Bolivar Town Council

Regular Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2026 at 6:30 PM

Chris Higdon, Mayor

P. Jean Reed, Recorder-absent

Carolyn Beyer

Vickie Gale

Dan Jimeno

Charlma Spence

Sarah Shafer

Laura Whittington, Town Administrator

Pledge of Allegiance:

Mayor Higdon asked everyone to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Call to Order:

Mayor Higdon welcomed everyone is attendance and called the February 3, 2026 regular meeting to order @ 6:35 pm.

Treasurers Report:

Mayor Higdon asked Laura to present the Treasurers report. Laura presented the Treasurers report for the month of January. The total income was $410,198 and the total expenses were $387,070., which leaves a net income of $23,128 for the month of January. Three budget revisions were presented to the council for approval. The first revision pertained to the increase of the line item of snow removal. Councilmember Vickie Gale made a motion to accept the budget revision. Councilmember Charlma Spence seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0. The second budget revision presented pertained to the Coal Severance Fund. This revision was necessary as the fund balance ending 24-25 was revised to actual amounts. Councilmember Dan Jimeno made a motion to accept the budget revision for Coal Severance. Motion seconded by Councilmember Sarah Shafer. Motion passed 5-0. Final budget revision that was presented pertained to the General Fund for 24-25. This revision was necessary in order to revise the

General Fund to actual amounts. Councilmember Vickie Gale made a motion to accept the budget revision. Councilmember Dan Jimeno seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

Town Attorney, Effie Kallas:

Legal counsel, Effie Kallas was in attendance for the February meeting. Effie reported that the most recent newsletter from the Ethics Commission was forwarded to the Mayor & Council prior to the meeting for their review. The Wine and Liquor Tax remittance report was also sent to Mayor & Council prior to the meeting. Effie reported that there were several bills introduced during the most recent legislative session. Effie is currently watching several bills that may affect the Town of Bolivar. An explanation of each of the bills was given with a detailed description of how it could affect Bolivar upon passage. House Bill 175, 180, 181, 184, 4029, 4080, 4091, 4163, 4178, 4236, 4376, 4481, 4623, & 4737 were the list given to the Mayor & Council. Mayor Higdon thanked Attorney Kallas for her report.

Sheriff's Department Report and Public Comment:

Corporal Hockman was in attendance for the February meeting and presented the PD report for the month of January. The following is a breakdown of the calls: 31 Directed Patrols, 65 Road Patrols, 1 Juvenile complaint, 1 Motorist Asst., 13 ATM Alarm calls, 4 Building checks, 2 911 hang ups, 1 Dest. Of Property/IP, 1 Civil Standby, 1 Foot Patrol, 1 Drug Activity IP, 1 Domestic IP, 4 Public Service, 1 Alarm, 1 Gunshot Heard complaint (unfounded). Information was also provided to the elected officials regarding data that was obtained from the speed trailer located on Polk Street. Corporal Hockman reported that the speed trailer was moved to a W. Washington Street location but recently removed due to the recent snow event. The device will be brought back to the town after snow event and maintenance. Mayor Higdon thanked Corporal Hockman for his report.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park-Superintendent Gossett:

Tanya Gossett, Superintendent for the Harpers Ferry National Park was in attendance for the February meeting. Ms. Gossett reported that the annual deer operations program began on February 3, 2026. Annual closing of portions of Maryland Heights will begin on February 15, 2026 through mid to late July for the peregrine falcons. Roof projects will begin to six (6) within Harpers Ferry National Historical Park. These projects will take at least three (3) months to complete. Byron Bridge staircase project update: expected to be completed by April 2026. There will be a 2-3 week closure period and a shuttle will be provided during this time. Elected officials will also be receiving a formal invite in reference to the upcoming parking summit.

Minutes:

Mayor & Council reviewed the minutes from the January meeting. Councilmember Sarah Shafer made a motion to approve the minutes as presented. Councilmember Vickie Gale seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.

Attendee Concerns:

None

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Higdon reported that January was a little light but he experienced his first rodeo with the snow. He thanked John & Laura for their work with the snow event. Mayor Higdon stated that his approach to work with the other municipalities worked out during the snow removal process. We joined forces with Harpers Ferry and ironed out a few issues prior to the arrival of the snow. The town also got in sync with Friendship Fire department and Jefferson County Office of Emergency Services. We did think it was going to be a little worse than it was but we worked with Cornerstone to be sure that the main access to the Town was open and all streets were accessible for residents and emergency equipment. It wasn't perfect but it was tweaked later and all the needs of the citizens were met. There was a lot of coordination during the event. This was definitely an all in this together type deal and we managed it. Mayor Higdon stated that the JCCVB submitted their 2025 annual report. All council members will be receiving a copy of this report. Mayor Higdon pointed out a few data points to the council included in the report. The following funds were received for various services: $87,000 from the sale of promotional items, $9.1 billion in economic impact across the State of WV, $6.6 billion of visitors spending in WV, 60,000 jobs, and there are now 41 accredited CVB offices across the State. Mayor Higdon feels that these are significant numbers.

