

SHEPHERDSTOWN TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

July 8, 2026 – 6:30 p.m.

Town Hall – 104 North King Street and via Zoom

1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 6:38 p.m.

2. Attendance

Members Present: James Gatz (Gatz), Harriet Pearson (Pearson), Jim Auxer (Auxer), Marcy Bartlett (Bartlett), Cheryl Roberts (Roberts), Ashleigh Sanders (Sanders), Joe Yates (Yates).

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Amy Boyd (Boyd), Gino Sisco (Sisco), Maged Kirollos (Kirollos), Woody Coe (Coe), Karl Musser (Musser), Mike King (King), Hunter Wetzel (Wetzel).

Visitors Present: List of those who signed in is available from the Town Clerk.

3. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Special Town Council Minutes of June 8 and the Regular Town Council Minutes of June 10, with the correction of Sanders' first name (misspelled in the June 8 minutes) and Yates' preferred first name in the June 8 minutes, and the addition of a “Members Absent” line to both sets of minutes. Motion made by Bartlett, seconded by Roberts. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Public Comment Period

Kay Schultz, representing the Town Run Watershed steering committee, thanked the Town for its efforts to protect the old elementary school site via the Town's plan to purchase the site from the County Board of Education. Town Run Watershed offered to walk the site and point out water-related considerations.

5. Public Hearings – Second Reading of Planned Unit Development Ordinance Amendment and Replacement (continued)

The Mayor recapped the process followed starting last year to develop the proposed PUD ordinance, which if enacted will replace the existing ordinance (itself modeled after Morgantown, WV's original PUD ordinance, which has since been updated). The process included review by the Planning Commission and Town Council together with consultant Christopher Fletcher, former planning director for Morgantown, who prepared the draft for consideration. The first reading took place May 13, 2026. The second reading began at the June Town Council meeting, during which Bartlett proposed four amendments and former Councilmember Blessing asked for stronger language on affordable housing; Council adjourned to continue the second reading at a subsequent meeting.

To provide newly elected Council members time to review and consider the draft ordinance, Gatz moved to postpone continuation of the second reading until the August Town Council meeting and, in the meantime, to arrange a workshop opportunity for Council members with the consultant. Sanders seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

6. Mayor's Report and Proclamations

Proclamation: As part of recognizing good work by town staff and community members, the Mayor proposed, and the Council unanimously approved, a proclamation honoring Town resident Jim Schmitt for his work on the Hometown Heroes banners program. A framed copy of the proclamation was presented to Schmitt.

Mayor's Report: The Mayor reported on the following items:

- A retail market study will be undertaken by Experience Shepherdstown, the Town-supported nonprofit organization that is also responsible for the First Friday events series and Shepherdstown.info. The study, which will be posted for the community's use, will be performed by Jon Stover & Associates, a consulting firm with significant relevant experience. The study process will include business interviews and a community survey.
- While the Rotary Club's July 4 parade was cancelled due to the extreme heat, the Mayor expressed gratitude for the Shepherdstown Rotary's hard work, led by Darlene and Brian Truman, to prepare for the parade. The Mayor also acknowledged the Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Department's continuing, despite the heat, their annual tradition of carrying the American flag in a solemn procession on German Street. The Mayor noted that there is some discussion underway with the organizers of the September 19 Constitution Day parade about expanding that event.
- Tragically, a town resident was struck by an automobile at the corner of German and South King Streets on the morning of July 4. The Shepherdstown Police Department is investigating the incident.

7. Ongoing Business

- a. Market House Plaza Pilot/Demonstration – Update. The Mayor reported that the Town's application to AARP for a grant to support a demonstration pilot of a pedestrian-friendly plaza behind the Market House was approved. The amount of the grant is approximately \$14,000. Town staff is working on the design of the pilot with outreach to businesses and community members, and a post-pilot evaluation will be performed to inform future decisions. The Mayor noted that Councilmember Sanders and volunteer Leigh Ann Evanson agreed to prepare proposed evaluation criteria and process for the Town, with others welcome to join that work. The Council also discussed the importance of pedestrian safety with respect to the Market Plaza.
- b. Flower Bed Maintenance – Update. The Mayor reported that Native Havens is the firm the Town has chosen to hire to plant and maintain Town-owned flower beds (Church to Princess Streets on German Street, and one block north of German Street) going forward, with an emphasis on native plants and water conservation. Council discussed the importance of safety considerations when installing plantings, with respect to the height of plantings not obscuring visibility.
- c. Shepherdstown Elementary School Property – Update. The Town's attorney is working with the Board of Education to prepare documents for the planned acquisition; the 90-day timeline for completing the transaction starts when these documents are completed. The Town has already conducted a high-level environmental appraisal which noted the presence of some asbestos issues in tiles, window caulking, and possibly some interior walls. Noting that it will be some time before the Town takes possession of the school property, the Council discussed

issues to be considered such as the cost of carrying the property while it is vacant and the Town is working on a plan for the property, including the cost of vacant property insurance and responsibility for mowing.

- d. Artistic Benches – Update. Two new benches have been commissioned and are expected to be unveiled in August. The Council discussed the utility of the Town's having an overall plan for placement and replacement of publicly-owned benches.

