Approved 2/3/26

Bolivar Town Council

Regular Meeting Minutes

January 6, 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 called the January 6, 2026 regular meeting to order @ 6:30 pm, welcomed all to the meeting and wished everyone a Happy New Year!

Treasurers Report:

Mayor Higdon asked Laura to give the Treasurers Report. Laura presented the Treasurers Report for the month of December. The total net income was $338,731 and the total expenses were $361,119. Report shows that there were more expenses than income generated for the month of December with a negative amount of $22,389. Laura stated that this could be a timing issue due to a few deposits that have not yet been recorded. Councilmember Vickie Gale made a motion to approve the Treasurers report as presented. Councilmember Carolyn Beyer seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

Town Attorney, Effie Kallas:

- Intergovernmental agreements for Public Safety and Tax Collection with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department have been approved. Once Laura receives the signed contracts, she will send to the WV State Auditor and the Attorney General.

- WV Ethics will be conducting an ethics & open meetings act training on January 30th. Please reach out to Kimberly Weber: kimberly.b.weber@wv.gov in order to register for the training.
- Effie stated that she will be working on the recent changes for the municipal elections.
- Attorney Kallas will be attending the annual WV Municipal League legislative conference to be held on January 25-27th in Charleston, WV.

Mayor Higdon thanked Attorney Kallas for her report.

Sheriff's Department Report and Public Comment:

Corporal Hockman presented the monthly police report for December with 124 incidents. The following is a breakdown of the calls: 43 Directed Patrols, 59 Road Patrols, 1 Public Assist, 1 Sick Person, 1 Missing Person, 1 Home Confinement, 1 Fraud, 1 Drug Activity NIP, 1 Disabled Vehicle, 1 Destruction of Property IP, 1 ATM alarm, 2 Theft NIP, 1 Alarm, 5 Building checks, 1 Patient transfer. Corporal Hockman stated that the speed sign on Polk Street showed some speeding activity but nothing alarming. He will review the data in more detail and discuss with the Mayor. Also, there are a few other locations in Bolivar that the sign can be moved and Corporal Hockman will discuss his suggestions with the Mayor.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park- Superintendent Gossett:

Superintendent Gossett reported that the National Park will be highlighting their 250th celebration. The program list will be made available to the public soon. There will be several capital projects that will be taking place over the next several months due to the receipt of unexpected monies. Please excuse our mess once we begin these projects. Mayor Higdon inquired about the status of the vacant buildings located behind the Jefferson County Visitors Bureau. The National Park service and the National Park conservancy have planned discussions in order to begin the demolition process of these structures this year. Mayor Higdon asked if there were plans to remove the metal gate from that location. Superintendent Gossett stated that she was unsure because the gate was not owned by the Park Service. Superintendent Gossett also reported that there would be a HF/Bolivar area parking summit in late February or March of 2026. If there is anyone interested in attending this summit, please respond to the email that was sent to the office.

Minutes:

Mayor & Council reviewed the minutes of the December 2025 meeting. Councilmember Carolyn Beyer made a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. Councilmember Dan Jimeno seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

Attendee Concerns:

None

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Higdon began his report by wishing everyone a Happy New Year! Mayor Higdon stated that December was an awesome month. The month was filled with amazing activities and informative meetings. Thank you to the staff for their commitment that was offered in order to pull off the events. Thanks to Dan Jimeno & Sarah Shafer for their assistance and braving the elements even though they were under the weather. All was done mostly with a smile. The parade, tree lighting and showing of Santa Claus was a huge success. There were a few tweaks that we work on next year but overall it was great. Mayor Higdon reported that he attended the Convention & Tourism Summit @ the Bavarian Inn venue. He stated that he was very impressed with the marketing campaign that was shared. It was very informative and well presented. Mayor Higdon remarked that he attended the end of year event sponsored by the HF-Bolivar Lions club held at the Bolivar Community Center. I have a sincere appreciation for this organization especially because several of my family members have been associated with this group. I would like to see us work to open the door for future opportunities for this organization. Mayor Higdon also attended the Canal Town Partnership event held in December. This was a good opportunity and great event. Thanks to everyone for their support and contributions in 2025. I look forward to 2026!

Committee Reports:

Street Committee:

Mayor Higdon reported that All American Paving provided a solution to the water issue reported on Rowles Street due to the recent paving repairs. Laura contacted the owner of the property located on W. Washington Street beside the park regarding the dead tree. Tree was removed by the property owner.

Bolivar Planning Commission:

Barb Staats, president of the BPC reported that their next meeting would be held on January 26th @ 7:00 pm.

Park & Recreation Committee:

Councilmember Vickie Gale and committee member Erik Eastman met with Mark Younker from Metro Recreation to review the recent inspection report. Mr. Younker shared lots of ideas and suggestions in order for the park to be compliant as required in the inspection report. Councilmember Vickie Gale requested that the proposal from Metro Recreation be sent prior to the meeting, however it has not been received. Erik Eastman provide details of the meeting with Mark Younker to the mayor and council. Mr. Eastman stated that replacement parts can be ordered and remedy most of the issues for a reasonable expense. Mark Younker will mitigate the risk of the equipment in order to reduce future issues. Mayor Higdon asked Mr. Eastman to come forward and expressed his gratitude to him for his dedication to the committee and most of all the town.

Canal Town Partnership:

Councilmember Charlma Spence reported that she was not in attendance for the December meeting. The January and February meetings will be conducted via zoom.

