

BOLIVAR TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES Tuesday, February 4, 2025

Stephen Paradis, Mayor
Victoria Gale
Chris Higdon
Dan Jimeno
Sarah McMains
Sarah Shafer
P. Jean Reed, Recorder, Mayor Pro Tem
Laura Whittington, Town Administrator

Moment of Silence Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Paradis asked everyone to stand for a moment of silence and remember the victims of the plane crashes.

Call to Order

The February 4, 2025 regular meeting of the Bolivar Town Council was called to order by Mayor Stephen Paradis at 6:30pm. Councilperson Sarah McMains attended this meeting by Zoom.

Treasurers Report

Treasurer Eric Lewis was not in attendance for this meeting. Mayor Paradis said our target amount is at 50%. Some of our larger items are running above the target amount Wine and Liquor Tax is on target, Hotel Occupancy Tax is at almost twice the amount, Sales Tax is above target, Gaming is on target and Video Lottery is 25% more than we had budgeted for this time of year. That is all good. Expenses payroll numbers look like they are a little above the 50% but that might be a timing issue. We will ask Eric to verify that for us. Mayor Paradis ask for a motion to approve. **Councilperson Chris Higdon moved to approve the Treasurers Report as presented by Mayor Paradis. Councilperson Victoria Gale seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 – 0.**

Budget Resolution

Mayor Paradis reported we need to do a budget revision due to insufficient funds in our Snow Removal line item and we also have two invoices that have not been paid. We also needed to move the ARPA money by December 31, 2024. The following was explained.

ARPA Balance Line item #369 increase line item 750 Streets and Highways by \$39,412 for a total of \$49,412. City Hall Line item 440-Decrease \$15,000 and move to Snow Removal line item 753 \$15,000 for a total of \$25,000. New Balance (City Hall is \$167,007).

Mayor Paradis read the Resolution. Resolved: That subject to approval of the State Auditor as ex officio chief inspector of public offices the municipal council does hereby direct the budget be revised prior to the expenditure or obligation of funds for which no appropriation or insufficient appropriation currently exists, as shown on budget number 1-General Fund (2024-2025), a copy of which is entered as part of this record.

The adoption of the foregoing resolution having been moved by Sarah Shafer, and duly seconded by Victoria Gale the vote thereon was as follows:

Sarah McMains	Yes
Dan Jimeno	Yes
Sarah Shafer	Yes
Chris Higdon	Yes
Victoria Gale	Yes
P. Jean Reed	Yes

Motion passed 6 - 0

Whereupon, Stephen Paradis declared said resolution duly adopted, and the same is, hereby as so stated above and the Mayor, Stephen Paradis is authorized to fix his signature on the attached "Request for Revision to Approved Budget" to be sent to the State Auditor for approval.

Town Attorney, Effie Kallas

- Attorney Kallas said later in our meeting we will discuss our two Intergovernmental agreements and they will be placed on the February 20, 2025 County Commission agenda.
- The Ethics Quarterly News Letter is in your packet. Under new opinions I would like to review and discuss Open meetings act; Maybe later on in the year when we have our Ethics training.
- Received the fourth quarter, 2024 of our Wine, Liquor and Private Club Tax distribution January 2025. Attorney Kallas compared this with last year and we are down by about \$2000 to \$3000. Nothing shocking but we will keep our eye on this.
- West Virginia Legislature starts February 12. I will track any new laws or changes to laws that might affect Bolivar and inform you about these. Mayor Paradis thanked Attorney Kallas for her report.

Sheriff's Department Report and public comment

Corp. Hockman reported for the month of January, we had 104 incidents. We had 63 Road Patrols, 14 Directed Patrols, 4 Building Checks, 3 Domestic Verb Ip, 2 Domestic Phys IP, 2 Public Service, 2 Threats, 2 Traffic Stops, 2 Welfare Checks, 1 911 Hang Up, 1 Alarm ATM, 1 CardcArrstD+++, 1 Disabled Vehicle, 1 Injured Animal.

Corp. Hockman said we seemed to have a few more domestic cases than usual probably due to the weather. Corp. Hockman said we had one person that has been removed from Bolivar Court Apartments and is no longer around. He said we did not have any incidents that were out of the ordinary.

