

Fries Town Council
April 7, 2026
Minutes

Members Present: Yvonne Burr, Mary Ann Cabbage, Jo Ann Gunter, Richard Hawks and Karen Snyder.

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

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

Minutes & Bills: Jo Ann Gunter moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes and to approve the minutes and bills as presented. Karen Snyder provided the second to the motion. All present voted aye, and the minutes and bills were approved as presented.

Police Report: Deputy Jones provided the police report for March, which included: One traffic arrest, one warrant and one felony investigation. Routine activities: 249 closed business checks, 33 service calls, 1 first responder, 4 civil papers, 88 directive patrols, 23 open business checks, 95 church checks, 6 warrant service attempts and 35 forestry checks for a total of 206.50 hours. After a quick review of the new golf cart permit, the mayor thanked Deputy Jones for his report and his service.

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

1. March 4th—VDH project progress meeting, contacted GCSO and asked that speeding ticket information be included on the monthly report and also spoke with DEQ concerning site visit at the wwtp. DEQ gave approval to proceed with project RFP.
2. March 5th—an incident was reported at the Fries Community Center concerning a loose dog. The town does have leash law, and service animals are the only animals allowed in the facility.
3. March 6th—Received unofficial news that Senator Warner had secured one million in congressional funds for the Town of Fries that were earmarked for water and wastewater.
4. March 11th—Met with VDOT, two non-profits and a new chemical provider for the water and wastewater treatment plants.
5. March 12th—Met with a paving contractor and a prospective new business owner.
6. March 13th—Attended a virtual service line inventory meeting. No lead found in town water system.
7. March 14th—She thanked Karen Snyder for working the indoor market.
8. March 17th—Attended a virtual Textmygov.com meeting.
9. March 18th—had several appointments in the office and met in the field with two tree contractors.
10. March 19th—Contacted several paving contractors and met with a prospective developer.
11. March 20th—VDEM conference call.
12. March 21st—Tree Contractor meeting.

13. March 23rd—MRPDC conference call, NRTSP call, and met with two developers concerning two separate projects. Met with VDH project supervisor, and two more tree contractors in the field.
14. March 24th—Grayson County Public Works conference call. Our contract is up for renewal and there will be a price increase included. Also met in the field with another paving contractor.
15. March 25th—Advertised RFP for WWTP project. Posted the RFP on the VA EVA website as well. Met with VDH project supervisor. Also had phone conference with Fire Chief.
16. March 26th—Contacted several more contractors for trees and paving.
17. March 27th—Field Work—met with two tree contractors and also had final walk through with VDH project supervisor and contractor.
18. March 30th—Contacted more paving contractors.
19. March 31st—Attended VDH virtual meeting. Received \$192,000 from Grayson County for final payment for water filters project.
20. April 1st—Conference call with VDH project engineer, attended a shared resources/mutual aid webinar and attended a virtual Textmygov meeting.
21. April 2nd—Contacted another paving contractor, interviewed and hired a part-time employee for the wastewater treatment plant, and met with a developer.
22. April 6th—Virtual meeting with EVA.
23. April 7th—Met with another paving contractor and received quote and prepared for council meeting.

The Mayor also gave a quick refresher concerning Roberts Rules of Order guidelines.

Organization Updates:

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

The Historic Fries Theatre Report – April 2026

The first quarter of 2026 has been active and productive for The Historic Fries Theatre, as we transition from winter into the beginning of the tourism season.

Operations & Facilities

- Volunteers continue to handle routine maintenance, weather cleanup, and ongoing care of the facility.

Programming & Events

- Our Thursday night jam sessions remain strong and consistent. Even through the winter months, attendance and participation have held steady, reinforcing the theatre's role as a weekly gathering place for music and community.
- A typical Thursday has become a full evening of activity:
 - o Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) students arrive around 3:45 p.m.
 - o They begin with cultural enrichment, learning aspects of Appalachian music and heritage.

- o This is followed by instrument instruction.
- o Meanwhile, adults begin arriving for the jam
- o Music runs from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m.
- o Volunteers then handle cleanup and reset for the following week
- The theatre also hosted the Community Center auction in March, providing an important space for community events beyond music programming.

Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM)

- The spring session of JAM is underway with another strong group of students.
- The program continues to integrate seamlessly with the Thursday night jam, creating a powerful example of tradition being passed from one generation to the next.

Summer Concert Series

- In partnership with Fries Tourism, we have finalized the 2026 Summer Concert Series at The Depot:
 - o May 22 – Whitetop Mountain Band
 - o June 12 – New Ballards Branch Bogtrotters
 - o July 10 – The Crooked Road Ramblers
 - o September 18 – The New Spring Valley Boys
- This series continues to be an important draw for both residents and visitors, connecting the theatre’s programming with outdoor tourism experiences.

From Mill Town to Music Town Project

- The theatre continues to serve as a primary location for recording oral histories for the Town’s from Mill Town to Music Town project.
- This work strengthens the theatre’s role as both a cultural venue and a center for preserving local history.

Regional & State Recognition

- We have received word that The Crooked Road is coordinating with Virginia Folklife to bring a film crew to the Thursday night jam as part of a documentary project.
- Additionally, multiple state-level music and tourism professionals have commented that our Thursday night jam is one of the strongest experiences anywhere along The Crooked Road.

Tourism Impact

- As tourism season begins, we are already seeing an increase in visitors attending events at the theatre.
- One recent visitor was told: “This is the real deal. What you’re seeing tonight happens whether we have tourist guests or not.”
- That authenticity continues to be one of our greatest strengths—it is not something created for visitors, but something visitors are fortunate to experience.

Safety Concerns

- Traffic around the theatre and community center remains a concern.

- Vehicles approaching from both directions often travel at speeds that make pedestrian crossing feel unsafe.
- While there have been no incidents, we will continue working toward solutions that improve safety for patrons.

Outlook

- With spring underway and a full slate of programming ahead, the theatre is well positioned for a strong season.
- Our volunteers remain the backbone of the operation, and their continued dedication allows the theatre to function as both a cultural anchor and a driver of tourism in Fries.

Respectfully submitted,

The Historic Fries Theatre

2. Fries Tourism Report: Kevin Combs

Fries Tourism Report – April 2026

Tourism activity continues to build momentum as we move into the spring and summer season.

Economic Development

- I have been working with a property owner in town to help develop a potential new business.
- The owner has been highly engaged and proactive in their approach.
- In particular, they have developed an excellent website focused on the New River Trail, which is designed to attract visitors and direct more traffic into Fries.
- This is still in the early stages, but it represents a very positive step toward expanding both our visibility and our local economy. More details will be shared as plans develop.

Marketing & Promotion

- We have placed our first advertisement in Blue Ridge Outdoors magazine, expanding our reach to a broader outdoor tourism audience.
- We have also updated our advertisement for The Gazette's Visitor Guide, which will be published shortly and distributed throughout the region.
- These efforts are part of a continued push to position Fries as both a cultural and outdoor destination.

Fundraising Efforts

- Due to limited funding within the Town's tourism budget, I have begun a direct fundraising campaign.
- Letters have been sent to local businesses, Airbnb owners, and individuals with an interest in the future of Fries.

- We have already received several donations, and I am encouraged by the early response. This support will help us continue and expand our tourism efforts.

From Mill Town to Music Town Project

- The From Mill Town to Music Town project is progressing well.
- I am actively collecting oral histories, which will become a key component of the project.
- This work will help establish and communicate Fries' important role in the development and spread of country music, strengthening our identity as a heritage destination.

Fries Fiddlers' Fundraiser & Silent Auction

- Preparations are underway for the Fries Fiddlers' Fundraiser.
- The evening will begin with a traditional Poor Man's Supper, followed by music and a silent auction.
- The silent auction will open at 6:00 p.m. and run through the evening (final closing time to be determined).
- We already have a strong lineup of items, including:
 - Season passes to the Blue Ridge Music Center
 - A handcrafted Fries Wildcats lighted mirror
 - A new ukulele with case
 - A three-night stay at the Fries New River Trail RV Park
 - A two-night stay at the Occasional Otter Airbnb
 - A handcrafted river table
 - A framed print by Willard Gayheart
 - A \$100 gift certificate to Southwest Farm Supply
- We are continuing to accept donations for the auction and expect it to surpass last year's success.

