

## INFORMATION TO SUPPORT KICK OFF OF SELECT COMMITTEE\*

1. The Select Committee should establish a Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary for the Committee. The Chair would have primary responsibility to deliver information to the Mayor and Town Council and can appoint a designee for those communications as well.
2. Article 1759 (Vacant and Uninhabitable Structures) may have elements that discourage abandoned housing and inform the work of the Select Committee. The oversight committee that is discussed in this ordinance has not yet been formed by the Town. The Select Committee is encouraged to review this Article and consider including the use of this ordinance in recommendations to Town Council if appropriate.
3. The Select Committee is encouraged to determine the appropriate look back period as it relates to the history of population decline in Harpers Ferry and the purpose of the Select Committee.
4. The Select Committee is encouraged to review programs that address population decline, housing availability, housing costs, and abandoned/blighted housing that have been considered, enacted and/or repealed by other municipalities in the United States. Towns with significant tourism and with a portfolio of historic architecture should be considered in identifying municipalities that are facing issues similar to Harpers Ferry.
5. The Select Committee is encouraged to identify and employ resources, stakeholders (e.g., realtors, rental property owners, Harpers Ferry National Historic Park, non-profits, business owners) and volunteers who may bring key information and labor hours to their tasks.
6. If any expenditure is needed, the Select Committee shall recommend the resources and associated costs to Town Council. One example would be the West Virginia University Land Use and Sustainable Development Law Clinic, which has assisted the Town during the Comprehensive Plan revision.
7. If the Select Committee feels additional voting members of their committee are warranted, the Select Committee should recommend those individuals to Town Council with justification.

\* “Select Committee” means the Select Committee on Assessing Harpers Ferry Population Growth Trends established November 10, 2025.

# **Charter for Select Committee on Assessing Harpers Ferry Population Growth Trends**

## **Mission**

This select committee is an official ad-hoc committee sanctioned by the Town Council of the Corporation of Harpers Ferry. It is charged with assessing and forecasting population growth patterns and their impact on the social, economic, and political vitality of Harpers Ferry.

## **Duties and Responsibilities**

The charge of this ad-hoc committee is narrowly focused. The Committee has no independent authority; however, it serves as an advisory body to the Town Council regarding the full scope of its mission. The ad-hoc committee has no line authority over an employee or office practice or procedure in pursuit of its mission. Specifically, the committee will assess and submit a report that describes the complete inventory of the town's housing stock, including at least the following:

- a. Full time residents
- b. Owner occupied homes
- c. Vacant and uninhabitable homes
- d. Long term renters
- e. Bed & breakfast properties
- f. Short-term rental properties
- g. Commercial properties not occupied by owner

Additionally, the committee will provide reports and/or provide recommendations to the Mayor and Town Council for actions related to the following.

1. Methods and frequency for updating the town housing stock inventory.
2. Reasons why vacant homes remain vacant.
3. Reasons why vacant structures are being purchased and then converted to short or long-term rentals.
4. Ways to attract permanent residents.
5. Town Government actions that could make Harpers Ferry a more attractive and welcoming place to live, and will foster full-time residency in Harpers Ferry.

## **Membership/Support**

1. This ad-hoc committee will be composed of up to five (5) members, each of which will be a full-time resident of the Town.
2. The committee members will be appointed by the Mayor in consultation with two other Town Council members and then confirmed by the full Town Council.
3. If needed, consultant and attorney fees will be borne by the Town.
4. Committee may engage subject matter experts (SMEs) as needed. SMEs will be advisory only (i.e., non-voting participants).

5. Committee members and SMEs should on a whole represent the perspective and interests of the Town's varied stakeholders (e.g., full-time residents, business owners, non-profit entities, Harpers Ferry National Historic Park).

### **Meetings**

1. Regular meetings of the ad-hoc committee will be established by the chairperson.
2. All meeting dates/times will be coordinated with the Town Clerk for proper scheduling.
3. All meeting posting requirements and other meeting issues must fulfill all requirements of the WV Ethics Commission Open Meetings Act.

### **Deliverables and Reviews**

1. A draft report of findings and recommendations will be presented to the Mayor and two Town Council members for initial review.
2. Following the initial review, all comments and suggestions will be submitted to the ad-hoc committee for incorporation.
3. The final report with recommendations will then be submitted to the full Town Council.
4. Following the formal establishment of the ad-hoc committee, a final report of findings will be submitted to the full Town Council within six (6) months.
5. The committee may also present interim reports and/or recommendations to Town Council during the 6-month period.

## **Population Over Time in Small Towns Across America: An Initial Look**

Prepared by Mike Rock 11/14/2025

### **The Small Towns**

Harpers Ferry, WV—Population 269 is located right next to the Harpers Ferry National Historical Park

Bolivar, WV—Population 1072 abuts Harpers Ferry WV

Jemez Springs, NM—Population 198 is located along the Jemez Mountain Trail – a National Scenic Byway

The Plains, Va—Population 245 is located in the rolling land of northern Fauquier County and surrounded by horse farms, The Plains is steeped in equestrian tradition.

Wardensville, WV—Population 265 iss near the Wardensville Wildlife Management Area for hunting and fishing.

Grand Lake, CO—Population 410 is a tourist destination adjacent to the western entrance to [Rocky Mountain National Park](#)

Springdale, Utah—Population 514 is located adjacent to the boundaries of [Zion National Park](#).

Towns were chosen on basis of internet search and population size similar to Harpers Ferry

### **Larger towns near National Parks (Populations near or < 10,000)**

Whitefish, Montana—population 7751 located near Glacier National Park

Jackson, Wyoming—Population 10,760 located near Grand Teton and Yellowstone

Gatlinburg, TN—Population 3755 located near Great Smokey Mountains

Bishop, CA—Population 3819 located near Yosemite

Estes Park, CO—Population 5904 located in Rocky Mountains

Port Townsend WA—Population 10148 located near Olympic National Forest

Bar Harbor, ME—Population 5089 located near Acadia National Park

All data are decennial population estimates by US Census Bureau taken from Wikipedia

## Populations Over Time















