



MINERAL COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

August 10, 2026 at 6:30 PM

312 Mineral Avenue Mineral Virginia 23117

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

A. CALL TO ORDER

The Town Clerk called the meeting to order at 6:56p.

B. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Council Member Michelle Covert (via zoom for medical reasons - Charlottesville, Va)

Council Member Rebecca McGehee

Council Member Bob Spedden

ABSENT

Vice Mayor Bernice Kube

Council Member Afton Von Tye

Mayor Pamela Harlowe

OTHERS PRESENT

Town Clerk Teri Burns

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All in attendance stood for the pledge of allegiance

D. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

A motion was made to amend the agenda by adding to New Business the resignation of Council Member Hempstead, billing matters, the attorney, treasurer office operations and the position of Town Manager.

Motion made by Council Member McGehee, Seconded by Council Member Spedden.

Voting Yea: Council Member Covert, Council Member McGehee, Council Member Spedden

Motion passed: 3-0-0

E. PUBLIC COMMENT

James Snider suggested having a Town Picnic at Whitlock Family Park on September 20, 2026.

Mike and Jess Huff submitted an email for public comment that was available to the public at the meeting. A copy was provided to each council member present. A copy is attached to the minutes as a part of the permanent record of the meeting.

Jonathan Christian, Executive Director, LASER, submitted an email for public comment that was available to the public at the meeting. A copy was provided to each council member present. A copy is attached to the minutes as a part of the permanent record of the meeting.

F. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

None

G. ACCOUNTS PAID

None

H. REPORTS

The DMV report was reviewed.

Council Members thanked Kelly Singletary for getting the water bills completed and mailed.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

1. BEAUTIFICATION & LITTER (MICHELLE COVERT)

Council Member Covert reported due to the water restrictions the committee had taken no action.

2. POLICE, LEGAL, FIRE & RESCUE (BECKY MCGEHEE & MICHELLE COVERT)

No report

3. STREETS (BERNICE KUBE & BOB SPEDDEN)

No report

4. PLANNING COMMISSION (COUNCIL LIAISON)

Council stated a need to appoint a replacement liaison to the commission.

5. CEMETERY (BERNICE KUBE)

No report

6. PERSONNEL (BERNICE KUBE & AFTON VON TYE)

Council stressed the importance of showing employees that they are cared about.
A motion was made to let the employees choose a Council Member representative of the Personnel Committee.

Motion made by Council Member Covert, Seconded by Council Member Spedden.
Voting Yea: Council Member Covert, Council Member McGehee, Council Member Spedden
Motion passed: 3-0-0

7. WATER & SEWER (AFTON VON TYE)

Council expressed a need to know what is happening with the well.
Hunter Martin, Town of Mineral well operator, provided information on PFAS.

8. BUDGET & FINANCE (AFTON VON TYE)

No report

9. PARKS (BERNICE KUBE & BOB SPEDDEN)

No report

10. COMMUNICATIONS (BERNICE KUBE & MCHELLE COVERT)

Council discussed the importance of getting the laptop with the electronic sign software on it back from Mr. Conrad.

11. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (BERNICE KUBE)

No report

J. OLD BUSINESS

1. Budget
The Council discussed proposed changes to the budget, ultimately deciding to table the discussion to the next meeting.
2. Engineer Study Update
The Council discussed the status of the study and agreed more information is needed.
3. Discuss quote for manhole upgrade
The Council tabled the discussion to obtain more information.
4. CUP Application Discussion
The Council agreed to table the discussion until the Planning Commission was able to review the application.

K. NEW BUSINESS

1. Discuss quotes for paving of roads at Spring Grove Memorial Park Cemetery
Council agreed to table the discussion of paving the roads at Spring Grove Park Cemetery.

2. Town Charter Annulment

A motion was made to not support annulling the Town Charter.

Motion made by Council Member McGehee, Seconded by Council Member Spedden.

Voting Yea: Council Member Covert, Council Member McGehee, Council Member Spedden

Motion passed: 3-0-0

3. Town Treasurer Position

Council decided to table the Town Treasurer position.

4. Town Manager Position

A motion was made to hire Nicole Washington as the permanent Town Manager. She will start on August 12, 2026. Her contract is similar to a previous one, it does include a \$45,000 back payment that is owed on a previous contract that the town broke and the town agreed that was owed. It also includes a clause that if she is asked to leave, forced to leave, terminated, or however it is described, if she is forced out, she will receive one year of severance pay. The rest of the contract is standard.

Motion made by Council Member Covert, Seconded by Council Member McGehee.

Voting Yea: Council Member Covert, Council Member McGehee, Council Member Spedden

Motion passed: 3-0-0

5. Town Treasurer Operations

The Council asked the Town Manager to take care of getting the bills paid and review the applicants for the treasurer position.