Summer Concert Series

- In partnership with The Historic Fries Theatre, we have finalized the 2026 Summer Concert Series at The Depot:
 - May 22 – Whitetop Mountain Band
 - June 12 – New Ballards Branch Bogtrotters
 - July 10 – The Crooked Road Ramblers
 - September 18 – The New Spring Valley Boys
- This series remains one of our signature tourism offerings and continues to draw both residents and visitors to town.

Ag & Art Tour Participation

- Fries will be included as a stop on this year's Grayson County Ag & Art Tour.
- A location has been secured, and we are encouraging artists to submit work for inclusion.
- This provides another opportunity to showcase local creativity and bring visitors into town.

Upcoming Event – New River Trail Races

- This Saturday, Fries will host participants in the New River Trail Races, including 10K, 25K, 50K, and 100K distances, along with a free community 5K.
- Volunteers are still needed. Anyone interested may contact tourism@friesva.com.
- This event continues to bring visitors from across the region and country into Fries.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Combs
Tourism Director

3. Fries Community Center: Director Alicia Jeffery submitted the following:

Fries Community Center

- Served free community meal.
- Hosted dining room/gym parties
- Community food pantry continues to be open and stocked for the community.
- Lobby remains open Monday-Thursday 3:30pm-6:30pm.
- Hosted Annual Spring Auction Fundraiser and Meal
- Hosted kids dance.
- Hosted Easter Egg Hunt at the ballpark
- Offered yoga class on Monday's.
- The community center bank account is stable we are working on many events to make sure we are able to keep it that way.

Things we are planning for Spring/Summer

- Kids dance.
- Family game night in the lobby
- Kids Lego club in the lobby
- Pie Day Fridays at the depot
- Ladies Night
- Paint Night

Thank you,
Fries Community Center Board

4. Fries Fire & Rescue: Homeowners are asked, at the request of Fire Chief Randy Lineberry, to ensure that house numbers are clearly visible from all street access points.
5. Friends of Fries: Sharon Billings reported that Friends of Fries wanted to buy a picnic table to put at the Caboose. Council had no objections. She also mentioned an idea that Rachel Hawks had mentioned before, which was creating a fence made of bicycles at the depot. After some discussion, it was decided to table the idea until a stable construction method could be determined.

Old Business:

1. Golf Cart Changes: The Clerk presented the new golf cart hang tag permits and reviewed the current golf cart policies.
2. VDH Infrastructure Project: The Mayor reported that only six residential meters remain to be installed and are currently backordered. The school meter is the only remaining commercial meter to be installed.
3. The DEQ WWTP grant: The project had been advertised for bids.
4. LOVE sign: Council was presented with sign ideas of various individuals for consideration. No decision was made.
5. Siren Location: The Mayor reported that she had scheduled a meeting with the Fire Chief to discuss the siren to get answers to various questions submitted by town citizens.

New Business:

1. Proposed Clean Up Day: The possibility of sponsoring a Clean-Up Day on April 18 was discussed, contingent upon sufficient planning and coordination. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.
2. Noise Ordinance Discussion: The Mayor reported that the current noise ordinance is minimal and discussed updating it as previously requested by Council. Sample ordinances from surrounding localities were presented to assist with the process.

Following discussion, Mary Ann Cubbage moved to form a committee of three to five members, consisting of both Council members and town citizens, to begin the process. The motion was seconded by Yvonne Burr. All members present voted aye, and the motion carried.

3. Beth Harris: Engineer, Central Rivers Hydro Plant: Ms. Harris was unable to attend; however, she reported that construction on the canal is planned to begin during the last week of April.
4. Tree bids: Council was presented with five bids from licensed and insured tree contractors for the removal of eight trees located on the water treatment plant property that posed a risk to the facility.

After reviewing the bids, Mary Ann Cabbage moved to award the project to R&R Tree Service, contingent upon confirmation that all debris will be removed. The motion was seconded by Yvonne Burr. All members present voted aye, and the motion carried.

5. Paving Bids: Council was presented with two bids from paving contractors for paving and/or patching several town streets. After review, Yvonne Burr moved to table the matter until an additional bid could be obtained for consideration. The motion was seconded by Jo Ann Gunter. All members present voted aye, and the motion carried.
 6. 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 Cabbage, Jo Ann Gunter, Richard Hawks, Karen Snyder and Cynthia Grant.

