



MINERAL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

August 11, 2025 at 6:30 PM

312 Mineral Avenue Mineral Virginia 23117

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

A. CALL TO ORDER

B. ROLL CALL

PRESENT

Ronald Chapman

Michelle Covert

Bernice Kube

Olivia Barrow

Rebecca McGehee

David Hempstead

Blair Nipper

C. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

D. ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Amend agenda to show no Public Hearing

Proposed moving New Business extension of lease for LASER after Public Comment

E. PUBLIC COMMENT

Debbie Moon, 232 Mineral Ave., read a letter that was also submitted to Council. Text follows:

Good evening Mayor and Council Members,

My name is Debbie Moon, and I own commercial property here in the Town of Mineral. I am here to express my opposition to the proposed ordinance that would prohibit a tobacco or vape shop from opening within town limits.

First, this ordinance would directly limit my property rights as a business owner and investor. When I purchased my building, I did so with the understanding that lawful businesses could lease or operate there under existing zoning and business regulations. I understand that the town manager would need to approve.

Second, this ordinance could hurt our local economy. Specialty shops, including vape/tobacco stores, bring in rental income for property owners, create local jobs, and generate sales and property tax revenue. If such businesses are prohibited here, those sales - and the associated economic benefits - will simply move to neighboring towns. That means Mineral loses out, while surrounding communities gain.

Third, I believe this approach unfairly singles out one type of legal business. Adults in Virginia are legally allowed to purchase these products, and the state has age restrictions and compliance requirements in place. If the concern is about youth access or marketing, the town could address those issues through zoning buffers, signage restrictions, or strict compliance checks rather than an outright prohibition.

I respect the town's goal of promoting public health, but we must balance that with the rights of property owners, the importance of a fair and competitive business environment, and the need to keep economic activity here in Mineral. This ordinance, as written, sends a message that certain lawful businesses - and the property owners who might host them - are not welcome. I urge you to reject this proposal or work toward a solution that addresses community concerns without limiting property rights or economic growth.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jonathan Christian, 529 Marcia McGill Way, leader of LASER, presented what the kids are working on this year for competition - they are building robots that build things. Points are awarded for various categories. There are also community events throughout the year where those who are not currently involved in LASER. In June a high school program will be launched to add on to the existing 2nd through 8th grade program. There was also an adult community outreach program this year. Questions were asked about the parts needed for building the robots, fundraising, etc. LASER has obtained grants to purchase needed items. There is a request to renew the lease for LASER for the coming year.

David Rogers, 2032 Chopping Rd., board of supervisors candidate for the Mineral District. His family is from the Louisa area. Even though not having grown up here, he spent summers with his grandparents. Mr. Rogers supports bringing industries here that employ Louisa citizens, but is opposed to any more data centers because they do not employ many people. Would like to see an urgent care center in Louisa.

F. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approval or Amendments of 7.8.25

7.8.2025 Minutes

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

Noted that there were discrepancies in formatting of agenda and minutes. All voted in favor of adopting the minutes as presented, with the exception of Council Member Kube, who abstained due to absence.

Motion made by Covert, Seconded by Nipper.

Voting Yea: Covert, Barrow, McGehee, Hempstead, Nipper

Voting Abstaining: Kube

2. Approval or Amendments of 7.14.25

7.14.2025 Minutes

Motion to approve as presented by Council Member Covert, second by Council Member McGehee.

All approved, except for Council Member Kube, who abstained due to absence.

Motion made by Covert, Seconded by McGehee.

Voting Yea: Covert, Barrow, McGehee, Hempstead, Nipper

Voting Abstaining: Kube

G. ACCOUNTS PAID

1. July Accounts Paid

Discussion of accounts paid: Comcast contracts - paying three contracts. We are looking into it, but we would have to break the contract, which extends approximately another three years.

Motion to pay July bills as presented made by Council Member Covert, second by Council Member McGehee. All voted in favor, except Council Member, who abstained. Town Attorney advised that a Council member may abstain from voting with no reason given.

Motion made by Covert, Seconded by McGehee.

