



Corporation of Harpers Ferry

Town Council

MINUTES

REGULAR Meeting
Monday, April 13, 2026
7:00 p.m.

Town Hall
1000 Washington Street, 2nd Floor
Harpers Ferry, West Virginia 25425

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Vaughn.

In the absence of Recorder Carden, Mr. DiCostanzo was designated to be the primary minute-taker, assisted by Mr. Craig (motion by Mr. Melton, second by Mr. Simmons, approved 6-0).

Member	Title	Status
Greg Vaughn	Mayor	Present
Kevin Carden	Recorder	Absent
Chris Craig	Councilmember	Present
Greg "Storm" DiCostanzo	Councilmember	Present
Jesse Z. Melton	Councilmember	Present
Christian Pechuekonis	Councilmember	Present
David Simmons	Councilmember	Present

The agenda was approved as submitted (motion by Mr. Craig, second by Mr. Pechuekonis)

Public comments

- Zach Morse spoke about item 6.d.ii. (Comprehensive Plan public hearing on April 30th) and 6.e.i. (Tree Commission Arbor Day event on April 25th on the eastern end of Fillmore Street)
- Jenny Thacker introduced herself as a candidate running for the House of Delegates District 100

1. Mayor's announcements.

The Mayor will meet with Park Superintendent Tanya Gossett. It will cover cooperation during the upcoming holidays, including coordination of both parking and general law enforcement.

A meeting was held the prior Tuesday with Senator Shelley Moore Capito and her contingent of top aids. Also in attendance were the Chief Finance Officer (Deb Kelly), Office Coordinator (Pat Morse), Water Clerk (Cathy), Public Works Administrator (Steve Paradis) and Council Member Jesse Melton. The Senator was thanked for her support and role in securing millions of federal dollars to help realize Harpers Ferry Water Works's long-delayed water distribution repairs and upgrades. The Senator is also championing an additional \$6.3 million for FY27, and over \$4 million for FY28. The

Mayor and all in attendance recognized Deb Kelly for her critical role in securing the funds through dedicated and savvy management, preparation, and presentation of the town's finances.

2. Recorder comments and updates – none

3. Community Announcements.

Mr. Craig had several announcements:

- April 24-26 Flip Flop Kickoff in Harpers Ferry will host through-hikers who will be heading north on the Appalachian Trail, return later in the year do the southbound route. Details can be found at flipflopkickoff.org, including a reception and pancake breakfast
- May 13 monthly Canal Town Partnership meeting at the John Brown Museum meeting space in Lower Town. It will be from 10 a.m.-12 p.m., concluding with a walk to the Byron Bridge for a ribbon cutting ceremony and walk across the bridge and down the new ramp-stairs (if the project is complete.)
- May 2 – Sam Michael Park – Kite Day event organized by Jefferson County Parks & Rec. The Elk Run Watershed group will also have activities to educate and celebrate our watershed.

a. Hilltop Hotel. None.

Park Superintendent Gossett made several announcements:

- A productive Parking Summit was held with Mayor Vaughn and Mr. Pechuekonis. Parking and vehicle circulation concerns and potential solutions were discussed, including follow-up action items.
- NPS has granted the park new direct hiring authority. New 9-month seasonal positions will be opening up for people who live within 60 miles of Park HQ. The Superintendent encouraged contacting the Park with potential position candidates.
- NPS grasslands rehabilitation will take place in May. Focus areas are in lower Bolivar Heights and at Nash Farm and include eliminating invasives, and planting with natives to expand biodiversity. There will be some mowing and application of herbicides. Trails will be closed from 4-8 hours while work is being conducted in active management areas. The Park will send email notification to the towns once the exact dates and times are known.
- Byron Bridge ramp/stair – the temporary stairs are expected to be removed in early-mid May, with work to install the permanent new staircase taking 3-4 weeks. Shuttle service will be provided during this period. Visit the C&O Canal Park website for details.
- Viewshed improvement at Jefferson Rock was acknowledged.

4. Approval of Minutes.

a. Regular meetings: 9 February 2026, 9 March 2026.

The minutes of 9 February 2026 were presented.

Motion	Motion to approve the minutes of 9 February 2026
Motion by	Jesse Melton

Second	Christian Pechuekonis
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

- b. Special meeting: 27 February 2026, 13 March, 2026, 24 March, 2026, 6 April, 2026
These minutes were not presented.

5. Special Presentations.

a. Discussion and action regarding county Child Care Needs presented by JCDA.

JCDA Director Daryl Cowles presented an overview of the childcare challenges in Jefferson County. Fellow Hunter Mize from Shepherd University discussed the issues in greater detail, including the effect on families, children, and the economy. The wait for childcare in the area is as much as 1 year and 5 months. The JCDA is working with YMCA of Frederick to improve the old dining hall on the Shepherd campus as a facility that include childcare. A capital campaign to raise \$900,000 for the remodeling is underway. The JCDA asked that Harpers Ferry and its residents consider engaging with the campaign.

b. Presentation by the Harpers Ferry-Bolivar Historic Town Foundation regarding an update on the First Zion Project.

