

Fries Town Council
September 1, 2026
Minutes

Members Present: Yvonne Burr, Mary Ann Cubbage, Bill Davis and Jo Ann Gunter.

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

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

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

Police Report: Deputy Long provided the police report for August, which included: Routine activities: 107 closed business checks, 35 service calls, 28 directive patrols, 12 open business checks, 36 church checks, 1 warrant service attempts, 2 first responders, 3 house checks, 1 juvenile investigated, 1 work other, 1 civil paper served and 15 forestry checks for a total of 175 hours. The Mayor thanked Deputy Long for what he and the department provided for the town and thanked him for giving the report.

Mayor Commentary: Mayor Grant reported a list of accomplishments since her last report at the August meeting that included the following:

August 6th—went to the courthouse for research.

August 7th—Conference call with Grayson County Track Coach concerning Sept. 16th track meet in Fries Town Park.

August 8th—She monitored the town market.

August 10th—had a visit with a former Mayor of Fries and his wife, Mike and Barbara Spears.

August 11th—Began EPA grant training.

August 12th—meeting with Grayson County Sheriff.

August 14th—Completed all 10 modules and tests of the EPA grant training.

August 17th—Conference call with USDA Rural Development.

August 25th—27th—out of town for summit/conference.

August 31st—followed up on several loose ends and prepared for the council meeting.

Organization Updates:

1. Fries Tourism Report: Kevin Combs reviewed the submitted report:

Fries Tourism

Report to Fries Town Council — September 2026

August was another productive month for Fries Tourism, highlighted by the 59th Annual Fries Old-Time and Bluegrass Fiddlers' Convention.

The convention was held the third weekend of August and went very well. This year required additional coordination with the Grayson County school system for use of the property, and we worked closely with school personnel to get the park back into condition for the event. The Fiddlers' Convention Committee continues to rely heavily on volunteers, and once again people stepped up when they were needed. An event of this size simply could not be held in a town the size of Fries without that level of community support.

Attendance at the Fiddlers' Convention has increased by approximately 8 percent per year over the past three years, giving us an encouraging indication that the event continues to grow following its revival.

The convention is also on sound financial footing. Sponsorships, donations, fundraising and gate proceeds have exceeded the costs of putting on the event, allowing us to build reserves for future conventions rather than operating from year to year at a deficit. In addition, our fundraising efforts have generated almost \$10,000 for music education for young people. This allows the convention not only to celebrate our musical traditions, but also to help ensure that those traditions are passed on to another generation.

Another important development this year was the recognition of the Fries Fiddlers' Convention as an affiliated venue of The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail. With the Historic Fries Theatre already an affiliated venue, Fries now has two Crooked Road affiliated venues. For a town our size, this is significant recognition of Fries' place in the musical heritage of Southwest Virginia and strengthens our ability to market the town as a cultural-tourism destination.

During August, I also returned to WBRF to join radio personality Cousin Andy on the air to promote Fries, the Fiddlers' Convention, and the activities taking place in town. WBRF continues to be a valuable partner in reaching both local residents and visitors throughout the region.

Looking Ahead — September in Fries

September promises to be an exceptionally active month, with music, arts, outdoor recreation, the Town Market and special events giving people multiple reasons to visit Fries.

Every Thursday — The Jam at the Dam
 Historic Fries Theatre
 Free admission

Friday & Saturday, September 5–6 — Windy River Bike Fest

Windy River will host its Bike Fest with live music and other activities.

Saturday, September 5 — Fries Town Market & Wildflower Walk

The Fries Town Market will be open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Master Naturalist Ashley DeCarme will lead a Wildflower Walk along the New River Trail beginning at 9 a.m.

Saturday, September 12 — Grayson County Ag & Art Adventure

The Fries Town Market will be open from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For the first time, Fries will be a stop on the Grayson County Ag & Art Adventure, with activities centered at Grayson & Whitter's and The Depot from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Artists and makers will display their work, and the New Ballards Branch Bogtrotters will provide live music at Grayson & Whitter's from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Fries' inclusion in the Ag & Art Adventure is particularly valuable because it connects the town with a countywide tourism effort and introduces visitors interested in art, traditional culture and locally made work to Fries and our businesses.

Sunday, September 13 — Tribute to Otis Burris

Legends of Grayson will present a musical tribute to noted local fiddler Otis Burris at the Historic Fries Theatre. Doors open at 1 p.m., with the concert beginning at 1:30 p.m.

Friday, September 18 — The New Spring Valley Boys

The New Spring Valley Boys return to the Historic Fries Theatre for a concert and dance.

Saturday, September 19 — Thunder by the River Classic Car Cruise-In

The September cruise-in will be held from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Taken together, these events illustrate the direction we continue to pursue with tourism in Fries. Rather than relying on one large attraction or event, we are building a calendar around the assets we already have: our music, our history and culture, the New River Trail and outdoor recreation, local artists and makers, our businesses, and community events.

The growing attendance at both the Fiddlers' Convention and the Historic Fries Theatre, our expanding relationship with The Crooked Road, and Fries' first participation in the Ag & Art Adventure are encouraging signs that awareness of Fries as a destination

continues to grow.

Our objective remains to turn that increased awareness into more visitors, longer stays, more spending with local businesses, and a stronger reputation for Fries throughout the region.

*Full financial report was given to council for review.

2. Fries Historic Theatre Report: Kevin Combs reviewed the submitted report:

Historic Fries Theatre

Report to Fries Town Council — September 2026

August was an exceptionally lively month at the Historic Fries Theatre, with strong attendance at our Thursday Night Jams from both local residents and visitors to the area.

We did not hold a jam on the first Thursday of August because of the Galax Old Fiddlers' Convention. The following Thursday, however, we held a special jam in conjunction with the Fries Old-Time and Bluegrass Fiddlers' Convention. More than 50 musicians participated, in addition to a large audience. This was the largest number of musicians we had hosted at a Thursday Night Jam to date.

Then, when we thought it could not get much better, the following Thursday brought another crowd of more than 50 musicians.

The growth we are seeing is not limited to August. Comparing attendance during the first eight months of each year from 2024 through 2026, theatre attendance has grown at approximately 17 percent per year. Just as importantly, we continue to see a healthy mix of local residents and visitors. These visitors eat in our restaurants, shop locally, stay in the area, and leave with a much greater awareness of Fries and its musical heritage.

The synergy between the Historic Fries Theatre and the Fries Fiddlers' Convention has become increasingly obvious. The convention brings musicians and visitors to Fries, while the theatre gives them another reason to come earlier, stay longer, and experience the musical culture of the town in a more intimate setting. Together, the two help reinforce Fries' growing reputation as a destination for authentic old-time music and Appalachian culture.

Coming in September

September will bring several special events to the theatre.

As part of the Grayson County Ag & Art Adventure, Legends of Grayson will sponsor a special concert at the theatre on Sunday, September 13, honoring the late fiddler Otis Burris, who was well known throughout this area. This tribute concert was previously held at the Historic 1908 Courthouse in Independence, and we are pleased to welcome it to Fries this year. Doors will open at 1:00 p.m., with the concert beginning at 1:30 p.m.

On Friday, September 18, The New Spring Valley Boys will return to the theatre for a concert and dance. Their previous appearance at the Historic Fries Theatre was very successful, and we are looking forward to having them back.