Voting Yea: Covert, Kube, Barrow, McGehee, Nipper

Voting Abstaining: Hempstead

H. REPORTS

1. DMV Report

The Town Manager gave the DMV report. Staff is working with DMV staff to get transactional reports showing monthly numbers.

2. Town Manager Report

A downed tree was reported to VDOT during the storm. The tree was moved by town personnel. VDOT told the Town Manager that it was not in the right-of-way.

Water Authority is making repairs at the water plant. They are operating at a 50% capacity; all is operating smoothly.

Repairs of Well #4 and sampling have been completed. A report from Royall Pump & Well is forthcoming. VDH will inspect once that report is received. VDH recommendations from Well #4 have been completed by Royall Pump & Well.

Source Water Protection Plan from Virginia Rural Water Authority has prepared a source water protection plan which was included in the packet. Question to attorney as to whether Council needs to approve - yes. It will be reviewed at the next regular water committee meeting on Wednesday, September 3, 2025. Committee will report back to Council at next meeting with recommendations. Having plans in place helps with receiving grant funds.

Annual Assessment Report by USG Water - originally did well maintenance, but it separated from USG. USG now only does tank inspection. Customer service with USG is lacking, e.g., in sanitary survey report received from VDH showed tank deterioration. Contact was made with USG to have taken care of instead of wash-out. Report

showed that none of these areas of concern were taken care of. Contact was made with them to correct, but no response from them. Water level transducer has been replaced. Water level is at 95% and remains at that level due to this replacement. We have enough water for 2-3 days for all residents if needed in an emergency.

Alex from VRWA has been working on GIS for manholes, sewer, and water lines. He is continuing to work on this. An update will be given at the next Council meeting. This will be used extensively in-house. The cost to the Town is free - we pay an annual membership fee to VRWA of \$400, as opposed to \$40,000 to contract this work. Staff is also being trained on this as well.

3. Treasurer's Report

A monthly sewer usage report has been added to the packet.

Moving into being able to draft bank accounts for utility payments.

Town Manager noted that there have been some comments and complaints about fees for using credit or debit cards. Staff will look into getting a credit card machine in the office.

4. Mayor's Report

No Mayor's report this month.

5. Committee's Report

Cemetery is in good shape; there a few items to discuss with committee members that will be presented to Council.

I. OLD BUSINESS

1. Tobacco Ordinance

Council Member McGehee is opposed to the sale of tobacco products. Town Manager asked to explain the ordinance. The ordinance does not say that the shop cannot be in the town; it says that as our schools, day cares, churches, educational facilities are smoke free, shops that do sell these items cannot be within 1000' of any of these locations. This is an ordinance that the State has allowed to be passed by municipalities.

Council Member Hempstead is opposed to the ordinance as presented.

Council Member Covert questioned the distance - can it be a different distance?

Mayor Chapman asked if the Exxon reopens and wants to sell cigarettes, etc., would they be denied. Town Manager Washington stated that it would be allowed because it is not a specialty shop.

Council Member Nipper asked about a tattoo shop selling these products; Town Manager Washington explained that this type of business (tattoo shop) would have to be approved by Council. If it were approved, they would be allowed to sell those items because it is not a specialty shop selling tobacco products. Council Member Nipper agreed that the distance should be less.

Town Attorney said that the language is pulled directly out of the code. His interpretation is that it is for new businesses and that it would apply to all tobacco products being sold within 1000'. This would be a zoning ordinance change.

Council Member McGehee asked if there was a tax on tobacco products - no. Stated she was opposed and that gas stations, etc. should be allowed to sell tobacco products, but is opposed to specialty shops.

Motion was made by Council Member McGehee and seconded by Council Member Hempstead to **deny** the Tobacco Ordinance as presented.

Council Member Kube said ordinance needs to be rewritten.

Motion made by McGehee, Seconded by Hempstead.

Voting Yea: Covert, Kube, Barrow, McGehee, Hempstead, Nipper

2. Updates on Derelict Buildings

Cameron property (Mineral Ave.) - 90 days to present plan. Problem is three trees in right-of-way and are right up against his house. VDOT has been contacted to determine if trees are in right-of-way. VDOT has stated that trees that have new and natural growth will not be cut down. There is also a water line that has a potential leak on a service line. The tree roots are possibly in the path of the water line. The Town will look into getting the cost of removing the trees.