Ed Wheelless, Director of the Harpers Ferry-Bolivar Historic Town Foundation, presented an update regarding the First Zion Project. Phase I restoration was reported as complete, including exterior refreshment, new roofing and shingles, foundation repointing (to be whitewashed), installation of new gutters, and repairs to leaking ceilings. To date, \$362,000 has been invested in restoration efforts, funded through 50 percent grants and one-third fundraising.

Mr. Wheelless noted that a charette was held to solicit community feedback on the proposed community center. The project aligns with the 2013 Comprehensive Plan regarding the protection of historic resources, a town museum, and a community center; the Board of Zoning Appeals has approved the required conditional use permit.

Future phases were outlined as follows:

- Phase II: Interior work on the ground (basement) level to create open meeting space, reception area, interpretive displays, and a small kitchen; includes an upstairs performance hall with lift access.
- Phase III: Development of community performance and gathering spaces.
- Phase IV: Construction of a picnic pavilion, off-street parking, and retaining wall.

c. Discussion and action regarding a Proclamation to Declare International Dark Sky Week 2026.

Roberta Meade Curry, representing the local Dark Sky chapter, presented on the "Go Dark" campaign and the proposed proclamation to declare International Dark Sky Week 2026 in Harpers Ferry. She shared Dark Sky International's goals of reducing light pollution, sky glow, and light trespass through adherence to five core principles:

- Useful: Lighting must serve a purpose.

- Targeted: Light should be directed downward, not toward neighbors.
- Low Level: Color temperature of 3000K or less.
- Controlled: Utilization of on/off switches, motion sensors, or timers.
- Warm-Colored: Use of warm-spectrum lighting.

Ms. Curry highlighted that Dark Sky tourism is promoted by WV Tourism and noted that local B&Bs can achieve compliance through chapter evaluations and lighting advice, and that additional information can be found at darksky.org.

Motion	Motion to adopt the Proclamation to Declare International Dark Sky Week 2026
Motion by	Chris Craig
Second	Jesse Melton
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

d. Discussion and action regarding a Resolution to Accept the Donation of Real Property.

The Office Coordinator (Pat Morse) presented a proposal concerning four landlocked lots located off Zachary Taylor in a gully area. The property owner, having been unable to sell the parcels, offered to donate them to the Town for tax write-off purposes. The Town Attorney has drafted the resolution required for acceptance. The Council discussed the terms of the donation and the associated legal documentation.

Motion	Move to adopt the Resolution to Accept the Donation of Real Property as presented, and to be presented to the Mayor for signature
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

6. Town Reports.

a. Historic Landmarks Commission.

i. General report.

A brief statement was read on behalf of the Commission, including that plans for two new home construction projects were under review.

b. Dark Skies Committee.

i. Discussion and action regarding review of changes to a Dark Skies Ordinance.

Chair Karen Sagisi presented the revised draft ordinance as requested by Town Council. She clarified that the Section 7 lighting plan is already in force under existing ordinances, and has recently been applied to new builds as part of the standard approval process for buildings; no retroactive action is required for previously approved structures. Requirements include a listing of lights and a basic drawing.

Ms. Sagisi addressed concerns regarding the permitting process, confirming that it does not alter current procedures or require the addition of the Dark Skies Committee to the review chain. The primary distinction for new builds and substantial changes is that lighting must be shielded and directed downward. Technical clarifications were provided noting that lumens equate to foot-candles (as already stated in the ordinance) and that the title "Ordinance Control Officer" has been updated to "Code Enforcement Officer."

Motion	Move to commit the new lighting ordinance to the Ordinance Review Committee.
Motion by	Chris Craig
Second	Jesse Melton
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

c. Water Commission.

i. General report from the Public Works Administrator.

Steve Paradis, Public Works Administrator (PWA), provided an update on water loss metrics and staffing. A midnight-to-4 a.m. check indicated a current system loss rate of 4,400 gallons per hour, compared to 6,000 gallons per hour during the same period last year. This represents a 27% reduction in the loss rate, attributed to ongoing mains and service line replacements.

Mr. Paradis reported that an estimated 63,000 gallons were used from fire hydrants during the March fire in Bolivar. The Mayor of Bolivar expressed appreciation for Town staff turning off the master meter of the apartment complex involved in the incident.

Regarding staffing, there are currently three vacancies within the department. One candidate has been identified as a likely hire pending background checks. A new advertisement will be posted to fill remaining positions.

ii. Discussion and action regarding Water Department staffing. (This item may require executive session.)