6. Attorney

A copy of the attorney's bill was provided to the public. Mr. Conrad was hired to represent the Town in the case of Washington vs. The Town of Mineral.

A motion was made to fire attorney John Conrad.

Motion made by Council Member McGehee, Seconded by Council Member Covert. Voting

Yea: Council Member Covert, Council Member McGehee, Council Member Spedden

Motion passed: 3-0-0

7. Resignation of Mr. Hempstead

Dave Hempstead submitted his resignation via email on August 5, 2026. Council discussed the process to fill the vacancy. The Council asked the Town Manager to take care of filling the vacancy.

L. ADJOURN

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 7:44pm.

Motion made by Council Member Spedden, Seconded by Council Member McGehee.

Voting Yea: Council Member Covert, Council Member McGehee, Council Member Spedden

Motion passed: 3-0-0

Mayor Pamela Harlowe - Vice Mayor Bernice Kube

Council Members: Michelle Covert, Bob Spedden, Rebecca McGehee, Afton Von Tye

Pamela Harlowe - Interim Town Manager/Clerk of Council, Teri Burns - Town Clerk, Vacant - 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.



Teri Burns <townclerk@townofmineral.net>

Official Public Record Submission for Tonight's Meeting – LASER / Town Charter Discussion

JC <jwchristi@gmail.com> Mon, Aug 10, 2026 at 8:01 AM To: townclerk@townofmineral.net
Cc: Jonathan Christian <robots@laser23093.org>, "president@laser23093.org"
<president@laser23093.org>, "vp@laser23093.org" <vp@laser23093.org>, "treasurer@laser23093.org"
<treasurer@laser23093.org>, "secretary@laser23093.org" <secretary@laser23093.org>

Teri,

This is Jonathan Christian and I'm the Executive Director of LASER writing to you from my personal email address to ensure my LASER email (robots@laser23093.org) doesn't hit a spam filter (because it literally has "robot" in the address...). I am writing to formally submit the attached statement regarding the Town Charter discussions at tonight's Town Council meeting as I am unable to attend in person (and it reads 8 minutes long which is > the 3 minute allotted public comment time).

As the Council deliberates the future of the Town Charter, it is vital that the record reflects what is truly at stake. This isn't just a discussion about administrative boundaries or a physical building—there is a "place" at stake. A place where 285 students (and counting) across six counties come to build community, find belonging, and invent the future at 102 East 1st Street.

I respectfully request that you perform the following two actions:

1. Enter this statement into the official public record and meeting minutes for tonight's meeting so it becomes part of the permanent record.
2. Forward this email and the statement below to the Mayor and all Town Council members prior to tonight's meeting so they may read it in full.

My 8 minute statement below contains the stories of a handful of LASER students that will never make the news. It is *their* voice that matters and I have the privilege to tell their stories with the hopes that the Council will understand more about "the place" that is at stake in their discussion to dissolve the Town Charter.

Thank you for your time and assistance.

JC

FORMAL PUBLIC COMMENT SUBMISSION FOR THE OFFICIAL RECORD

To: The Mayor and Members of the Town Council of Mineral, Virginia

From: Jonathan Christian, Executive Director, LASER

Date: August 10, 2026

Subject: Public Statement Regarding Town Charter Deliberations

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My name is Jonathan Christian; I'm the Executive Director at LASER. By now, most of you know who we are. You know about our passion for providing affordable STEAM education for all students regardless of their educational affiliation or zip code. You know about our outreach programs, our camps, and our competitive teams. Maybe you've even looked at our website. But many of you have never set foot in the building at 102 E 1st Street to see what we do firsthand. As a research scientist by day, I understand the importance of identifying what is known, and what is unknown.

The known is a comfortable place to reside, but it's dangerous. It's full of complacency and illusions of grandeur. The unknown is a humbling, exciting, wondrous place where true discovery happens. Since many of you haven't been inside 102 E 1st Street recently, what happens behind those doors is an unknown to you. Let's venture into it for a moment. Let me take you behind the scenes to meet the LASER students, to hear their stories. They're the ones that matter, not me. My name can be lost to history and that's fine by me, but it's their names, their stories that should permeate your minds and guide your decisions. My purpose here tonight is singular: to speak for the 285 kids from 6 different counties who have participated in our programs, and to remind you that there is more at stake in your decision to annul the Town

Charter. Namely, there's a "place" at stake.

Let's start with Day 1 of regular practice for our competitive robotics teams, which kicked off this past Tuesday. The excitement is palpable. It's the students' first day to start building. They've done their research, they mapped out their strategy, they sketched their first design, and now it's build day. Before practice starts, one student tells me, "While we wait, I'm going to build a helicopter." He's not kidding. A real, moving helicopter, from scratch. He knows he can do it, and I know he can do it. It's not until he's already built the blades and rotor assembly that I ask him to save the pieces for the robots. These kids can build anything; their imagination is so powerful, and their drive is second to none. This is how it should be. Teach kids basic principles, how to work together, how to evaluate ideas fairly, encourage them to take risks and try new things. Then get out of the way, cast them off into uncharted waters, and let them get wonderfully lost making new discoveries along the way.