7. Engineering Contract: Jo Ann Gunter moved to renew the town engineering contract with The Lane Group, Inc. The motion was seconded by Karen Snyder. All members present voted Aye and the motion carried.
8. Backhoe: Mary Ann Cabbage moved to approve the purchase of a used backhoe for up to \$21,000. Yvonne Burr provided the second to the motion. All members present voted Aye and the purchase was approved.

Announcements:

1. Reminder: The deadline to be included on the agenda is Tuesday, one week before the meeting.
2. Household Hazardous Waste Collection & Personal Document Shredding: Sat., April 11, 2026 (8am—11am) at the City of Galax Public Works Facility, & (1pm—4pm) at the Grayson County Public Works Facility.
3. Large Item Curbside Pickup will be held in town limits on June 1st.

With no further business to discuss, Richard Hawks moved to adjourn. Yvonne Burr provided the second. All present voted Aye, and the meeting was adjourned.

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

Fries Town Council
March 3, 2026
Minutes

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

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

Call to Order: The Mayor called the meeting to order and 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. Jo Ann Gunter provided the second to the motion. All present voted aye, and the minutes and bills were approved as presented.

Police Report: Deputy Rice provided the police report for February, which included: Routine activities: 224 closed business checks, 41 service calls, 1 first responder, 2 civil papers, 81 directive patrols, 16 open business checks, 75 church checks, 1 animal control call and 28 forestry checks for a total of 174 hours. The mayor thanked Deputy Rice for his report and his service.

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

1. January 7th—Progress meeting for the VDH Infrastructure Project and Water Filters Project.
2. January 10th—Held an indoor market at the dining room.
3. January 12th—Received a request from the county ACO officer requesting a copy of the town animal control ordinance, specifically about our leash ordinance. We provided a copy.
4. January 14th—Attended a textmygov.com virtual meeting and then had a meeting with a potential business owner.
5. January 15th—Met with another potential business owner.
6. January 16th—Submitted pay request #8 to VDH for the Infrastructure Project.
7. January 22nd—Neptune software training for the new meters.
8. January 23rd—Addressed 5 water leaks due to the weather. Scheduled the Jesuit High School Students visit for July 12th—July 23rd.
9. January 24th & 25th —Snow and Ice all weekend!
10. January 26th—Town Hall closed due to inclement weather. Public works cleared the streets as best they could but had difficulty with the ice.
11. January 28th—postponed Virginia Tech Archive trip due to inclement weather.
12. January 29th—met again with a potential business owner.
13. February 2nd—Submitted pay request #9 to VDH for the Infrastructure Project. Addressed several leaks due to inclement weather. Public Works continued to work on snow/ice removal.
14. February 4th—Had problems with town email working correctly. Worked with Kevin Combs and Bluehost to get problem fixed.
15. February 5th—Public Works addressed a downed tree and power line on Top Street. Addressed a problem at the WWTP with the clarifier.

16. February 6th—Virtual meeting with VDOT. Addressed several water leaks. Met with potential business owner.
17. February 10th—Signed and submitted documentation needed to move the WWTP grant forward.
18. February 11th—Attended a TACS webinar.
19. February 12th—Continued Neptune training.
20. February 13th—Inspected new water filters at the water treatment plant.
21. February 17th—Addressed more water leaks. Called in VA Rural Water for their leak detection service.
22. February 18th—Price shopped for a different chemical vendor for treatment plants. Found a vendor that will save the town approximately \$500 per order.
23. February 19th—Began contacting paving contractors for quotes for paving and patching.
24. February 20th—Addressed several animal control issues that were hindering public works progress.
25. February 23rd—Had email issues in Town Hall again. Worked with Kevin Combs and Bluehost to fix.
26. February 24th—Addressed more water leaks. Call from Hydro Plant Engineer about upcoming construction plans.
27. February 27th—Received complaint about emergency siren. Continued researching for safety regulations in a residential area.
28. March 2nd—Scheduled site visit with DEQ for the wastewater treatment plant concerning upcoming grant.
29. Update on speed signs. The town partnered with the Grayson County Sheriff's department to purchase two solar digital speed signs in an effort to slow down traffic in town. The town was working with VDOT to determine where the signs should be located and ordering supplies to install the signs.

