

October 2026

Shepherdstown  
WEST VIRGINIA

# TOWN HALL NEWSLETTER

**Hello neighbors,**

As usual, our Town is chock-full of special fall events this month, and I encourage you to come downtown and experience this special place.



That said, I want to highlight some important happenings at Town Hall:

- Town Council will consider a new ordinance that would authorize owners of property with single-family homes to build Accessory Dwelling Units (sometimes known as “mother-in-law” suites) on their property.
- At the request of area residents, the Town is planning changes to traffic patterns and enforcement on the very narrow streets in the neighborhood west of Duke Street and North of Route 45, with the goal of increasing safety and deterring drivers from using those streets to avoid the four-way stop.
- The Town is continuing to recruit for volunteers for committees, including the Planning Commission, the Board of Appeals, and the Tree Commission—all of which are vital to the continued success of our Town.

Finally, I hope you're planning to participate at the annual Boo Fest event on Saturday, October 31, on German Street—a wonderful, spooky Town tradition. Bring your neighbors & friends as well!

— James Gatz, Shepherdstown Mayor

## A New Welcome to Shepherdstown



Visitors arriving in Shepherdstown from Maryland now have an updated resource to help them explore town. Located on Duke Street near the James Rumsey Bridge, across from the Bavarian

Inn, the Town's three-sided informational kiosk was originally developed several years ago in collaboration with the [Canal Town Partnership](#).

Recently, the Town worked with the Partnership to replace the outdated map displayed on the kiosk.

The new display features an updated map of Shepherdstown, local landmarks, places to shop, eat, and explore, and QR codes linking to additional information.

Especially useful for pedestrians and cyclists arriving from Maryland and the C&O Canal Towpath, the updated kiosk offers a welcoming introduction to Shepherdstown and helps visitors discover what the community has to offer.



## Making the Grade: Elementary School Property Update

The Town continues to explore the purchase of the former Shepherdstown Elementary School property.

At this time, the property remains under the ownership of the Jefferson County Board of Education (JCBOE), who is responsible for property maintenance, mowing, and weed control.

The JCBOE made the property available for purchase after the elementary school was relocated in early 2026. The Town made an offer of \$1.57 million for the 8.4-acre property this summer.

The purchase agreement provides an opportunity for the Town to conduct due diligence and explore financing options before Town Council decides whether to move forward with the purchase. Town Council anticipates making a final decision on whether to go forward with the purchase later this year.

As part of its due diligence and planning, the Town issued a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) seeking individuals or firms that can provide project coordination and technical expertise as the Town examines the purchase and potential future use or redevelopment of the property. Responses to the RFQ are due October 21.

No decisions have been made about the future use of the property. Should the Town ultimately move forward with the purchase, residents will have opportunities to provide input as part of the planning process.

– **We will continue to provide updates** through the Town newsletter, website, and at Town Council meetings as the process moves forward.

## Biz Spotlight: Wild Laurel Boutique

For Lauren Taylor, Founder of Wild Laurel Boutique (119 W. German St.), opening a shop of her own was a longtime ambition rooted in family, creativity, and a love of fashion and interiors.

Growing up in West Virginia, Taylor spent much of her childhood working in her parents' furniture store and gift shop. She eventually earned an MBA with hopes of starting her own business—and continues to work as a CPA.



Wild Laurel brings those interests together in a carefully curated mix of clothing, accessories, and home goods. “I wanted the clothing to feel polished but still relaxed and wearable—pieces you could wear to work, out to dinner, or just throughout everyday life,” she noted.

Alongside clothing and loungewear, shoppers will also find candles, seasonal décor, linens, table-setting accessories, and Shepherdstown-themed merchandise. Taylor pays particular attention to presentation, hoping the store feels inviting and full of unexpected discoveries.

For Taylor, Shepherdstown, felt like a natural home for the boutique. “I wanted Wild Laurel to add to the existing experience here and give people one more reason to spend an afternoon exploring Shepherdstown.”

Since opening, she has especially enjoyed building relationships with customers. Conversations with regulars help shape what she stocks, while visitors who discover the shop during a trip to Shepherdstown often continue following or shopping with Wild Laurel online.

Ultimately, she adds, the experience is as important as the merchandise. “I enjoy watching mothers, daughters, and granddaughters browse together, each finding something that reflects their own style. I want people to feel like they’ve discovered something special when they walk in.”

