

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
TUESDAY APRIL 14, 2026- 7:00 P.M.**

Mayor and Council Members Present: Tim Litz, Mayor, Dale Yontz, Vice-Mayor, James Lloyd, Geary Jonas, Alma Dunford, Bob Lewis

Council Members Absent: James P. “Sean” Viars

Administration Present: Jason Childers, Town Manager
Monica H. Patton Clerk/Treasurer

Administration Absent: Derek Breedlove, Police Chief

Others Present: Mike Jones, Janie Dean, Sue Nelson, Brenda Hopkins, Amy McBride, Frank Akers

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mayor Litz called the meeting to order and determined a quorum was present.

INVOCATION

Councilmember Jonas gave the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Litz led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Councilmember Dunford seconded by Councilmember Lewis to approve the minutes of the March 24, 2026, meeting. The motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Yontz, Jonas, Lloyd, Lewis, Dunford; zero (0) against.

CITIZEN’S TIME – Janie Dean President of Friends of the Rural Retreat Public Library. She explained that a thank you card was sent to the town for the funding provided for the library. She wanted to make Council aware of how the funds were spent. The funding was used for the summer reading program, petting zoo, Astrid Environmental Services put down a heavy lining to control the humidity levels in the cellar and in the library, the dehumidifier and HVAC were serviced and repaired, and the building was pressure washed. Mrs. Dean stated that Levi Mooney of Gutter Pro repaired gutters on the building at no cost. They need to have gravel placed on the parking lot, and the porch is in need of repairs. They are also supporting the

summer reading program again this year. She thanked the council for the funding that are provided by the town. Town Manager Childers commended Mrs. Dean for the explanation of how the funds were spent. Mayor Litz thanked Mrs. Dean for her time.

Brenda Hopkins of West Baumgardner Avenue addressed Council. Mrs. Hopkins lives across the street from the Heritage Park & Market site. She stated that the town and dedicated citizens should be commended for the progress on the park project. Mrs. Hopkins stated that as a citizen she is conflicted with the site. In the past she suggested that grass be planted across from her house instead of a parking lot. There is currently a gravel parking lot there that provides parking for the Farmers Market customers. She is concerned about the pickleball courts that are proposed for the area. She is concerned about the noise from the ball hitting the pickle ball paddles. Mrs. Hopkins requested soundproof barriers, no lights, planting shrubs and evergreens around the courts, and that the town only install one court. She stated that her research indicates that the high frequency noise from pickle ball bothers dogs. The irregular rhythm will affect dogs and cause barking, restlessness and stress to the animals. She stated that she appreciates the council considering what is best for the community.

Councilmember Lewis stated that the town will not ignore Mrs. Hopkins' thoughts regarding pickleball. He added that if the noise becomes a problem the town will address the issue.

Frank Akers stated that his wife is the president of a tennis club. They installed pickleball courts then removed them due to the noise. He mentioned that the sound is loud and sharp.

Amy McBride stated that she is here to support Brenda Hopkins. She stated that she has a speech, but she has no hope that there will be any change. She stated that if you live in the 200 to 300 blocks of West Baumgardner Avenue, there is already enough noise.

Round Table Meeting at the Depot – Mrs. McBride announced that on Thursday, April 16, 2026, the Depot is hosting the Wythe Bland Chamber of Commerce round table at 3pm. She invited Council to stop in. Frank Aker added that the tourism group meets monthly. He stated that the state parks system from Foster Falls will attend the meeting.

Dr. Pepper Day – Councilmember Lloyd stated that Council has mentioned not having the event this year. Mr. Akers stated that on Depot Day last year they displayed trains inside the Depot, and they would like to display Dr. Pepper memorabilia on Dr. Pepper Day. Councilmember Lloyd stated that he will reach out to Dr. Pepper Corporation regarding the event and report back to Council. Councilmember Lewis stated that the event has turned out to be a T-shirt giveaway. Mayor Litz stated that he wonders if it is worth the effort to give out free shirts. Councilmember Lloyd agreed that the majority of attendees only want the free t-shirt. Mr. Akers mentioned that the 24th is on a Saturday this year and it might be good to have the event on 10-24.

Fiber Placement – Mr. Akers stated that he knows of three different people that have been scammed by people posing as fiber companies. He warned people that telephones will need to be updated if the customer goes to Brightspeed's fiber service. Town Manager Childers stated that the biggest issues are with the sales people going door to door after dark. He and Chief Breedlove have addressed this with one company. Mr. Akers asked if the town controls which companies can bury fiber cable. Town Manager Childers stated as long as they stay on the state right-of-way utility companies are allowed to install their cables.

CORRESPONDENCE – Treasurer Patton read a thank you note from Janie Dean of Friends of the Library.

POLICE REPORT - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Treasurer Patton announced that the annual Shred-It event will take place on Saturday April 18th from 9 to 12. There will be a dumptruck onsite to place empty boxes and trash in.

