

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
TUESDAY, JANUARY 13, 2026- 7:00 P.M.**

Mayor and Council Members Present: Tim Litz, Mayor, Dale Yontz, Vice-Mayor, James Lloyd, Geary Jonas, James P. “Sean” Viars, Bob Lewis, Alma Dunford

Council Members Absent: None

Administration Present: Jason Childers, Town Manager
Monica H. Patton, Clerk/Treasurer
Derek Breedlove, Police Chief

Administration Absent: None

Others Present: Mike Jones

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 Viars seconded by Councilmember Dunford to approve the minutes of the December 9, 2025, meeting. The motion passed by a vote of six (6) for: Viars, Jonas, Lloyd, Dunford, Lewis, Yontz; zero (0) against.

CITIZEN’S TIME – None

CORRESPONDENCE – None

TOWN MANAGER’S REPORT

Lighting at Community Center - Town Manager Childers reported that the lighting at the community center will be replaced with an adjustable fixture to prevent light from shining into nearby residences. He also reported that the two motion-detection lights have been repaired.

Porches and Railings – Town Manager Childers stated that Mike Jones, Treasurer Patton and himself discussed this project and the options. He explained that the porch and railing at Pepper Stage is the most important one. The community center and caboose porches are used the least so they can be updated later. The contractor will get a quote on this project soon.

Mayor Litz suggested that the plumbing in the building at the downtown property should be run on the outside of the walls or valves provided so the water can be shut off. The plumbing will need to drain properly if the building is not heated during the winter months. He mentioned that it will be less expensive than fixing busted water lines in the walls. Town Manager Childers stated that the General Contractor has the Town’s best interest at hand, and he feels sure the plumbing will be handled properly.

Town Manager Childers stated that after speaking with the general contractor on the Heritage Park & Market site, the roof on the building is in very good condition. He stated that this is a solid building.

Town Manager Childers suggested allowing citizens to purchase trees in the park for memorials. Councilmember Dunford stated that park benches are another option for memorials.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION – Town Manager Childers reported: The contractors for the playground and the bathrooms at the Downtown site have been working on this project recently. The trim has put on the building around the top and the windows in the building. The inside has been gutted for renovations inside the building.

The contractors were able to complete the grade work for the playground, and the contractor for the playground has begun installing their equipment on the site. Once this is finished the concrete can be poured and the turf will be installed.

The Town is still working with the engineer on the rest of the park. It is planned to open the splashpad, playground, and bathroom area on Memorial Day this year.

Town Manager Childers reported that once construction is completed the town will have a grand opening around the Memorial Day opening.

UPGRADES TO WATER PLANT – Town Manager Childers reported: The water plant has been operating without any period of shutdown for any reason. The Town needs to hire a Water/Wastewater plant operator soon. We have advertised the position for a month and have gotten minimal activity towards making this hire. We will continue to pursue this opening heavily.

The maintenance crew workers have stepped up to assist when needed until we can hire someone for the position. Patrick Wheeler does the meter reading and backs up the water/wastewater operator when needed.

Mike Jones spoke with Jarvis Tree Removal regarding removing trees at the Staley Spring the cost will be \$3400. This will take place next week.

The Town was able to close on the property at Staley Spring for the approved amount and, this property has now been secured for our future water production expansion. I have also been in touch with the Lane Group, and the Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) for the Staley Spring site should be completed and available next week. At that point, the Town can begin to talk with VDH and the manufacturers of water plants to begin the project.

DERELICT PROPERTY – None

WATER ACCOUNTABILITY – Town Manager Childers reported: I have reached out to Kevin Belcher to come and speak to the utility committee about the water accountability within the Town's system. Hopefully this will occur by February.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES & LEGAL MATTERS – Councilmember Viars asked if a Town Attorney has been considered. Town Manager Childers stated that he has spoken with an attorney that is interested and Council will need to appoint someone to this position. Councilmember Lewis stated that he ran the name through the Virginia Bar Association and he is active and in good standing. A motion was made by Councilmember Lewis and seconded by Councilmember Lloyd to appoint Paul R. Cassell as the Town Attorney. The motion passed by a vote of six (6) for: Lloyd, Jonas, Yontz, Viars, Dunford, Lewis; zero (0) against.

Town Manager Childers stated that he would like to recognize Mike Sobey for his professionalism and hard work for the town. A plaque or resolution would be nice for Mr. Sobey. Mayor Litz suggested that Town Manager Childers take care of the recognition to Mr. Sobey.

MURAL PLANNING –Town Manager Childers reported that he has spoken with a couple of citizens who are interested in participating in the mural planning process. He stated that the Lions Club expressed interest in participating by sponsoring a LOVE sign; however, there are currently no funds available for the LOVE signs from Virginia Department of Tourism. A meeting with committee members will be scheduled. Councilmember Lewis asked whether a LOVE sign would still be considered if funding is not obtained.

Councilmember Dunford reported that Phyllis Hurt and Linda Vaught are interested in creating a memorial in honor of their sister. Town Manager Childers stated that there will be opportunities available for memorials.

7:20 – Town Manager Childers left the meeting

POLICE REPORT – Chief Breedlove mentioned that the town has had complaints about tractor trailer traffic and noise. He advised that he spoke with one of the motor carrier officers and the Virginia State Police will perform inspections soon.

Chief Breedlove announced that the training on the new Southern Software system will be conducted on February 17, 18, and 19, 2026, at the Wytheville Police Department. Councilmember Lewis inquired whether the Chief's current computer would be adequate for the new software. Chief Breedlove confirmed that the existing computer will be sufficient.

HERITAGE DAYS FESTIVAL – Vice-Mayor Yontz stated that he finally received an answer from the headliner. He mentioned that he has been working on a contract since August 2025. Diamond Rio will be the headliner for the 2026 Heritage Day festival.

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Councilmember Viars asked if all businesses have purchased a business license. Treasurer Patton reported three businesses still have outstanding licenses. Two of these businesses have provided the necessary verification of receipts and given their total amount due but have not provided payment for the license fee.

Councilmember Lewis stated that there has been some movement at the old NAPA building cleaning up outside of the property.

Revised Personal Property Tax Tickets - Treasurer Patton reported that the revised personal property tax tickets will be mailed soon. The mailing will include a revised tax ticket including all of the information with an explanation of why the tickets are revised.

Painting of the fire station – Councilmember Lewis stated that if the Town Manager cannot get other quotes, then the town should hire the person that has previously given the town a quote. A motion was made by Councilmember Lewis and seconded by Vice-Mayor Yontz to authorize Town Manager Childers to contact and hire the company that quoted painting the fire station for the amount quoted. The motion passed by a vote of six (6) for: Lloyd, Jonas, Yontz, Viars, Dunford, Lewis; zero (0) against.

NEW BUSINESS

None

TREASURER'S REPORT

The invoices for January 13, 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