

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE RURAL RETREAT TOWN
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON
TUESDAY MARCH 24, 2026- 7:00 P.M.**

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

Council Members Absent: Dale Yontz, Vice-Mayor

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

Administration Absent: Derek Breedlove, Police Chief

Others Present: None

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 10, 2026, meeting. The motion passed by a vote of six (5) for: Viars, Jonas, Lloyd, Lewis, Dunford; zero (0) against.

CITIZEN’S TIME – None

CORRESPONDENCE – Councilmember Viars reported that a citizen had inquired about potholes throughout the town. He acknowledged that town staff is actively addressing the issue.

Councilmember Lewis noted that the town crew had recently completed some patching work.

Town Manager Childers stated that he is working to bring RAM Paving in as quickly as possible to address the ongoing pothole problems. He mentioned that several areas require attention, with Milk Plant Road receiving the highest number of complaints. Other streets with reported issues

include Baumgardner Avenue, Mountain View Avenue, Sherwood Avenue, and Indian Circle. Complaints have also been received regarding the Rescue Squad building parking lot.

Town Manager Childers confirmed that he has contacted VDOT and reported all of the above locations.

POLICE REPORT - Town Manager Childers stated that Chief Breedlove had an accident off duty, and he received an injury to his hamstring. He will most likely be out of work for several weeks while he recovers. He added that Chief Breedlove wanted him to report that he worked nights last week and had one call while on duty. Any emergencies will need to be reported to the Wythe County Sheriff's office.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Liberty at the Lake – Town Manager Childers handed out information for the Fourth of July Festival at the Rural Retreat Lake. He stated that the town has \$4,500 left in contributions for this fiscal year. The level of sponsorship that he recommends is \$5,000, so the town will go over on the line item by \$500. A motion was made by Councilmember Viars and seconded by Councilmember Lewis to approve \$5,000 for the festival, Liberty at the Lake, in July 2026. Councilmember Dunford stated concerns about why the Fourth of July festival was taken away from the town years ago. Town Manager Childers stated that his understanding is that the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) were involved with the decision to stop the festivities at the lake.

Mayor Litz stated that he would like to see proof that this is what happened because he does not believe that this was the reason. Councilmember Dunford agreed that the town needs to contribute, but she has an issue since the County stopped having the event in Rural Retreat.

Councilmember Viars stated that the town should celebrate the fact that this is coming back to the Rural Retreat Community. These people will drive through the town, and it is good for businesses. This means a lot to the citizens of Rural Retreat. Councilmember Lewis stated that it was relinquished because the fire department could no longer afford to purchase the fireworks. Councilmember Lloyd stated that the County took over the event after the fire department gave it up. Town Manager Childers stated that the \$5,000 level will be recognized as the presenting sponsor and includes a main stage logo banner, on-stage recognition, premium booth space, early setup access, the town's logo on t-shirts, social media features, and 4 VIP parking passes. The motion passed by a vote of four (4) for: Jonas, Viars, Dunford, Lewis; one (1) against: Lloyd.

NEW BUSINESS – None

COMMITTEE REPORTS

FINANCE & APPROPRIATIONS – Treasurer Patton reported there will be a finance committee meeting on Monday, March 30, 2026, at 5 pm to discuss the FY 27 budget.

Treasurer Patton reported that the 2026 business license renewal forms have been mailed. These licenses are due by April 30, 2026.

Councilmember Viars asked if the new attorney has been contacted regarding the delinquent business license. Town Manager Childers stated that he has attempted to contact the individual. He stated that he would like to speak with this person and explain again that the town would like to take care of the situation without legal action.

PERSONNEL, ORDINANCES & LEGAL MATTERS – None

HERITAGE DAYS – Councilmember Lewis stated that the bands requirements will not fit on the Dr. Pepper stage. They are asking the town to rent a stage for their performance which will cost \$30,000. Treasurer Patton reported that the cost will include the sound, so the stage will cost approximately \$25,000. Councilmember Lewis stated that if the town rents the stage, it will make the festival cost upwards of \$60,000. Mayor Litz asked if the town has sent any funds to the band. Treasurer Patton replied that no funds have been sent. She has an email from Vice-Mayor Yontz dated January 16, 2026, indicating the contract was approved. Treasurer Patton stated that she has a copy of the rider if anyone would like to see it. Councilmember Viars stated that a committee needs to be established to discuss the issue further. Town Manager Childers stated that it needs to be the finance committee because it makes the budget proposals. Mayor Litz agreed and stated that this needs to be resolved soon.

MURAL PLANNING- Town Manager Childers stated that there will be a committee meeting held soon to plan the mural. Councilmember Dunford asked if there is an allotted amount of money for the mural. Town Manager Childers stated that it is built into the park project.

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 for the Downtown site is completing the work on the inside of the building and the porch on the north side. They are also making plans with the fencing company to get the fences and gates around the splash pad, playground, and pavilion. Separate contractors will build the smaller pavilion between the playground and the splash pad. They are also going to start getting electricity to the Framer's Market before any sidewalks are laid.
- I have reached out to 2 contractors about the pickleball courts, and hopefully they will be in Town to go over the area with me soon.
- **Water Plant:** The tanks have gotten back to their normal levels and are staying in the 90 feet range. Everything is working as it should and the coil should be in soon so a CIP cleaning can be completed.
- The Town, Davenport and Associates, and RDA engineering have met a couple times to go over funding for the water plant at Staley Springs to go over options for funding the project. There were 4 options proposed to the Town that will be discussed with the Finance Committee on Monday as part of the budgeting process. The PER for Staley Spring has also been shared with VDH for review to get the permitting process started.
- I have reached out to Aquahawk, which is company where customers can monitor their water consumption on their own and set alarms if their water consumption reaches a certain level. The initial setup is \$5k and \$3.20 per meter per year. The Town currently

has 1,005 water customers, so the annual cost would be \$3,200. There would also be a fee from Southern Software for data file sharing, but that cost is unknown at this time.

Councilmember Viars asked if the town could possibly investigate a program on the industrial level where the town would monitor usage instead of the customer. Town Manager Childers stated that the town does this once a month when the meters are read.

Councilmember Lewis inquired about the meter calibration at the water plant. Town Manager Childers stated this has not taken place.

Councilmember Viars inquired about when the contractor would be painting the firehouse. Town Manager Childers stated that the project is scheduled to take place in April.

Councilmember Lewis inquired which employees are permitted to drive town vehicles home.

Town Manager Childers responded that the following employees have a town truck assigned to them for take-home use due to being on call and subject to after-hours callouts:

- Mike Jones
- Michael Robert
- Christopher Buckingham
- Stephen Grubb

Councilmember Dunford asked about the pumps that are needed at the water plant. Town Manager Childers stated that they have arrived to the vendor in Tazewell.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The invoices for March 24, 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