

TOWN OF GALENA

Mayor & Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 8, 2026 at 7:00 PM

ATTENDANCE

Present

- Tyler Carpenter – Mayor (presiding)
- Jack Duhamell – Council Member
- Sarah Merrell – Council Member
- Cheryl Richwine – Council Member
- Marisa Pisapia – Town Administrator
- Sue Bisbee – Town Clerk
- Mike Gibson – Maintenance & Facilities Coordinator

Absent

- John Carroll – Council Member
- Kevin Best – Town Attorney
- Kent County Sheriff's Office

Also Present

- Jamie Williams – Director of Kent County Economic & Tourism Development
- Carla Thorpe – Kent County Health Officer
- Chris Comer – Comcast, Government & Community Affairs
- Lauren Johnson – Owner, Family First Christian Education Center

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Carpenter called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Roll call was taken as reflected above. The Mayor noted that Council Member Carroll was attending a campaign event and sent his regards — his absence broke a 14-year streak of attending every meeting during his term.

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

A motion was made by Council Member Duhamell to approve the record of motions/minutes from the August Meeting and seconded by Council Member Merrell; all present were in favor, motion carried.

SHERIFF'S REPORT

No representative from the Kent County Sheriff's Office was present. The Sheriff's Office submitted its report by email in advance of the meeting; no additional details were read into the record.

PRESENTATIONS

Kent County Economic & Tourism Development — Jamie Williams

Ms. Williams, Director of Kent County Economic and Tourism Development, provided the following updates:

- Housing Study: Underway with consultant Urban Partners; completion expected February 2027. The county is seeking town representation on the steering committee (Galena and Millington have already responded) and is compiling a list of stakeholders for interviews.
- Economic & Tourism Development Strategic Plan (2027): Consultant PPR Strategies has been selected to update the 2022 plan; the contract is under review by the grants and contracts director, with completion targeted for the end of March 2027 (moved from February to allow time to incorporate housing study findings).
- Kent MD 250: Proclamation signed by all elected officials will be framed and displayed in the County Commissioners' hearing room. A Washington College GIS program has built a "story map" portal (free of charge) for residents to submit local history stories; social media pages are active for the initiative.
- Museums of Kent: Chairperson Stephanie Gosman is hosting trivia nights around the county through year end; events are promoted via the county's tourism and economic development Facebook pages.
- Upper Shore Regional Council / Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS): The Upper Shore (Cecil, Kent, and Queen Anne's counties) is pursuing Economic Development District (EDD) designation, now qualifying based on individual census tracts rather than county-wide criteria. Designation would open federal infrastructure and programming funding to the county, towns, nonprofits, and schools. An open house is scheduled for September 21, 6–8 PM, at the Worton Community Center. A priority-projects survey has been distributed to towns, nonprofits, and schools for inclusion in the CEDS document.
- Small Business Community Impact Grant: A new grant this year; 8 applications received, 6 approved (1 denied for being a startup outside program rules; 1 pending resolution of outstanding issues). A total of \$3,200 was distributed in awards of \$1,000–\$5,000 to businesses supporting community needs such as daycare, transportation, and healthcare.
- Business Attraction Marketing Plan: In progress through the Upper Shore Regional Council, funded by the state's 2022 regional council grants; another working group meeting is scheduled for the following week.
- Short-Term Rental Tax: Software implemented to identify unregistered short-term rentals (e.g., Airbnb) and ensure equal tax treatment with hotels/B&Bs. Reporting moved from quarterly to monthly per state legislation. Collections across the county totaled \$519,000 in 2026 — a 51% increase since the software's implementation. The county retains 15% for software/administration. State legislation will shift rental-tax collection to the Comptroller's Office effective July 1, 2027.

Kent County Health Department — Carla Thorpe

Ms. Thorpe, the county's new Health Officer (in the role since March 2026), introduced herself and outlined the department's services and initiatives:

- The department operates from two locations: 125 South Lynchburg Street (administration and clinical services — family planning, immunizations, cancer screening, communicable disease, reproductive health, lead exposure, adult medical day care, and Assessment/Evaluation/Referral Services) and 300 Sheeler Road (behavioral health campus — residential substance use treatment, peer recovery support, outpatient mental health serving over 600 residents with school-based services, and developmental disability case management).
- Upcoming community engagement meetings will support a countywide needs assessment and strategic plan; the department is beginning outreach to each municipality.

- New initiatives funded through the state's Rural Health Transformation Funds include a food-is-medicine program (medically tailored meals/produce prescriptions, in partnership with the Upper Shore Council and Washington College), an opioid treatment program at the Winslet Center, an additional level of substance-use care (3.1 services), a jail diversion pilot for justice-involved individuals with mental health needs, and expanded transportation services for residents 55+, the homeless population, and the general public.
- The Mayor noted the town's interest in transportation access for residents in outlying areas (e.g., Briscoe Manor) and offered the town's assistance where useful.