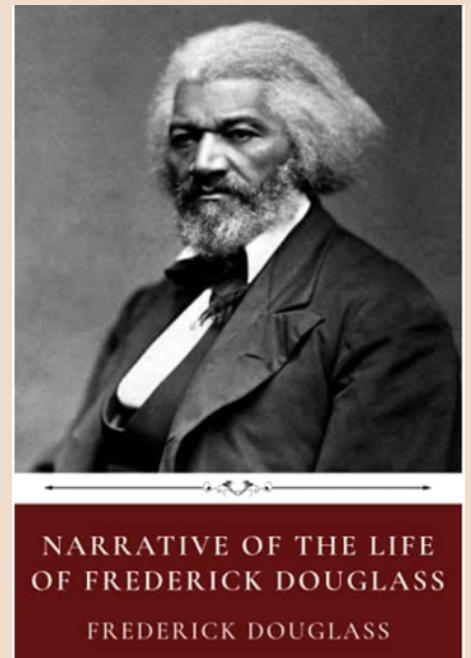
Looking ahead, Taylor hopes Wild Laurel becomes a familiar part of the downtown experience for both locals and visitors. “More than anything, I’d love for it to become a lasting part of the downtown community while still maintaining the personal, small-shop experience that makes it special.”



# Shepherdstown Kicks Off Common Reading Program

A new community-wide reading experience got underway on September 19, and everyone is invited to be part of it.

**The Details:** Shepherd University students selected Frederick Douglass' *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* for the university's 2026–2027 Common Reading Program. Now in its 20th year, the program brings the University and surrounding community together around a shared piece of literature and a year of reading, learning, and conversation.



First published in 1845, Douglass' autobiography recounts his experiences under slavery and became one of the most influential works associated with the abolitionist movement in the U.S.

**What to Expect:** Throughout the academic year, Shepherd and numerous other community partners will host a series of public events, including book discussions, a film screening, artistic demonstrations, and other activities, exploring Douglass's life, legacy, and impact on American history.

— We will keep the community up to speed on these events— and look forward to taking part with you!



## A Greener Vision for Downtown Shepherdstown

There's more to the new plantings around downtown Shepherdstown than meets the eye. Beyond adding color and character to the streetscape, the Town project is designed to support healthier

trees, attract pollinators, reduce maintenance needs, and make downtown an even more inviting place to explore.

The Town has contracted with Native Havens LLC, which is working alongside Bright Side Landscapes, to take a thoughtful, nature-based approach to transforming the Town's tree wells, beginning with four of the most prominent planting areas near the intersection of German and King Streets.

"We're studying the latest approaches in landscaping and trying to use plants as tools to meet common objectives," explained James Dillon, owner and senior designer at Native Havens.

Rather than relying on traditional wood mulch, the team is introducing native ground covers that create a living layer of vegetation, or "green mulch," to help keep soil temperatures cooler and improve growing conditions for trees.

"Those plants serve other purposes, too," said Dillon. "Some provide habitat for caterpillars, while others support specialized bees and pollinators at different times of year. Early-blooming varieties offer resources in March as well, while others flower into October and November."

The goal, he underscored, is a landscape that works throughout the seasons while offering something beautiful for residents and visitors to enjoy.

plantings cont ...

## Sleep, Creep, Leap

Dillon also sees the plantings as an opportunity to encourage people to slow down and spend more time downtown. That said, the work is unfolding in phases. Native Havens completed an initial round of planting ahead of Labor Day, installing approximately half of the planned vegetation while avoiding the risks associated with late-summer heat and dry conditions.



The first phase emphasized the four larger beds near German and King Streets, where ornamental plants provide a more noticeable visual impact. Smaller tree wells farther from the intersection will feature primarily native ground covers, emphasizing ecological benefits, tree health, and lower maintenance. Crews also removed existing soil and mulch, along with invasive plants, including Johnson grass, mugwort, and bindweed.

Ongoing care is another important part of the effort. Dillon said Native Havens will continue checking the plantings approximately once a week throughout the year, adjusting watering and maintenance as conditions require. He also hopes the improvements encourage nearby businesses and residents to take greater pride in the surrounding streetscape.

For those wondering when the full transformation will become visible, Dillon pointed to a familiar saying among gardeners: This plant is going to sleep, creep, and then leap.