Organization Updates:

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

The Historic Fries Theatre Report

Town Council Meeting – March 2026

Kevin Combs, Board Member

Overview

The first two months of 2026 have been eventful for **The Historic Fries Theatre**. Despite weather challenges and facility issues, the theatre continues to operate steadily as a volunteer-driven 501(c)(3) cultural center serving residents and visitors alike.

Weather & Facility Updates

- We were closed for two Thursday Night Jam sessions due to ice and snow. Ice conditions made parking areas unsafe and prevented use of surrounding spaces.
- We appreciate the work of the Town Public Works crew in helping address icy conditions around the building.
- Theatre volunteers spent considerable time clearing sidewalks around both the theatre and the Community Center.
- We experienced another HVAC issue — this time involving a disconnect box that required replacement. The issue has been resolved.

While weather disruptions are unavoidable, we were able to resume regular operations quickly.

Thursday Night Jam

The Thursday Night Jam remains the heartbeat of the theatre.

- Jam sessions have been lively for this time of year.
- Regular patrons are clearly grateful to have a consistent weekly gathering place during the winter months.
- Attendance remains solid relative to seating capacity.

The jam continues to provide affordable entertainment and social connection for the community.

Traffic & Pedestrian Safety Concerns

Traffic continues to be an issue around the theatre and Community Center.

- Vehicles round the blind curve on the west side and crest the hill on the east side at speeds that are uncomfortable for pedestrians.
- Although there have been no accidents to date, crossing the street can feel intimidating when traffic approaches at high speed.

We continue to believe this deserves attention before a serious incident occurs.

Recent & Upcoming Events

- **February 20** – Concert and dance featuring the New Spring Valley Boys. The event was well received and provided an enjoyable winter gathering opportunity.
- **March 21** – The theatre will host the Community Center fundraiser.
- **May 1** – The theatre will host the Fries Fiddlers' Fundraiser.

Additionally:

- We will feed and host the Holy Cross group at this Thursday's jam session.
 - Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) will begin its Spring semester this Thursday.
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From Mill Town to Music Town Collaboration

The theatre has been collaborating with Fries Tourism as the setting for a number of interviews connected to the **From Mill Town to Music Town** project, which explores how mill town culture in Fries influenced mountain music and early country music.

The theatre space continues to serve as a natural and authentic setting for documenting Fries' musical legacy.

2026 Summer Concert Series (Fourth Year)

The theatre and Fries Tourism have collaborated to plan the 2026 Summer Concert Series — now entering its fourth year.

Scheduled performances:

- **May 22** – The Whitetop Mountain Band (Memorial Day weekend opening, continuing tradition)
- **June 12** – New Ballards Branch Bogtrotters
- **July 10** – Crooked Road Ramblers
- **September 18** – New Spring Valley Boys

This series continues to bring high-quality traditional music to Fries while supporting local businesses through increased visitation.

Community Impact

The Historic Fries Theatre continues to:

- Provide consistent weekly entertainment.
- Serve as a gathering place during winter months.
- Support youth through JAM programming.
- Host community events and fundraisers.
- Collaborate with Tourism to strengthen Fries' identity as a music town.
- Draw visitors downtown, benefiting nearby businesses.

The theatre remains a steady, positive presence in Fries — operational, collaborative, and forward-looking.

Thank you for your continued support of The Historic Fries Theatre and its mission to preserve and promote the musical heritage of Fries, Virginia.

2. Fries Tourism Report: Kevin Combs

Fries Tourism Report

Town Council Meeting – March 2026

Kevin Combs, Tourism Director

Tourism has been actively working to secure funding and build momentum for several major initiatives planned for 2026.

Fundraising Efforts for 2026 Projects

Over the past several weeks, Tourism has prepared and begun distributing a series of fundraising letters tailored to four specific audiences:

- Fries business owners and commercial property owners
- Airbnb and short-term rental owners
- Individuals who grew up in Fries and maintain an interest in the town
- People who have discovered Fries through tourism efforts and now have second homes or have relocated here

These letters request financial assistance to support several 2026 projects, including:

- The third year that Tourism has hosted the Fries Fiddlers' Convention
- A coordinated advertising campaign promoting Fries businesses
- Support for the From Mill Town to Music Town project, which has received a grant from Virginia Humanities

This fundraising effort allows us to leverage grant funding, expand our marketing reach, and continue building tourism as an economic driver for the town.