That student who wanted to build a helicopter was inspired by another student—a middle schooler—who previously built a mock-up of a compound bow assembly just so he could study the non-linear tension profile to find a mechanical advantage for a launcher concept for his robot. He sees things once, and almost instantaneously, these amazing creations just appear out of thin air.

Let me tell you about an elementary school student that has no understanding of fluid mechanics, or Pascal's Law, and yet immediately dives in on Day 1 to use pneumatic pistons to actuate a scissor lift that needs to reach two feet in the air. He's never used pneumatics a day in his life, but he knows they're there. It's our job to put as many advanced technologies as we can into the hands of students so they can be prepared for tomorrow's workforce. Workforce development doesn't start when you're a teenager or in college. It can start in elementary school, but you have to blur the lines between play and learning to the point where they become indistinguishable. That's what we do.

I've only told you about 3 students. 282 more to go.

Still on Day 1 of practice for our competitive teams.

Let me tell you about a student who last year said, "I don't know how to build, I just do the coding." That same student built a complete drivetrain in less than three hours on Tuesday. Impossible is not in our vocabulary. We're here to build confidence into kids. How do we know when we've succeeded? To answer this, I'll quote our fifth student, a 7th grader who has been with us for three years. He said, "I don't know everything, but I feel confident that I can figure just about anything out." That's it. That's success. It's in them. It's not trophies on a wall—which we have many of—it is this life altering confidence that gives them the bravery to solve the toughest problems of the future without batting an eyelash.

Let me tell you about a new student on our competitive teams who was quiet as a mouse when she first walked through our door. Sometimes it seems like she's afraid to do the wrong thing, say the wrong thing, or make a mistake. We teach students that there are no mistakes, only learning opportunities. We meet them where they're at and put them into "must have" situations where it's not about whether you want to do something, it is that "this thing must happen to move the team forward." She needed medium-sized shafts for the wheels of the drivetrain she was building, and she needed to take them from the other half of the drivetrain another teammate was working on. That means she needed to disassemble, then reassemble the work of a teammate who was more experienced than she was. "I'm afraid to mess anything up," she said to me. She didn't really know where to start without the whole thing falling apart. She's smart, she can see the intricacies, but she's new so she doesn't have that confidence yet. So like playing Jenga, she picked a starting place, and like a team of surgeons, we worked together to dismantle and rebuild the other student's work so she could get the shafts she needed. Sometimes you have to break things to fix them. We live this lesson every day.

That's 6 students out of our 16 on our competitive teams. I'd love to tell you about the other 10, but let's shift gears.

I could tell you about the students who were visiting their grandparents at the end of summer in Goochland. Grandpa signed them up for our Battle Bots event on July 24th. They had such a good time that they immediately signed up for our Gladiator Bots summer camp which started the following Monday. At the end of the camp, one of the students said, "This was the most fun week of anything I've ever done."

Now, let me tell you about the increasing number of families who are looking for places for kids that don't have a place. They have kids who are smart, but have a hard time fitting in. They're on the spectrum, have health issues that keep them out of sports, or they have disabilities that make it hard for them to participate in group activities. Look on Google Maps and find me a place for them. Where can they dream, where can they create, where can they collaborate? It is here. In Mineral. Right down the street at 102 E 1st Street. More and more of these types of kids keep coming to us because they didn't have a place, but they do now.

Let me close with one more. A story that will never make the headlines or be found on social media.

Come back to Tuesday, and let's talk about an elementary school student on our competitive teams who was pretty down. You could see it on his face when he walked in the door. Something was weighing on him. He participated in practice, but about 30 minutes before the end, he started to pull his hat down lower over his face. I asked him how he was feeling and if he was okay. He told me about how he had a different ride home tonight because his mom was taking his great-grandma back to the doctor for more tests. It was the third such round in a seemingly short period of time. Something is wrong and the doctors are looking for answers. He's afraid of losing her. He started to tell me about other things on his mind, and I told him, "It seems like you're carrying a lot of things, that's hard. Do you always carry so much in your mind?" He said yes.

So I asked him to come with me and we sat down in the back of the room together where it was quiet. I showed him some special tokens that were inspired by a fictional novel I recently read—the details of which don't matter. This was a special project that we and Lake Anna Signs & Printing worked together on. As a kid, sometimes you feel like you have no control and you don't have enough of certain traits stored up to help you through whatever it is you're going through. So they can borrow ours. Each token has a trait: peace, strength, belief, hope, courage, love—we even have a blank one they can fill in.