Mayor Paradis thanked Corp. Hockman for his report.

Harpers Ferry National Historical Park-Superintendent Gossett

Superintendent Gossett announced they were able to send a letter for support package for the proposed Harpers Ferry Strategic Infrastructure Enhancement Project which the Hagerstown Eastern Panhandle Metropolitan Planning Organization put together and put forward on behalf of WVDOH to the USDOOH for better utilizing investments to leverage development program grants.

Appalachian National Scenic Trail; Welcome Superintendent Ed Clark

Former Town Council Member Sandi Marra and CEO of Appalachian Trail Conservancy introduced Superintendent Ed Clark.

Mr. Clark thanked Sandi Marra for the introduction to Mayor and Council. Mr. Clark said he has been on the job about 11 1/2 years. Some of the points of interest mentioned in tonight's remarks consist of:

- Continue protecting and improving Our Countries Land

- Cleaning up infrastructure damage from various types of storms
- Locally, there are many hazardous roads crossing the Appalachian Trail □ Economic impact such as Bryon Bridge closure
- Estimate four and one half million visitors per year.
- Mr. Clark thanked all the volunteers that help in any way with the Appalachian Trail
- Mr. Clark thanked Bolivar for the invitation and said he would return. NOTE: I did not receive a written report from Mr. Clark.

Minutes

Approve Regular Meeting Minutes-January 14, 2025

Recorder Reed will make changes/corrections to the January 14, 2025 Regular Meeting Minutes.

Councilperson Sarah Shafer moved to approve January 14, 2025 regular Meeting Minutes with corrections. Councilperson Victoria Gale seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 – 0

Attendee Concerns

Lisa Kovatch thanked us for the support of the Bolivar Lantern Festival event.

- We had a little problem with the weather, but we made a commitment to participate so we moved the event to the Bolivar Children's Park
 - We created a Cultural Garden in the park and it was well received. Thanks for being there to everybody that came.
 - People really enjoyed a chance talk to their neighbors and see the Art works up close.
 - One of the participants from Charles Town created these "Thank You" cards. Lisa asked if they were in our packets. They were!
 - Read the comments, please, we really appreciate it.
 - Nice comments in the Journal. Thanks to you.
- Mayor Paradis thanked Lisa for her comments.

Mayor's report

Mayor Paradis said The Mayors got together on January 22, 2025 for the Mayors meeting

- Major topic was Homelessness County wide
- Mayor Paradis and Jessie Melton, of Harpers Ferry, are working on a noise complaint concerning the Barn.
- The Auditor has sent out paper work that we need to fill out and return to the Auditor. There appears to be multiple of the same papers, but all need to be answered and returned.
- Superintendent Gossett mentioned she had written a letter along with a letter from Mayor Paradis in support of sidewalk completion and resurfacing all of Washington Street (this grant was not approved last year so we will try again.)
- Other letters of support came from Bolivar Harpers Ferry-Bolivar Historic Town Foundation for continued work on the Historic Church behind the Post Office/Police Station.

Mayor Paradis asked Recorder Reed to give a report on the upcoming election.

Recorder Reed gave a written copy of the Election Calendar of Dates for the upcoming June 3, 2025 Election. Those running for Mayor: Steve Paradis

Chris Higdon

Recorder: P. Jean Reed

Council: Lisa Kovatch

Charlma Jones Quarles
Sarah Shafer
Dan Jimeno

Carolyn Beyer Victoria Gale

Please see attached Calendar of important election dates from March 11 through June 3.

Street Committee

Mayor Paradis said he reached out to a company about radar speed flashing signs that shows your speed and a little message. The messages get a little bit sterner if you are speeding. I do not have a price quote from this company.

Bolivar Planning Commission

Barbara Staats said they elected officers for the Planning Commission for the next term

President	Barbara Staats
Vice President	Chris Higdon
Secretary	Deb Hale

Someone attended their meeting and had a question on property line. They told them they would have to go to Legal to get this resolved. They also wanted to get a demo permit. We informed them that along with the Executor of the Estate, the both would have to come in to get the demo permit. We also went over all the permits that were issued this year. We went over the annual report. The Planning Commission will meet quarterly from now on. The dates are: January 27 April 28, July 28 and October 27. Mrs. Staats said these meetings will be posted prior to the meetings.