“Much of this year's growth is happening below ground as new plants establish their roots,” he pointed out. “Next spring and summer should bring more visible growth, color, and activity.”

Dillon is especially motivated by what that could mean for downtown. “I’m very, very excited to show people what’s possible with plants and how pretty it can be,” he said. “I want to wow people, and I want people to have a butterfly and hummingbird experience in town.”

— Dillon made a special point to recognize Brian and the team at Bright Side Landscapes for their work helping bring this project to life.



# Constitution Day Parade Celebrates America's Founding Principles

Shepherdstown's 2026 Constitution Day Parade brought residents and visitors together on Saturday, September 19, for a spirited celebration of the U.S. Constitution, the principles of

American democracy, and the importance of civic participation. With over 100 people in attendance, the event reflected the community's enthusiasm for honoring the nation's founding document and the rights and responsibilities it continues to represent.

Participants made their way through downtown Shepherdstown carrying American flags and signs featuring passages from the Constitution, transforming German Street into a colorful reminder of the document's enduring significance.

A special highlight was an appearance by Ace Parsi, candidate for the U.S. House of Representatives in West Virginia's 2nd Congressional District. Following numerous local citizen-speakers, Parsi delivered a passionate speech about the Constitution, its importance to American democracy, and the responsibility citizens share in protecting the principles it establishes. His remarks provided a fitting conclusion to the day's celebration.

Beyond the parade itself, the gathering offered an opportunity for neighbors to come together, reflect on the country's democratic foundations, and recognize the continuing relevance of the Constitution in everyday civic life.

The Town extends its appreciation to everyone who participated, attended, and helped make this year's Constitution Day Parade such a memorable community occasion.



# Halloween Comes Alive in Shepherdstown This Month



Known as one of America's most haunted small towns, Shepherdstown embraces its spooky side throughout October, with a month of festivities culminating in the annual Shepherdstown Boo!Fest and Halloween night celebrations on October 31.

From ghostly encounters and family-friendly activities to live music, performances, art, and plenty of costumed revelry, the season offers something for just about everyone.

"Shepherdstown has the perfect atmosphere for the season!" said Ashley Nease of Experience Shepherdstown. "We have centuries-old lore, mystery, magic, and spookiness built into the town's character in every season, but it feels more aligned with the earlier darkness, crisper temperatures, and traditions of the Halloween season."

## Halloween cont ...



Nease pointed to the combination of the town's history and its creative, engaged community as the driving force behind the festivities. Local businesses, nonprofit organizations, Shepherd University, Town Hall, and dedicated volunteers all contribute to a calendar that extends well beyond Halloween weekend.

"These collaborations are indicative of the generous spirit of this town, and the fun we can have when we get together," she said.

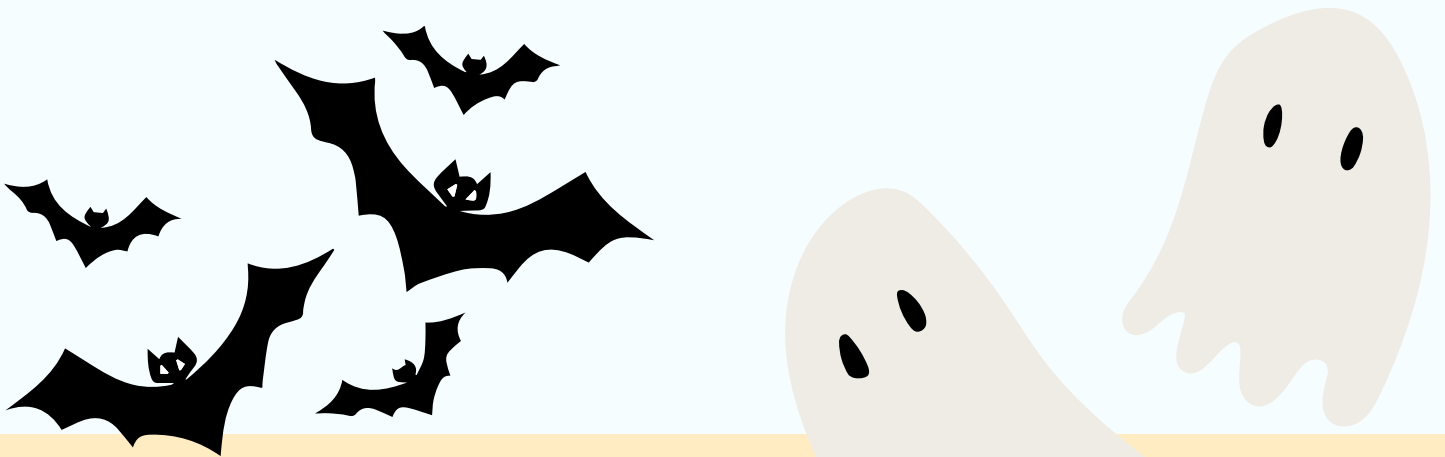
Among this year's highlights, Nease is especially looking forward to the annual Enchanted Tea and the Charles Washington Symphony Orchestra's Haunted Symphony performance on McMurrin Hall Lawn (directly downtown) during Halloween trick-or-treating.

