



MINERAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES CONTINUATION OF JANUARY 12, 2026 MEETING

February 09, 2026 at 6:30 PM

312 Mineral Avenue Mineral Virginia 23117

Phone: 540-894-5100 | townclerk@townofmineral.net

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Harlowe called the meeting to order at 6:35pm

B. OPEN MEETING POLICY

During the discussion of adopting the Open Meeting Policy there is a disagreement on whether the proposed policy is consistent with Virginia's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), particularly regarding reasons for remote participation and disclosure of location.

Motion to adopt the Open Meeting Policy by Hempstead, Seconded by Von Tye

Voting Yea: Kube, Von Tye, Hempstead

Voting Nay: Covert, McGehee

Motion Passed 3-2-0

C. ROLL CALL

Present:

Michelle Covert

Bernice Kube (Zoom - medical)

Afton Von Tye

Rebecca McGehee

David Hempstead

Bob Spedden

D. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in attendance stood for the Pledge of Allegiance

E. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Motion to amend the agenda by Hempstead, Seconded by Covert

Voting Yea: Spedden, Hempstead, McGehee, Von Tye, Kube, Covert

Motion Passed 6-0-0

- Add public signs and zoning changes

- Add council comments
- Add Quincentennial

F. Public Comment

Rebecca Vigon, becky@mineralmarket.org

Informed the council of the upcoming dates for the Winter Markets on the 1st and 3rd Saturday of the month ending in April. April 25th is scheduled as Beautification Day. Ms. Vigon requested Hank bring over some excess dirt from the cemetery to put in the dips along the train track to make the ground level for the vendors who park there. Council Members Covert and McGehee will be assisting on Beautification Day, planting flowers and picking up trash. She requested that the mayor schedule a large item pick up on April 25th for town residents to dispose of unwanted items. Opening Day for the Mineral Farmers Market will be May 2nd.

Debbie Moon, 232 Mineral Avenue

"I would like to bring to your attention several differences found in zoning Article V when comparing the version from the December meeting to the one presented in the packet this evening.

It appears that various items have been changed, with words both added and deleted. I am unsure if these specific revisions have been fully reviewed, and I wanted to ensure the Council was aware of these updates before proceeding."

Blair Nipper, 301 W Fourth Street, k9mpnip@hotmail.com

"I am requesting clarity and accountability regarding the Town's previously undisclosed bank account(s), the failure to identify and reconcile them during required administrative transitions, and the timing of the information now being disclosed.

It is now established that the missing account(s) were not newly discovered during the most recent transition. Rather, the accounts were identified during the transition following the departure of former Mayor/Acting Town Manager Pam Harlowe. That fact raises serious questions as to why this information was not formally documented, disclosed to Council, reconciled in the Town's financial records, or incorporated into official audits and transition materials at that time.

Under Virginia law, the Town Manager is the chief administrative and fiscal officer of the Town and is responsible for the proper administration of all Town affairs.

Va. Code § 15.2-1541 assigns the manager responsibility for administration and supervision of all Town departments and financial operations.

Va. Code § 15.2-1542 requires the manager to ensure that the governing body is fully informed as to the Town's financial condition and administrative activities.

A lawful and complete transition necessarily includes a verified inventory of all Town bank accounts, identification of authorized signatories, reconciliation to the general ledger, and disclosure to the governing body. Failure to complete or communicate that inventory constitutes a breakdown in statutory administrative responsibility.

In addition, Council members serve as fiduciaries of public funds.

Va. Code § 15.2-1405 establishes that members of governing bodies are trustees of the public interest and must exercise reasonable care, diligence, and oversight in the management of Town affairs.

Council's fiduciary role presumes accurate and complete financial information from staff; when material financial facts are withheld or delayed, that fiduciary function is compromised.

The handling of Town bank accounts also implicates Virginia's local-government financial-control requirements.

Va. Code § 15.2-2503 requires localities to maintain accurate accounts of all funds and financial transactions.

