TOWN OF BOLIVAR
MEETING MINUTES
September 1, 2026, at 6:30pm
Bolivar Community Center

Chris Higdon, Mayor
Carolyn Beyer
Victoria Gale
Dan Jimeno
Sarah Shafer
Vacancy
P. Jean Reed, Recorder
Laura Whittington, Town Administrator

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

Call to Order
Mayor Higdon called September 1, 2026, regular meeting of the Bolivar Town Council to order at 6:32pm. Mayor Higdon welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Treasurers Report
Mayor Higdon asked Laura to give the Treasurers report.

- Laura reported for August our income was $92,701, and our expenses were $141,592. Our net income shows a loss of $48,892. However, this report does not reflect several bank deposits that were made. This is a timing issue. Laura explained the remainder of the report in detail. (See the financial statement for complete details.) Laura said Treasurer Eric Lewis could not attend the meeting tonight but will attend the October Meeting for a quarterly update and he will answer questions at that time.
- Mayor Higdon asked Laura if all the big-ticket expenses were paid in August such as Slonaker's paving, new doors for the community center, H.F. Bolivar Historic Foundation etc. Laura replied that all of these are up to date.
- Councilperson Dan Jimeno asked if we still have a portion of the Children's Park equipment to pay.
- Laura said we still have about half.
- Mayor Higdon asked for a motion to approve the Treasurers report.
  Councilperson Dan Jimeno moved to approve the Treasurers Report as written. Councilperson Sarah Shafer seconded the motion. Motion passed 5 – 0.

Mayor Higdon thanked Laura for the report.

Town Attorney, Effie Kallas -

Attorney Kallas reported she attended the WV Municipal League Annual Conference in Charleston last month and that is why she did not attend the August Town Council Meeting. Attorney Kallas said if anyone would like to attend next year's Conference it is usually held on the first Tuesday in August.

The WV Ethics Training will be held on Friday, October 30, 2026, from 12:00 to 1:00pm. Please email Kimberly.b.weber@.wv.gov for an invite.

I have the second quarter report from the State Treasurer's Office for Bolivar's Wine Liquor Tax in the amount of $9,943.15.

- Attorney Kallas would like to put on the agenda for next month House Bill 2451 concerning Business Licenses and Privilege Taxes and Home Business permitted use. Attorney Kallas would like to move forward with this issue next month.
- We will also need to update our ordinances by January 1, 2027, regarding Accessory Dwelling Units.
- We also need to put on the next meeting agenda our Intergovernmental Agreement for safety and for Tax collection with Jefferson County Sheriff's Dept.
- Attorney Kallas would also like to discuss a situation dealing with Bee Hives and WV Lawsuit. This problem is in the Charleston, WV area now but we need to look at this situation and our ordinances too.
- Attorney Kallas and Laura do not have anything to report on our Elections.

Councilperson Carolyn Beyer asked where we stand on replacement of our Council Member vacancy?
Mayor Higdon said he would take responsibility for this and will work on resolving it.
Mayor Higdon thanked Attorney Kallas for her report.

Sheriff's Department Report and Public Comment

Sheriff Hanson reported 108 incidents in August 2026: 93 handled by JCSO, 1 by WVSP, 1 by CTPD, and 17 by HFPD. The incidents included 43 road patrols, 20 directed patrols, 9 out-of-car checks, 4 building checks, 4 protective orders, 3 bank alarms, 3 foot patrols, 3 harassment calls, 3 traffic stops, 2 reckless acts, 2 threats, 1 911 hang-up, and 1 disabled vehicle. Sheriff Hanson also provided an update on a 2024 incident, noting that the individual involved will serve a prison sentence of 37 to 160 years. He then discussed legislation passed last year creating School Security Officers. He stated that Jefferson High School, Washington High School, and Charles Town Middle School have Prevention Resource Officers, who are armed sworn officers. Harpers Ferry Middle School has a School Security Officer employed by Sheriff Hanson. Funding is provided by the Board of Education, but the officers work under