These special events, combined with our regular Thursday Night Jams, continue to demonstrate the role the Historic Fries Theatre can play not only as a community gathering place, but as an important part of Fries' tourism economy and cultural identity.

We appreciate the continued support of the Town of Fries and everyone who volunteers, performs, attends, and helps make the theatre a welcoming place for both our neighbors and our visitors.

Respectfully submitted,

Yvonne Burr and Kevin Combs

3. Fries Community Center: No report submitted. Mary Ann Cubbage asked if she was correct in stating that the town was completely responsible for the community center now. The Mayor replied that she was correct, but asked to table the matter until all information had been turned over and the current situation resolved. Council agreed.

Old Business:

1. Wastewater Treatment Plant Grant: The Mayor reported that we had just submitted our first request for funds on the \$900,000 DEQ grant to cover engineering fees.
2. VDH Infrastructure Project: Only the replacement of the Fries School meter and a few replacement meter lids were left to be completed on the original project. Negotiations on the Canal Street line replacement were underway.

New Business:

1. Sharon Billings—Tree Issue: Mrs. Billings reported that a significant number of mature trees throughout the Town of Fries had been lost over the past several years, including trees along the New River Trail and in the Town Park. She suggested that the Town consider planting additional trees to preserve and enhance the community's natural environment for future generations.

Mrs. Billings reported that she and Mary Ann Cubbage had been discussing the matter and planned to draft a letter to the New River Trail State Park requesting that trees recently removed from the trail area be replanted.

Mrs. Billings also reported that she had contacted Rachel Kim with the Virginia Department of Forestry and learned about a matching grant program that could provide approximately \$100 to \$150 per tree, along with funding for mulch and protective fencing. After reviewing

the grant information, she asked whether the Town would assist with planting if the grant application were approved.

Mrs. Billings also requested Council's approval of the proposed letter to the New River Trail State Park. Following discussion, Council agreed to send the letter, and all Council members expressed their desire to sign it.

The proposed Virginia Department of Forestry matching grant application was approved by motion of Yvonne Burr, seconded by JoAnn Gunter. All members present voted Aye.

2. Charlie Lawrence Comments: Mr. Lawrence waived his time to speak to a later date.

Announcements:

1. Reminder: The deadline to be included on the agenda is Tuesday, one week before the meeting.
2. Fries Town Market, every Saturday from 9am—1pm.
3. Thunder by the River: September 19th, Fries Town Park

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

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

Fries Town Council
August 4, 2026
Minutes

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

Others Present: Cynthia Grant, Mayor; Deputy Thompson, Grayson County Sheriff's Department and several town citizens and guests.

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

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

Police Report: Deputy Thompson provided the police report for July, which included: Routine activities: 79 closed business checks, 14 service calls, 45 directive patrols, 4 open business checks, 31 church checks, 3 warrant service attempts and 15 forestry checks for a total of 170 hours. The Mayor reminded Deputy Thompson that the ongoing work at the hydro plant at the dam presented a safety hazard to the public. Crowder Construction had requested that the area be patrolled to help prevent accidental injuries resulting from trespassing. Deputy Thompson stated that he would relay the request to the rest of the department.

Mayor Commentary: Mayor Grant reported a list of accomplishments since her last report at the July meeting that included the following:

July 8th—VDOT meeting concerning several safety issues in town, completed our 599 application and submitted it and researched 5 potential grants.

July 10th—met with possible contractor for bell. Inspected the bell for damage. It appeared to be intact. Also met with a contractor and Mr. Sparks in the town park to discuss location and details of the permanent restrooms. Scheduled AEP tree work for the park.

July 11th—Thanked Jill for staffing the market.

July 12th—Jesuit High School students arrived.

July 13th—Students began working in the community.

July 14th—meeting with Brian Reed concerning ongoing grants and then field work within the town.

July 15th—Received complaint concerning 2 more vehicles going over the bank in front of the caboose in July.

July 16th—Students worked on town projects. Painted gas shed and worked on various projects at the water plant and wastewater plant. Requested guard rails in multiple locations in the town, including the bank in front of the caboose.

July 17th—meeting with Grayson County Administrator. Reported sink hole at the school to VDOT. Met with a resident concerning downtown window murals project with the school.

July 18th—Thanked Jill for staffing the market.

July 22nd—Community Center roof inspected. Found small issue in corner near the chimney. Grace Baptist Church donated a few pieces of playground equipment to the town.

July 23rd—Jesuit Students left after a wonderful trip. VDH virtual meeting. Virginia Hurricane Season Preparedness webinar.
 July 24th—met with Town Attorney. Met with local insurance agent.
 July 25th—Thanked Yvonne and Kevin for staffing the market.
 July 27th—Removed old power poles from town park.
 July 30th—Meeting with Brian Reed. Meeting with Lane Group/RDA. USDA Rural Development Call.
 August 1st—Fence installed around playground for children's safety. Hazardous trees cut down at water treatment plant. Thanked Jill for staffing the market.
 August 3rd—Interviewed and hired a part-time public works employee.

Organization Updates:

1. Fries Tourism Report: Yvonne Burr reviewed the submitted report:

Tourism Director's Report
 Town of Fries Town Council
 August 2026
 Submitted by Kevin Combs, Tourism Director

This has been another productive month for tourism in Fries as we continue working toward the long-term goal of making our town one of Southwest Virginia's premier heritage tourism destinations. Our efforts continue to focus on attracting visitors, strengthening our partnerships, preserving our history, and encouraging investment in the community.

Preparations for the 59th Annual Fries Old-Time & Bluegrass Fiddlers' Convention are now in their final stages. The convention has become one of the Town's signature events and remains an important driver of tourism and economic activity. This year's marketing campaign has included radio advertising, print advertising, social media promotion, posters, and regional outreach. Because the convention follows immediately after the Galax Fiddlers' Convention, we are emphasizing Fries as the last major fiddlers' convention of the summer, encouraging visitors already traveling to the region to extend their stay.

One of the most exciting developments continues to be our Virginia Humanities project, From Mill Town to Music Town. The oral history interviews have exceeded my expectations in both quality and depth. The stories being collected demonstrate that the closing of the textile mill did not end the culture that built this town. That culture continues today through music, family traditions, community values, and the lives of the people who call Fries home.

Plans are moving forward to begin publicly sharing portions of these interviews during Fiddlers' Convention weekend. These presentations will introduce visitors to the remarkable stories behind Fries' musical heritage and provide another reason for people to spend additional time in town. This project is becoming much more than an oral history collection; it is evolving into a long-term cultural asset that will help preserve our heritage while attracting future visitors.

Looking beyond the convention, preparations continue for our first participation in the Grayson

County Ag & Art Adventure this September. This countywide event will introduce a new audience to Fries and provide an excellent opportunity to showcase our artists, our history, and our Appalachian cultural heritage. I believe this event has the potential to become another important annual tourism opportunity for our town while highlighting the creativity and craftsmanship that continue to thrive here.

Our partnership with Grayson County Tourism continues to be outstanding. We are working together to market Fries as a destination and to ensure our events receive regional exposure. Cooperative marketing efforts allow us to reach audiences that would otherwise be difficult for a small town to reach on its own.

The Historic Fries Theatre continues to be one of our strongest tourism assets. Thursday Night Jam attendance remains strong, with an increasing number of visitors experiencing Fries for the first time. Many of these guests also patronize our restaurants, explore the New River Trail, and visit other businesses while they are here. The theatre continues to demonstrate how cultural programming can directly support economic development.

