



APRIL 2026

Shepherdstown  
WEST VIRGINIA

# TOWN HALL NEWSLETTER

## Greetings, neighbors –



Wow, another month has slipped by! Here we are in April, and I have to say, our little town looks glorious this time of the year.

As usual, this newsletter is filled with information and updates on Town Hall goings-on, and beyond. Take a look—you'll find synopses on two Town Council meetings and a special workshop on Planned Unit Development zoning. You'll also learn how to participate in a Town food and yard waste recycling/composting program, to be piloted in the coming few months.

Plus, artists and budding artists will be interested in our contest for designing new "Welcome to Shepherdstown" banners.

Additionally, be sure and read about our new—and long-awaited—sports pub, [The Study Hall](#), now open for business, as well as the outdoor opening of our cherished Shepherdstown Farmers Market. With that in mind, you'll also find information on the most recent addition to our downtown artistic bench collection.

Finally, in case you haven't heard, I am so pleased to share that Mary Ellen Diaz, owner and chef of our town's very own [Alma Bea](#) restaurant, has been named a finalist for the Southeast regional category of "Best Chef" in the 2026 James Beard Restaurants and Chef Awards. A VERY big deal. We're all rooting for you, Mary Ellen!

Take some time with this month's newsletter—there's plenty to catch up on around Town!

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



## Call for Artists: Shepherdstown Welcome Banner Contest

The Town of Shepherdstown is inviting local artists to help shape the look of our downtown through the new "Welcome to Shepherdstown" Banner Contest.

Selected designs will be featured on banners to be hung on street light poles throughout Historic Shepherdstown beginning later this year.

Artists who live, work, or attend school in Shepherdstown are encouraged to submit original, vibrant designs that reflect the character, culture, and spirit of our community.

Up to three winning artists will receive a \$300 honorarium, with their work displayed on Town banners.

**Contest Opens: April 1, 2026**

**Deadline to enter: May 10, 2026, at 5pm.**

For full details, [CLICK HERE](#).



# Town Council Activities:

## March 11, 2026 Town Council Meeting Recap

The Shepherdstown Town Council met for its monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 11, 2026, to review ongoing projects, municipal planning efforts, and community initiatives. The meeting included updates on the upcoming municipal election, development of the Town's FY27 budget, infrastructure projects, and several committee and staff reports.

### Key Updates from the March meeting:

- Jefferson County Convention & Visitors Bureau Update
- Annette Gavin Bates provided a briefing on the work of the Jefferson County Convention and Visitors Bureau (JCCVB), which operates the Visitor Center located in the Shepherdstown Market House. In FY26, Shepherdstown will contribute an estimated \$162,000 in Hotel/Motel Tax revenue support to the JCCVB. The Town also provides the JCCVB use of the Market House building for the Visitor Center under a \$1-per-year lease arrangement. | **Event Permits Approved.**
- Town Council approved event permits for the upcoming Shepherdstown May Day Celebration (May 3rd) and Relay for Life (April 18th) activities.
- Intersection Improvements near Shepherd University
- The Town Administrator reported that the West Virginia Division of Highways is making improvements to an intersection crossing Duke Street near Shepherd University, including installation of an ADA-compliant curb cut.
- **Board and Commission Appointments:** Town Council approved the appointment of Terry Hadley to the Tree Commission and voted to reappoint Carolyn Rodis to the Board of Zoning Appeals.
- **Grant Committee Activity:** The Town Grants Committee reported that it is currently working on several funding applications, including:
  - Congressionally Directed Funding for new sidewalks along German Street
  - A Chesapeake Bay Foundation grant to support a pilot food and yard waste composting program
  - An AARP grant application to fund planning and installation of a temporary "proof of concept" pedestrian plaza around the Market House in last summer 2026.
- **Public Works Department:** Public Works Director Woody Coe reported that staff responded during the previous month to four water leaks, one sewer backup, and 35 frozen meters. The total cost for trash, recycling, and yard waste collection during December was \$3,800. The department has made two new hires but still has two vacancies.
- **Police Department:** Chief Mike King reported 20 police service calls, including 13 assists to the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. Notable incidents included an embezzlement complaint that resulted in an arrest and a shooting homicide reported at University Heights.

# Town Council Activities Cont...

— March 16

The Town Council and Planning Commission held a joint workshop on Monday, March 16, at 6:45pm.

The workshop focused on the Town's Planned Unit Development (PUD) Ordinance and recommended updates to the ordinance. (More on PUDs on the next page.)