As I told this student, "We're not just here to build robots, we're here to build community. You're not alone. We believe in you, we care for you. If whatever you're going through demands more than what you have, take some of ours. You can take as much as you need of whatever you need. Keep them in your pocket, and the next time you're in the hospital to visit your great-grandma, feel for the tokens in your pocket and remember we're with you."

I have hundreds more stories I could tell, but we can't be here all day. We're passionate about expanding STEAM education, but ultimately, we're here to build community so students have "a place." A place isn't just about the walls or the roof. It's about the safety, the connection, and the people inside it. But without those walls at 102 E 1st Street, that community loses its home. Please remember these students' stories, hear their voices as you make decisions that could impact their future.

We have a signed agreement to use the shared space at 102 E 1st Street through July 2027. We'd like to be here longer than that. We invite you to come meet these amazing kids; you're welcome any time. We know the Town Charter is a complex puzzle with many moving parts. As you work through it, we ask that you protect the piece of the puzzle that provides a place for these kids. Thank you.

Teri Burns <townclerk@townofmineral.net> **Fwd: Council Mtng 10 Aug**

Michael Huff <michael.huff23@gmail.com>
To: townclerk@townofmineral.net

Please see the below and attached for the next Council meeting.

Good day Council Members. I have been remiss in coming back as the one after the one I attended, I remembered the wrong day and then for this one and t work. I read through past minutes, looked at the budget, bills paid, and have heard the rumblings going on. I would like to offer up some notes for considerati working in the business world for 23+ years and this is the lens I was using. Apologies if these have already been considered.

Please see attached

Mineral 3.5- is a boundary from 312 Mineral Ave. Sharing this as if we amended the charter to include those inside the 3.5-mile radius it could op but it could pay dividends to the town).

Mineral 3.5 Us- This is to illustrate where my residence is with the green square. I highlight this, as my wife and I consider ourselves part of Mine used the laudromat in town. I utilize the Barber shop multiple times per month. We eat at Sabors, Joe Joes, Mineral Restaurant. Used the DMV S at other places we have lived and want to do some here to drive foot traffic to town. We have only lived here two years, and my work travels hav Mineral Economic- I know you all are probably aware of this but just wanted to see how the town boundaries

fall (42, 43, 58, 59).

Mineral Economic Us- This is my property (green highlighted rectangle) and it falls in 58. Again, showing this as a thought for charter amendmen

Budget

First and foremost, I'm on board with a lot of it and good decisions were made. Some things to consider;

On board with reducing Town Manager pay, for now. If we want to keep talent, they need to be compensated appropriately. I say this as I h for another job b/c it paid a bit more which increases their quality-of-life

Professional services- FY26 \$40k, FY27 \$50k but it looks like the town only was a bit over \$18k for FY26. Could this not be less than the \$ data?

Audit/CPA- over \$54k. De we solicit competitive bids every 3-5 years? How we determined if there is any double work being done? IT and Telecomm- Has an audit in this area been done recently? Has Starlink ever been considered? It is more expensive up front but the would be half of what is being paid for each. If no to Starlink, are the current speeds all needed? Speed affects pricing. Because of all the redundant fees.

Copier costs- this was confusing to look at b/c there seems to be a lot all over. Are the leases not combined? Are they able to be? What is possibly away from hard copies being needed and printed at the town expense. Digital signatures were a drop in the savings bucket and n DMV paperwork not be emailed to customers? Saved to their online DMV account?

Electricity- How many of the lights in town are LEDs? I drive through town about 0530-0545 Mon-Fri and the array of different colors there as energy efficient as they could be, nor as bright. Have we done a streetlight inventory at all?

DMV- Revenue decreased, so have we been open hours that aren't conducive for the customers? Do we have a by-hour customer count w out new hours? I have never done one but how much are appointments utilized? If they are, can we optimize and make this the preferred walk-in hours being different? Are we even able to use appointments? I tried looking up different things I would need and Mineral isn't even DMV Selects (or otherwise) that are oversaturated that those customers can be deferred to Minerals?

Misc Revenue- FY26 says close to \$29k and FY27 is forecasting \$1K. What is this and why is it so large a gap?

Water- purchases are budgeted to decline? If demand remains the budget is now \$26k short already.

Wastewater treatment- is there a down trend?

Asking b/c the projection is ~\$140k but only approving \$125k.

Landfill/Hauling- with inconsistent tonages (7.26, 6.65, 6.79, 7.29- these four average 6.99 tons) does this not affect funding? It would see load 7 tons) there would easier forecasting for budget.

Special events- reduced to \$0. What special events were the town paying for?

Looking at the above, it could potentially save \$30-50k annually.

I appreciate the time you spent on reading this and the considerations that may be had.

Respectfully,

Have a blessed day!

Jesus saves!

Mike & Jess Huff