As always, I continue to seek opportunities to market Fries through partnerships, media coverage, and personal networking. Every visitor we attract represents not only immediate economic activity but also a potential ambassador who shares their positive experiences with others. Tourism remains one of the most practical and sustainable opportunities available to strengthen our local economy, support our businesses, and build pride within our community.

I appreciate the continued support of the Mayor and Town Council as we work together to tell the story of Fries and build on the momentum we have created over the past several years.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Combs
Tourism Director
Town of Fries

***Full financial report was given to council for review.**

2. Fries Historic Theatre Report: Yvonne Burr reviewed the submitted report:

Historic Fries Theatre Board Report to Fries Town Council
August 2026
Submitted by Kevin Combs on behalf of the Board of Directors

The Historic Fries Theatre continues to play an important role in strengthening both the cultural life and the tourism economy of Fries. As we move through the summer season, we are seeing continued growth in attendance, increased visitation from outside the area, and a growing recognition of the theatre as one of the community's signature attractions.

Our Thursday Night Jam at the Dam remains the cornerstone of our programming. Attendance continues to be strong, but perhaps more significant is the increasing percentage of first-time visitors. Through radio advertising, social media, Grayson County Tourism, The Crooked Road,

and word of mouth, we continue to welcome people who have never before visited Fries or the theatre.

One observation has stood out throughout the summer. A friend and colleague who is an expert in Appalachian culture noted that many visitors are witnessing something they have likely never experienced before: musicians playing together entirely by ear, without sheet music, while genuinely enjoying one another's company. The smiles, laughter, dancing, and obvious camaraderie create an authentic cultural experience that cannot be manufactured. Visitors frequently tell us that this has been the highlight of their trip to Southwest Virginia and that they plan to return.

These visitors do not come only to the theatre. They eat in our restaurants, purchase fuel and supplies, explore the New River Trail, visit local businesses, and often return for other community events. In that sense, the theatre serves as an economic engine as well as a cultural institution. Every successful Thursday evening benefits not only the theatre but also the Town of Fries.

As is our tradition, we paused programming during the week of the Mount Airy Fiddlers' Convention and will also take a break during the Galax Fiddlers' Convention. This allows many of our musicians and volunteers to participate in those important regional events while returning refreshed for the remainder of our season.

Preparations are now focused on supporting the **59th Annual Fries Old-Time & Bluegrass Fiddlers' Convention** on August 14–15. The theatre will welcome many convention visitors to downtown Fries and will serve as another opportunity to showcase the town's rich musical heritage. Together, the theatre, the convention, and other community attractions present Fries as a destination where Appalachian culture is not simply remembered—it is still being lived.

The Board of Directors remains committed to preserving the unique heritage of Fries while using that heritage to strengthen the town's economy and quality of life. We appreciate the continued support of the Town Council and look forward to building on this momentum throughout the remainder of the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Combs
On behalf of the Board of Directors
Historic Fries Theatre

3. Fries Community Center: No report submitted.

Old Business:

1. AEP/Asplunch Tree Proposal: The Mayor reported that the tree work in the park playground had been completed and the largest tree was saved.

2. Town Park Fence: The Mayor reported that the project had been completed.
3. Hazardous Trees at the WTP: The Mayor reported that a total of 8 trees had been removed.

New Business:

No new business was discussed.

Announcements:

1. Reminder: The deadline to be included on the agenda is Tuesday, one week before the meeting.
2. Fries Town Market, every Saturday from 9am—1pm.
3. Thunder by the River: August 22nd, Fries Town Park

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

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

Fries Town Council
July 7, 2026
Minutes

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

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

Call to Order: The Mayor called the meeting to order, and JoAnn Gunter 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 Rice provided the police report for June, which included: Routine activities: 2 warrants, 239 closed business checks, 20 service calls, 1 first responder, 67 directive patrols, 7 open business checks, 78 church checks, 6 warrant service attempts and 33 forestry checks for a total of 171.50 hours. The Mayor thanked Deputy Rice for his report and for his continued dedication and service to the Town.

Mayor Commentary: Mayor Grant reported a list of accomplishments since her last report at the May meeting that included the following:

May 6th—Went to Miller's Creek, NC and purchased a backhoe.

May 6th—DEQ came to WWTP and inspected the underground storage tank. The tank was in compliance.

May 9th—Thanked Mary Ann for staffing the Town Market.

May 12th—Short meeting with VRWA representative.

May 15th—Held Budget Workshop

May 15th—Signed new waste collection contract with Grayson County.

May 16th—Thanked Jill for staffing the Town Market.

May 18th—Took parade forms to the State Police office in Galax to get approval.

May 18th—Submitted Budget Public Hearing information to be advertised.

May 19th—Meeting at Town Park to discuss fencing options.

May 20th—Attended VDH Fluoridation Webinar.

May 21st—Meeting with Crowder Construction.

May 21st—Received email notification from Mark Warner's office that the Town will be receiving 1 million in congressional earmarked funds for water and wastewater to address stormwater damage from Helene.

May 22nd—Meeting with Bobby Sparks.

May 22nd—Conference call with The Lane Group/RDA.

May 23rd—Thanked Jill for staffing the Town Market.

May 27th—Meeting at the Hydro Plant to discuss upcoming 2-year project.

May 27th—Zoning Committee Meeting.

May 27th—Meeting with paving contractor.

May 28th—Meeting with town engineer.
 May 28th—Meeting with Asplundh representatives.
 May 29th—Safety meeting at WWTP.
 May 30th—Thanked JoAnn for staffing Town Market.
 June 2nd—Budget Public Hearing and Council Meeting.
 June 3rd—Conference call with Brian Reed concerning the congressional funding.
 June 3rd—Contractor meeting to get quote on Community Center Porch/Balcony repair.
 June 4th—Meeting in Independence.
 June 5th—Meeting with citizen concerning fireworks complaint.
 June 6th—Thanked JoAnn for staffing the Town Market.
 June 9th—Signed contract for road work with contractor.
 June 9th—Signed and submitted Req#12 for the VDH Infrastructure grant.
 June 9th—Short Asplundh meeting.
 June 10th—Sheriff Hash visited us at the Town Hall.
 June 12th—Purchased and installed new carpet on Community Center porch.
 June 13th—Thanked Jill for staffing the Town Market.
 June 16th—Asplundh/AEP meeting.
 June 16th—Town WTP staff and Public Works staff in a joint effort, replaced a foot valve at the water plant.
 June 17th—Conference call with Brian Reed.
 June 17th—Conference call concerning fencing at the playground. Anticipated date of installation is August 1st and 2nd.
 June 17th—Received praise for our public works department for recent tree trimming and council received praise for installing speed signs from two citizens.
 June 20th—Thanked Jill for staffing the Town Market.
 June 27th—Thanked Jill for staffing the Town Market.
 June 29th—Annual water quality reports and cross connection surveys were mailed out.
 June 30th—Meeting at Independence with Mark Warner.
 July 1st—She congratulated Fries Dam Steakhouse for receiving their liquor license.
 July 4th—She thanked Jill, JoAnn & Kari for staffing the Town Market
 She then thanked Jeff Shaffner and Jared Anders for fabricating and installing a safety grate for the Fries Community Center pool equipment room.

Organization Updates:

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

Tourism/Theatre Report

Fries Town Council

July 7, 2026

Good evening.