This session was intended as an educational workshop for Town Council and Planning Commission members. The workshop was broadcast live via Zoom.

No votes were taken during the meeting.



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- In recognition of Sexual Assault Awareness Month, the Town Council also approved a request from the Eastern Panhandle Empowerment Center to display teal ribbons on town trees throughout April. This year marks the 25th-annual observance of the campaign, which aims to raise awareness and support survivors.

- The Council approved several donations to support Town services and community improvements as well, including a \$100 cash donation from the Women of the Moose to assist the Police Department with operational expenses, and the donation of a used vehicle from the City of Martinsburg for police use.

- Additionally, the Council accepted an in-kind contribution valued at approximately \$15,000–\$20,000 from the Friends of the Rumsey Monument, Inc., which will support improvements at Rumsey Monument Park, including parking spaces, concrete pads for a bicycle rack and signage, and landscaping enhancements.

- Finally, the Council approved the proposed FY28 Operating Budget in the format as required by the State. The Operating budget outlines projected FY27 revenues of \$3.03 million and expenditures of an equal amount for the upcoming fiscal year in accordance with state requirements. The Operational Budget will be submitted to the State and printed in the Spirit newspaper in the coming weeks as required by State law.

- The FY 2027 Operating Budget is balanced, fully funds essential operations, and maintains a responsible contingency reserve. Overall, the budget reflects conservative financial assumptions while continuing to support Town priorities, including public safety, public works, community engagement, and ongoing modernization of government operations.

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## Special Meeting – March 19

The Town Council held a special meeting on Thursday, March 19, to address several items related to community initiatives, donations, and the Town's upcoming fiscal year budget:

- The Council approved funding for cash prizes associated with the upcoming “Welcome to Shepherdstown” Banner Contest, building on previously approved funding for the production of new banners.



**DID YOU KNOW?**

## **Basics of Planned Unit Development (PUD) as a Zoning Strategy**

A Planned Unit Development (PUD) is a zoning approach that provides more flexibility in how the land is used when compared to a more traditional zoning approach, including flexibilities in building types, layout, and housing options, allowing for a more efficient and thoughtfully designed project.

For example, instead of requiring every home to sit on a fixed-size lot, a neighborhood developed under a PUD approach can allow a mix of housing types and shared spaces, resulting in a more cohesive and functional neighborhood while maintaining overall density.

While PUDs allow flexibility, it is not informal or arbitrary. The process is guided by an ordinance and established standards, with the Town working alongside applicants (the developer) to refine project details such as layout, open space, and overall design to ensure alignment with community goals.

### **Shepherdstown's Current PUD Ordinance**

The Town of Shepherdstown enacted its current PUD ordinance in October 2007. To date, the Shepherd Village and Sage Place neighborhoods, approved in 2016, represent the first and only developments completed under the Town's PUD ordinance.

It was recently learned that the current Shepherdstown ordinance is based completely on an ordinance enacted by the City of Morgantown to address its development needs more than 25 years ago. As a result, portions of Shepherdstown's current PUD ordinance do not align well with the current planning needs of our town.

The Town Council and Planning Commission are now investigating ways to update and amend the Shepherdstown PUD ordinance to ensure it more closely reflects Shepherdstown's current situation and specific conditions, planning goals, and policy priorities.

**NEW**

# New Business Spotlight



## \* The Study Hall Sports Pub \*

A new addition to downtown Shepherdstown is bringing fresh energy to a long-vacant space on East German Street. The Study Hall Sports Pub, now open at 126 East German Street, offers a welcoming atmosphere with classic American-style food, friendly service, and a lively, community-oriented feel.

While the name is new, the two-level space may feel familiar to longtime residents, as it was previously home to Tony's Pizza and Stonewall's Underground Pub. The new owners have re-imagined the location with a mix of dining, entertainment, and social space, including a game room and an inviting rear patio.

The upstairs restaurant has opened with a soft launch, with a grand opening planned soon (at press time) following final approvals. Looking ahead, plans for the downstairs and outdoor areas include trivia nights, karaoke, and live local music.

The Study Hall Sports Pub offers both dine-in and take-out options and reflects the continued strength of Shepherdstown's small business community and downtown vitality.



# Shepherdstown Farmers Market Enjoys Busy Outdoor Return

With the arrival of spring, the Shepherdstown Farmers Market returned to its outdoor location on South King Street near the Market House on Sunday, March 29. The Market is now open every Sunday from 9am-1pm, continuing a long-standing community tradition that connects residents with local farmers, producers, and artisans.