Comcast — Chris Comer

Mr. Comer, Comcast's Government and Community Affairs representative for the Eastern and Western Shore, introduced himself ahead of the Council's vote on the Town's cable franchise agreement renewal (see Mayor & Council Report). He noted:

- The franchise agreement pertains specifically to cable television; internet and telephone services are regulated separately, and the agreement is non-exclusive.
- Comcast leases space on existing utility poles (Delmarva Power/Verizon) rather than owning poles, and pays a franchise fee tied to cable television service.
- Residents with service or infrastructure issues (e.g., damaged equipment boxes) should contact him directly for prompt follow-up.
- Comcast continues to invest in network upgrades, including AI-based monitoring to detect and preemptively address signal issues, and is extending fiber closer to homes.

Council Members raised customer billing and equipment concerns for long-tenured customers; Mr. Comer offered to have Comcast review individual accounts on request.

GOOD OF THE TOWN

- A resident reported that a previously reported outage light was repaired quickly following the prior month's meeting, with thanks to Delmarva Power for the fast turnaround.
- Lauren Johnshon, owner of Family First Christian Education Center, joined remotely and requested that town officials present to her students on the roles and responsibilities of local government as part of a civics unit, either at Town Hall or via a classroom visit. The Council expressed interest; Lauren was asked to propose a few available dates so staff and council availability can be coordinated.
- Gary Robson reported progress on the pollinator garden: timbers have been placed and cut to size, stakes will be set this week, and fill dirt and plants will follow. Native, perennial plants will be sourced from the Master Gardeners' plant sale on September 18. This is the first major Park & Tree Committee project completed in several years.

MAYOR & COUNCIL REPORT

Charter Review Workshop Follow-Up

The Mayor summarized a recent charter review workshop attended by Council, Planning Commission, staff, and members of the public. The focus was on removing outdated provisions the Town can no longer reasonably administer and cleaning up the Town Code, rather than substantially expanding it.

Speed Enforcement

The Town continues to receive resident complaints about speeding and is actively researching virtual/automated speed enforcement options (e.g., speed cameras), to be pursued once other current projects allow.

Ordinance 2026-08 — Commercial Dumpsters (First Introduction)

An Ordinance of the Mayor and Council of the Town of Galena to regulate the use, maintenance, servicing, and sanitation of commercial dumpsters within the town, in order to prevent unsanitary conditions, pest infestations, litter, odors, leakage, excessive noise, and other public nuisances; to authorize town enforcement and administrative abatement; and to provide for enforcement and penalties. The Ordinance responds to ongoing concerns about dumpster maintenance at several businesses and related pest activity. A vote is expected next month following review by Planning Commission.

Ordinance 2026-09 — Accessory Dwelling Units (First Introduction)

An Ordinance of the Town of Galena amending the Town of Galena Zoning Ordinance to add definitions and standards for accessory dwelling units (ADUs), in compliance with the Maryland Accessory Dwelling Unit Act of 2025 (House Bill 1466 / Senate Bill 891), and to authorize ADUs on lots with single-family detached dwellings.

- State law now requires municipalities to permit ADUs (e.g., finished basements, converted garages/attics, or secondary structures); the town retains discretion over which ADU types are permitted in which zoning categories, within state parameters.
- Council framed the ordinance as supporting affordable/attainable housing, including options for aging family members or adult children.

Ordinance 2026-10 — Dwelling Apartment in C-1 District (Text Amendment)

An Ordinance of the Town of Galena amending the Town of Galena Zoning Ordinance to authorize dwelling apartments as a conditional permitted use in the C-1 Commercial District. The Ordinance originated from a specific proposal to add apartments above/within an existing commercial building and reflects the Town's broader goal of allowing mixed commercial/residential use on underutilized commercial parcels.

Because this is a Text Amendment Application, a Council vote was needed to forward it to Planning Commission rather than a standard introduction/vote cycle. A motion was made by Council Member Merrell to forward the Ordinance to the Planning Commission and second by Council Member Duhamell; all present were in favor, motion carried. The Planning Commission Meeting is September 28 at 6:00 PM.

Comcast Franchise Agreement Extension

A motion was made by Council Member Duhamell to sign a five-year extension to the Town's Cable Franchise Agreement with Comcast and seconded by Council Member Merrell; all present were in favor, motion carried. The Town Attorney reviewed and negotiated changes to the agreement prior to Comcast's acceptance. The agreement is non-exclusive and does not preclude other providers from entering town rights-of-way.

TOWN ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

Code Enforcement

- 12 code enforcement warnings have been resolved to compliance; 5 remain outstanding.
- A Backyard Chicken Permit issue has been resolved for one property; a second remains open.

Commercial Occupancy Permits

- Sassafras Primary School received its Commercial Occupancy Permit after receiving final approval from the Maryland State Department of Education.

- Family First Christian Education Center likewise received its Commercial Occupancy Permit following final State Department of Education approval.
- Spill the Tea LLC received its Commercial Occupation Permit to open a bookstore & gift shop in Lovely Cove Coffee's empty suite in their building at 100 N. Main Street.

Monopole Project

The monopole received final approval from the county. Staff continues coordinating meetings related to the project.