Mayor Paradis thanked Barb Staats for the report.

Park & Recreation Committee

No meeting this month. Councilperson Victoria Gale reported Councilperson Sarah McMains is emailing other Towns and Municipalities for information on their parks. Councilperson McMains said she is still working on getting information. Councilperson Gale said she will get with Eric and the other members to set up a meeting. Councilperson Gale said she has been taking the minutes of their meetings.

Canal Town Partnership

Charlma Quarles reported about 7000 volunteer hours donated to the Canal Town Trust for 2024. That translates into about \$20,000 in kind service. I thought that was pretty good. Also they reported over 10 tons of invasive species were removed by volunteers as well. Along the Canal, seven cabins have been renovated and families can stay in the quarters for a small fee. These raised over \$150,000 just from that program. They have a Park after Dark Program and they raised over \$200,000. They also had a 37% increase in visitors in 2024. We did not have a meeting in January due to weather.

Water Commission Report

No report

Streetscape Committee

Nothing to report

Jefferson County Development Authority

No Report

History Committee

Jeff Staats reported that this committee is starting work on the Welcome to Bolivar brochure that was one of the objectives presented to the council back in October when you approved the History Committee. As we work on putting this brochure together as well as preserving Bolivar's History, we may at times need to utilize the town's communication means to reach out to the community for additional information, such as photos they may have to share with the committee's history preservation goals. We would like to know if it is okay with the council that the committee uses the town's communications for Bolivar history related communication. This is something Deb Hale put together, you may use it or something similar.

Mayor Paradis asked Laura if any of our communication devices would prohibit something like this. Laura said she does not, but this committee was formed by the Town Council so they make recommendations and bring them to you. I do not put things out there without, first, having the approval of the Town Council. So that is the reason for this information coming to you tonight. Mayor Paradis asked Attorney Kallas for guidance.

Attorney Kallas would like to see the authority given to this committee before giving an opinion. Mayor Paradis asked for this to be added to the March meeting agenda and to have available the meeting minutes for when this committee was approved.

Old Business

1. Sidewalk project status update

Laura said this is all in the hands of Department of Highways. We had a deadline January 21. We are still actually receiving phone calls from people who say they would like to participate in the replacement of mailboxes on W. Washington Street. I sent a number in to Inspector Scott Boyd to cover the mailboxes on W. Washington Street and we are just waiting for them to start replacing them. So it is in their hands right now. This task has been completed as requested.

2. Discuss/Approve reimbursement for supplies to Lisa Kovatch (Lantern Festival accounting & check approval)

- [illegible]

Mayor Paradis gave this 2 page insert explanation of this information. Please read.

Bolivar Lantern Festival Category	Appropriation	Expense	Over (Under)	Sources	Over (Under)	Source of Funds	Paid by Vendor	Reference	Description	Kovatch
Reimbursements	Instructor Fee	\$ 550.00	town	town	Populoh	Invoice-VMP	instructor	fee	0	
	Instructor Fee	\$ 550.00	\$ 550.00	\$ 0.00	0	Workshop	Facilitators	\$ 250.00	town	
	town	town	Populoh	Invoice-VMP	facilitator	fee	0	Workshop	Facilitators	\$ 250.00
	town	town	Redgrave	Invoice-PR	facilitator	fee	0	Workshop	Facilitators	\$ 500.00
								\$ 500.00	\$ 0.00	0
	travel reimbursement	\$ 109.21	town	town	Populoh	Invoice-VMP	instructor	travel	0	
	travel reimbursement	\$ 193.80	\$ 109.21	(\$84.59)	0	workshop	supplies; promotional			
	materials	\$ 121.20	town	town	on file w/ Laura	on file w/ Laura	Glue, trash bags, twine,			
	paintbrushes	0	workshop	supplies; promotional	materials	\$ 211.56	town	town	on file	
	w/ Laura	on file w/ Laura	Zipties, twine, Reed #6	0	workshop	supplies; promotional				