Tourism activities continue to move forward on several fronts, and I believe we're seeing the results of the work that so many people are putting into making Fries a destination.

The From Mill Town to Music Town project continues to progress very well. I have now completed 15 oral history interviews and have identified five additional interviews that I hope to conduct before the project is complete. The people interviewed included former mill workers, musicians (and in many cases both), dancers, family members of musicians, and scholars. Together, these interviews tell the story of how the textile mill shaped the culture of Fries, how that culture gave rise to a remarkable musical tradition, and how that musical heritage continues to define our town today.

Our next major milestone will be a screening party during one of our Thursday night jam sessions, where we'll premiere a video featuring highlights from the interviews. The complete project remains on schedule and should be wrapped up by the end of the year.

Fries will also participate for the first time in the Fifth Annual Grayson County Ag & Art Adventure on September 12 and 13. This countywide event opens farms and artists' studios to the public, with both guided bus tours and self-guided maps available for visitors.

I plan to exhibit my visual artwork—including photography, painting, woodworking, and design—as well as videography at the soon-to-open Grayson & Whitter's coffee house. The Depot will also be one of the featured stops, where three local artisans are currently scheduled to exhibit their work.

The second day of the Ag & Art Adventure will feature a special concert honoring Otis Burris and his musical family, presented by Legends of Grayson. For the first time, this event will be held at the Historic Fries Theatre. Bringing this countywide event to Fries is a significant accomplishment and will introduce many new visitors to our community.

Our Summer Concert Series continues to be successful. The second concert, held in June, had to be moved indoors to the theatre because of the extreme heat, but attendance was good and the evening was well received. The third concert is this Friday, July 10, featuring The Crooked Road Ramblers at The Depot, weather permitting.

The July Fourth weekend was another reminder of the growing appeal of Fries as a tourism destination. Businesses throughout town and the surrounding area were busy all weekend. In fact, while I was in Galax yesterday, one of the bank tellers asked me, "I'll bet Fries was busy." I hear comments like that regularly from tourism professionals in neighboring communities. It's encouraging because it shows that Fries is increasingly being recognized throughout the region as a place where things are happening.

Marketing efforts continue as well. During June, I recorded an interview with Bill Bartee that aired on WBT, and I was also a guest on Cousin Andy's radio program promoting Fries and our upcoming events. I'll be back on Cousin Andy's show again this Thursday morning at 8:30.

Finally, on a personal note that also reflects positively on the town, I've been playing each week with an Appalachian string band at the Farmers Market. It has been rewarding to see that market continue to grow. Kari has done an outstanding job developing it into another attraction that brings both residents and visitors to Fries. Every successful event we add—from the farmers market to the Thursday jams, concerts, festivals, and arts events—strengthens the overall tourism experience and gives people more reasons to spend time in our community.

As always, thank you to the Council, our volunteers, our businesses, and the many organizations and individuals who continue working together to make Fries a vibrant place to live and visit.

*Full financial report was given to council for review.

2. Fries Community Center: No report submitted.
3. Fries Fire & Rescue: The Mayor presented Chief Randy Lineberry with a check for \$15,000 received through the Aid to Localities (ATL) Grant from the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. The Town applies annually for these funds on behalf of the Fire Department. She also presented Chief Lineberry with the Town's contribution toward the July 4th fireworks display.

Chief Lineberry thanked the Town for securing the ATL funding and for partnering with the Fire Department to provide the community's Independence Day fireworks. He reported that, year to date, the Department has responded to 65 fire calls and 345 rescue calls. He also thanked the community for its continued support.

Lisa Chrystie, a Town resident, asked what citizens could do to help beyond making financial donations. Chief Lineberry explained that donations of water, Gatorade, and food are always appreciated during fire calls. He also shared that the Department accepts donations of clothing and furniture items for individuals and families who have lost their homes and belongings due to fire.

The Mayor thanked Chief Lineberry and all members of the Fire Department for their dedicated service to the community.

Old Business:

1. AEP/Asplunch Tree Proposal—Will Smith:

AEP representative Will Smith reported that AEP had planned to remove trees in the Town Park for the past four to five years because of their proximity to the three-phase power line that serves approximately 371 electric meters throughout the Town. However, due to severe storms and the damage caused by Hurricane Helene, the work has been delayed until now.

Mr. Smith explained that the trees were already contacting the power lines, causing minor power outages on a nearly daily basis. He also stated that the situation posed a significant public safety hazard, as the trees could become energized and present a risk to anyone in the park. He advised that the tree nearest the Café was located directly beneath the power line and would have to be removed to comply with current AEP and federal vegetation management standards. He emphasized that the matter needed to be addressed as soon as possible.

Council Member Mary Ann Cabbage asked whether AEP could cut a "V" through the tree rather than remove it. Mr. Smith replied that current federal standards no longer permit that practice. Mrs. Cabbage then suggested pruning the oak tree on the caboose side of the park since it was besides, rather than directly under, the power line. Mr. Smith explained that doing so would require pruning both sides of the tree, which would ultimately kill it.

A citizen asked whether the power lines could be relocated. Mr. Smith responded that they could not, noting that AEP holds a 40-foot utility easement and that the tree is located within that easement. He further explained that if the tree were to bring down the line, it could interrupt service not only to the Town but also damage the substation, potentially causing an outage extending as far as Independence.

Another citizen commented that oak trees are keystone species that provide habitat for wildlife, shade, cooling, and oxygen. She expressed concern that the Town had already lost many trees in recent years due to natural causes and felt it would be unfortunate to lose additional mature trees.

Mr. Smith also offered to provide replacement trees for the Town to plant at locations of its choosing. He stated that the replacement trees would be available in April 2027.

Following further discussion, Mrs. Cubbage made a motion to remove the tree beside the Café as required by AEP and to trim the oak tree on the caboose side of the park in accordance with AEP specifications. The motion was seconded by Yvonne Burr. All members present voted "Aye," and the motion carried.

2. Benefits of trees letter: Sharon Billings submitted the following:

Letter to Fries Town Council, July 2026 from Sharon Billings, Friends of Fries

Where have all the trees gone in Fries?

I have noticed recently the disappearance of many of our mature trees in town. 1. Several mature pines were cut down across from the theater. 2. Three mature pines removed from Riverview Ave, and I am told the rest will also be eliminated. 3. I am told that the large oaks at the end of Riverview Ave/school area are to be removed. 4. All of the mature Ash trees were killed and removed due to the Ash borer insect. 5. Now Appalachian power wants to cut down 2 mature oaks and a sycamore that are near the playground.

Why should we protect these mature trees?

Very old, large trees provide disproportionately greater environmental benefits compared to their younger, smaller offspring, especially in carbon sequestration. This results in greater amounts of oxygen produced for us humans and other animals. Veteran trees offer homes, shelter, hunting spots, transport routes and food for animals ranging from birds to bats to beetles. A mature oak tree can be home to over 300 species of caterpillars which birds use to survive and feed their young. To raise a clutch of young birds, parents will transport over 6000 caterpillars to complete their growth. Oak trees are considered to be **keystone species** since they support so many different species of insect pollinators.

As far as benefit to us humans in Fries. These mature trees provide oxygen and shade (reducing temperatures significantly) and a magical ambiance. The children playing at the playground benefit from this particularly. If the trees are removed, these benefits disappear for these children and new trees will only benefit their grandchildren, maybe.