8. New Business

a. Special Events Request – Vote

- i. Indivisible Event – July 17. Motion to accept the event application, moving the location to King Street between German and Old Queen Alley due to McMurrans construction and safety concerns (amended, on Chief King's recommendation, to keep Old Queen Alley open for emergency vehicle access). Motion made by Roberts, seconded by Yates. Motion passed unanimously.

b. Volunteer Applications – Vote

- i. Shepherdstown Planning Commission – Town Council considered the application of Michael Binder for the Planning Commission. Roberts moved to approve the application, Bartlett seconded the motion, and all voted aye.
- ii. Age Friendly Shepherdstown – Town Council considered the application of Louann Stovel to join the Age Friendly Shepherdstown committee. Bartlett moved to approve the application, Pearson seconded, and all voted aye.

- c. Resolution in Support of Petition Requesting the State to Complete the Path to Morgan's Grove Park. With minor edits, adding mention of “along Highway 480” and editing dates in the prefatory section, the Town Council voted unanimously in support of a petition to the state Department of Highways asking for completion, as soon as possible, of the much-anticipated bike/pedestrian path to the Library and Morgan's Grove Park, which after years of delay had been committed for completion in 2026 and has now been delayed again to 2027.

- d. Development of Ordinance on Accessory Dwelling Units – Discussion. The Mayor reported that Ryan Simonton, one of the Town's attorneys, is working on a draft ordinance on accessory dwelling units to conform to the requirements of a new state law on this topic; that law goes into effect January 4, 2027. The text of the draft ordinance should be available next month.

- e. Water Department FY27 Budget – Discussion. Council discussed the Water Department Board's authority to approve its own budget, which is currently operating at a deficit as water rates have not been adjusted since approximately 2021. The Water Board intends to apply for water rate increases, which would need to be approved by the Town Council and ultimately the state Public Service Commission, and would affect the public. Especially in light of these considerations, Town Council must remain connected to and aware of the Water and Sanitation/Sewer Board's work.

- f. Sanitation Department FY27 Budget – Discussion (see prior item).

- g. Donations to the Town – Discussion/Vote. Council discussed a proposed donation of approximately \$1,500 to \$2,000 to pay for a marker in Rumsey Park from Doug Perks, working with the Historic Shepherdstown wayside committee. Pearson and Roberts raised

the issue of making sure the new marker is compatible with existing and planned historic wayside markers. Pearson moved that the donation be approved with the requirement that a design and text of the wayside be provided to the Historic Landmarks Commission and the Mayor for review and approval. Roberts seconded, and all voted aye.

h. Town Applications for Grants – Status. Musser reported on grants awarded:

Recent:

- AARP grant for Market Plaza pilot project (previously discussed).
- Mills Group pro bono services grant for planning for redevelopment of the Tobacco Warehouse.

Older:

- Eastern West Virginia Community Foundation, \$4,000 for restoration of the Shepherd Burial Ground – currently working with Historic Shepherdstown on this.
- Chesapeake Bay Trust, \$4,000 for a food waste composting project – working with Tabler Farm on an MOU. There are 24 volunteers participating in the pilot project so far; the Town budgeted for 30.
- WV Office of Energy grant for ADA/energy-efficient doors – awarded in April; the project to install doors at Town Hall is in progress.
- Town applied to the Safe Streets and Roads for All grant for \$100,000 from the Department of Transportation; expect to hear back in December.
- Town applied for congressionally-directed funding for streetscape work; no word back on that.

Other Grant Activity:

- Town to provide a letter of support to Historic Shepherdstown, which is applying for a grant from the Preservation Alliance of West Virginia for replacement of the Entler Hotel's metal roof. Grant application deadline is July 31.

i. Planning Town Council Orientation and Retreat – Discussion. Council members are to let the Clerk, Amy Boyd, know of July evening dates for an orientation on Town government and Town Council processes. A retreat may also be scheduled, to be a structured meeting to get to know each other and discuss priorities.

9. Town Staff / Department Reports

a. Department Reports

Police – Chief King reported a relatively slow month in June (May was busy due to threats against schools). The accident on July 4, in which an individual was struck, is being investigated. The Chief urged everyone to be careful driving and walking.

Water/Sewer – It was noted that there is an error in the written report included in the meeting packet: the pedestrian/bike path project is actually now scheduled to be completed July 2027.

b. Town Financial Status – Finance Director Kirollos reported a true surplus of \$272,000 and projected a \$300,000 surplus for the entire fiscal year by the end of July 2026.

- c. Approval of Town Expenditures – Bartlett moved to approve, Roberts seconded, and all voted aye to approve the town expenditures listed in the packet.

10. Reports by Committees, Commissions, and Boards

Parks and Recreation Committee – Committee Chair Roberts expects to receive a cost estimate for a new historical marker (to replace a pre-existing marker at Rumsey Monument Park) and asked that this item be added to the August Town Council agenda for approval. The cost is estimated to be under \$2,000. The Parks and Recreation Committee did not meet in June due to lack of quorum.

Water Board and Sanitary Board – Bartlett reported that the Water Board plans to discuss what is needed to obtain approval for a water tariff increase. She also reported that PFAS testing in biosolids was done and all results are under State of Maryland standards, which are being used as a benchmark since West Virginia does not have established limits.

The Mayor encouraged Council members to be responsive with dates for orientation and retreat, which would include discussion of committee membership and structures.

11. Adjournment

Roberts moved to adjourn the meeting, Bartlett seconded, and all voted aye. Meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Prepared and respectfully submitted by Harriet Pearson, Recorder