materials \$ 205.36 town town on file w/ Laura on file w/ Laura Reed #7 0 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 60.57 town town on file w/ Laura on file w/ Laura Paper 0 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 61.40 town Kovatch Walmart xx9956 batteries \$ 61.40 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 9.30 town Kovatch Walmart xx-6916 batteries \$ 9.30 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 66.33 town Kovatch Walmart xx-1431 batteries; zipties \$ 66.33 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 46.42 town Kovatch Home Depot xx-63255 dowels, stakes \$ 46.42 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ (38.95) town Kovatch Home Depot return-63255 dowels, stakes \$ (38.95) workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 43.63 town Kovatch Amazon xx-6617 lights; paper lanterns \$ 43.63 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 195.00 JCCVB town Vital Signs 6689 banners 0 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 106.84 JCCVB Kovatch FedEx xx-E07X flyers \$ 106.84 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 51.93 JCCVB Kovatch FedEx xx-209X flyers \$ 51.93 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 290.00 JAC town Progressive Printing tbd booklets 0 workshop supplies; promotional materials \$ 1,656.20 \$ 1,430.59 (\$225.61) 0 graphic design \$ 100.00 JCCVB town Simply On Union Invoice-SOU graphics 0 graphic design \$ 100.00 \$ 100.00 \$0.00 JCCVB grant \$ 453.77 \$ 500.00 \$ (46.23) JAC grant \$ 290.00 \$ 300.00 \$ (10.00) Town Committed Funds \$ 1,946.03 \$ 2,200.00 \$ (253.97) TOTALS \$ 3,000.00 \$ 2,689.80 (\$310.20) \$3,000.00 \$ (310.20) \$ 346.90 Wednesday, January 29, 2025 Checks To Valeska Populoh Amount \$

Peter Redgrave \$ Simply On Union LLC Jefferson Arts Council Jefferson County CVB Lisa Kovatch Progressive Printing Vital Signs \$ \$ 909.21 250.00 100.00 10.00 \$ 46.23 \$ 346.90 \$ 290.00 \$ 195.00 misc (see 1/31/2025 Treasurers Report detail) \$ 598.69 Total \$ 2,746.03

- This paperwork shows some invoices that have been paid and some that are not paid
- This paperwork shows the sources of receipts, disbursements, refund of grant monies and unpaid invoices.

Mayor Paradis said the last column is specifically those reimbursements to Lisa Kovach that we are here to act on tonight. If you look at the data itself the data itself under the different categories, the instructor fees we paid what was invoiced, same thing for facilitators @ \$500, for travel reimbursement we budgeted \$193.80 and spent \$109.21. Workshop supplies, promotional materials Total spent \$1,430.59. Graphic design budgeted \$100 paid from CVB Grant monies came from CVB = \$500, Jefferson Arts Council = \$300, and Town of Bolivar \$2200 for a total project of \$3,000.

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Insert a 4 page insert from Councilperson Sarah Shafer that she presented after Mayor Paradis gave his presentation. Please read.

Written by Sarah Shafer to specifically address fellow council members during Feb 4. 2025 Town Council meeting
re: lantern festival funding approval Fellow Council:

I have been raising the alarm on this agenda item since it came to us during the normal, November TC session, without adequately being able to articulate my concerns. After spending time with our Town Administrator to understand how our current policy works when requesting Town funds, I think I am better able to share my concerns. And to ensure you are paying attention, my concerns are that we are not being used to be complicit to chargeable offenses of Fraud, waste, and abuse. I understand there are certain individuals who are unprofessionally making this personal and attempting to make it look like I am "anti-lantern festival" the reality is, I am just "Pro-do it ethically and legally". I loved the idea of the festival, I love community events and I thought they were quite beautiful, actually. We just need to ensure we are handling the fiscal portion correctly. In light of receiving the recent documentation for our regular audit from David Howell, CPA, and understanding that Fraud and legal allocation of funds are considered a presumptive condition, I encourage each of you to understand what we have before us. Not only have we taken an oath to protect the fiduciary responsibility of this Town, we have to be cognizant that we can be held criminally accountable for our actions while in our elected positions.

Fraud, waste, and abuse in the government do not have a \$\$ threshold. While a lesser offense, you can be found guilty of fraud for the misappropriation of a paper clip. It is defined on the OIG website as:

Fraud is defined as the wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain. Fraud includes false representation of fact, making false statements, or by concealment of information.