Advertising & Marketing

Tourism continues to promote Fries regionally and statewide through multiple platforms:

- Blue Ridge Outdoors – Our first ad has appeared in the most recent issue. This publication reaches outdoor enthusiasts across the Appalachian region and positions Fries as a destination for music, recreation, and culture.
- WBRF –Radio promotions.
- The Galax Gazette
- Regional travel supplements.
- Expanded social media marketing highlighting businesses, events, and the town's unique identity.

These efforts continue to raise awareness of Fries not only as a historic mill town, but as a living music and recreation destination.

Fries Fiddlers' Convention Updates

We are pleased to report that **The Crooked Road** has announced that the **Fries Fiddlers' Convention is now an affiliated venue.**

This affiliation strengthens Fries' recognized role in Virginia's musical heritage and further connects us to statewide tourism networks. It is especially meaningful given Fries' long-standing musical history.

Fries Fiddlers' Fundraiser – May 1

The annual Fries Fiddlers' Fundraiser will be held on May 1st.

- Tickets are \$10
- Admission includes a traditional “poor man’s dinner” of pinto beans and cornbread
- Access to a growing silent auction

The silent auction has already received several notable donations, including:

- A Fries Wildcats lighted mirror
- A handcrafted river side table
- A mobile by Saul Chase
- Additional items still being added

This fundraiser helps ensure the long-term sustainability of the Fiddlers' Convention and reduces reliance on town resources.

From Mill Town to Music Town

Tourism continues work on From Mill Town to Music Town, which has received grant funding from Virginia Humanities.

This project will tell the story of how Fries' mill town culture influenced American music. In addition to producing educational materials and a traveling exhibit, the grant includes funding for marketing—bringing visitors into town to experience Fries' history, music, businesses, and natural beauty.

Closing

Tourism's work continues to focus on three core outcomes:

1. Bringing visitors to Fries who spend money in our businesses.
2. Strengthening Fries' identity as a historic music town.
3. Creating opportunities and entertainment for residents.

We appreciate Council's continued support as we work to grow Fries in a way that honors its past and builds its future.

Kevin also shared the following flyer:

Your Tourism Office at Work

A QUIET LOOK AT VISIBLE PROGRESS



FRIES TOURISM IS ABOUT HELPING PEOPLE - VISITORS AND RESIDENTS - SEE THE TOWN MORE CLEARLY AND VALUE WHAT ALREADY EXISTS HERE.

VISITORS

Tourism brings people to Fries for concerts, recreation, and heritage experiences. These visitors eat, stay, shop—and spread the word. Their presence supports local businesses and short-term rentals, boosting the economy without changing the town's character.

STORYTELLING

Fries' rich history as a mill and music town is now being preserved and shared. Tourism efforts support exhibits, documentation of old-time music, and projects that help the town tell its own story—in its own voice.

PRIDE

Tourism helps residents see Fries with fresh eyes. Events and storytelling have sparked pride, highlighted the town's value, and encouraged conversations about its past, present, and future.

DOING MUCH WITH LITTLE

The Fries Tourism Department is a volunteer effort. Much of what has been accomplished has been through partnerships, grants, in-kind contributions, and countless unpaid hours - all with the goal of benefiting the town as a whole

Tourism dollars raised and grants secured go toward projects that promote Fries, protect its heritage, and support local activity - not personal gain.

DISCOVER MORE ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY'S TOURISM INITIATIVES AT FRIESVA.COM

The Impact of Tourism and the Theatre on Fries

Bringing Business and Visibility

- Secured tourism and cultural preservation grants
- Produced marketing videos for local rentals, restaurants, and attractions
- Saved the Fries Fiddlers' Convention and raised funds for its future
- Redesigned and maintained the official town website, YouTube, Facebook and Instagram.
- Created and distributed rack cards to welcome centers across Virginia
- Represented Fries in interviews, podcasts, news articles, and social media
- Advertised Fries regionally via social media, radio, magazines, newspapers, and travel guides
- Installed free public Wi-Fi at The Historic Fries Theatre
- Created logos and branding to promote Fries and its musical legacy
- Maintained the theatre building and repaired the historic neon sign
- Kept Fries visible on The Crooked Road, Virginia's heritage music trail
- Reported regularly to town council on theatre and tourism activities and finances
- Promoted outdoor recreation opportunities

