding me just how welcoming our town is for residents and visitors alike. Thank you to everyone who helped make this holiday season so special.

Town Hall is gearing up for a busy and productive new year. This newsletter features the non-profit [Shepherdstown Historic Commission](#), which does important work in managing the town museum and maintaining our historic records and artifacts.

You'll also read about notable actions taken at Town Hall over the past month. These include on-boarding two new town staff members—a Project Manager/Planning Specialist and a new Police Officer—and the approval of an overall Police Pay Scale, which will attract and employ skilled, experienced police personnel.

We also wish a fond farewell to the beloved Evolve pop-up space, and we welcome two new business to our ever-vibrant downtown—Stoney's Pub and the Slow Down Barbershop and Lounge—businesses from neighboring communities that have branched out to our town.

Finally, please share this note with friends, neighbors, and family members—and encourage them to sign-up via the QR code below to subscribe to this free monthly newsletter.

Have a great January!

— James Gatz | [jgatz@shepherdstown.gov](mailto:jgatz@shepherdstown.gov)



## Police Pay Scale Adopted

Town Council recently adopted a formal pay scale for Police Department personnel. The new scale clearly outlines pay progression and advancement over time, giving officers greater transparency as they plan and build their careers with the Town.

It also strengthens Shepherdstown's ability to recruit and retain qualified officers, particularly in a competitive regional environment where departments are actively seeking new hires.

"The pay scale plan was vital for the Shepherdstown Police Department to hire and retain qualified officers," said Chief Mike King. "In order that the police provide the best possible officers and service to the community, the pay must stay competitive with the surrounding agencies, or we lose those officers to the other agencies."



## Recodifying Town Ordinances Moves Forward

Town Council recently unanimously approved a contract to update and recodify the Town's ordinances and ensure they are easily accessible to the public on the Town's website.

Best practice recommends recodifying municipal ordinances every 10 years, but Shepherdstown's code has not been comprehensively reviewed in more than 30 years, making this an important and overdue investment.

The process will involve multiple phases given the age and complexity of the existing code, and is expected to take approximately 18 months to complete.

## **Town Partner Spotlight: Historic Shepherdstown Commission**

The Historic Shepherdstown Commission plays a central role in preserving, interpreting, and sharing our town's rich history. Its mission spans education, stewardship, and preservation—from caring for landmark properties like the Town-owned Entler Hotel, Historic Shepherdstown Museum, and Shepherd family burial plot on New Street, to maintaining archives that document the people and stories that shape Town.

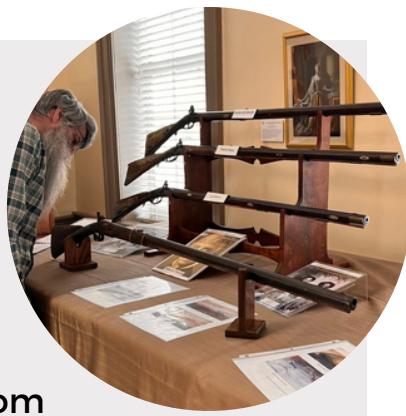
The Commission has been active on many fronts over the past year. Its popular speaker series brought historians and craftspeople to town to explore topics ranging from pottery making and the Kentucky rifle to the Bee Line March and the early Black community in Harpers Ferry.

The Historic Shepherdstown Museum remained open on weekends from April through October, with additional hours in December, and the Kentucky (Sheetz) Rifles exhibit continues through a partnership with the Kentucky Rifle Foundation.

Beyond programming, the Commission has supported major community efforts, including the Bee Line March 250th anniversary, remodeling work at the Entler Hotel, creation of the 2025 holiday ornament, which featured the likeness of the Fireman's Hall building, and participation in town parades and events. The Commission also welcomed Stephanie Unger as President this year and hired and trained a new administrator, Suprena Mills.

Looking ahead, the Commission continues to operate as a self-sustaining organization supported by memberships, donations, rentals, fundraisers, and grants. Current projects include Benedum-funded work such as restoration of a 35-star American flag, expansion of the Historic Markers Program, and upgrades at the Historic Shepherdstown Museum. New interpretive waysides are also planned for Princess Street Landing and Rumsey Park, further connecting residents and visitors to Shepherdstown's past.