Sheriff Hanson's supervision. Sheriff Hanson said if I fail the students then I have failed and I will not fail the students of Jefferson County.
Mayor Higdon thanked Sheriff Hanson for a tremendous job.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park Report-Superintendent Gossett
Superintendent Gossett reported the Byron Bridge work is expected to continue until October.
Grass rehabilitation on Bolivar Heights has completed its third oversight application at Bolivar Heights and Nash Farm. We are looking at additional or other applications.
An old, abandoned tractor trailer was removed from Park Service property.
We are starting a new project at Anthony Hall formerly Mather Training Center. Crews are already set up and will be working on this for the next 90 days.
The Park will commemorate the Battle of 1862 in Harpers Ferry with five days of ranger programs starting on September 12. On that day there will be more artillery firing. We will send a note out to everyone ahead of that. These programs will run through September 15.
This fall the Park Service will begin an improvement preservation with Federal Department of Transportation. This will include Whitman Avenue.
Mayor Higdon said he would send Superintendent Gossett the dates for the two parades to prevent conflicts.
Mayor Higdon thanked Superintendent Gossett for her report.

Approve Meeting Minutes – August 4, 2026
Mayor Higdon asked for corrections or changes to the minutes of August 4, 2026.
Mayor Higdon asked for a motion to approve.
Councilperson Victoria Gale moved to accept and approve August 4, 2026, regular meeting minutes with corrections. Councilperson Sarah Shafer seconded the motion. Motion passed 5 – 0.

Attendee Concerns:
None

Mayor's Report
Mayor Higdon said he was very pleased that we have started this new year with continued progress and additional accomplishments for the Town of Bolivar.

Over the past month, we successfully completed **Phase II of our street repair program,** another significant investment in our town's infrastructure. We are also underway with the **demolition and pre-construction work for our new bus stop.**

I am equally pleased to see Council members taking a proactive role in addressing long-standing issues, including the need to review and modernize our ordinances. These are exactly the types of issues that require engagement, collaboration, and a willingness to move beyond simply identifying problems toward resolving them.

Planning Committee I also want to acknowledge the work of our Planning Committee.

Recently, we were faced with a challenging property matter involving a town property owner. While we encountered some self-inflicted obstacles early in the process, ultimately the parties came together, communicated, collaborated, and found a path toward a resolution. I appreciate everyone in getting us to that point. That experience also leads me to make a broader statement to Council and to all of our committee members.

Leadership, Accountability & Modernization

I am not serving as Mayor with expectation that every issue, decision, or initiative must come through the mayor's office.

We have different levels of expertise represented on this Council, and we have committee members who bring years of experience and knowledge to this town. I invite—and—expect each of us to be proactive in our respective roles.

We need to **communicate, collaborate, and execute whenever possible.** Our responsibility is to produce outcomes and provide answers for our residents. Those answers may not be the answers people want to hear, but our residents deserve timely, thoughtful and responsible action.

My focus continues to be on **fixing what is broken and modernizing how the Town of Bolivar operates.**

That includes:

- Modernizing our processes and procedures.
- Reviewing and updating outdated ordinances.
- Continuing improvements to our parks and Community Center.
- Evaluating how this governing body conducts the business of the town.
- Identifying responsible opportunities to strengthen town revenue.
- Supporting the professional growth of town staff.
- Strengthening engagement with our neighboring municipalities and county partners.
- Being willing to consider new ideas, opportunities, technology, and approaches that reflect the needs of our community today---not simply how things were done 20 years ago.

Modernization does not mean abandoning our history or the character of Bolivar. It means ensuring that the way we govern and operate can serve this community for the next generation.

Regional and County Engagement

I also want to share with Council that I have been engaged with the **Jefferson County Commission** regarding two significant regional issues: **ambulance and**

emergency medical service impacts associated with growth, and data center development.

The County Commission has expressed its intent to engage municipalities in broader discussions surrounding these issues, and I have agreed in principle for Bolivar to participate.