Council Member Covert brought up the Cameron property on St. Cecilia Ave. The building is being used for storage of building materials, which is not an approved use for the zoning area. Decision should be made on whether this will be allowed. Council

Member McGehee mentioned that we fined Mr. Morgan, for storing materials at the old school property, but the Town never received anything for it.

Town Manager Washington will get clarification from Mr. Cameron on what he intends to do with the house on Mineral Ave.

3. Update on Water and Well # 4

a. Discussion on update status.

Update on Water and Well #4

Report given in Town Manager's report.

J. NEW BUSINESS

1. Extending the Lease for LASER

LASER lease agreement expires in 2026, but requested to extend until July 31, 2027.

Motion made by Council Member McGehee to extend the lease until July 31, 2027.

Seconded by Council Member Nipper. All voted in favor of extending lease.

Discussion followed regarding lowering the cost of the lease, which is currently \$110 per month and includes the lease and utilities. Proposed waiving the \$110 per month since they are a non-profit. Tabled until next meeting in order to speak with legal counsel.

Motion made by McGehee, Seconded by Nipper.

Voting Yea: Covert, Kube, Barrow, McGehee, Hempstead, Nipper

2. Delinquent Utility Bills - Landlords & Tenants

Several properties within the Town that are rented out. There are many delinquent water bills on these properties. Staff is working to obtain information from public records on owners of these properties. We will move forward, pending approval, with having an landlord/tenant agreement that requires approval of property owner to apply for public utility services within the Town. This will allow the Town to move forward if the tenant does not pay the water bills of placing a lien on the property for those unpaid utility bills. Late notices are sent out, cut-off notices sent out, then cut-offs are done. We are also making payment arrangements with those who have fallen behind and have been collecting on them.

Mayor asked if this is required in order to have services turned on - yes.

Council Member Covert asked if this would allow us to collect on unpaid bills from landlords - yes.

Mayor Chapman asked if we could put a lien on property of tenant. In most cases of a tenant, there is not real property to put a lien on.

Town Attorney has advised that new tenants should be paying not less than three months and not more than five months of water/sewer charges as a security deposit. The Town is not currently charging that amount.

Is a public hearing needed to increase the security deposit? No. If Town is going to require landlord's authorization to obtain services, it is state code that the above security deposit is required. Clarification that motion should be to adopt new policy with agreed-upon number of months security deposit.

Motion was made by Council Member Nipper to approve the tenant/landlord agreement as presented with additional security deposit of four months, seconded by Council Member Hempstead. All voted in favor.

Motion made by Nipper, Seconded by Hempstead.

Voting Yea: Covert, Kube, Barrow, McGehee, Hempstead, Nipper

PUBLIC HEARING

No Public Hearing

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Hempstead - why the Town advertising for a cleaning service? Clarification that this was a private advertisement for Council Member Covert and was not for the Town.

Council Member McGehee - complaints about attacks on office staff, specifically about previous Town Clerk and current Town Manager. She also complained about Mrs. Hempstead calling Council, the schools, etc. "fools" and has questioned the Town's water management. There needs to be partnership and working together.

Mayor Chapman - received card from Council Member Kube.

Council Member Hempstead - DPOR called the investigator and said they were investigating the Washingtons because there are definitely state violations. Town Manager Washington

stated that DPOR and the State Police have sent a letter stating that there is no fault. She stated that her personal life has nothing to do here.

CALENDAR

Calendar of Events

K. ADJOURN

Adjourn

Motion made by Council Member Barrow and second by Council Member Covert to adjourn. All in favor.

Motion made by Barrow, Seconded by Covert.

Voting Yea: Covert, Kube, Barrow, McGehee, Hempstead, Nipper

Mayor Ronald Chapman- Vice Mayor Michelle Covert

Council Members: Michelle Covert, Bernice Kube, Olivia McCarthy, Rebecca McGehee, Blair Nipper

Nicole Washington, Town Manager, Vacant, Town Clerk, Kelly Singletary, Town Treasurer, Robert Sproul, 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.