

Fries Town Council
February 3, 2026
Minutes

The February meeting was canceled due to the persistent ice storm and hazardous conditions.

Signed

Attest

Fries Town Council
January 6, 2026
Minutes

Members Present: Yvonne Burr, Mary Ann Cabbage, Bill Davis, Jo Ann Gunter and Karen Snyder.

Others Present: Cynthia Grant, Mayor; Kevin Combs, Tourism Director; Deputy Brannock, Grayson County Sheriff's Department and several town citizens.

Call to Order: The Mayor called the meeting to order, and Karen Snyder gave the invocation.

Minutes & Bills: Bill Davis moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes and to approve the minutes and bills as presented. Yvonne Burr provided the second to the motion. All present voted aye, and the minutes and bills were approved as presented.

Police Report: Deputy Brannock provided the police report for December, which included: One criminal arrest and one warrant. Investigation of one misdemeanor. Routine activities: 200 closed business checks, 24 service calls, 62 church checks, 78 directive patrols, 15 open business checks, one first responder, 4 warrant service attempt and 23 forestry checks for a total of 170 hours. Yvonne Burr asked if he knew of any speeding tickets issued since the last report. The officer said that he did not since they had not been included on the report, but he would ask that speeding tickets be included on the report in the future. Mayor Grant thanked Officer Brannock for his report.

Mayor Commentary: Mayor Grant reported a list of accomplishments since the last meeting that included:

1. December 3rd—Virtual Water Source Protection Webinar
2. December 3rd—VDH Project / Water Filter Project Progress Meeting
3. December 3rd—Contacted Surveyor concerning town property for upcoming projects.
4. December 4th—Telephone service out-contacted US Cellular but unable to resolve.
5. December 5th—Text My Gov meeting.
6. December 5th—Meeting with property owners.
7. December 9th—Planning Committee meeting.
8. December 10th—Meetings and went to US Cellular to resolve phone service issues.
9. December 13th—Indoor Market
10. December 15th—Town Christmas lunch
11. December 16th—Back to US Cellular for phone issues.
12. December 17th—Contacted Assurance to return device.
13. December 19th—District III Senior's Christmas Party.
14. December 31st—Found the dry valve outside door kicked in again and the pipe to the dry valve frozen and busted. Water was spraying everywhere. Thank you to Mark and Jason for staying late and repairing the line and the door.

Organization Updates:

1. Fries Tourism & Fries Historic Theatre Report: Kevin Combs reported the following:

Joint Report to Fries Town Council

From: Fries Tourism & The Historic Fries Theatre

Reporting Period: December 2025

The Historic Fries Theatre – December Update

- The Theatre hosted Martha Spencer and the Wonderland Band on December 12. The concert was well received and continued the Theatre's role in presenting high-quality regional musicians.
- The Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) Grayson County Chapter completed its first semester of operation, culminating in a recital on December 19. Approximately 20 students participated in the program.
 - During the semester, the Grayson chapter also held a joint session with the Galax JAM chapter and participated in the Galax Christmas Parade.
 - Planning is already underway for Spring 2026, and students have begun signing up for the next session.
- Theatre management continues to handle financial administration for the JAM Grayson County program. This includes:
 - Receipt of \$4,000 in grant funding from the JAM parent organization
 - Collection of tuition
 - Payment of instructors and related expenses
 During the semester, it became clear that a separate bank account was needed to properly segregate JAM funds from Theatre operations. That account has now been opened. JAM financial activity is reported alongside Theatre accounting for transparency.
- The Thursday Night Jam closed out the year on a high note with a large crowd and a covered dish gathering, reinforcing the jam's importance as a weekly community event.
- The New Year's Eve concert and dance required rapid decision-making due to an unexpected emergency. At approximately 3:30 p.m. on December 31, a major water supply line elbow failed, flooding the lower part of the building and requiring the water to be shut off.
 - Because the sprinkler system and bathrooms were unavailable, the building could not be used safely.
 - Given the late hour, cancellation was not a viable option. Theatre management approached the Fries Dam Steakhouse, which generously agreed to host the event.
 - the bands agreed to the change, social media updates were posted, signage was placed, and essential equipment was relocated.
 - Although the space was crowded, the event was widely reported as fun and successful.
 - No admission was charged due to the inconvenience, but voluntary offerings covered the band payment, allowed for extra tips to servers, and the

- Theatre paid the Steakhouse for use of the facility from its own funds.
- The Thursday Night Jam will resume on January 8 with a Breaking Up Christmas gathering. As always, this is a free event. Doors open by 5:30 p.m., eating begins at 6:15 p.m., music at 7:00 p.m., and a cakewalk at 8:00 p.m.
- The Theatre continues to collect food for the Community Center food pantry and encourages attendees to support this ongoing effort by bringing items to Theatre events or dropping them off at the Community Center.
- A logistical concern was noted regarding parking. The town car is frequently parked in the lot used by Theatre patrons on event nights. As each parking space represents a significant portion of available parking, the Theatre respectfully requests that the town car be parked elsewhere during Theatre events.

