

August 2026

Shepherdstown
WEST VIRGINIA

TOWN HALL NEWSLETTER

Hello neighbors,

The month of July brought our Town a complex mixture of sadness and joy. We were shocked and deeply saddened by the tragic passing of two individuals—both of whom were very important to our town—and at the same time, we experienced an ample serving of joy and wonder by way of the Contemporary American Theater Festival throughout the month.

In remembrance, we mourn the loss of beloved community member, Steven Bullock, and our hearts go out to his partner, Allison Jones, and all who loved him. A celebration of Steven's life will take place on Tuesday, August 4, at The Mecklenberg Inn, from 6-9pm. Read more about Steven on page 3.

In addition, Gary McDowell, a dedicated Town employee and member of our Public Works and Sanitation teams for more than 41 years, passed away last week. Gary will be remembered for his humility, kindness, dependability, and willingness to step up and help where needed. Our entire community is extremely lucky to have had Gary with us for so many years. Please keep Gary's family in your thoughts.

Key Developments at Town Hall

- Our new Town Council was sworn into office on July 1, and hit the ground running. I look forward to the commitment they will bring to the work ahead!
- The Town has contracted with Native Havens Landscaping to improve and maintain our downtown flower beds.
- Staff continues to develop the plan for a short-term plaza pilot near the Market House that reflects the ideas and concerns submitted by residents.
- We are actively moving forward with the purchase of the former Shepherdstown Elem. School building—a promising long-term opportunity for the community.

As always, my office hours are the fourth Wednesday of each month at 6:30pm at Town Hall. Please stop by or reach me anytime at jgatz@shepherdstown.gov.

With gratitude,

— James Gatz



Friends of Shepherdstown Library Summer Book Sale

The [Friends of Shepherdstown Library](#) (FOSL) will host their annual [Summer Book Sale](#) from August 12-15, offering a wide selection of books for readers of all ages while supporting the Library's programs and services.

Community members wishing to donate new or gently used books may do so beginning August 5. (Please wait until August 5 to drop off donations, as storage space is limited.)

The Friends are also seeking volunteers to help with book sale setup, organizing, and cleanup. High school students looking to earn volunteer service hours are especially encouraged to participate.

Folks looking to volunteer can sign up [HERE](#).

Celebrating Another Successful CATF Season!



As another Contemporary American Theater Festival (CATF) season comes to a close, Shepherdstown once again celebrates one of the community's most distinctive and nationally recognized cultural traditions.

From July 10 through August 2, theatergoers from across the region and beyond gathered on the Shepherd University campus to experience five contemporary productions—including four world premieres—as part of the 2026 Festival.

This season featured productions of *The Smoker*, by Lisa D'Amour; *Refugee Rhapsody*, by Yussef El Guindi; *Best Line Wins*, by Beth Kander; *¡VOS!*, by Christina Pumariega; and *My Favorite Sociopath*, by Aurin Squire.

Beyond the performances themselves, audiences also participated in more than 30 talktheater events, including backstage tours, artist discussions, lectures, public changeovers, and post-show conversations that gave theatergoers a deeper understanding of the creative process and the ideas explored on stage.

“I’m often asked if the season is going well—is it successful?” said CATF Artistic Director, Peggy McKowan. “It’s a challenging question to briefly answer, but for me, I’m proud of the quality of our work and the improvements we made in our process—to ensure that artists and audiences have a profound connection. This summer feels exciting, rewarding, and joyous. I feel that we inched closer to our dreams of CATF.”

Each summer, CATF contributes not only to Shepherdstown's cultural life, but also to the vitality of the community, welcoming thousands of visitors who support local restaurants, shops, lodging, and businesses while experiencing one of the country's premier destinations for new American theater.

The Town of Shepherdstown extends its congratulations and thanks to the artists, staff, volunteers, Shepherd University, and everyone who helped make another successful festival season possible!

In Remembrance —

Steven Bullock | 1954–2026



The Shepherdstown community lost one of its own last month, and while he hadn't been here long, Steven Bullock had already made his mark as a fixer, a friend, and someone who "fit right in."