Enriching Life for Residents

- Brought in hours of live music, film screenings, and cultural programming to the theatre and The Depot
 - Created a museum and cultural exhibit space in the theatre
 - Prepared a historical video shown at the Washington Inn and theatre
 - Added slideshow features to weekly jam sessions
 - Started the Grayson County Junior Appalachian Musicians program to nurture future musicians
 - Promoted community pride with storytelling campaigns like *"...and that's how we got to Fries"*
 - Supported local causes: donated to Fire & Rescue, raised funds post-Hurricane Helene, collected for the Community Center Food Bank
 - Maintained a clean, welcoming space at the theatre and on surrounding grounds
 - Helped document and share Fries' music and milltown history through exhibits, oral history, and educational projects
 - Continued work on an art gallery space to showcase local talent
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3. Fries Community Center: Director Alicia Jeffery submitted the following:

Fries Community Center

- Served free community meal
- Hosted dining room/ gym parties
- Community food pantry continues to be open and stocked for the community
- Lobby remains open Monday-Thursday 3:30pm-6:30pm
- Hosted kids dance and had a great turnout
- Offered yoga class on Monday's
- The community center bank account is stable we are working on many events to make sure we are able to keep it that way.

Things we are planning for March

- Kids dance
- Family game night in the lobby
- Kids bingo in the lobby
- Kids Lego club in the lobby
- Our annual spring auction

Thank you,

Fries Community Center Board

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

Old Business:

1. Golf Cart Changes: After some discussion, Jo Ann Gunter moved to start using the rear mirror hangtag permits instead of stickers and require inspections every two years. Karen Snyder provided the second. All present voted Aye and the motion carried.
2. Water treatment plant filters update: The Mayor reported that the second water filter had been completed, approved by VDH and was in operation.
3. VDH Infrastructure Project: The Mayor reported that the project had been slightly delayed due to weather but should be completed quickly.

4. The DEQ WWTP grant was reported to be progressing and may be ready to request bids for construction within 30 days.

New Business:

1. LOVE sign suggestions: Several ideas for a new LOVE sign were presented to council for review. No action was taken.
 2. Emergency Siren Location: After receiving several complaints regarding the noise level of the emergency warning siren, the Town is currently researching appropriate sound level standards for residential areas, as well as recommended safe distances from nearby homes. This review is being conducted to verify the siren is in full compliance with applicable requirements and installation guidelines.
 3. Proposed Clean Up Day: The Mayor reported that the Town would be organizing a Spring Clean Up Day. More information will be provided on the Town Facebook page as it becomes available.
 4. 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, Bill Davis, Jo Ann Gunter, Karen Snyder and Cynthia Grant.

5. Fries Community Center Contract: The Mayor presented an updated contract for the Fries Community Center that had recently been reviewed by the Town Attorney for Council consideration. Following discussion, Yvonne Burr moved to approve the contract as presented. The motion was seconded by Karen Snyder. All members present voted in favor, and the motion carried.
6. Rejected Cornerstone Organization Contract: The Mayor presented an updated contract for the Rejected Cornerstone Organization Contract for use of the third floor in the Community Center Building that had recently been reviewed by the Town Attorney for Council consideration. Following discussion and a revision to allow all visiting student groups sponsored by the Town or the Fries Community Center access to the space, Yvonne Burr moved to approve the contract. The motion was seconded by Karen Snyder. All members present voted in favor, and the motion carried.

Announcements:

1. Reminder: The deadline to be included on the agenda is Tuesday, one week before the meeting.
2. Household Hazardous Waste Collection & Personal Document Shredding: Sat., April 11, 2026 (8am—11am) at the City of Galax Public Works Facility, & (1pm—4pm) at the Grayson County Public Works Facility.
3. Large Item Curbside Pickup will be held in town limits on June 1st.
4. Reviewed the schedule for the 2026 season of the Fries Town Market. Opening day is Saturday, May 2, 2026 from 9am to 1pm.

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

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

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: _____