Fries Tourism – December Update

- I was interviewed for the Grayson County episode of the PBS series Hometowns, which aired on Christmas Day. Fries was a featured location, providing valuable exposure for the town.
- Town of Fries Tourism applied for the Virginia Tourism Corporation Marketing Leverage Program grant and was notified in December that we will receive \$4,875 in reimbursements. These funds will be used in the coming year to market the town and the Fries Fiddlers' Convention.
- Town of Fries Tourism also applied for a Virginia Humanities grant, which was approved. We will receive \$12,000 in matching funds to produce a documentary and related educational materials exploring how early country music was influenced by textile mill culture in Fries.
- Continued collaboration with local businesses is underway. I am working with the Fries Dam Steakhouse and the Washington Inn to install professionally framed local photography that reflects the town's landscape, history, and character.
- New Year's Eve was a strong example of Fries' growing vitality. Between fireworks, dining at local restaurants, and live music events hosted by the Historic Fries Theatre and Windy River Café, Fries was a fun, safe, and welcoming place to celebrate the holiday.

Fries Tourism & The Historic Fries Theatre

Year in Review – 2025

Fries Tourism – Year in Review

Over the past year, Fries Tourism has focused on shaping a clear and compelling narrative for the town—one rooted in mill history, early country music, and outdoor recreation.

Key accomplishments include:

- Attracting out-of-town and out-of-state visitors, many of whom stayed for multiple evenings.
- Increasing Fries' visibility through regional and statewide media, including PBS.

- Securing state and humanities grant funding to support marketing, education, and cultural documentation.
- Strengthening partnerships with local businesses to improve the visitor experience.
- Expanding visual storytelling through photography, video, and historic interpretation.
- Laying groundwork for long-term cultural preservation through oral history and documentary work.

The Historic Fries Theatre – Year in Review

During 2025, The Historic Fries Theatre continued to grow as the cultural anchor of the town. Major highlights include:

- Hosting a consistent calendar of concerts, dances, and weekly jam sessions.
- Providing a welcoming home for traditional Appalachian music and community gathering.
- Successfully launching and supporting the JAM Grayson County program, introducing young people to traditional music.
- Strengthening internal systems for finances, donations, and volunteer operations.
- Responding effectively to unexpected challenges while maintaining public trust and goodwill.
- Operating entirely through volunteer leadership, demonstrating a high level of commitment and professionalism.

Shared Impact

Together, Fries Tourism and The Historic Fries Theatre have:

- Reinforced Fries' identity as a music town with deep historical roots
- Supported local businesses through events and visitation
- Built pride among residents while attracting new audiences
- Demonstrated that volunteer-driven organizations can produce meaningful economic and cultural impact

The work continues, but the progress made in 2025 shows that Fries' best days are ahead.

2. Fries Community Center: No report was submitted.

3. Fries Fire & Rescue: No report was submitted.

Old Business:

1. The second water filter at the water treatment plant was nearing completion.
2. The VDH Infrastructure project, if weather permitted, was on track and to be completed by the end of the month.

- 3. The DEQ grant for the wastewater treatment was underway and awaiting the engineering documentation to be completed.

New Business:

- 1. Golf Cart Ordinance Review: The Clerk presented Council with a copy of the current Golf Cart Ordinance for review. Following discussion, Council agreed to consider possible revisions to the ordinance and to continue discussion at the next regular meeting.
 - 2. Closed Session: 2.2-3711A: Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Council by affirmative vote went into closed session as provided by Section 2.2-3711. A. (Moved by Yvonne Burr, Karen Snyder provided the second).
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Karen Snyder moved to exit the closed session. Jo Ann Gunter provided the second. All present voted Aye and the motion carried.

As required in Section 2.2-3712.D of the 1950 Code of Virginia, as amended, Council certified that to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion by which the closed meeting was convened were heard, discussed or considered in the closed meeting by Town Council.

Certified by: Yvonne Burr, Mary Ann Cubbage, Bill Davis, Jo Ann Gunter, Karen Snyder and Cynthia Grant.

- 3. Property Survey Results: Council reviewed the results of the recently completed survey of Town-owned properties. After discussion, Council determined that new lease agreements would be prepared by the Town Attorney to reflect and accommodate the survey findings. Upon motion by Mary Ann Cubbage, seconded by Yvonne Burr, the matter was put to a vote. All members present voted Aye, and the motion carried.

Announcements:

- 1. Reminder: The deadline to be included on the agenda is Tuesday, one week before the meeting.

With no further business to discuss, Jo Ann Gunter moved to adjourn. Karen Snyder provided the second. All present voted Aye, and the meeting was adjourned.

Signed: _____

Attest: _____