These conversations are expected to occur in the coming weeks.

Regardless of the broader political environment or election cycle, meaningful municipal participation in these discussions is long overdue. Decisions involving growth, public safety, infrastructure, and development can have consequences that extend well beyond jurisdictional boundaries.

Bolivar should have a seat at the table.

I invite members of Council to participate with me and provide their expertise, support, and input as these discussions move forward.

Staff Recognition

Finally, I want to recognize two members of our team on record.

John Garza has done an exceptional job managing the work associated with the bus stop project while continuing to keep up with the town's landscaping and other responsibilities. His performance and commitment have been outstanding, and I want to publicly thank him for his efforts.

I also want to recognize **Laura.**

The Town Office has been extremely busy with multiple projects, administrative responsibilities, and additional initiatives that I have asked the office to undertake. Through all of that, Laura has continued to demonstrate tremendous dedication and commitment to her responsibilities to the Town of Bolivar.

Her consistency, professionalism, and willingness to take on additional responsibilities are greatly appreciated.

I am fortunate to have a team around me that supports the work we are trying to accomplish and, more importantly, supports what we collectively stand for as a town.

We have accomplished a great deal, but there is considerably more work ahead of us.

I remain focused on **progress, accountability, modernization, collaboration, and results.**

Thank you.

Committee Reports
Street Committee
Nothing to report

Bolivar Planning Commission-
Last meeting was held on August 12, 2026, at 7:00pm. Right now, everything seems to be resolved and quiet.
Mayor Higdon thanked Mrs. Staats for the work on resolving this situation quickly.

Parks & Recreation Committee
Councilperson Gale said they did not have a meeting in August. Laura said she talked to Metro about a schedule for new park equipment and installation. Laura said some items are ready for loading on the truck. We do not have an exact date for delivery but, soon.

History Committee
Jeff Staats reported the committee met on August 24, 2026. They welcomed a new member, Vanessa. This committee has been emailing back and forth with people in Argentina. With the help of Andrew Lee on the emails, they are trying to work on having a Sister City since that is where we got our name. This would be nice for Bolivar's 200th Birthday Celebration. The next committee meeting will be September 28, 2026, at 6:30pm.

Water Commission Report
Laura gave a quick update from the Water Company. New meters are 75% complete. In October, there will be a new app in portal. The Gilbert Street water line is scheduled for late September or early October. Projections are coming through and income is up.
Recorder Reed asked if there was a problem with the new meters.
Mayor Higdon said we are not aware of problems with the new meters. There has been widespread overbilling of residents and businesses in Bolivar and Harpers Ferry. These issues remain unresolved. Councilperson Gale said she immediately had a drop in water pressure. Mayor Higdon said we will need to hear from Steve Paradis about this matter.

Board of Zoning Appeals

No Report

Special Events Committee
Councilperson Sarah Shafer said the time of the Movie scheduled for November 7, will be announced later.

Building Inspector Report
No Report

Municipal Ordinance Committee

Councilperson Carolyn Beyer said they met on Monday, August 31, 2026. All members were present. We discussed how to approach the ordinance and focus on nuisance. We are going to review all the ordinances. I will be making copies, and we will review all of them. The committee would like to review all complaints received in writing and any complaints received by Mayor Higdon. We want to get the opinion of the community about concerns and not just what a few citizens feel. Our plan is to have a proposal to the Council by January 2027. We will hold our next meeting on September 30, 2026, at 6:00pm.

Mayor Higdon said progress is good.

Mayor Higdon said he has mentioned this to us previously, but he will mention it again. I have had several people in my ear that continue to tell me we need to look in to Salvage Yard Laws. We need to educate ourselves on these laws and be aware of this in our ordinances.

Councilperson Beyer said she had forgotten about that but would follow through to educate us on any changes to the ordinances.

Mayor Higdon thanked Councilperson Beyer for her report.