See the update under 6.c.i.

iii. Water Commission Report

There was no report.

iv. Discussion and action regarding Drinking Water Week Proclamation.

The PWA presented a Drinking Water Week Proclamation, which was read aloud by Mr. DiCostanzo.

Motion	Move to adopt the Drinking Water Week Proclamation as presented.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6

NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

Motion	Move to change the word “morality” to “mortality” in the Proclamation.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

d. Planning Commission.

i. Planning Commission report.

Chair Zach Morse, reported that no Regular meeting was held, in favor of two Special meetings to complete the Comprehensive Plan revision draft.

ii. Update and discussion only on the 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update and Public Hearing.

Mr. Morse reported that the near-final draft is available in both digital and physical form, and was supplied to members of Town Council. There will be a public hearing on April 30th at 7 p.m., which will be publicized in the local paper of record. Final content may change pending public comment, after which it will be edited and presented to Town Council for consideration, input and/or adoption.

Mr. Morse thanked the current and past Planning Commission members who worked on the revision: Jesse Melton, Emily Eads, Paul Mayhew, Joe Keady, Amanda McDaniel, Michael Zeleke, Chris Craig, Robert Meade-Curry, Tim Wisecarver, Paul Thomas, and Ken Dill.

The Plan's forward describes Harpers Ferry as a "window of history and gateway into Wild and Wonderful West Virginia." It outlines seven focus areas, each containing background information and action items developed through open houses, surveys, stakeholder input, and state regulations compliance. An implementation matrix details priorities and timeframes (1–2 years, 3–5 years, and 6–10 years). Supporting appendices include lists of stakeholders, general survey data, and a housing survey.

e. Tree Commission.

i. Discussion and action regarding the approval of the Arbor Day Proclamation.

The Tree Commission Chair announced that two trees would be planted to recognize Arbor Day. A proclamation was presented by the Chair and read by Mr. DiCostanzo.

Motion	Move to adopt the Arbor Day Proclamation as submitted.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Christian Pechuekonis
YES	6
NO	0

Result	MOTION PASSED
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f. Parks & Recreation Commission.

i. Parks & Recreation Commission report.

Commission member Zach Morse announced that the Film Festival at the Mathers Center sold out, and that the Easter Egg hunt was well-attended. Music On the Ridge will take place on the last Saturday of June on the Storer Campus lawn, featuring the bands Souled Out and Section 20. There is no rain date.

g. Treasurer's reports and approvals.

i. Review and approval of financial reports: February 2026.

The Finance Officer presented the financial reports for the General Fund and Water Works. There will be a 10% reduction to Water Works billings revenue due to inaccuracies of meter readings since the beginning of the year.

Motion	Motion to approve the financial reports as submitted.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

ii. Approval of invoices and purchases.

The Finance Officer presented the invoices and purchases.

Motion	Motion to approve the invoices and purchases as submitted.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Christian Pechuekonis
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

h. Budget and Finance Committee.

i. Discussion and action regarding WDA grant and approval of Resolution #18.

Gilbert Street is the last project and is in process, which was added. Contractor Green Ridge secured their bond and the contract has been signed. Pre-construction meeting will occur within the coming weeks.

ii. Discussion and action regarding the water meter CDS project.

Regular progress meetings are being held. Efforts to establish wireless data collection points was described. One is to be placed on a HFWW water tank, and another at the east end of Fillmore Street. The Park wants to sign off on both proposed sites at once. Database migration work will be undertaken, contractor Green Ridge has begun meter pit preparation, and the first installation sections have been identified. The PWA is

working with the PSD on zero-read meters. Any dead meters will be replaced with same type of meter.

iii. Discussion and action regarding CDS funding for future years.

The Finance Officer walked through the active CDS pipeline. The FY24 appropriation is the meter project. No CDS requests were granted by Congress in 2025. The town's FY26 request (replacement of 11,000 feet of distribution elements) has been approved through Senator Capito's office and is waiting for its motion to proceed.

iv. Discussion and action regarding maintenance of mains contracting.

The Finance Officer discussed plans for paying incoming invoices.

v. Discussion and action regarding maintenance contract for Water Plant generator.

Mr. DiCostanzo presented on behalf of the PWA that regularly maintaining the service generator will help ensure it will be operational when needed.

Motion	Motion to approve the maintenance program for the water plant generator as proposed for \$1,700/year.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Jesse Melton
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

vi. Discussion and action regarding FY'26 BZA funding request.

BZA requested training from the WVU Legal Land Clinic on key municipal governance processes. The session will be open to members of BZA and other parts of the municipal government.

Motion	Motion to approve \$1,200 FY26 funds for the training led by BZA training from the WVU Land Clinic pending documentation.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	David Simmons
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

vii. Discussion and action regarding town grounds maintenance.

Items discussed were new mulch for the parks at the gazebo, Potomac Street, and Franklin Street (\$2,690 total); and to refresh hanging baskets in Lower Town (\$400). Both should come out of 906 (Beautification).