Official trick-or-treating takes place Saturday, October 31, from 6–8pm, when several downtown streets will be closed to vehicles (map at the end of this newsletter) and the walkable heart of Shepherdstown—including the pilot plaza around the Market House—fills with costumed families and Halloween spirit.

With so much happening throughout the month, residents and visitors are encouraged to explore the full calendar and make the most of the season.

You can find the complete schedule of Halloween events [right here](#). The calendar is updated regularly as new activities are announced, so be sure to follow [Halloween in Shepherdstown on Facebook](#) for the latest additions and updates.

Whether you're coming for the frights, the festivities, or simply the atmosphere, there's plenty of Halloween spirit to discover in Shepherdstown this month!



# Town Council Formalizes Position on Immigration Enforcement



In response to concerns raised by residents about federal immigration enforcement, the Shepherdstown Town Council adopted a resolution on September 9, clarifying the Town's position on the role of local law enforcement, constitutional protections, and community trust.

Resolution No. 26-007 formally establishes Shepherdstown's longstanding practice of not participating in the federal 287(g) program (of the Immigration and Nationality Act), which allows U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to authorize local law enforcement officers to perform certain immigration enforcement duties under federal oversight.

While Shepherdstown has not participated in the program, its position had never been formally documented.

"The resolution was the result of numerous people in town asking for the Council to make a formal statement regarding the treatment of people by federal law enforcement, specifically, ICE," explained Town Council member Joe Yates, who introduced the measure.

Yates said the resolution followed research into the Town's legal obligations under West Virginia law and the options available to local governments.

Although state law requires cooperation with federal immigration authorities under certain circumstances, participation in the 287(g) program remains voluntary. The resolution makes clear that Shepherdstown will continue complying with mandatory state laws while declining to enter into a voluntary agreement with ICE.

The measure also reaffirms constitutional protections, including freedom of speech and assembly, protections against unlawful searches and entry onto private property, and the right to remain silent. It recognizes the public's right to observe and record law enforcement activities, provided doing so does not interfere with official duties.

## ICE cont ...

Additionally, the Council expressed opposition to any future requirement that municipalities participate in the 287(g) program, citing concerns about local budgetary and operational autonomy.

Importantly, the resolution does not authorize interference with lawful federal immigration enforcement. Rather, it seeks to clarify the Town's position, preserve accountability, and reinforce public trust.

For Yates, the action was also about responding directly to residents who wanted their local government to take a clear position.

“While Shepherdstown is not participating in the program, there was no formal position that the town had taken on the matter, and it was important to a number of citizens that we formalize our position,” he said.

Ultimately, Yates emphasized that the resolution reflects both the limits of the Town's authority and its responsibility to listen to the community. "The thing I would like the community to know about this issue," he emphasized, "is that we heard you and we acted."

## Legendary Book Sale Enjoys Record Year

The Shepherdstown Community Club's (SCC) annual **Legendary Book Sale** returned to the War Memorial Building September 18–27, welcoming residents and visitors for 10 days of browsing, bargain hunting, and discovering new reads.

According to Marianne Kehoe, a Community Club board member who's been involved in the event for about five years, the 2026 event was the most successful yet.

“Shoppers were delighted by the wide variety of titles available,” she noted. “The sale is one of the Club's two major annual fundraisers, helping support the maintenance and preservation of the War Memorial Building and Morgan's Grove Park, both owned and maintained by SCC.”

More than 50 volunteers, including Club members and community supporters, helped transport books, prepare the venue, staff the sale, and handle cleanup.