Waste is defined as the thoughtless or careless expenditure, mismanagement, or abuse of resources to the detriment (or potential detriment) of the U.S. government. Waste also includes incurring unnecessary costs resulting from inefficient or ineffective practices, systems, or controls.

Abuse is defined as excessive or improper use of a thing, or to use something in a manner contrary to the natural or legal rules for its use. Abuse can occur in financial or non-financial settings. Using a position of authority to obtain an improper payment

1. It is unprecedented for a citizen to request the use of Town Funds unless they are doing so on behalf of an organization or business. My initial concerns (In November) about precedent being set were centered around this fact. The reason that it was unprecedented is because by virtue of the fund request application currently in place, an Individual cannot seek town funds to host a community event. When this event was initially brought before us, that is exactly what this was. It was NOT a Town event; it was an event being organized by an individual *for the benefit of the community* while spending Town funds that the town had not approved. **(Waste #1)** Under normal conditions, before a business or organization's request reaches the council, certain documentation and information is included so that it can be compiled and presented as a complete package. This documentation and information were bypassed by our Mayor who not only placed this item on our agenda, but also called a special meeting to secure funding without using the proper channels currently in place **(Abuse #1)** This is important to note because the individual who is organizing the festival is his significant other, which I don't believe he has fully disclosed. Additionally, he has not recused himself from these conversations and instead fully inserted himself into all aspects of the festival. This raises red flags and at minimum is a large Ethical conflict of interest.
2. Upon initial request, the individual was unable to answer questions and quantify this project and the use of funds. The project had already been loosely organized and advertised prior to approval of the Town. The organizer had flyers printed and available at an art event on Oct. 5, a full month prior to it ever being placed as a Town Council agenda item. The organizer invited and scheduled a high dollar instructor despite assuring the council last year that this instructor was a one-time expense, in 2023, again, prior to Town approval.

Funds were being spent on this project on behalf of the Town by an individual citizen with zero oversight. Meaning that a representative from the Town was unable to co-sign on an expense before it happened. Additionally, the project organizer wrote grants on behalf of the Town, before the council approved the project and without the Town's consent. The Town Administrator was directed by the Mayor to sign off on the grant requests prior to this event being brought before the council. **(Abuse #2)** And that person is requesting us to pay for grant writing (Referenced in initial spreadsheet given in November as "Graphic Design/Grant Admin, Lisa Kovatch 5hrs @ \$20/hr" **Fraud #1**). Additionally, the Mayor sits on the board for one of the grantors and it is unclear if he recused himself from that discussion. That places us in a potentially precarious place. We were brought together under special session because if we did not obligate funds, then the project would not move forward. If we did not approve this event and pick up the tab for the balance of expenses that had already been promised by an individual citizen, then the grant money could not be dispersed. As a council, we were backed into a corner to obligate a large amount of funds at last minute, with still loose details on how those funds would be spent. Councilmember Sarah McMains offered a fantastic compromise to pull this project under the umbrella of the Town so that it could continue to move forward. It was approved because as a council, we do value the arts and community events. She did this despite the organizer explicitly stating that she did not want to work with anyone in the Town for a now Town-owned event. A condition of this compromise was that ALL materials would be purchased through the town and NO individual reimbursements would be made. The Mayor did not recuse himself from the conversations on more than one occasion **(Abuse #3 & #4)** (Nov 20 and Jan 14 meetings)

3. We have been presented with a multitude of messy spreadsheets, whose itemizations do not match (Amazon purchase \$49.93 vs \$43.63), that include unverifiable expenditures (No actual receipt for Amazon purchase or flyers in amount \$51.93). We have been presented with expenditures that occurred prior to this becoming a town event when an individual was under the assumption that they were spending town funds prior to the town obligating those funds (Both flyer line items). We have been presented with unverifiable expenditures that occurred after the Town explicitly stated that all material requirements would be submitted to the town for purchase and no individual reimbursements would be made. **(Waste #2)** We were presented with duplicate receipts for the same transaction in different formats (Walmart receipt #9956 in the amount of \$66.33) **(Fraud #2)**. We were presented with invoices over the amount of actual services rendered (Valeska Populoh is invoicing for 20 total hours of instruction and facilitation of workshops and the workshops as listed on website were only given for 17 hours) **(Fraud #3)**

I refuse to be complicit in activity that, if approved, will certainly be flagged as fraudulent. I absolutely will not jeopardize my freedom and be forced into criminal activity. We have been asked to blindly write checks or reimburse for people who have been less than honest surrounding many steps of this project. It doesn't matter if this dishonesty is because of intentional manipulation or disorganized ignorance, the charges and punishment will be the same. I don't trust that leadership has our back on this one.