Opening day brought a strong turnout from both locals and visitors, who gathered despite brisk early-spring temperatures. Eventually, with sunshine overhead and a lively atmosphere throughout the morning, it was clear the return outdoors was well worth the anticipation.

Over the winter months, the Market successfully transitioned indoors on Sundays, and now that momentum carries forward outdoors, where locals and visitors alike can once again enjoy fresh seasonal produce, meats, and more, as well as baked goods, handcrafted items, and the vibrant energy that has made the Market a cornerstone of the Shepherdstown community.

## Public Participation at Town Hall



Shepherdstown Town Council meetings are held the second Wednesday of each month and are open to the public both in-person and via Zoom. Residents are encouraged to attend and stay engaged in local government.

The Town also relies on volunteers to serve on boards, commissions, and committees throughout the year.

Residents interested in getting involved are encouraged to contact the Town Clerk at: [clerk@shepherdstown.us](mailto:clerk@shepherdstown.us) or call **304-876-2312** for more information.

# Shepherdstown Presentation Draws Strong Response Following ACFF Screening



A sold-out audience filled the Frank Center Theater at Shepherd University on Friday, March 13, for the American Conservation Film Festival (ACFF) screening of ‘Unless Something Goes Terribly Wrong,’ a documentary exploring the challenges facing aging municipal wastewater infrastructure across the country.

Following the screening, Shepherdstown Mayor James Gatz joined Public Works Director Woody Coe and Wastewater Chief Operator Kenny Shipley for a presentation and audience discussion highlighting the Town’s modern wastewater treatment facility and the systems that protect public health and the Potomac River.

More than half of the audience remained after the film for the presentation and Q&A session, where attendees learned about Shepherdstown’s wastewater infrastructure, including the Town’s membrane filtration treatment system, Chesapeake Bay compliance requirements, and the operational work carried out daily by the Town’s water and wastewater staff. (For a detailed look, visit [last month’s Newsletter right here](#) – pg. 7.)

Gatz opened the discussion by emphasizing the importance of maintaining strong local infrastructure and investing in qualified personnel to operate it.

“Our wastewater system is one of the most important public services the Town provides, even though most people never see it,” he said. “We are extremely proud of the facility we have in Shepherdstown and the professionals who operate it every day to protect public health and the river that flows through our community.”

During the presentation, Shipley walked attendees through a visual overview of the Town’s wastewater treatment process, explaining how the system safely treats wastewater before it is returned to the Potomac River. Both he and Coe, as well as Gatz, also answered a range of audience questions about system operations, environmental protections, and the challenges communities face when infrastructure is not properly maintained.

Audience members commented afterward on both the educational impact of the film and their appreciation for learning more about Shepherdstown’s system and the people responsible for operating it.



## **New Art Bench Unveiled Downtown to Great Reception**

Mayor James Gatz and the Town Council Public Works Committee unveiled another new artistic bench on Saturday, March 7, marking the second installation as part of the Town’s revitalized Art Bench initiative. The striking new bench, created by local artist Brandon Nicklas, now resides in front of McMurrin Hall—known locally as “The Wall”—along German Street downtown.

Sponsored by the Town and administered through the Town Council Public Works Committee, the project reflects Shepherdstown’s continued investment in public art and creative placemaking. The Town funded the bench and provided a stipend to the artist.

During the unveiling, the Mayor offered brief remarks before Nicklas dramatically removed a large purple sheet covering the bench, revealing the design to an enthusiastic crowd gathered for the event. Applause and cheers quickly followed as it became clear that the theme Nicklas selected was both imaginative and deeply rooted in regional culture.

Nicklas explained that the bench’s theme—“Appalachian Cryptids”—was inspired by the folklore and mysterious creatures that have long been part of the region’s storytelling tradition. The design brings together a collection of legendary figures associated with Appalachian lore, blending local history, myth, and a touch of humor.

Featured cryptids depicted on the bench include: Mothman, the Grafton Monster, the Flatwoods Monster, Veggieman, a Snallygaster, a Sheepsquatch, an Ogua, a Snarly Yow, and Bigfoot.

With its playful tribute to Appalachian legend, the new bench adds another distinctive element to Shepherdstown’s growing collection of public art.

More art benches are expected to be announced in the coming months as the initiative continues to grow.