## Town Takes Steps to Secure More Grant Funding

The Town of Shepherdstown has taken a new step toward securing grants for community projects and long-term priorities through a contract with [Sustainable Strategies DC](#), a firm specializing in grant writing, fundraising, and strategic funding assistance.

Per the arrangement, Sustainable Strategies will assist the Town in identifying funding opportunities, developing competitive grant applications, and pursuing financial support for projects that might otherwise be difficult to advance with limited municipal resources.

“Shepherdstown starts off with advantages—it’s a wonderful place with good bones and smart people of good will, and a place that your state and federal politicians know is special and worthy of solid progress,” said Sustainable Solutions CEO Matt Ward.

A central part of the partnership, added Ward, will be the development of a “Resource Roadmap,” connecting the Town’s 2025 Comprehensive Plan and priority projects with potential funding sources.

Heather Iliff, the firm’s Principal and Director of Economic Mobility, explained that Sustainable Strategies will work directly with Town leadership, staff, and the [Shepherdstown Grants Committee](#) to put that roadmap into action.

“Our goal is to ensure that Shepherdstown punches above its weight in pursuing significant outside funding for its priorities,” she said.

Potential funding areas include water and sewer infrastructure, downtown revitalization, town livability, roads and sidewalks, historic preservation, and support for municipal planning and services such as fire, police, parks, and recreation.

Ward also stressed the importance of preparation before submitting applications. “It’s one thing to identify a priority, such as key goals in the Comprehensive Plan or high-priority projects,” he said. “It’s another thing to turn a priority into a grant-worthy project proposal.”

## – Water Rate Increases Under Review for 2027 –

The Town's Water & Sanitary Boards are reviewing rising costs of operating the water and sewer systems and whether core rate increases may be necessary to cover those costs later—by mid-2027.

Shepherdstown's most recent rate increase took effect in 2021, and operating expenses have continued to climb in the years since.

National cost indicators help illustrate the pressures facing water utilities. Between 2021 and 2026, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics' Water and Sewerage Maintenance Index have increased significantly.

Costs of chemicals and equipment needed to administer the systems have increase as well, and the Shepherdstown system has experienced increases comparable to the national trends.

The Boards will continue to review the rising costs and the potential for recommending that the Town Council change customer service rates at their monthly meetings.

**In the event the Boards recommend any rate increases,** the Town Council will convene a public hearing to obtain public input prior to making a decision on any changes. That said, the WV Public Service Commission would review any rate changes approved by the Council.

– **Additional information** about the proposed rates and implementation timeline will be shared as the review progresses.