Born in Boston and raised primarily in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, Steven eventually settled in Portland, Oregon. In the years that followed, he regularly traveled back to Louisiana to care for his mother as she lived with dementia.

He met his partner and current Shepherdstown resident, Allison Jones, in 2011 at a high-end furniture store. "He happened to be sitting on a sofa called The Hollywood, and for a while, that became his nickname," she explained.

They moved together to Seattle after a close friend of Steven's offered him a job, and spent the next decade in the Pacific Northwest.

Ten years later, and they were ready for a change, which ultimately took them to New Orleans, where Hurricane Ida changed their minds again in August 2021. Another friend of Steven's had a historic home in Charles Town, so the couple landed in West Virginia for the first time—where they eventually discovered Shepherdstown.

"After our first visit, we kept returning, and one afternoon, I looked at him and said, 'If we're going to live in this area, it has to be here,'" Allison remembered.

Everything sort of fell into place from there, and Allison and Steven officially landed in downtown Shepherdstown in October 2024. For two people with diverse skill sets—from artist to craftsmen to writer to designer, and more, the couple felt like a puzzle piece sliding perfectly into position.

"We absolutely fell in love with Shepherdstown," she emphasized. "Every day, we woke up feeling grateful to be here. The community welcomed us with open arms, and in a very short time, we formed some incredibly strong friendships. Steven felt exactly the same way. We were constantly talking about how fortunate we were to have found this place. It felt like a forever place for us."

For a true "Mr. Fix-It," according to Allison, Steven found a rhythm in Shepherdstown almost immediately—but it was the person inside, she noted, that likely connected most deeply. "He was a man of great intention. He practiced unconditional love, and was simply there for people. He loved animals, nature, music, literature, art, and film. He was smart, funny, thoughtful, kind, respectful, and had the goofiest sense of humor. He touched so many lives—had close friends in San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, New Orleans, Austria, and now West Virginia. He lived a wide life."

But most of all, she said, "He loved me. I had the honor of spending fifteen years by his side. We referred to ourselves as 'Team Bullock.' He had a beautiful mind—could figure anything out. He was a free spirit, completely unique. What I truly admired about him was that he found his own way through life and built a career around the things he was naturally good at. I've never met anyone like him. We genuinely enjoyed each other's company."

Allison added, "Since Steven passed, my family has grown exponentially. Friends from every place we've ever lived, and especially here in Shepherdstown, have reached out asking what they can do. It's a reminder of just how many lives he touched, and I'm so grateful for that."

Making Room for Creativity in Shepherdstown

For Amanda Berry and Jonathan Schmidt, opening Make It Shepherdstown wasn't simply about starting a business—it was about creating a space where creativity could be shared.



After calling Shepherdstown home for the past 15 years, the couple came across an opportunity and decided to open a place where anyone—regardless of experience—could explore their own creativity in a relaxed, welcoming environment.

Located at 109 S. Princess Street, Suite B, **Make It Shepherdstown** officially opened on April 1, a date the owners chose intentionally.

"We wanted to promote being lighthearted and having more fun than being professional," Jon explained. "Being creative can be intense and serious, but it also has plenty of room to be silly and full of comedic relief—and we think everyone could use some of that."

Visitors will find far more than a traditional art studio. The space offers everything from sewing machines, embroidery equipment, paints, canvases, and polymer clay to Cricut vinyl cutters, a heat press, an airbrush kit, a basic woodworking bench, and even 3D printers. The goal, however, isn't simply providing equipment—it's creating an atmosphere that feels comfortable enough for creativity to flourish.

"We wanted it to have an 'at-home' feel," said Amanda. "People can take their projects home or leave them here until next time—and they don't even have to worry about cleaning up."

Looking ahead, the owners hope Make It Shepherdstown continues to grow as a gathering place for artists and makers of every age and experience level.

"We want everyone, from every walk of life, to come in, meet, and make."

A New Welcome Takes Shape in Shepherdstown

Beginning this month, visitors and residents alike will notice a new look welcoming them to Historic Shepherdstown.