Motion	Motion to approve the town grounds maintenance items as submitted.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

viii. Discussion and action regarding Town Hall maintenance (restriping parking lot, town hall light fixtures, elevator maintenance).

Parking lot striping \$4,000 (440 contracted services), light fixtures \$3,150 (\$440 contracted services), elevator maintenance \$51/month (440 building maintenance)

Motion	Motion to approve the Town Hall maintenance items as submitted.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Jesse Melton
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

ix. Discussion and action regarding Parks & Rec funding requests (Easter Egg Hunt, Earth Day, Music on the Ridge).s

Events include the Easter egg hunt (\$225 from 402), Earth Day (\$85 out of 402), and Music on the Ridge (\$3,100 out of 402 and \$3,715 from 906)

Motion	Move to approve the Parks & Rec funding requests as approved/amended.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

The Music on the Ridge feature act requires a 25% deposit.

Motion	Move to pay \$550 as a 25% deposit to Souled Out to secure their performance for 2026 Music the Ridge out of 906 Arts & Humanities.
Motion by	Storm DiCostanzo
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

i. Ordinance Review Committee

i. Ordinance Review Committee report.

The second reading of the ordinance change the title Ordinance Compliance Officer to Code Enforcement Officer is ready.

The Committee is also working on: adjusting rules for setbacks related to restaurants adjacent to residential lots; a new zoning category for town zoning maps; historic and solicitation signage guidance (request from BZA); standardization of the nomination, appointment and terms of commissions and committees; and language to allow reasonable extension of permit deadlines.

ii. Discussion and action regarding first reading of Ordinance 2026-01 Business District; Uses.

No actions were taken.

iii. Discussion and action on second and final reading for approval of Ordinance 2026-02 Code Enforcement Officer, changing the title of the official from Ordinance Compliance Officer to Code Enforcement Officer.

Work continues.

iv. Discussion and action on first reading for approval of Ordinance 2026-04 Signs, pertaining to historic and solicitation signage.

Work continues.

j. Internal Office Operations.

i. General report.

The Committee is working on elements of the employee handbook, including job descriptions.

7. Unfinished Business.

a. Discussion and action regarding update on the Columbia Street Gate Beautification project. Mayor Vaughn and Mr. Pechuekonis devised potential elements to propose to Hill Top developer SWaT to improve the entryway at Columbia Street.

b. Discussion and action regarding town employee driver policy.

The proposed policy will prohibit unauthorized passengers in town vehicles, and allow the town to request employee DMV records at any time.

Motion	Move to accept the town employee driver policy as amended
Motion by	Chris Craig
Second	Jesse Melton
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

8. New Business.

a. Discussion and action regarding the solicitation of the NPS regarding documenting the historic significance of the Weaver-Gillison house.

Motion	Motion for the Mayor to write a letter to Superintendent Gossett asking that NPS to request help with the Weaver-Gillison House
Motion by	CP
Second	SD
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

b. Discussion and action regarding collapsed structure.

Structure fell onto neighbor's property. Corrective action required per the OCO, requesting action.

Motion	Motion that Code Enforcement Officer and Mayor exercise their plenary authority to execute the ordinance compliance process in the case of the collapsed outbuilding known to the relevant parties forthwith with no further deliberation, action, or consent required of Town Council.
Motion by	Jesse Melton
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

c. Discussion and action on establishing a field office in Suite 101.

Mr. Melton articulated the need for frontline town staff to have occasional office space. He proposed establishing a "Field office" in the empty downstairs space at Town Hall.

Motion	Motion that a field office for frontline employees be established inside 1000 Washington Street and for up to \$500 be used to provision the space with necessary furnishings and supplies.
Motion by	Jesse Melton
Second	David Simmons
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

d. Discussion on Items for NPS Gateway Communities meeting.

Mr. Melton described the items to be discussed with Andrew Lee of the Park. They included bicycle parking and accommodation, wireless connectivity, a new bus shelter supplied by EPTA, Qugley Road plowing, stormwater remediation, pedestrian subway upkeep and security, and train station open hours.

e. Discussion and action regarding public safety and law enforcement policy.

Mr. DiCostanzo presented a draft resolution, co-authored with Mr. Pechuekonis. It formally declines participation in the federal 287(g) program that would establish collaboration with ICE, and reaffirms the town's commitment to WV law and the constitutional rights of all people.

Motion	Move to accept the resolution as submitted, pending review by legal counsel.
Motion by	Jesse Melton
Second	Chris Craig
YES	6
NO	0
Result	MOTION PASSED

Motion to adjourn by Mr. Craig, Second by Mr. Simmons. Meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

The above minutes are true and correct, as approved.

Mayor: _____ Date: _____

Recorder: _____ Date: _____