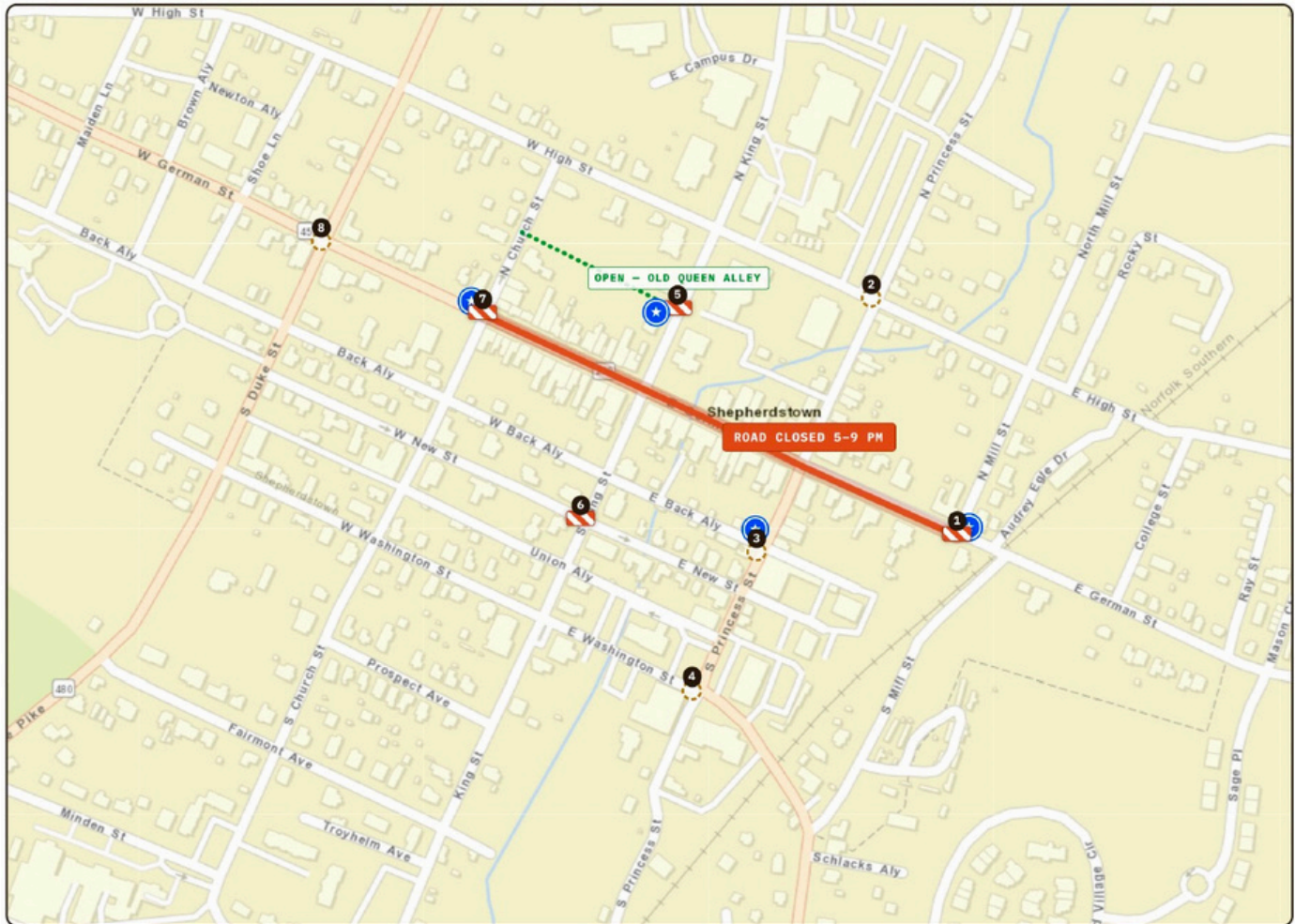


# Trick-or-Treat *Street Closures* & Barricade Map

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2026

CLOSURES EFFECTIVE 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

BARRICADES DEPLOYED FRIDAY, OCTOBER 30



## Barricades

Hard = striped - Soft = dashed ring - numbers match map

- 1 **HARD** ROAD CLOSED SIGN  
East German St @ North Mill St
- 2 **SOFT** ROAD CLOSED SIGN  
North Princess St @ East High St
- 3 **SOFT** CRUISER PARKED HERE  
South Princess St @ Old Back Alley entrance
- 4 **SOFT** NORTHBOUND - ROAD CLOSED SIGN  
South Princess St @ Washington St
- 5 **HARD**  
North King St @ Old Queen Alley
- 6 **HARD**  
South King St @ New St
- 7 **HARD**  
West German St @ Church St
- 8 **SOFT** EASTBOUND - ROAD CLOSED SIGN  
North Duke St @ German St

## Street Closure

- German Street — N Mill St to Church St, closed 5-9 PM
- Old Queen Alley — remains open all evening

## Police Cruisers

- ★ North Mill St & East German St
- ★ South Princess St @ Old Back Alley (barricade #3)
- ★ Church St & West German St
- ★ Police Department, Old Queen Alley

## Notes

**Deployment:** barricades placed Fri, Oct 30; ROAD CLOSED signs at E German @ Mill, N Princess @ High, S Princess @ Washington, N Duke @ German.

**Effective:** all closures take effect 5:00 PM sharp, Sat, Oct 31.

**Old Queen Alley** stays open to traffic throughout the event.

# Know Where to Go During Halloween!



# 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, October 14, 6:30pm.
- Planning Commission: Monday, October 19, 6pm.
- Age-Friendly Shepherdstown: Wednesday, October 21, 1:30pm.
- Joint Meeting: Water/Sanitary Boards Thursday, October 22, 6:30pm
- Public Works Committee: Monday, October 26, 6:30pm.
- Parks & Rec Committee: Tuesday, October 27, 1pm
- Special Town Council (tentative): Wednesday, October 28, 6:30pm.



## Mayor's Office Hours:

Fourth Wednesday of every month at 6:30pm, Town Hall. The office hours will be cancelled in cases where the Town Council schedules a special meeting at that time.

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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