Verifiable expenses as approved under Town Council during Nov. 20th special session:

The actual workshop, according to organizer information and town website lasted for 17 scheduled hours. We cannot pay someone for hours not present.

Valeska Populoh: 10 hours @ Instructor rate = \$550, 7 hours @ facilitator rate = \$175, travel expenses = we need receipts or verification that we can authorize the state approved amount for state employees at \$0.67/mile). I am asking for legal or accountant guidance to make sure that we reimburse for this appropriately, that line item should be tabled. Due Valeska in interim: \$800

Peter Redgrave: 10 hours @facilitator rate = \$250

Progressive printing made the booklets that the JAC grant was written for, already paid \$290

Vital Signs, already paid through the town \$195

Workshop supplies purchased through appropriate Town channel and already paid, \$598.69

** We need to find out if Grant funding can be moved into the general fund for this project if all monies are not used as listed. If not, then we need to reimburse JCCVB for \$305.00 and JAC for \$10. If we can move it to the general fund for the project, then those monies can go toward the above expenses.

Line items in question: (all of which will be scrutinized under Fraud, Waste, and Abuse during our next audit, if approved)

\$61.40 batteries, purchased 12/29

\$9.30 batteries, purchased 12/30

\$66.33 batteries and zipties, purchased 12/29

\$7.47 dowels (purchase \$46.42 – return of \$38.95) dated 12/27 and 12/30

\$43.63 paper lanterns, purchased 11/25, not an actual receipt and dollar amounts do not match

Items above all purchased AFTER the council directed that there would not be any reimbursements for material.

\$106.84 flyers, purchased 10/23, prior to Town approval

\$51.93 flyers, no receipt, no date

\$100 graphic design. Originally submitted as “Graphic design/Grant writing” Ethical concerns as the owner of this business is the same person as the organizer of the event. And, the only person who deemed this spending necessary is the same person that financially benefitted from it.

Councilperson Sarah Shafer said that is why I do not feel we should pay these bills as it stands. I think all of these items could have

Mayor Paradis ask for any other comments.

- Councilperson Dan Jimeno said, for him when he received the letters from our Auditors for last year, it hit home. The questions he was asking, we are going to be asked these same questions next year. For me, personally some of these transactions just do not set right. Effie when you were first talking about ethics, there was like a test. I forgot what you called it. At the end of the day something just does not sit right, air on the side of caution. It is nothing to do with Arts. I personally fully support events whether it is concerts, parades or the arts. I am all for it. I read some of those letters. It is definitely things that are needed in this town. The issue here is how we got here and it can be done better. Unfortunately, some of these transactions just do not set right and if you had a chance to read the Auditor's

questions, he discusses control, are controls in place, and ethics violations, he goes on and on. Whoever gets elected next year will have to answer these questions.

- Councilperson Sarah Shafer spoke up and said, "Oh it will be us that will be answering those questions this year and next year".
- Councilperson Dan Jimeno so whatever we decide, we as Town Council will be liable (that includes Steve as well) so, as Effie said when we first talked about Ethics Commission, we as a body should air on the side of caution and I agree.
- Councilperson Victoria Gale said she agrees. She felt like we were pushed into something when most of us had questions and was very uncomfortable of a couple aspects of the meeting. And then Lisa went and purchased supplies when we specifically voted in that all purchases would go through the town and there would be no reimbursements to individuals. I did not feel comfortable with the emergency meeting. I thought it was biased and not ethical.
- Councilperson Sarah McMains thanked Sarah Shafer for putting this report together and bringing some other dimensions and elements to light and to this meeting. I just want to say I agree and would like to have a copy of your report to study and read over. Listening to Sarah, there are some serious concerns to be addressed. I see we have some issues with our own town policies, the implementation and understanding of them. This got caught up in that, but then there are things outside that reality that Sarah has brought in tonight that we need to consider and have more discussion about. So I would like to digest this a little bit more, I understand the policies that were in place that you say were circumvented but what I think what was presented to us, I don't think anyone can make an argument that we were not trying to support it. I honestly think we were trying to support it and now we are getting down to these grave details finances and financial reporting that we cannot overlook. I do think we need to follow due process and make sure we are acting ethically and within the law and ordinances. Councilperson McMains again thanked Sarah Shafer for the report.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said she would forward a copy of the letter to Laura and she would send out.
- Recorder Reed also asked for a copy of the letter for her records.
- Mayor Paradis said he did not see where you see fraud has been committed.
- Councilperson Dan Jimeno said transactions out of scope.
- Mayor Paradis said we appropriated money for workshops, supplies and promotional materials @\$1,656.20. You have receipts for all of what Lisa purchased (I don't know if the supplies Laura purchased is included in these receipts. Is that what is in question?