Old Business

1. **Discuss/approve from Ryan Neher regarding Lantern Festival Event for 2026**

   Ryan Nehar gave a progress update on the Lantern Festival. He mentioned the following:

   - Mr. Neher would like to get the Lantern Festival on the calendar so he can start advertising the date on Facebook.
   - He will be talking to Laura about traffic control and police presence.
   - He is working with Laura to have reserved The Bolivar Community Center for two weekends to make the Lanterns
   - Arranged for a heater to keep warm, we may need access to electrical outlets for musical instruments and heaters
   - The Woman's Club will be providing refreshments
   - Mr. Neher was excited to hear the Community Day was rescheduled as that will now coincide with the first lantern making workshop.

     Mayor Higdon asked Mr. Neher how we can help with advertising and getting the word out. Mr. Neher said will be using the Observer, Spirit of Jefferson, Libraries in Jefferson County, our Kiosk and the Bolivar Newsletter. He would like to place a lantern in Town Hall entrance and in the Bolivar Harpers Ferry Library.

     Laura asked for clarification on what is expected from the Town of Bolivar. Laura said so you are asking for town awareness, location to be in the Bolivar Children's Park, use of electricity, use of the Bolivar Community Center for the workshop during the first full weekend of November and the

second weekend in November? Laura said, So you are not asking for any money or funding? Mr. Neher said that is right.
Mayor Higdon asked for a motion to approve.
Councilperson Sarah Shafer moved to provide non-funding assistance for the Lantern Festival and Parade in the form of Town Awareness, Traffic Control for the actual event on December 21, provide workshop space for the first full weekend in November and the second weekend in November and the use of the electricity in the Children's Park. The parade date is December 21, 2026. Councilperson Carolyn Beyer seconded the motion. Motion passed 5 – 0.

2. Discussion/approval of ordinance change regarding public nuisances within Bolivar
Table for next meeting.

3. Discuss/Approve changes to Bolivar Municipal Election procedures per SB50
Table for the next meeting

New Business

1. **Discuss/Approve the purchase of laptops for elected officials (for council meeting use)**

Laura started by explaining that last month we had eleven pages of minutes from one meeting. Everyone was flipping through page after page for information. Laura said, if we are going to modernize Bolivar and we are changing policy and procedure updating ordinances, then, this would be a step in the right direction and very effective for all of us. Councilperson Dan Jimeno said he prefers screen verses paper. Dan said he is all for it. Dan said he would like to recommend purchasing a Google Crome Book.
Councilperson Sarah Shafer said she is for it, but we need a plan.
Councilperson Carolyn Beyer said she thinks this would be more economical. This is the way to go!
Councilperson Victoria Gale said we need to modernize; we are going into the age of AI. There is no turning back.
Mayor Higdon asked for a motion to approve.
Councilperson Dan Jimeno moved to allocate up to $3000 for eight devices including additional software and hardware to modernize our IT infrastructure. Councilperson Sarah Shafer seconded the motion. Motion passed 5 – 0.

2. **Appoint an additional member to the Bolivar Municipal Ordinance Committee**

Councilperson Carolyn Beyer would like to recommend Sandi Marra to a position on the Bolivar Municipal Ordinance Committee. Councilperson Beyer said Ms.

Marra is highly qualified and has served on this Council before. She has also worked for the Appalachian Trial Conservatory for quite some time. She is quite an accomplished individual. Ms. Marra has agreed to serve on this committee. Councilperson Beyer said this position was posted.
Councilperson Victoria Gale moved to appoint Sandi Marra as a member of the Bolivar Municipal Ordinance Committee. Councilperson Dan Jimeno seconded the motion. Motion passed 5 – 0.

Adjournment

Councilperson Sarah Shafer moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Victoria Gale seconded the motion. Motion passed 5 - 0. Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm

P. Jean Reed

P. Jean Reed, Recorder

Chris Higdon, Mayor

Next Meeting Tuesday, October 6, 2026, at 6:30 PM