Recommendations: Why cannot the power company just prune the few invading branches of these trees with a cherry picker instead of killing the trees? Also, it is a very good idea to now **planting new trees** to replace those we have lost for future generations. Below are recommended native trees that are beneficial to pollinators:

- American Holly (*Ilex opaca*) — Provides year-round cover through dense foliage. The flowers provide nectar for bees and butterflies, including Henry's elfin butterfly.
- Black cherry (*Prunus serotina*) — Hosts as many as 450 insect species, including tiger swallowtail, red-spotted purple and spring azure butterflies.
- Carolina silverbell (*Halesia caroliniana*) — Hosts seven species of butterflies and moths, including eastern tiger swallowtail, mourning cloak and red-spotted purple butterflies.
- Chickasaw plum (*Prunus angustifolia*) — Hosts spring azure, red-spotted purple, coral hairstreak and other butterflies.
- Common persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*) — Hosts luna moths.
- Eastern red cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*) — Hosts juniper hairstreak butterfly. Songbirds and small mammals eat its fruits.
- Hackberry (*Celtis laevigata*) — Exclusively hosts caterpillars of the hackberry emperor, American snout, tawny emperor, and other butterflies.
- Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*) — Hosts zebra swallowtail.
- Serviceberry (*Amelanchier Canadensis*) — One of the first native trees to bloom. It provides flowers for the earliest group of pollinators and is a larval host to the red-spotted purple and the viceroy butterflies.
- White oak (*Quercus alba*) — Hosts hundreds of insects, including hairstreak and duskywing skipper butterflies, imperial moths, treehoppers and walking sticks.

New Business:

1. Park Permanent Restrooms/Bobby Sparks: Bobby Sparks, organizer of the annual Thunder on the River events, updated Council on the joint effort to construct permanent public restrooms in the Town Park.

Mr. Sparks reported that he had secured commitments from three donors to assist the Town with funding the project. He also stated that he had worked with Town staff to identify a suitable location for the building. The proposed site is near the caboose, as it is adjacent to existing water and sewer lines and is the only area of the park located outside the floodplain.

Mr. Sparks presented a rough sketch of the proposed structure, which includes men's and women's restrooms and a small covered front porch. He advised that he planned to meet with a contractor to obtain a turnkey construction estimate and anticipated receiving the estimate within the next few weeks.

A citizen suggested that the Town consider installing timer-controlled door locks similar to those used at the public restrooms in Floyd. Mr. Sparks responded that he would look into that option.

The Mayor thanked Mr. Sparks for his time, dedication, and continued efforts to move the restroom project forward.

2. Permanent Restrooms: Dennis Hines:

Dennis Hines addressed Council and stated that he had also come to discuss the need for permanent public restrooms in the Town Park. He advised that he had identified a donor who was willing to contribute \$5,000 toward the project. The Mayor suggested that Mr. Hines coordinate his efforts with Bobby Sparks, who is already working with the Town on the project, and thanked him for bringing the information forward.

Mr. Hines then expressed concerns regarding the speed bumps located on Riverview Road. He stated that he did not believe they were needed in their current location and felt they had not been effective in addressing speeding.

A Riverview Road resident disagreed, stating that the speed bumps had successfully reduced vehicle speeds and had also encouraged motorists to stop at the nearby stop sign.

Mr. Hines further stated that he had witnessed a young child run in front of a vehicle while crossing the dirt roadway between the caboose and the Town Park. He suggested that the Town install speed bumps in that area and create a marked crosswalk to improve pedestrian safety.

The Mayor advised that the Town had already coordinated with the Boy Scouts, Precision Landcare, and Southwest Farm Supply to install a fence at the Town Park. She reported that the fence installation was scheduled for the first weekend in August.

Following additional discussion, Council expressed support for installing a marked crosswalk across the dirt roadway between the caboose and the Town Park. Council agreed to move forward with the project after the park fence had been installed.

Mr. Hines left the meeting before the discussion concluded. As he departed, the Mayor thanked him for his comments, concerns, and interest in improving public safety.

Announcements:

1. Reminder: The deadline to be included on the agenda is Tuesday, one week before the meeting.
2. Fries Town Market, every Saturday from 9am—1pm.
3. Thunder by the River: July 18, 2026, Fries Town Park

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

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

Fries Town Council
June 2, 2026
Budget Public Hearing
Minutes

Members Present: Yvonne Burr, Mary Ann Cubbage, Bill Davis and Jo Ann Gunter.

Others Present: Cynthia Grant, Mayor; Kevin Combs, Tourism Director and several town citizens.

Call to Order: The Mayor called the hearing to order, and Jo Ann Gunter gave the invocation.

The Mayor stated that the purpose of the public hearing was to present the first reading of the duly advertised proposed Fiscal Year 2026–2027 Budget. She then requested that the Town Clerk read the proposed budget aloud for the record. Below is the proposed budget she read:

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 15.1-16.2 of the 1950 Code of Virginia as amended, of a public hearing on the proposed Town of Fries budget for the fiscal year beginning on July 1, 2026. The public hearing will be held in the Historic Fries Theatre at 6:30 pm on Tuesday, June 2, 2026. Town residents are welcome to attend and express their views. The Final Budget meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 2, 2026, at 7:00 pm in the Historic Fries Theatre.

The tax rates will be as follows:

\$.40/\$100 value—Real Property
\$2.25/\$100 value—Personal Property
\$2.25/\$100 value—Machinery & Tools
\$.40/\$100 value—Public Utility Real Estate

Water, Sewer & Garbage rates will be as follows:

\$ 29.50 for 1st 2000 gallons—Water
\$ 5.25 for each additional 1000 gallons—Water
\$ 25.25 for 1st 2000 gallons—Sewer
\$ 5.75 for each additional 1000 gallons—Sewer
\$ 20.00 per month—Garbage

The proposed budget shall be for planning purposes only and obligates the Town to no expenditure.

Town of Fries Proposed Budget FY2026/2027

Revenue

General Fund

Real Estate, P. Property, M&T Tax	\$211,000.00
Del. Tax	\$ 20,000.00
Pen. & Interest	\$ 2,900.00
Utility Tax	\$ 12,500.00
BPOL	\$ 3,000.00
Meals Tax	\$ 38,000.00
CATV	\$ 9,000.00
Vehicle License Fee	\$ 5,000.00
Refunds, Gifts, Misc.	\$ 20,100.00

Lodging Tax	\$ 17,000.00
VDH Infrastructure Grant	\$912,000.00
DEQ/Congressional Funding	\$1,900,000.00
Misc. State Funds:	\$ 58,600.00

Sub Total: \$3,209,100.00

Enterprise Fund	
Water, Sewer, Garbage, Penalties & Deposits	\$341,548.00
Sub Total	\$341,548.00

TOTAL REVENUE \$3,550,648.00

Expenditures	
Gen. Government	\$118,628.00
Police	\$ 36,000.00
Public Works	\$144,408.00
Rec., Fire, Admin., Grants & Reserves	\$2,861,900.00
Water	\$169,098.00
Sewer	\$161,574.00
Garbage	\$ 59,040.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURES \$3,550,648.00

Following the reading of the proposed budget, the Mayor invited comments or questions from the public. A member of the audience asked what the Police Expenditure line item covered. The Mayor responded that, under the Town's contract for law enforcement services, the expenditure provides 160 hours of dedicated police service to the Town of Fries.