- Councilperson Dan Jimeno said there was a transaction completed without/prior to Town Council sitting down and voting. The individual was acting on behalf of our town.
- Mayor Paradis said so that is what you consider fraud?
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said yes, the Office of Inspector General definition of fraud is *The wrongful or criminal deception intended to result in financial or personal gain. Fraud includes false representation of facts, making false statements or by concealment of information.*

So if an individual is requesting monies for grant writing.

- Mayor Paradis said the money that is going directly to Simply On Union, LLC is for Graphic Design. It is not for writing grants.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said that is what was explained to us in a November Meeting. Fraud
Issue # 2 is when we were presented with duplicate receipts some transactions in different formats. That is fraudulent, trying to influence the bottom line. When presented with receipts over actual amount as actual services rendered so when we are getting an invoice from Valeska for 20 hours when she only did 17 hours of a workshop, that is fraud.
- Mayor Paradis said well let's address that one because I think fraud is a strong word.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said "absolutely a strong word".
- Mayor Paradis said I think Valeska, I just want to set the record straight on a few of these things. Valeska was here on a Friday night, she was here on Sunday, she was here on Monday and she was also here getting peoples lanterns together for when we actually had the event on the 25th. Valeska put in far more time than what you see on here. I just want to make that clear.
- Councilperson Victoria Gale asked where is this documented. See that is the problem.
- Mayor Paradis said she documented the times she was here.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said but you are asking us to trust people that have been dishonest with us. You are asking me to sign off on things that could have criminal repercussions based on West Virginia Law.
- Councilperson Victoria Gale said well just go back to the procurement of grants before the town voted giving approval for that. You can't do that. I can't go and start writing grants for me in the name of the town. I can't do that.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said I think the other problem is you are too close to it and you have not recuse yourself. It is a huge issue just like your presence sitting at

this table, it is unethical because of your personal relationship to the person requesting funds. You don't find that to be a conflict of interest!

- Mayor Paradis said "no".
- Councilperson Victoria Gale said she just wanted to point out that your vote at the last thing, you did not recuse yourself from that. If Effie would have been here she would not have let that happen. I am going to point that out. There is an ethics concern.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said so wasteful spending as we did not have anyone from the town involved with a town run event we did not have any oversight. We did not have for example a contract in place for printing of flyers. All that was taken on by an individual without any consultation from the town and then we are getting dinged for it. And this was all getting done prior to us even having it on our radar. If all of this would have been done correctly, it would have been covered and she would not have had paid out of her pocket to spend and it would have been done. When you do not do things correctly you have to chalk it up to lesson learned. It is a hard lesson sometimes but if you forget things at the last minute, you just donate it or you just buy it especially when there was a stipulation from the town that said No Individual Reimbursements.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer said I am unwilling for \$500-\$600 whatever the final dollar amount is, I am absolutely unwilling to. I feel like it is fraudulent and I am unwilling to sign off on it.
- Councilperson Sarah McMains said this is unfortunate, but important to discuss. Some of the points Sarah brought up, we need to discuss and work on but we should be careful about putting on the record character assassinations and using words like manipulation. Councilperson McMains said she feels like no one in this room meant to commit fraud. We need to be careful with name calling and be considerate of others since some might read these minutes. We do live in a small town. Councilperson McMains thanked Councilperson Shafer for bringing this to our attention.
- Mayor Paradis asked for highlighted list of the discrepancies to match with what he has.
- Councilperson Sarah Shafer will give Mayor Paradis what she has to compare.
- Councilperson Chris Higdon said he is the odd person out. He said he came in prepared to vote in favor and move on. The prior Council meeting minutes provided instructions to submit a detail of expenses and a spreadsheet was provided. I reviewed the spreadsheet and in my view and experience with financial accountability, that this would pass the test of an auditor. He feels he will have to abstain. We have issues to be discussed. I am not arguing that any of the information presented is true or false, but I am not aware of the issues in the detail as presented tonight. Of all that happened here (right, wrong or indifferent I feel this was truly an