Committee Reports:

Street Committee:

No report

Bolivar Planning Commission:

Barb Staats, President of the Planning commission reported that the original BPC meeting scheduled in January was postponed due to inclement weather. Meeting was held on February 2, 2026. During the February meeting, new officers were elected. President: Barb Staats, Vice-President: Dan Jimeno, & Secretary: Deb Hale. The BPC annual report was also approved and a copy has been submitted to the mayor and council for their review. Barb will discuss the change in permit fees later in the meeting.

Park & Recreation Committee:

Councilmember Vickie Gale reported that the committee met on February 2, 2026. The committee discussed the recent proposal received by Metro Recreation and there was an issue with the breakdown. Councilmember Gale sent an email to Metro and requested a better understanding and breakdown of the items that needed attention. Proposals were received from Mark Younker from Metro Recreation and Richard from Cunningham Recreation. The proposal from Cunningham Recreation also needs more clarity but these individuals are most

likely not an avenue in which we will proceed. Metro Recreation-Mark Younker, presented a report but we are requesting more concise information. The Park & Recreation committee hope to present a new proposal next month.

Canal Town Partnership:

Councilmember Charlma Spence reported that the members met via zoom for the January meeting and will meet via zoom for the February meeting. The webpage is being updated and the Town of Bolivar section needs a little attention. Councilmember Spence will lean on Jeff Staats for the historical portion in order to update Bolivar's section of the website.

Water Commission:

No report

History Committee:

Jeff Staats reported that the January meeting was postponed due to inclement weather. The meeting has been rescheduled for February 23, 2026 @ 7:00 pm.

Board of Zoning Appeals:

No report

Special Events Committee:

Councilmember Sarah Shafer suggested that we set a budget for the special events committee. Laura stated that there will be a budget meeting in March and more specifics can be discussed including future events.

Old Business:

1. **Discuss/Approve opioid settlement funds and reporting status:** Mayor Higdon asked Councilmember Carolyn Beyer for any updates that she may have to report. Councilmember Carolyn Beyer stated that she and Michael Zeleke from Harpers Ferry met with Judge Bridgett Cohee on January 14, 2026. Judge Cohee gave an outline of her program. The basically a diversion program for kids that may be experimenting or have experimented with drugs. Councilmember Beyer provided a handbook for the council to review that will give more details about this program. Michael & Councilmember Beyer think that this is an excellent prospect. A future meeting will be held with the United Way representative to discuss disbursement options. The City of Charleston is currently using the United Way as their fiscal agent. Funds disbursed could go through the United Way. The other option is the drop-box for medication disposal. Michael & Councilmember Beyer both agree that this option should be utilized with some of the funds. The total would be around $3,000. The boxes would be located at various police stations and would serve the entire community. This option is still in the investigating

phase. Councilmember Beyer & Michael feel positive about both options. These are good possibilities, but we are not ready for a proposal. Mayor Higdon stated that he is really impressed with the information that Councilmember Carolyn provided. Mayor Higdon will also provide a contact to Councilmember Beyer in order for her to contact the Office of Emergency Services to assist with medication disposal purposes. Thank you to Councilmember Carolyn Beyer for your report and all of your research. Nice Job!

2. **Discuss/Approve request from Mike Lowrey regarding Bolivar Municipal parking lot:** Mayor Higdon reported that this was a carryover discussion from last month regarding the paving of the municipal lot. Mayor Higdon will have a discussion with Mike Lowrey and advise that he is permitted to pave up to his property line. If the town council chooses to work towards the possibility of paving the parking lot, we will proceed with the procedure to revamp the ordinance. Mayor Higdon stated that he considered the case closed. Councilmember Vickie Gale stated that she would love to see the parking lot paved for handicap accessibility reasons. Mayor Higdon advised that there are some hurdles to conquer before we may proceed with paving. Councilmember Vickie Gale asked what the requirements were in order to move forward. Mayor Higdon replied that the ordinance would need to be rewritten and then put to a vote by council to pave the area. This process will take a little time to move forward. Councilmember Vickie Gale requested that this item be placed on the March agenda for further discussion.