For more information, and for membership details, visit <https://historicshepherdstown.com>.



# New Hires

The Town welcomed Karl Musser as its new Project Manager and Planning Specialist.

Karl has more than 30 years of experience in GIS analysis, project management, and public-sector collaboration, including extensive work with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and current service on the City of Brunswick Planning Commission.

Throughout his career, Karl has managed large, grant-funded projects, supported conservation and land-use planning initiatives, and advised senior leadership on policy development and implementation.

His work has ranged from developing geospatial tools used at the national level to overseeing contracts and ensuring compliance with federally funded programs.

Karl's background in zoning, GIS, and planning review—combined with his experience working directly with communities—will support Town staff, commissions, and residents as Shepherdstown continues to advance planning initiatives, improve public access to information, and apply regulations with clarity and fairness.

---

Shepherdstown also welcomed Kevin Baylor to the Police Department, bringing prior law-enforcement experience from the Martinsburg Police Department.

The addition of Officer Baylor's strengthens the department as it continues to focus on public safety and community presence.



## Continued Coordination with Rotary Club

Mayor James Gatz recently met with Shepherdstown Rotary Club President Dale Homan to ensure continued strong coordination and collaboration between the Town and the Club throughout 2026, building on shared goals that support community events, public spaces, and civic life.

The Rotary Club has contributed greatly to the successes of Town parades—specifically the annual July 4 parade and the holiday parade in early December.

Rotary has also been instrumental in an annual bridge clean-up event and support for other events and activities. Plans are underway to ensure even greater collaboration in the coming year.



### Stay Connected with Town Hall

The Town of Shepherdstown is making it easier than ever to stay informed. By signing up for Town Hall alerts and updates, you'll receive important news, event announcements, meeting info, and our monthly newsletter—delivered straight to your inbox.

To sign up, simply scan the QR code below or visit: [www.shepherdstown.gov/alerts](http://www.shepherdstown.gov/alerts)

Signing up is quick, free, and open to everyone. More than one person in a household is welcome to subscribe, so family members can each receive updates directly.





## **Fond Farewell: Evolve Shepherdstown**



After seven vibrant years at 106 West German Street, the founders of Evolve Shepherdstown—Elise Baach and Jan Hafer—announced in late November that they were stepping aside and turning in the keys on January 1. Since opening in 2019, Evolve has been a creative hub for entrepreneurs, artists, nonprofits, and neighbors, offering a flexible, welcoming space to exhibit work, launch ideas, host events, and build community.

Throughout its run, Evolve became more than a storefront. It was a place to try something new, to gather, to learn, and to connect—whether through pop-ups, classes, fundraisers, conversations, or quiet moments of inspiration. Jan and Elise's vision, generosity, and good humor helped shape a space that reflected the best of Shepherdstown's creative and collaborative spirit.

The Town extends its sincere thanks to Jan and Elise for their energy, leadership, and commitment to fostering opportunity and creativity in our community. Their work has left a lasting imprint on downtown and on countless individuals who passed through the Evolve shop.

Looking ahead, we're pleased to share that the location will continue as a revolving event and pop-up space under new stewardship. With exciting plans underway, the space will reopen under a new name—Eclectic—and remain available to artists, makers, entrepreneurs, and community groups as a place to exhibit work, teach classes, introduce services, host gatherings, and more.

The spirit of experimentation and vibrancy that defined Evolve will carry forward with Eclectic.

Thank you, Jan and Elise, for seven memorable years and for helping make Shepherdstown the creative, welcoming place it is today.



## Welcome – New Business Additions to Town

Shepherdstown is pleased to welcome two new businesses to town, each bringing its own flavor and energy to our downtown mix.

Stoney's Pub recently opened its doors on Princess Street, offering a casual neighborhood pub

atmosphere with an expanded food and drink menu, as well as plenty of screens to watch the big game.

The new spot blends classic pub fare with a relaxed setting designed to serve both locals and visitors, adding another welcoming place to gather, dine, and unwind downtown.