event to benefit the town.) I feel we need to find a way to table this until the next meeting as we find a way to correct what is broken procedurally and move on.

- Councilperson Victoria Gale said we did agree to pay most of these invoices.

Councilperson Sarah Shafer moved to AMEND and TABLE her motion to not approve invoices for the Lantern Festival. Councilperson Victoria Gale seconded the motion.

Discussion: Councilperson Dan Jimeno said he is not a CPA or Lawyer but asked if we could have an auditor or someone to advise us on this matter. Maybe just ask for some expertise. Due to liability concerns, we need some professional advice. We could reference this advice to next year's paperwork and auditor. Recorder Reed said we may need advice on how we handle this and what our corrective measures are moving forward. Mayor Paradis asked if other checks pertaining to the Lantern Festival. After discussion, Mayor Paradis said these checks will be on hold also.

New Business

1. Presentation from Annette Gavin Bates regarding Jefferson County CVB (Annual report)

Annette Gavin Bates gave her 2024 Yearly report to Bolivar Mayor and Town Council. She thanked Bolivar for being a part of our brand

See attached brochure for complete details about Jefferson County Convention and Visitors Bureau. Mrs. Bates stated that Jefferson County is number 1 in visitors spending in the State

We have 43 Boards members across the State. We are the 3rd largest board.

We have recently opened the old Shepherdstown Library as a Visitors Welcome Center.

We have added Ranson to our brand this year.

Any awards we receive is a winner for all.

Tourism Summit will be April 15, 2025 at the Bavarian Inn.

We spent over one-half million dollars in promotions this year.

Councilperson Dan Jimeno thanked Mrs. Bates for all they do.

- 2. Discuss/agreement with Jefferson County Sheriff's Dept.-Tax Collection Attorney**
Kallas said there were no changes but we are to be receiving quarterly consultations and meetings that have not been taking place but will start. They need to comply.
Councilperson Chris Higdon moved to authorize Effie Kallas to forward our Intergovernmental agreement to Jefferson County Commission for approval as presented. Councilperson Sarah Shafer seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 – 0.

3. Discuss/Approve Intergovernmental agreement with Jefferson County Sheriff's Dept.Public Safety Police Services

Attorney Kallas said all issues have been resolved that were in questions. Please read Complete agreement for clarity. Mayor Paradis said he could ask Trey how many patrols during a week in town.

Councilperson Sarah Shafer moved to Approve/Authorize Effie Kallas to move forward with our Intergovernmental contract with Jefferson County Sheriff's Department for Public Safety Police Services contingent on clarification of day shift hours to insert week-end patrols in line with what we already have. Councilperson Victoria Gale seconded the Motion. Motion passed 6-0

4. FY 2025-2026 Budget Process Schedule

Budget Process Schedule

March 1-Organizations Part of budget

Evaluation

March 1 Spec. Workshop before 3/28/25

April 15- Need you for 15 to 20 minutes for Laying of the Levy

Laura thanked everyone.

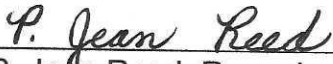
5. FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Map Revision-update.

This will be on the agenda as New Business for next month

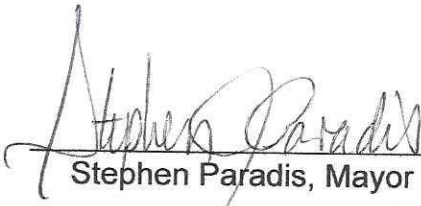
Adjournment

Councilperson Sarah Shafer moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Victoria Gale
Seconded the motion. Motion passed 6 – 0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm



P. Jean Reed, Recorder



Stephen Paradis, Mayor