Va. Code § 15.2-2510 mandates that all Town funds be accounted for and subject to audit and financial reporting requirements.

If a Town bank account existed outside the general ledger, outside audit documentation, or without Council knowledge after it was discovered, then the Town's financial records may have been incomplete or inaccurate during that period.

The most troubling issue is timing. If these accounts were known and documented after Ms. Harlowe's departure, why was Council not formally briefed at that time as required by § 15.2-1542?

Why were corrective actions not immediately taken to ensure reconciliation, disclosure, and audit accuracy? Why is this information only now being acknowledged publicly? Delayed disclosure of material financial information undermines public trust and creates the appearance that statutory transition and fiduciary obligations were not met. Whether intentional or not, such failures must be addressed transparently and on the record.

Accordingly, I am requesting that Council:

Require a written timeline documenting when each account was discovered, by whom, and under whose authority

Identify why the accounts were not disclosed to Council or incorporated into financial records at the time of discovery, as required by Va. Code § 15.2-1542

Confirm whether audits, financial statements, or required reports under Va. Code §§ 15.2-2503 and 15.2-2510 were materially affected

Direct adoption of a formal, written transition and financial-account verification policy to ensure compliance with statutory fiduciary and financial-control duties going forward

This matter is not about personalities. It is about governance, statutory duty, and the protection of public funds. The public deserves a complete and truthful accounting—not only of the accounts themselves, but of how and why the transition process failed.

I respectfully request that Council address this issue on the record and take corrective action consistent with Virginia law.”

Becky McGehee, 714 St. Frances Avenue,

Stated she had submitted a FOIA request for the missing account, the mayor was in violation of her request, and it would be pursued. She also stated that the mayor's son, Eric Harlowe, called Mike Leman and asked if anyone tried to get with Nicole if her husband would fight them and responded with anyone would. After that, when the man went to Nicole's house, guess whose truck was in the Miller's Market parking lot, Mr. Hempstead. She stated it was a set up. This is a small town, and we don't do things like that. If you're going to do things like that then get the hell out. Ms. McGehee has let the Commonwealth's Attorney know all of this. Ms. McGehee also stated that Tracy

Hempstead has been telling people that Nicole made up the story about poisoning the water, and she had proof that it was true. Also stated she would not be silenced.

G. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion to amend the 12.1.2025 minutes

Add that the discussion included budgeted line items for the Town Attorney, DMV revenue and the county water expense.

Motion to table the 12.15.2026 minutes until the next meeting

Motion made by Covert, Seconded by McGehee

Voting Yea: Covert, Kube, Von Tye, McGehee, Hempstead, Spedden

Motion passed 6-0-0

H. ACCOUNTS PAID

Mayor stated accounts have already been paid.

I. Committee Reports

1. Streets – Dr. Covert suggested the streets committee be combined with the water/sewer committee stating to obtain the information needed for the streets she needs to know what is going on with the water/sewer. She feels like the public is being excluded from the committee meetings since they are not publicized.
2. Police/Legal – Council member McGehee stated that any time a committee meets, the public has a right to come to the meeting. She also presented several police reports to the council.

There is a disagreement between council members over the aggressive behavior of one council member. The Mayor called for the adjournment of the meeting.

Motion by Hempstead, Seconded by Covert

A vote was not taken.

The meeting ended at 7:42pm.

Mayor Pamela Harlowe - Vice Mayor Bernice Kube

Council Members: Michelle Covert, Bernice Kube, Bob Spedden, Rebecca McGehee, Afton Von Tye, Dave Hempstead

Vacant, Town Manager, Teri Burns, Town Clerk, Kelly Singletary, Town Treasurer, Vacant, Town Attorney

Town Council meets for its regular session on the second Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Persons wishing to be heard or having an item to be placed on the agenda should make their request to the Clerk of Council by the final Monday of the month preceding the meeting.