SHEPHERDSTOWN SPECIAL TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

October 28, 2026 – 6:30 p.m.
Town Hall – 104 N. King Street, and via Zoom

1. Call to Order

Mayor Gatz called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. The agenda for this special meeting did not include a public comment period, but the Mayor offered to hear comments from anyone present. No members of the public spoke. At the Mayor's suggestion, Council agreed to take up the Shepherdstown Elementary School Property item at the end of the meeting.

2. Attendance

Members Present: James Gatz (Gatz), Mayor; Jim Auxer (Auxer); Marcy Bartlett (Bartlett); Harriet Pearson (Pearson); Cheryl Roberts (Roberts); Ashleigh Sanders (Sanders); and Joe Yates (Yates). Auxer participated via Zoom; all other members were present in person.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Gino Sisco (Sisco), Town Administrator; and Maged Kirollos (Kirollos), Finance Director.

Visitors Present: A list of those who signed in is available from the Town Clerk. Speakers included C. Kemmerling and M. Hope, Jefferson County VOLT; and A. Nease, Experience Shepherdstown.

3. Resolution – Voices Opposing Line Transmission

Gatz introduced the resolution opposing the Valley Link North, Gore-Doubs-Goose Creek, and Mid-Atlantic Resiliency Line projects, which was first presented at the previous meeting. C. Kemmerling and M. Hope of Jefferson County VOLT (Voices Opposing Line Transmission) answered questions from Council.

Auxer moved to adopt the resolution for the Mayor's signature, seconded by Sanders. During discussion, Council agreed to spell out "PATH" as the Potomac Appalachian Transmission Highline and to change "Project" to "Projects" in the title. The motion to adopt the resolution as amended passed unanimously.

4. Special Events Requests

A. Nease of Experience Shepherdstown presented the three requests.

a. First Friday November 6. The application had been submitted to Town Hall and circulated by email but was not included in the meeting packet. The event is an inflatable-costume race down King Street. Participants gather at 5:00 p.m. and the race starts at 5:15 p.m., within the usual 5:00–7:00 p.m. First Friday hours. King Street would be closed from Old Queen Alley (possibly from High Street) to German Street, and a hot beverage cart is possible. Sisco reported that staff had signed off on the application.

b. First Friday December 4. Festive First Friday will include a Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Department bonfire with s'mores on King Street, a carol performance in Reynolds Hall, and Girl Scouts caroling through the streets.

c. Holiday Kick-Off. The Holiday Kick-Off and tree lighting is on November 27. It will include Santa and Mrs. Claus in McMurran Hall, and storytelling by the library's children's librarian at the bonfire. Nease confirmed that both December events and the Kick-Off have been coordinated with the Fire Department, which will set up and staff the bonfires. The Town will decorate the parking meters the day before Thanksgiving. Holiday free parking will run from November 25, 2026 through January 4, 2027.

Auxer moved to approve all three special event requests, seconded by Bartlett. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Town Communications / Alerts – Discussion

Gatz reported on problems with Town alerts during the recent boil-water advisory. Staff who would normally have been involved were out of the office that day, and the Town's alert system did not deliver all messages. Town Hall is reviewing both its internal procedures, including standardized messages, and the alert system itself. The Town plans to ask residents to confirm or update their contact information by mail, with an online option, to help improve the quality of the contact data.

6. Holiday Lights – Discussion

Sisco reported that he had contacted the contractor that has hung the downtown holiday lights in past years. The contractor has provided insurance information covering the Town and holds a current Town business license. The cost is $4,080, an estimated 24–32 labor hours, for a four-person crew. The crew will use a lift at third-story locations and ladders elsewhere to rehang and inspect the existing lights and replace failed bulbs and cords; no new lights will be added. Before work begins, Town Hall will reconfirm permission from property owners, since the existing permission list dates from 2024.

Sisco will find out how the snowflake lights (about seven) will be installed this year. He also reported that five streetlights are out and have been reported to the electric utility with addresses and pole numbers. The Town has also asked the utility to correct streetlights that are not coming on at dusk. Police officers would typically be expected to report lights that are out. Council members were also asked to report outages to Town Hall.

7. Sidewalk along Highway 480 to Morgan Grove Park – Discussion

Gatz reported that he has been told the State's contractors expect to begin construction in mid-November. He has asked for written confirmation, which had not yet been received. There will be intermittent traffic disruptions, managed by flaggers during set hours, and residents may see road marking and flagging beforehand. The Town will announce the start in the Town newsletter once the date is confirmed.

8. Town Building Code – Discussion

Pearson presented her discussion paper, included in the packet, to gather Council input on the idea of the Mayor and Town staff drafting an ordinance adopting the West Virginia State Building Code by reference. She noted that the Town has no building code, although most of the surrounding county is covered by one, and that a code promotes safety and predictability in property sales and lending. Historic structures receive special considerations and exemptions, and the code would apply only to future work. The program could be kept lean by contracting out inspections and recovering costs through fees, though Town Hall would still need a staff point of contact.

Council members noted the value of interim inspections in catching poor construction. They raised implementation questions, including which staff member would run the program, how fees would be set, and how inspectors would be contracted. Members suggested coordinating with implementation of the property maintenance code, and noted that Shepherd University, as a state entity, would be exempt.

By consensus, Council asked the Mayor and Town staff to develop a draft ordinance and an implementation proposal for Council's consideration. No vote was taken, as none was required.

9. Traffic Issues on W. High Street and Surrounding Areas – Discussion

Gatz reported that the matter was discussed at a Public Works meeting earlier in the week. Public Works estimated about $6,800 to install the stop signs, one-way signs, and speed bumps shown on the map Roberts provided. Gatz has also consulted a consultant about an engineering review. The Town plans to start with the one-way signs and speed bumps as a pilot and get engineering input before investing further.

10. Shepherdstown Elementary School Property

Bartlett moved, seconded by Sanders, to enter executive session under W. Va. Code § 6-9A-4(b)(9) to discuss matters involving the purchase of real property. The motion passed unanimously, and Council entered executive session at approximately 7:15 p.m.

Pearson moved, seconded by Bartlett, to return to open session. The motion passed unanimously, and Council returned to open session at approximately 8:30 p.m. No action was taken.

11. Adjournment

Bartlett moved, seconded by Yates, to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

Prepared and submitted by Harriet Pearson, Recorder