Water Commission Report:

Steve Paradis was in attendance in order to provide the report. Steve stated that personnel is down at Harpers Ferry Water works by a couple guys. Resumes' are being received and will be reviewed soon in order to increase the staffing. The plant operation is going well. The next water commission meeting will be held on January 28th @ 5:00 pm. Funds have been approved for meter replacement. All meters will be replaced and will be radio reads. This work will begin in March 2026. Five (5) new hydrants have recently been installed within the water system area. Harpers Ferry Water Works is currently replacing crocks and cleanouts in preparation for new meters. Gilbert Street upgrades are anticipated to be next in line. This construction will be put out to bid with the start date announced weather dependent. Grant phase to repair pressure system on Prospect Street has been sent out for bid. The WDA grant project assisted in replacing 8700 feet of distribution mains. Of the 8700 ft., Harpers Ferry received 4%, Bolivar 20%, and the County 76%. Another 30-40% has not yet been engineered. Thirty two (32) gate valves have been installed. Eighty one (81) service connections have been replaced. 20% in Harpers Ferry, 20% in Bolivar and 60% in the County. Bolivar representative, Joe Howsare stated that he would be attending the January meeting and report back to the council and Mayor in February.

History Committee:

Jeff Staats reported that the next meeting will be held on January 27th @ 7:00 pm. Jeff also announced that Bolivar turned 200 years old on December 29th. Future celebration of this event will be planned at a later date.

Board of Zoning Appeals:

No report

Special Events Committee:

Members will schedule a meeting to collaborate on future events. Memorial Day & Simón Bolivar celebration will be top priority.

Old Business:

1. **Discuss/Approve opioid settlement funds and reporting status:**
   A detailed report was given by councilmember Carolyn Beyer concerning this subject matter. Carolyn stated that she and Michael Zeleke from the Town of Harpers Ferry have been combining resources to provide a sustainable ideas for the funds. At the present time, Carolyn stated that we would be moving away from the Middle School

idea because it is not sustainable. Councilmember Beyer & Michael Zeleke feel that the communities would be better served if Harpers Ferry and Bolivar combine funds for the same project. Harpers Ferry has approx. $12,000 and Bolivar has approx. $10,000. Option 1 is to install drop boxes for drug collection. Michael Zeleke is assisting with research for the box placement. Option 2 is a drug court. Councilmember Beyer will report further information to the mayor and council once received. This is still in the investigation phase but we are working in collaboration with Harpers Ferry for better options.

2. **Discuss/Approve request from Mike Lowrey regarding Bolivar Municipal parking lot:** Mayor Higdon asked legal counsel, Effie Kallas if she could give the status on this matter since our last meeting. Effie stated that this property is a community corridor according to the town ordinances. Mayor Higdon posed the idea of allowing Mr. Lowrey to pave the area and gift the town the asphalt. We could consider this a hold harmless agreement. Effie stated that in order to allow paving in this area, the ordinance would require a specific change in language. Mayor Higdon stated that he is ready to kill the idea of allowing Mr. Lowrey to pave the paper street. Councilmember Vickie Gale requested that the paving of the municipal alley be placed on the February agenda for discussion. Mayor Higdon reported that he will not hold up Mr. Lowrey for his spring paving project and will advise him that Mr. Lowrey is permitted to pave his property only.

New Business:

1. **Discuss/Approve revised building permit packet:**

   Barb Staats, president of the Planning Commission reported that the building permit packet had been revised and updated. Copies for review were sent to the Mayor and council in November and December. Mayor Higdon asked for a motion to approve the revisions and updates to the building permit packet. Councilmember Carolyn Beyer made a motion to approve. Councilmember Charlma Spence seconded the motion. Motion passed.

2. **Discuss/Approve expenditure to Harpers Ferry-Bolivar PSD for manhole risers:** Laura explained that an invoice of $1475.26 was received from Bolivar-Harpers Ferry PSD for the cost of manhole risers. PSD sent an invoice to cover the cost of the risers after street repairs were approved and completed. Laura further explained that the PSD has never billed for the risers in the past and that there was not a discussion of this expense prior to the street repairs. Laura stated that she was bringing this matter before the town council for their awareness, but was not questioning that the invoice should not be paid. This is strictly an awareness factor in order to avoid this issue for future

projects. Councilmember Vickie Gale made a motion to approve the expenditure. Councilmember Carolyn Beyer seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

3. **Discuss/review process and enforcement of town ordinances regarding public nuisances within Bolivar:**
   Mayor Higdon gave an explanation to the council as to why this subject was on the agenda. Mayor Higdon stated that there were multiple properties in town that could be considered in non-compliance with our nuisance ordinance. Mayor Higdon would like this subject matter researched in order for the town to uphold and enforce the ordinance. Councilmember Carolyn Beyer stated that she has researched this matter and advised that the ordinances need revisions in order to be enforced adequately. It's time to address the issue and the numerous complaints that are received by our citizens. There is also an economic reason to enforce this ordinance. Mayor Higdon remarked that it is also important to protect our neighbor's property values. Mayor Higdon requested that legal counsel, Effie Kallas research this issue further in order for us to have a better understanding of how we can enforce our town ordinances and this issue. Effie Kallas remarked that she will proceed with the research and report her findings to the mayor and council at the next meeting.

4. **Discuss/Approve town employee job classification change:**
   Mayor Higdon explained that he placed this item on the agenda in order to change Laura Whittington's job title from Town Administrator to Town Manager. He stated that Laura manages the town and her title should reflect as such. Legal Counsel, Effie Kallas suggested that before this was approved, that she would look into a few items. The Town of Bolivar is a Class IV and WV State code may not allow Bolivar to change the title to reflect town manager. Item will be tabled for the February meeting for further discussion.

Adjournment:

Councilmember Sarah Shafer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Vickie Gale seconded the motion. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 9:40 pm.

Laura Whittington, Town Admin.

Chris Higdon, Mayor

Next meeting to be held on February 3, 2026 at 6:30 pm