## Slow Down Barbershop & Lounge

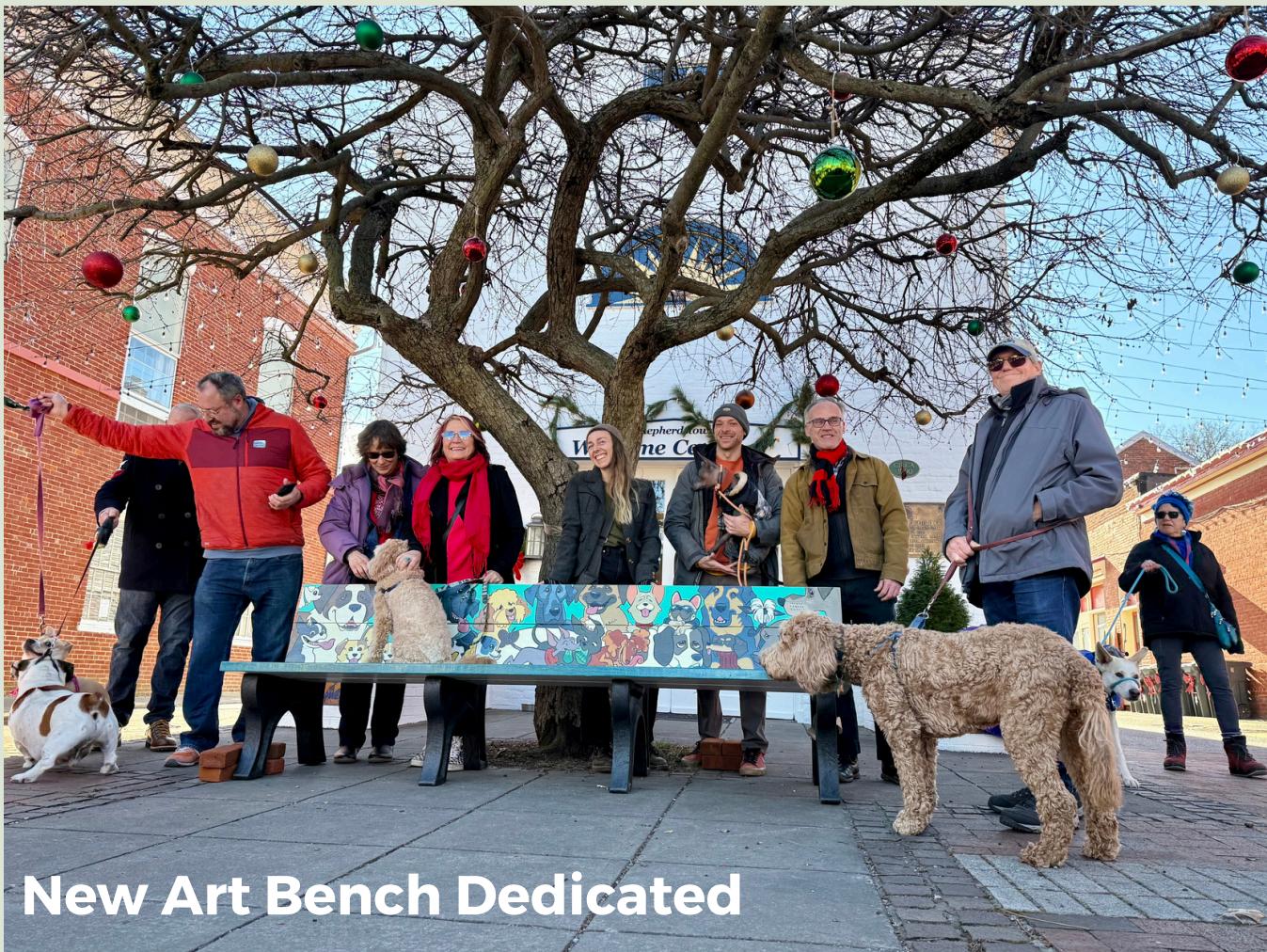
We're also happy to welcome the Shepherdstown location of Slow Down Barbershop & Lounge.

Known for its laid-back approach and focus on quality service, Slow Down brings its modern barbershop experience to town,

joining an existing location in Hagerstown. The Shepherdstown shop adds a new personal-service option for residents while contributing to the growing diversity of downtown businesses.

The Town is excited to see these new ventures take root and encourages residents to stop in, say hello, and support our local business community as it continues to grow and evolve.