The Town's new Welcome Banners—featuring the winning design from local artist Danielle Corsetto—will appear on light poles throughout the historic district, adding another colorful and uniquely Shepherdstown touch to the community streetscape.

Selected through the Town's Welcome Banner Contest earlier this year, Corsetto's design was chosen for its creative interpretation of the people, places, and character that make Shepherdstown such a special place to live and visit.

"I wanted to feature a scene in Shepherdstown that's well-loved by visitors, but also very special to the people who live here, including college kids," she explained. "As a resident, the Rumsey Monument is my favorite destination, but I also have fond memories of visiting the overlook as a student. The Canada geese are a nod to the original native name of the Potomac River, Cohongaroota, which translates to something like 'the sound of the wild geese,' and was also the name of the old yearbooks at Shepherd College."

Mayor Gatz said the new banners represent more than simply a fresh look for downtown. "There are so many things that are unique about Shepherdstown that it's difficult to capture them all in a single design. Danielle created something that reflects the inviting spirit of our community, and I think residents and visitors alike will enjoy seeing the banners throughout town."

Corsetto added, "I'm honored to have my artwork featured around town! There are so many incredible artists in Shepherdstown, and between Town Hall's recent uptick in commissioning new public art, the university students' murals, and spaces like Skull City Studio and Make It Shepherdstown, I feel like the town's visual art scene is becoming more visible to people who may only know us for theater or music."

The Town extends its appreciation to everyone who participated in the Welcome Banner Contest. The creativity and enthusiasm shown by all entrants helped celebrate the community spirit that makes Shepherdstown so special.



Spotlight: Shepherd University's New President



Dr. Cameron B. Wesson
17th President of Shepherd University

The Town of Shepherdstown extends a warm welcome to Dr. Cameron B. Wesson, who officially began serving as the 17th president of Shepherd University on July 1.

Dr. Wesson joins Shepherd following leadership roles at La Salle University, Franklin & Marshall College, and several other

institutions during a higher education career spanning more than three decades. An archaeologist by training, he succeeds Dr. Mary J.C. Hendrix, who served as Shepherd's president since 2016.

"We're pleased to welcome Dr. Wesson to Shepherdstown," said Mayor Gatz. "Shepherd University is an essential part of our community, and the relationship between the Town and the university benefits our residents, students, businesses, and visitors alike. We look forward to working with Dr. Wesson and continuing the strong partnership that has long existed between our two institutions."

Dr. Wesson echoed the mayor, emphasizing the special relationship between SU and the Town. "The university is woven into the life of this community, and the community, in turn, enriches the experience of every Shepherd student," he said. "From my very first day on campus, I've been struck by the warmth, pride, and sense of place that define Shepherdstown. I look forward to building on these strong relationships as we work together to ensure both the university and the town continue to thrive."

The Town wishes Dr. Wesson every success as he begins this new chapter at Shepherd University and looks forward to the opportunities ahead through continued collaboration between SU and the Shepherdstown community.



Come Out for First Friday Music – August 7

Shepherdstown's First Friday "[Shepherdstown LIVE](#)" music series continues on Friday, August 7, from 5–7pm, with another evening of free live music, downtown shopping, dining, and community fun.

This month's featured performer is [Undertone](#), bringing live music to the Town Hall Plaza (104 N. King Street). Residents and visitors are invited to stop by, enjoy the performance, and spend the evening exploring everything downtown Shepherdstown has to offer.

Held monthly from May through October, the First Friday series is presented by [Experience Shepherdstown](#) and the Town of Shepherdstown, and celebrates local music while encouraging the community to support Shepherdstown's shops, restaurants, and small businesses.

The event is sponsored by [Stoney's Pub](#) and [Nikki Visions Vol. 1](#).

Help Shape the Town You Love

Have you ever wondered how decisions are made about new development, land use, or long-term planning in Shepherdstown?



The Town is currently seeking volunteers to serve on the Shepherdstown Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission reviews matters related to the Town's physical development, including proposals for new construction, major redevelopment projects, and updates to the Town's zoning ordinances. Commissioners also help shape long-range planning efforts, working to ensure that future growth reflects the community's vision and priorities.