3. **Discuss/Review process & enforcement of town ordinances regarding public nuisances with Bolivar:** Mayor Higdon asked Legal Counsel, Effie Kallas if she had an update regarding public nuisances in the town. Councilmember Vickie Gale explained to the Mayor & Council about an ongoing situation in Madison Park that could be considered a nuisance property. Mayor Higdon stated that this issue and other properties are in need of attention. The town is responsible for addressing all of the property issues instead of focusing on just a few. The town needs to be advised what our options are regarding enforcement. Mayor Higdon referred to legal counsel for her advice on how to approach this issue. Effie Kallas stated that there is information in our town charter and ordinances that define power of enforcement and that the property maintenance code was also adopted in 2016. Effie stated that sometimes the best approach is the neighborly way. Mayor Higdon stated that the town has sent letters in the past. Sometimes it has changed the situation and other times it has not made a difference at all. Mayor Higdon would like to take the opportunity to meet with the property owners in order to discuss a resolution. Effie Kallas advised that the property maintenance code may be a useful tool once our building inspector is hired. The Town Council is not allowed to just go to properties and acknowledge that this is a public nuisance and go to court. Effie will be sure that the council receives the ordinances pertaining to this subject matter for further guidance. Item was tabled for further discussions and action.

4. **Discuss/Approve town employee job classification change:** Mayor Higdon advised that he made the move to change Laura's title to recognize what she does on a day to day basis. I would like her title changed in order to reflect what she undertakes. Mayor Higdon stated that Laura is managing the Town. She makes sure that everything is managed daily. Mayor Higdon feels that Laura's title deserves a better description in order to compliment her duties. Legal Counsel, Effie Kallas reported the research regarding the job title change. There are four (4) plans that provide duties and responsibilities. The Town of Bolivar is a Mayor & Town Council plan. Effie advised that if her title is changed, a different title should be selected. Councilmember Dan Jimeno explored other titles and shared a few. Mayor Higdon said that he would appreciated everyone taking the time to discuss this matter and would accept any feedback that the council can provide at the next meeting.
5. **Update from Dan Jimeno regarding email addresses for Mayor, Council & staff:** Councilmember Dan Jimeno provided the council, mayor, recorder, bza, and Laura with information that contained their new email address and password. Councilmember Dan Jimeno provided a step by step instruction guide in order for everyone to set up their new account and change the password provided. Councilmember Dan Jimeno also provided information pertaining to additional tools that Google Workspace offers. Mayor Higdon thanked Councilmember Dan Jimeno for his efforts on this matter.

New Business:

1. **Discuss/Approve proposal for the Bolivar Children's park-items from the inspection report:** Item tabled for further discussion in March
2. **Discuss/Approve increase to building inspections fees:** Mayor Higdon recognized Barb Staats, BPC President to explain the increase to the building inspection fees. The Bolivar Planning Commission proposed that the Council increase the inspection fees from $75 to $125 in order to cover the cost of the building inspector. Councilmember Dan Jimeno requested that the council discuss agenda item #3 (three) before making a decision to approve the increase to the permit fees. Request was granted and council moved to Item #3 (three). After discussing the topic of building inspector, discussion reverted back to the increase of building permit fees. Barb Staats added that the permit fees have not been increased for many years. Barb Staats also remarked on the fees that the other municipalities were charging. Laura advised that $125 would cover the cost of the inspector fees. Councilmember Vickie Gale made a motion to increase the permit fees to $125. Councilmember Dan Jimeno seconded the motion. Motion passed 5-0.
3. **Discuss/Approve the hire for the position of building inspector:** Mayor Higdon explained to the Council that this is not a new hire for the town but strictly putting a building inspector in an as needed position for the town. A third-party inspection firm from the MD area was contacted to assist the town. This company provides assistance to the City of Ranson, Charles Town and Clarke County, VA. Matt Anderson, owner & CEO of Matthew Anderson & Co. interviewed for the position of building inspector and

provided his certifications for council review. Mayor Higdon provided additional details about the tasks that Mr. Anderson would provide to the town. There was also a vote from the County Commission to approve a Memo of Understanding (MOU) to provide services for the town. Complete details were not available to report to the council regarding the MOU. Mayor Higdon recommended Matt Anderson for the position of building inspector. Councilmember Carolyn Beyer made a motion to approve Matt Anderson as the building inspector for Bolivar. Councilmember Vickie Gale seconded the motion. Motion passes 5-0.

Adjournment:

Councilmember Sarah Shafer made a motion to adjourn the meeting @ 9:40 pm.

Laura Whittington, Town Admin.

Chris Higdon, Mayor

Next meeting will be held on March 3, 2026 at 6:30 pm