## New Art Bench Dedicated

Shepherdstown unveiled the first of several new artistic benches on Sunday, December 21, during a community gathering at the Market House. The installation marks an early milestone in the Town's revitalized Bench Initiative, a program designed to blend public art with functional, inviting spaces throughout downtown.

Reintroduced earlier this year, the initiative celebrates local artists while enhancing shared public spaces with benches that reflect Shepherdstown's history, personality, and creative spirit. The effort builds on the success of past community art projects—including the well-loved benches produced during the COVID pandemic by [Shepherdstown Shares](#).

Two new benches were developed this fall, painted by local artists in a studio space rented by the Town. The first to be completed, created by Shepherdstown illustrator Danielle Corsetto, was revealed at the December 21 event.

"I am just thrilled with the new work Danielle has created for us," said Mayor James Gatz. "It warms your heart and brings a smile to your face. These benches are more than seating—they're functional pieces of public art that bring people together, support local artists, and add to the character of downtown. The Bench Initiative reflects what Shepherdstown does best: combining creativity, community, and thoughtful use of public space."

More benches will follow in the months ahead.

# Highlights from the December 10 Town Council Committee Reports

At the December 10th Town Council meeting, committees shared updates on several projects and initiatives underway across Shepherdstown. These updates reflect the continued work—large and small—that helps keep Shepherdstown moving forward. More information on these projects will be shared as work progresses

- The Age-Friendly Shepherdstown Committee reported continued progress on the Town's emerging bike route, noting that multiple sharrows have now been installed. The committee also discussed Shepherdstown's potential participation in the national Bike Friendly Community program. Committee members also raised the importance of ensuring proper audio equipment is used at public meetings so that all attendees are able to hear and participate fully.
- The Parks and Recreation Committee announced that construction of the asphalt walking path connecting Cullison Park and Rumsey Park is expected to begin in spring 2026, pending Town Council approval. Additionally, the new stairway between Mill Street and Cullison Park is now complete. At Riverfront Park, the stolen picnic table has been replaced, and Town Run Watershed signage has been relocated for Planning Commission review.
- Planning Commission members approved a stormwater project proposal from St. Agnes Church. The Commission agreed to adjust its meeting calendar to allow two weeks between Historic Landmarks Commission and Planning Commission meetings, following HLC's offer to move to the first Monday of each month.
- The Tree Commission reported ongoing work at several locations, including a planned proposal for a knee wall and root barrier at Town Hall, and a review of options to enlarge a concrete tree well at 112 W. German Street for improved doorway clearance. Members also discussed new planting opportunities, stump grinding needs, and a recent pruning request on E. High Street.
- The Water Board shared that the first sampling for the Town Run Watershed Initial Baseline Study is scheduled for this month. The Board also reported that estimates for the new water basin building came in higher than expected, and design revisions are underway.

The Sanitary Board approved funding to rebuild sewer feed pumps at a cost of \$18,000 and authorized the purchase of a new forklift for \$38,000.

# Upcoming Dates/Times for Town Council and Committee Meetings (Town Hall)

All meetings are typically convened in-person at Town Hall and broadcast via Zoom, with the exception of Age-Friendly Shepherdstown—which is held only via [Zoom here](#).

For all meetings, if a Zoom link is available for that meeting, it can be found [on this page](#) by clicking on the respective meeting and “2025”—and then the Video link within the “Resources” column that coincides with that date/time.

## Meetings:

- Town Council: Wednesday, January 14, 6:30pm.
- Age-Friendly Shepherdstown: Wednesday, January 21, 1:30pm.
- Finance Committee: Thursday, January 8, 6:30pm.
- Grants Committee: Tuesday January 6, 6:15pm.
- Historic Landmarks Commission Monday, January 5, 6pm.
- Planning Committee: Monday January 19, 6pm.
- Public Works Committee Monday, January 26, 7:30pm.
- Special Building Commission Wednesday, January 7, 6:30pm.
- Tree Commission: Friday, January 9, 2:30pm.



## Mayor's Office Hours:

Fourth Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm, Town Hall. Email [jgatz@shepherdstown.gov](mailto:jgatz@shepherdstown.gov) with any questions.

Municipal Court hours: Third Wednesday of every month starting at 5:30pm, Town Hall. [Click here](#) for more information.