There being no further questions or comments from the public or members of Council, Jo Ann Gunter moved to adjourn the public hearing. Bill Davis seconded the motion. All members present voted "Aye," and the motion carried unanimously. The public hearing was adjourned.

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

Fries Town Council
June 2, 2026
Regular Session
Minutes

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

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

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

Minutes & Bills: Yvonne Burr 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 Thompson provided the police report for May, which included: Routine activities: 171 closed business checks, 21 service calls, 1 first responder, 69 directive patrols, 13 open business checks, 45 church checks, 5 warrant service attempts and 17 forestry checks for a total of 165 hours. Deputy Thompson also reported one speeding ticket that was not included in the written report.

The Mayor reported that she had recently attended a meeting with representatives from the Hydro Plant and Crowder Construction. Due to the large amount of equipment that will be stored on the property during repairs to the canal, the representatives requested additional law enforcement patrols in the area to help provide security. Deputy Thompson stated that he would relay the request to his supervisors.

The discussion then turned to speeding concerns on Firehouse Drive by the Town Park. Council explained that Firehouse Drive is maintained by Virginia Department of Transportation; therefore, the Town does not have the authority to install speed-reducing devices on the roadway. Council requested that Deputy Thompson and other patrol officers provide additional traffic enforcement in the area, particularly near the Town Park, to help reduce speeding and improve public safety. The Mayor also reported that a fence will be installed around the Town Park later in the summer to enhance safety and help protect children using the park. The Mayor thanked Deputy Thompson for his report and for his continued dedication and service to the Town.

Mayor Commentary: In the interest of time, the Mayor stated that she would forego her usual commentary and provide her report at the next meeting.

Organization Updates:

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

The Historic Fries Theatre Report
Submitted by Kevin Combs
On Behalf of the Board of Directors

The Historic Fries Theatre continues to stay active as we move into the busy summer season.

The theatre recently hosted the first concert of the Summer Concert Series after weather forced the event to move indoors from The Depot. While we would have preferred to hold the concert outside as planned, the theatre provided an excellent backup venue and allowed the event to proceed successfully. The concert drew a strong crowd and demonstrated once again the importance of having a functioning performance space available in Fries.

The Grayson County JAM program recently concluded its spring session with a recital at the theatre. The recital showcased the progress made by the students over the course of the semester and highlighted the importance of providing opportunities for young people to learn traditional Appalachian music. We appreciate the instructors, volunteers, parents, and students who continue to support the program.

As usual, the Thursday Night Jam sessions continue to grow busier as tourism season increases. We are seeing more visitors from outside the area attending regularly, along with strong participation from local musicians and dancers. The jam continues to be one of the most important ongoing cultural activities in Fries and remains a major draw for visitors interested in authentic Appalachian music and dance traditions.

The theatre also continues to support ongoing work connected to the “From Mill Town to Music Town” project. Several oral history interviews connected to the project have either taken place at the theatre or are helping contribute to the theatre’s growing role as a center for preserving and interpreting the cultural history of Fries.

The Board of Directors appreciates the continued support of the town, volunteers, musicians, dancers, and community members who help make the theatre successful.

2. Fries Tourism Report: Kevin Combs

Tourism Director’s Report
Kevin Combs
Town of Fries

Tourism season is now underway, and there has been a great deal of activity in Fries over the past month.

I recorded a new series of radio commercials promoting the Summer Concert Series at The Depot. Although our first concert had to be moved indoors to The Historic Fries Theatre due to weather, the event was still successful and well attended. The advertising campaign appears to be working. Numerous people have told me they heard the commercials on the radio, which is helping increase awareness of Fries and our events throughout the region.

I am continuing to work with Tracy Cornett and Grayson County Tourism on plans for the upcoming “Legends of Grayson” concert, which will memorialize Otis Burris and honor the musical legacy of the Burris family. This event has the potential to draw visitors while also celebrating an important part of our local cultural heritage.

Fries will also be participating in the county-wide Ag & Art Adventure tour this September. I will be

exhibiting my own work, and at least two additional artisans from Fries are also planning to participate. This gives Fries another opportunity to showcase local creativity, craftsmanship, and Appalachian culture to visitors from outside the area.

The Virginia Humanities-funded project, "From Mill Town to Music Town," continues to progress very well. I have now completed 14 oral history interviews with former mill workers, musicians, and dancers connected to Fries and its musical traditions. The interviews are providing tremendous insight into the culture and history of the town and are documenting stories that might otherwise be lost. I am planning to present highlights from these interviews during the weekend of the Fries Fiddlers' Convention, likely at The Historic Fries Theatre and possibly at the ballpark during the convention itself.

I also continued regional promotion efforts through radio appearances. I was interviewed on WBRF with Cousin Andy and also appeared with Tim Frye of WPAQ. During those programs, we discussed Fries, the New River, the New River Trail, the Summer Concert Series, the Fries Fiddlers' Convention, the Classic Car Cruise-Ins, Fries Fire & Rescue, Fries Dam Steakhouse, and Windy River Café. These appearances help position Fries as an active cultural and tourism destination across a wide listening area.

The recent Fiddlers' Convention fundraiser was both a successful fundraiser and a strong community event. The evening featured food, music, silent auction items, and live auction items. Thanks to strong community support, the event raised over \$5,800 for the Fries Fiddlers' Convention.

The town also recently hosted students from East Tennessee State University during their Alternative Spring Break program. The students worked on projects in Independence, Galax, and Fries while learning about the culture and history of the region. They also attended the Thursday Night Jam at The Historic Fries Theatre, giving them an opportunity to experience the living music traditions of Fries firsthand.

Looking ahead, I am scheduled to be interviewed in June by Bill Bartee for his radio program on WBT in Charlotte. This will provide another opportunity to promote Fries and its tourism assets to a large regional audience.

As always, I appreciate the support of council and the many volunteers and community members who help make these activities possible.

*Full financial report was given to council for review.

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

Fries Community Center

- 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
- Offered yoga class on Monday's

Things we are planning for Spring/Summer

- Kids dance
- Kids lego club in the lobby

- Pie Day Fridays at the depot
- Ladies Night

Thank you,

Fries Community Center Board

*April and May Financial reports were submitted to council for review.

Old Business:

1. DEQ Grant for WWTP: Bid opening was held and one bid received. Lane Group was working to certify the bid.

New Business:

1. AEP/Asplundh Tree Proposal: The Mayor reported that she had recently met with representatives from Asplundh to discuss a proposal regarding the removal of two trees located in the Town Park playground area. Due to their size and encroachment on nearby three-phase utility lines, the trees were identified as a potential ongoing risk to the electrical infrastructure.

AEP/Asplundh proposed, at their expense, to remove and dispose of the two trees and to purchase and plant six replacement trees at locations to be determined by the Town. They requested that Council review the proposal and consider granting permission to proceed.

Following discussion regarding possible alternatives, including relocation of utility lines and options for tree maintenance and preservation, Council member Mary Ann Cubbage made a motion to table the matter in order to allow additional time to investigate alternatives. Karen Snyder seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor, and the motion to table carried unanimously.