“We can’t just take it for granted that our town is such a special place,” said Commission Vice President, Madge Morningstar. “So many big and little decisions happen behind the scenes that can either help or hurt what we love about living here. Learning about that process, and being part of it, has really deepened my appreciation for everything that is unique and wonderful about Shepherdstown.”

While much of the Commission's work involves reviewing plans and considering regulations, its broader mission is helping Shepherdstown balance thoughtful growth with preservation, ensuring that future decisions support both today's residents and generations to come.

“We all have things we'd like to improve in our town,” said Commission member Lauren Chapalee. “Serving on the Planning Commission is a chance to be part of the solutions—not just worry about the problems. When we bring diverse perspectives to a shared goal, we get better outcomes for everyone.”

The Planning Commission meets on the third Monday of each month at 6pm at Town Hall. Residents interested in serving or learning more about the Planning Commission can **[Click Here](#)** for additional information.



A Look Ahead at Spring Tree Planting

The Shepherdstown Tree Commission, under the new chair Robin McGrorty, is beginning to plan its spring tree planting efforts, continuing its great work under previous chair Linus Bicker to enhance and expand the town's tree canopy.

Trees play an important role in the health and character of Shepherdstown, and the Commission is currently developing plans for next year's planting season. It will share additional information with the community as the project develops, including opportunities for residents to learn more and get involved.

As a first step, the Tree Commission is actively seeking new planting sites. Within this first stage, the Commission is asking residents to let them know if they have a spot near their house that is on Town property, which they think could be a place for a new tree.

All suggestions will be assessed for feasibility in partnership with Public Works. The Tree Commission meets on the second Thursday of each month at 6:30pm at Town Hall. Residents are welcome to attend and learn more about the Commission's ongoing work to care for Shepherdstown's urban forest.

Suggestions should be emailed to either Gino Sisco (Town Administrator) or Amy Boyd (Town Clerk) at Town Hall:

gsisco@shepherdstown.gov
aboyd@shepherdstown.gov

Annual Legendary Book Sale Needs Volunteers for 2026 Event



Each year, the Shepherdstown Community Club's **Legendary Book Sale** transforms the War Memorial Building (102 E. German St.) into a treasure trove for book lovers while raising funds that support the War Memorial Building and Morgan's Grove Park.

This year's sale will run from September 18–27, but before the first books find new homes, the Community Club is looking for volunteers to help make it all happen.

— The following days, times, and tasks need volunteer help!

Saturday, August 29 | 1:00–4:00pm | Transport books from the Morgan's Grove Park Pavilion (drop-off point) to storage.

Thursday, September 10 | 10:00am–3:00pm | Transport bookshelves from storage to the War Memorial Building.

Saturday, September 12 | 10:00am–3:00pm | Transport books from storage to the War Memorial Building.

Tuesday, September 29 | 10:00am–3:00pm | Transport books from the War Memorial Building back to storage.

Wednesday, September 30 | 10:00am–3:00pm | Transport bookshelves from the War Memorial Building back to storage.

Remember, you do not need to volunteer for the entire shift. Even one or two hours makes a big difference, and you are welcome to help on just one day or as many days as your schedule allows.

If you're able to lend a hand, email **blhuillier@icloud.com** with the day(s) and time(s) you're available.

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, August 12, 6:30pm.
- Age-Friendly Shepherdstown: Wednesday, August 19, 1:30pm.
- Finance Committee: Wednesday, August 5, 6:30pm.
- Grants Committee: Tuesday, August 4, 6:30pm.
- Historic Landmarks Commission: Monday, August 3, 6pm.
- Planning Commission: Monday, August 17, 6pm.
- Public Works Committee: Monday, August 24, 6:30pm.
- Parks & Rec Committee: Tuesday, August 25, 6pm.
- Tree Commission: Thursday, August 13, 6:30pm.



Mayor's Office Hours:

Fourth Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm, Town Hall.
Email 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.