NEW BUSINESS – None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Treasurer Patton reported that she received the engagement letter for the FY 25-26 annual audit from Robertson Farmer, Cox Associates. Their fee for these services is \$24,475. This is an increase of \$1,165 from last year.

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES & LEGAL MATTERS – None

HERITAGE DAYS – Vice-Mayor Yontz stated that since 2006 he has been treated with respect. He stated that he missed the last meeting due to exposure to COVID and was treated disrespectfully in his absence, and that he was offended by the way he was treated and was not able to defend himself. Also he is not here for a title, but because he has passion for the town. He explained that the sound crew called on Friday evening and said the stage is not big enough. He replied that they said we would need to rent a mobile stage. He stated that somehow word got around that the town would need to increase the fee to \$60,000 to cover the extra costs. He called the band and asked what size stage they would need. The band agreed that the existing stage will work. He mentioned that the current budget of \$50,000 will work for the event. The finance committee agreed that \$40,000 will be proposed for the fy 2026-27 budget. Councilmember Dunford asked if the \$40,000 will include the entire event or just the entertainment. Vice-Mayor Yontz stated that it is the entire budget for next year's event. Mayor Litz replied that the main concern was that the cost of the event was going over budget.

Mayor Litz stated that the Town of Rural Retreat has three political appointees, these positions are the Town Manager, Treasurer and Police Chief. Every election year the three appointees are re-appointed. Mayor Litz stated that one appointee should never be attacked by one council member. He reminded everyone that there is a chain of command. He stated that all the town employees work for the Town Manager. The Town Manager works for the six-member Council, therefore a political appointee can be voted off at any time by a vote from the Council.

MURAL PLANNING- Town Manager Childers stated that there will be a meeting on April 28th prior to the council meeting.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

The Town Manager's report is attached and is hereby made part of these minutes. The following items were reported and discussed.

- **Downtown Revitalization:** The contractor has installed the HVAC, electricity, and the majority of the project in the building on the Downtown Site. They have also started the concrete work for the playground and the drop inlets for the drainage near the playground and the splashpad. The next steps will be the porch, doors, flagpole, electrical, the gazebo, and other concrete work. I have also tentatively set a meeting about the pickle ball courts for next week.

Lions Club- Town Manager Childers explained that the wishing well was donated by the Lions Club. He suggested placing a plaque or sign on the wishing well for the club.

Splash pad and Playground Grand Opening - Town Manager Childers stated that plans need to be made for a grand opening on Saturday, May 23rd. Town Manager Childers stated that the town will invite Wythe Bland Foundation, the Chamber of Commerce, and Council members. Treasurer Patton stated that Josh Widner with Polar Express would be able to charge \$250 for 70 to 75 snow cones for kids. Town Manager Childers stated that we would possibly need to prepare for 150. He stated that there will be food trucks on site at the event. A motion was made by Vice-Mayor Yontz and seconded by Councilmember Jonas to use \$1,500 from the general fund's undesignated line item for the grand opening of the park. Councilmember Lewis suggested to include music. He mentioned inviting Bud Pollard to perform. The event will be held from 1pm to 3pm. The motion passed by a vote of five (5) for: Lloyd, Jonas, Yontz, Dunford, Lewis; zero (0) against.

- **Water Plant:** While the Town was doing some repairs on the CIP cleaning unit and conductivity sensor, the plant went into shutdown. The Town crew was able to get the plant back online yesterday evening. The Town dropped to about 83 feet in the orange tanks, but we expect to catch up quickly with regular water production. The lake is getting ready to ramp up and The Town needs to be at full capacity for the warmer weather activities.
- The Lane Group, VDH, and the Town met in Abingdon to discuss our Staley Spring water plant project. This was an initial discussion about the scope of the project and what the details were. VDH did give guidance on the process moving forward. The first step is to complete a battery of testing of the RAW water at the spring. Once these analyses have been completed the results will be reported to the water plant manufacturer and they will design the plant to meet the filtration needs of the water at the spring. There will also need to be an up-to-date monitoring of the flow capacity of the spring so the permit can be issued for the amount of water the Town can take from the spring. The Town hopes to get this sampling done for DEQ in the next couple weeks depending on the range of samples that are required.
- **Derelict Properties:** I have spoken with Town Attorney Cassell regarding some of derelict properties in Town. Some of these are in the TACS system for delinquent taxes. He advised that any of the properties that are in this process should not be addressed until the process of the tax collection is completed.

Councilmember Dunford asked about stop sign that is down on Elm Avenue. Mike Jones stated that the VDOT will take care of the sign.

Councilmember Lewis asked Town Manager Childers for the status of the electrical sign that the Lions Club suggested the town update at the corner of N. Main Street and Chinquapin Avenue. Town Manager Childers stated that he made a phone call previously and left a message but has not heard back from the company. He mentioned that he will make another phone call about the sign and the flagpole for the park.

TREASURER’S REPORT

The invoices for April 14, 2026, were read and approved.

ADJOURNMENT – There being no additional business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned upon a motion by Councilmember Lewis. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

Mayor

Clerk