2. Mower Quotes: The Mayor reported that Town staff was currently operating with only one functioning zero-turn mower and presented Council with several quotes for consideration regarding the purchase of a replacement unit. After reviewing the submitted quotes and discussing the options available, Council member Mary Ann Cubbage moved to approve the purchase of a new commercial mower for use by Town staff, with a maximum expenditure not to exceed \$11,000. Jo Ann Gunter seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor, and the motion carried unanimously.
3. FY2026/2027 Budget Discussion: The Mayor conducted the second reading of the proposed budget. Council member Mary Ann Cubbage moved to adopt the proposed budget as presented. Yvonne Burr seconded the motion. All members present voted in favor, and the motion carried unanimously. The FY2026/2027 budget was adopted.

4. Closed Session: 2.2-3712: Pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Council by affirmative vote went into closed session as provided by Section 2.2-3712. (Moved by Yvonne Burr, Karen Snyder provided the second).

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, Jo Ann Gunter, Bill Davis, Karen Snyder and Cynthia Grant.

5. Paving Quotes: Council reviewed the paving, patching, and tar-and-chip quotes along with the list of town streets to determine which areas should be prioritized in order to maximize the available funding. After discussion, Council agreed to prioritize Smith Street, Hester Street, Laurel Street, and Vaughan Street for the current phase of work. Members noted that the patching and tar-and-chip method was the most cost-effective option and would allow the Town to resurface all four streets rather than paving only one or two under the available budget. Mary Ann Cubbage moved to proceed with resurfacing the four selected streets. Yvonne Burr seconded the motion. 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. Fries Town Market, every Saturday from 9am—1pm.
3. Thunder by the River: June 20, 2026, Fries Town Park

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

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

Fries Town Council
May 5, 2026
Minutes

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

Others Present: Cynthia Grant, Mayor; Kevin Combs, Tourism Director; Ed Rehkopf, Gil Caldwell and several town citizens.

Call to Order: The Mayor called the meeting to order and Jo Ann Gunter 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: No Report.

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

1. April 8th—Meeting with NRTSP and Thunder by the River regarding permanent restrooms in the park. Meeting with Fries Fire Department regarding the siren, events, forming an emergency preparedness committee and more.
2. April 10th—met with a homeowner to discuss property maintenance and upkeep guidance.
3. April 11th—She thanked Jill and Karen for working the indoor market.
4. April 13th—Awarded tree removal contract. Work will be performed in July.
5. April 15th—Meeting with Grayson County Sheriff and Fries Fire Department.
6. April 16th—Pre-bid conference with Lane Group for the DEQ grant for the WWTP. Met at playground with Boy Scout Leader and Fencing Company to discuss fencing options for the playground. Decided on dimensions and discussed possible low cost/no cost options. Project is moving forward.
7. April 20th—Met with a contractor concerning building problem. Met with a local business owner to resolve an issue. Field work concerning a water leak.
8. April 21st—Attended ARPA webinar and then submitted final report on funds that were used for the water treatment plant filters.
9. April 22nd—Meeting with a plumber.
10. April 23rd—Mount Rogers Mobile Heath Unit provided services at the Depot.
11. April 24th—Field work-reviewed the mulch work at the park.
12. April 28th—Bid opening for the DEQ grant for the WWTP. One bid was received and is being negotiated. Met with the AFLAC representative.
13. April 29th—Contacted several more paving companies in an effort to get another quote.
14. April 30th—Meeting with Lane Group Engineer and a meeting at the bank.
15. May 1st—Mailed out personal property tax bills. Met with garden leaders and loaded fertilizer and soil. She thanked the Lions Club for donating to the garden. Cleaned the depot restrooms.
16. May 2nd—Opening Day for the Market. She thanked Jill for working the market.

- 17. May 4th—Met with another paving contractor and received a quote. Field work—reviewed the handrails and light poles that had been painted near the depot. Also inspected the new lights that were installed near the depot.
- 18. May 5th—Assisted in the installation of the speed signs on town property.

Organization Updates:

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

The Historic Fries Theatre – Monthly Report (May 2026)

We continue to experience ongoing issues with the Theatre’s heating system. During the month of April, \$1,300 was spent on necessary repairs. This remains an area of concern as we work to maintain a reliable and efficient system for the building.

In April, the Theatre hosted a collaborative visit from The Crooked Road and Virginia Folklife. They filmed material for an upcoming video podcast mini-series focused on traditional dance. The segment recorded at the Theatre is one of three being produced along The Crooked Road and highlights flatfoot and square dancing. This project places Fries in a prominent position within a regional storytelling initiative centered on living Appalachian traditions.

Attendance at the Theatre continues to increase as we move into warmer weather and the tourism season. An analysis of cakewalk proceeds—which closely track attendance—shows a clear upward trend, indicating growing participation in Thursday night activities.

Anecdotal feedback from attendees continues to underscore the importance of the Theatre and the weekly Thursday night jam. One observation worth noting is that the Theatre represents a unique type of tourism experience: the evening unfolds in the same authentic way regardless of whether visitors are present. This means that tourists are not seeing a staged performance, but rather a genuine community gathering. They are experiencing traditional music as a living, evolving practice—one that continues to shape and reflect the lives of those who play, dance, and listen.

The Junior Appalachian Musicians (JAM) program resumed in March with strong participation. Students receive instruction not only on their instrument of choice, but also in the broader context of Appalachian music, dance, and cultural traditions. The program continues to integrate well with the Thursday night jam, providing a pathway for younger musicians to engage with and sustain these traditions.

The Historic Fries Theatre continues to serve as both a cultural anchor and an economic driver for the town. By offering an authentic, community-based experience that cannot be replicated elsewhere, the Theatre attracts visitors who contribute to local businesses while also strengthening community identity. As attendance grows and partnerships expand, the Theatre is playing an increasingly important role in positioning Fries as a destination for heritage tourism and traditional Appalachian music.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Combs

On behalf of the Board of Directors

*Full financial report was given to council for review.

2. Fries Tourism Report: Kevin Combs

Tourism Report – May 2026

Much of the past month was devoted to preparation for the Fries Fiddlers' Fundraiser, including securing items for the silent auction and promoting the event. The fundraiser was successful, and a full financial and operational report will be presented at the June meeting.

Tourism season is now gaining momentum, and we are beginning to see increased activity across multiple areas. This is particularly evident at The Historic Fries Theatre, where attendance trends reflect a rise in visitation. Additional details are included in the Theatre report.

Tourism and The Historic Fries Theatre are again co-sponsoring the Summer Concert Series at The Depot. Four concerts are planned for May, June, July, and September, with August intentionally skipped due to the Fries Fiddlers Convention. These concerts continue to serve as an important draw for both residents and visitors. Other recurring events contributing to tourism activity include Thunder by the River cruise-ins, weekly bike nights and karaoke at Windy River, and the Thursday night jams at the Theatre.

Councilwoman Yvonne Burr and I traveled to Floyd, Virginia with a prospective business owner to attend a workshop focused on the coffee business. This effort reflects ongoing work to support new business development in Fries and strengthen our local economy.

The From Mill Town to Music Town project continues to progress. To date, ten oral history interviews have been completed toward a goal of 12–15. These interviews are already capturing valuable insights into the relationship between the town's industrial past and its musical traditions. The completed project will result in interpretive materials that further establish Fries' role in the history of American music and enhance our cultural tourism offerings.

I visited the office of The Crooked Road in Abingdon, Virginia to advocate for The Historic Fries Theatre and strengthen our partnership. I also obtained promotional items to support the silent auction fundraiser.

The New River Trail Races were held in mid-April under excellent weather conditions. More than 200 runners participated across distances of 10K, 25K, 50K, and 100K, along with a community 5K event. This race continues to be a significant tourism driver, bringing visitors from outside the area who contribute to the local economy through lodging, dining, and other spending.