# Shepherdstown to Launch Pilot Community Composting Project



Shepherdstown is preparing to launch a pilot program to collect food scraps and yard waste from up to 30 households. The goal is to turn everyday materials that normally go to the landfill into valuable resources that stay right here in our community.

Food scraps collected through the pilot will be composted at Shepherd University's Tabler Farm, creating nutrient-rich compost for local soil. Yard waste will be processed into mulch that can support gardens, landscaping, and community green spaces.

This pilot will help the Town test approaches and learn what collection and composting strategies will work best for our community. It is planned that the pilot will start with weekly curbside collection, different container options, and educational materials as we explore whether a full community-wide service is feasible and advisable.

## Why Composting? Why Now?

Composting is one of the most effective ways for small towns to reduce waste and strengthen environmental resilience.

- Reduces landfill waste: Food and yard waste make up a large portion of what we throw away. Composting keeps these materials out of the landfill and reduces methane emissions.
- Improves local soils: Compost and mulch enrich gardens, landscapes, and farms—helping retain moisture, reduce erosion, and support healthier plants.
- Keeps resources local: Instead of paying to haul waste away, we can turn it into something useful right here in Shepherdstown.

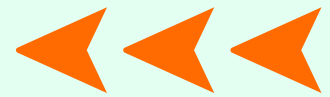
— Responding to community interest: Residents, students, and local gardeners have increasingly asked for composting options that support sustainable living. With rising disposal costs, regional environmental goals, and strong community enthusiasm, this is the right moment for Shepherdstown to explore a composting service. And it is one of the strategies of Shepherdstown's 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

## Interested in Participating?

In the next few weeks, the Town will release a short survey to gauge interest in joining the pilot, including by participating in weekly food-scrap and yard-waste pickup. Your feedback will help shape the design and cost of this service and guide next steps.

Watch for the survey on the Town website, social media, and in the next newsletter. Or you can let Karl Musser, Shepherdstown's new Project Manager and Planner, know you are interested in participating. He is available at [kmusser@shepherdstown.us](mailto:kmusser@shepherdstown.us).

# Share Your Input: Regional Transportation Survey Now Open



The Hagerstown/Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization (HEPMPO) is currently updating its Long-Range Transportation Plan and is seeking input from residents across the region, including Shepherdstown.

As the federally designated transportation planning organization for Washington County, MD, and Berkeley and Jefferson Counties in West Virginia, HEPMPO works with local and state partners to plan for future transportation needs.

This includes roads, transit, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, as well as broader issues such as safety, congestion, freight movement

and overall quality of life. As part of this effort, HEPMPO has launched an online survey to better understand current conditions and identify priorities for the future.

The survey includes questions related to road improvements, transit options, sidewalks, traffic concerns, bike paths, maintenance needs, and accessibility.

Residents are encouraged to take a few minutes to complete the survey, which will remain open through April 30, 2026: <https://metroquestsurvey.com/ox8t8j>

In addition to the survey, HEPMPO will host a series of public meetings—each with a virtual option—to gather further input:

- April 22, 5:30–6:30pm – Charles Town (Charles Town Library, Meeting Room – Basement)
- April 23, 5:30–6:30pm – Martinsburg (Martinsburg Public Library, Martinsburg Room – Top Floor)
- April 28, 5:30–6:30pm – Hagerstown (Washington County Free Library, Conference Room 334)

Additional information, including links to the survey and background materials, can be found at [www.hepmo.net](http://www.hepmo.net). Written comments may also be submitted by mail or email, and must be received by April 30, 2026. (Contact info here: <https://hepmo.com/about-us/contact/>)

Community input plays an important role in shaping future transportation planning across the region, and residents are encouraged to participate!

# 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 "2026"—and then the Video link within the "Resources" column that coincides with that date/time.

## Meetings:

- Town Council: Wednesday, April 8, 6:30pm.
- Age-Friendly Shepherdstown: Wednesday, April 15, 1:30pm.
- Finance Committee: Wednesday, April 1, 6:30pm.
- Grants Committee: Tuesday April 7, 6:15pm.
- Historic Landmarks Commission Monday, April 6, 6pm.
- Planning Committee: Monday April 20, 6pm.
- Public Works Committee Monday, April 27, 6:30pm.
- Parks & Rec Committee Tuesday, April 28, 6pm.
- Tree Commission: Thursday, April 9, 6pm.
- Water/Sanitary Board: Thursday, April 23, 6pm.
- Special Town Council: Tuesday, April 21, 6:30pm.



## 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.

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