MAINTENANCE & FACILITIES REPORT

Monopole Project — NEPA Review

The Federal NEPA environmental review has begun. Archaeological test pits were conducted last Friday after researchers identified that homes had stood on the site in the 1800s; results are expected in approximately six weeks. The area proposed for the pole has previously been disturbed by fill work related to the adjacent wastewater facility. The Town's engineer is finalizing the site plan in parallel so an RFP can be issued once the NEPA review clears; grading work will level a low area currently used for stormwater runoff, replacing it with a retaining feature required by the county.

Wastewater Treatment Plant

- The new dual air compressor system is fully functional and performing well; when one unit threw an error code shortly after installation, the second unit allowed operations to continue without any reportable downtime.
- A downed tree and related fence damage at the wastewater facility have been repaired; another contractor also trimmed the surrounding tree line to prevent recurrence.

Park Lighting

The Town continues sourcing bird-friendly lighting options within budget for the park; staff is reviewing a previously identified compliant fixture.

Grounds & Equipment

- Completed 4 utility mark outs; patched a pothole on Phelps Avenue; repair of a similar issue on Seminary Avenue is scheduled within the next day or two.
- Hauled a load of sludge at the wastewater plant; replaced 2 water meters, with more replacements anticipated.
- Performing daily inspections, weekly code enforcement with the Town Administrator, and routine grounds maintenance; an unusually wet summer has significantly increased mowing demands town wide.

Commercial Dumpsters / Grease Traps

In coordination with the wastewater operator, staff is following up with food-service businesses regarding grease trap maintenance and pump-out frequency, tying into the pending Commercial Dumpsters Ordinance (Ordinance 2026-08). The Town Attorney noted the town can address this under its public nuisance/property maintenance authority.

CLERK REPORT

Bank Balances — as of September 8, 2026

Account	Balance
General Fund (Checking)	\$38,914.67
General Fund (Savings)	\$176,711.92
Sewer Fund (Checking)	\$51,328.62
Sewer Fund (Savings)	\$329,891.27
Water Fund (Checking)	\$151,012.96
Water Fund (Savings)	\$261,679.77
Backup Account (Shore United Bank)	\$2,000.19
CD (Shore United Bank)	\$200,000.00
TOTAL	\$1,211,539.40

A motion was made by Council Member Merrell to approve the balances as read into the record and seconded by Council Member Richwine; all present were in favor, motion carried.

Inter-Fund Transfers Approved

- Sewer to General: \$9,998.84
- Water to General: \$10,905.23
- Water to Sewer: \$58,813.85

A motion was made by Council Member Merrell to approve the inter-fund transfers as read into the record and seconded by Council Member Richwine; all present were in favor, motion carried.

Office Updates

- Park donation letter campaign is underway; a \$500 donation was received from Shore United Bank, deposited to a dedicated tracking account.
- Town office bathroom received a simple upgrade.
- Attended first Council of Government (COG) meeting.
- All water bills processed; remaining items to be completed by Maintenance.
- A new door access system will be installed at Town Hall beginning September 16.
- New Gateway Park signage has been designed and ordered; new dog waste-station boxes, bags, and garbage cans have also been ordered, pending installation by Maintenance.

Halloween Bingo & Pumpkin Cook-Off

A combined Halloween Bingo and Pumpkin Cook-Off event is planned for Friday, October 30, 6:00 to 9:00 PM, at Galena Volunteer Fire Company, with proceeds benefiting the playground fund. The event will run roughly 10 bingo games alongside pumpkin cook-off judging and awards. Costumes will be encouraged, with a best-costume prize under consideration.

MEETING & EVENT SCHEDULE

- 9/11 Remembrance Ceremony – Friday, September 11 at 6:00 PM at Galena Volunteer Fire Company. The Town Attorney will serve as guest speaker.

- Planning Commission Meeting – Monday, September 28 at 6:00 PM (Ordinances 2026-09 and 2026-10)
- Halloween Bingo & Pumpkin Cook-Off – Friday, October 30 at 6:00 PM at Galena Volunteer Fire Company
- Next Mayor & Council Meeting – Monday, October 5 at 7:00 PM

MOTIONS SUMMARY

Motion	Moved By	Seconded	Result
Approve record of motions/minutes from previous (August) meeting	Council Member Duhamell	Council Member Merrell	Approved
Send Ordinance 2026-10 (Dwelling Apartment in C-1 District) to Planning Commission	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Duhamell	Approved
Sign Comcast Franchise Agreement Extension	Council Member Duhamell	Council Member Merrell	Approved
Approve bank balances as read into record	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Richwine	Approved
Approve inter-fund transfers as read into record	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Richwine	Approved
Approve tonight's audio minutes and adjournment	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Richwine	Approved

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Council Member Merrell to approve the audio minutes adjourn and seconded by Council Member Richwine; all present were in favor, motion carried.

A motion was made by Council Member Merrell to adjourn and seconded by Council Member Richwine; all present were in favor, motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Minutes recorded by: _____ Date approved: _____