Work is underway with the Fries condo property to develop a gallery space for photography and visual art. Fries is scheduled to be a stop on the Grayson County Ag & Art Tour in September. Depending on logistics, the tour stop may be hosted at the condo or at another participating business in town. This represents an additional opportunity to diversify and expand our tourism offerings.

I am also working with East Tennessee State University and The Crooked Road to explore bringing students to Fries for an alternative spring break focused on community service projects. This initiative has the potential to create both immediate community benefit and long-term awareness of Fries among younger audiences. Fries received regional exposure in the May–June issue of Blue Ridge Outdoors. In addition, a new visitors guide featuring an updated Fries advertisement has recently been released, further supporting our marketing efforts.

Closing

Tourism efforts in Fries continue to focus on a combination of event-driven visitation, cultural heritage programming, and strategic partnerships. By building on the town's unique identity as both a historic mill town and a living center of traditional Appalachian music, we are not only increasing visitation but also strengthening the narrative that sets Fries apart. These efforts position the town for sustainable growth by attracting visitors who are seeking authentic, experience-based tourism and who are more likely to return and invest in the community.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Combs, Tourism Director

*Full financial report was given to council for review.

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.
- 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

*No financial report given to council this month.

4. Fries Fire & Rescue: No report given.

Old Business:

1. DEQ Grant for WWTP: Bid opening was held and one bid received. Lane Group was working to clarify the bid.
2. Noise Ordinance: The formation of the committee was still pending.
3. Paving Bids: Council reviewed three paving quotes that had been provided in their packets. Following discussion, Mary Ann Cubbage moved to table the matter to allow Council members an opportunity to inspect the streets and make a recommendation at the next meeting. Karen Snyder seconded the motion. All members present voted Aye, and the matter was tabled.

New Business:

1. Fenders Curve/VDOT Issue: Ed Rehkopf: Mr. Rehkopf presented the following for consideration:

Petition to Fries Town Council

Re: Accident Mitigation at Fender's Curve

My wife and I purchased the Fender House at 1004 East Main Street in May of 2021. We have very much enjoyed the house and our time in the Fries community, but I have grave concerns about the east entrance to the town.

The sharp 90-degree turn, locally known as Fender's Curve, on State Road 606 as it turns up the hill as East Main Street, is a significant danger to drivers, as well as pedestrians and bicyclists who walk up the hill from the New River Bike Trail or the new RV Park.

Most, if not all, the traffic on this road is local and drivers are aware of the turn. A 15-mph speed limit sign is posted on the right side of the road as drivers approach the turn from Low Bridge, but during the summer months this sign is often obscured by bushes and vines. There is also a large Right Arrow sign directly ahead on the opposite side of the road at the turn, but it is not obvious until a car is fast approaching the turn.

In the five years we have lived in our home, there have been 16 accidents that I have direct knowledge of and others I only know from damage to our trees and yard from drivers have missed the turn and crossed the oncoming downhill lane departing town. These accidents occur most frequently at night, but also during the day.

Two and a half years ago, I contacted the Virginia DOT and reported the dangers of this turn. DOT responded by reducing the speed limit on the Fries Road at the Carroll County Line. But the problem continues to happen with at least eight accidents since the speed limit change.

Given that most of the traffic on this road is local, I am convinced that the primary cause of these accidents is driver inattention. I can only speak for myself but believe that all of us have much on our minds and are often distracted by matters other than the road ahead. Without some effort to mitigate the dangers of these continuing accidents, I fear a head on collision with traffic descending the hill to head out of town.

I have again contacted the VA DOT to inform them that accidents continue to happen and suggested the installation of rumble strips to alert drivers of the impending turn. We all recognize the effectiveness of the rumble strips on Highway 94 west of town where it meets Scenic Drive, alerting drivers of the approaching stop sign. It seems like this would be the perfect solution to the issues at Fender's Curve.

I was informed that the DOT could not install rumble strips without the Board of Supervisors' approval. They gave me a phone number to contact the local Board of Supervisors. I called and it was Jill's number, so I assume the Fries Town Council would have to be the approving authority.

I therefore respectfully request that the Fries Town Council approve a request for the VA DOT to install rumble strips on Highway 606 on the east end of town as it approaches Fender's Curve.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Ed Rehkopf, 1004 E. Main Street, Fries, VA 24330, 276-233-5662

Following discussion, Mary Ann Cubbage moved that a letter be sent to VDOT requesting the installation of rumble strips at Fender's Curve, as suggested by Mr. Rehkopf. Jo Ann Gunter seconded the motion. All members present voted Aye, and the motion carried.

2. Grayson County Garbage Contract: The Mayor reported that the contract had not been updated in 6 years and was up for renewal. The county increased the cost of service by \$2.00 per household. After some discussion, Jo Ann Gunter moved to approve the contract as presented. Mary Ann Cubbage seconded the motion. All members present voted Aye, and the motion carried.
3. Water Treatment Plant 2025 Gold Award: The Mayor announced that the Fries Water Treatment Plant had received the 2025 Gold Water Treatment Plant Performance Award for Excellence in Clarification, Filtration, and Backwash. She expressed her appreciation for the efforts of the plant operators, Dillon Gunter and Scott Brooke, whose dedication and commitment to excellence enabled the facility to achieve this recognition under Virginia Department of Health standards.
4. Budget Schedule: The Mayor announced that the budget workshop would be held on May 14th @ 10am. The Budget Public Hearing was scheduled for June 2nd @ 6:30pm.

Announcements:

1. Reminder: The deadline to be included on the agenda is Tuesday, one week before the meeting.
2. Mount Rogers Mobile Health Unit will be here May 19th at the Depot.
3. Large Item Curbside Pickup will be held in town limits on June 1st.
4. First Cruise-In of the season, May 23rd @ 2pm.
5. Fries Town Market, every Saturday from 9am—1pm.

The Mayor recognized Gil Caldwell, who requested to address Council. Mr. Caldwell stated that he had previously served on councils in other localities and commended the Town Council for its work. He remarked that he believed everyone shared a common goal of doing what is best for the Town.

Mr. Caldwell then inquired about the Town's leash law. The Mayor confirmed that the Town does have a leash law in effect. Mr. Caldwell reported that he had experienced issues with a loose dog and had submitted several videos to the Grayson County Animal Control Officer but had received no assistance.

The Mayor advised that she had recently met with the Grayson County Sheriff to discuss concerns regarding animal control services. She reported that the Sheriff is in the process of hiring a dedicated Animal Control Officer to address such matters. The current officer has multiple responsibilities and is unable to devote the necessary time to responding to the volume of animal control calls received.

Next, Mr. Caldwell advised that parking was an issue in the town. He gave examples of people parking on both sides of the street on Smith Street being dangerous, and the Mayor parking on the wrong side of the street in front of the Town Hall. After the laughter subsided, he also said that he thought that the Mayor and town officials should have permanent parking spaces assigned to them anyway. The Mayor stated that council would take his suggestion under advisement and thanked him for bringing his concerns to council.

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

Signed: _____

Attest: _____

Fries Town Council
April 7, 2026
Minutes

Members Present: Yvonne Burr, Mary Ann Cubbage, 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 Cubbage 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).
-

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, 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 Cubbage 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.
-

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
-

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).
-

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 Cubbage, 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).
-

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: _____