

# TOWN OF GALENA

## Mayor & Council Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 4, 2026 | 7:00 PM

### ATTENDANCE

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#### Present

- Tyler Carpenter – Mayor (presiding)
- Sarah Merrell – Council Member
- John Carroll – Council Member
- Cheryl Richwine – Council Member
- Mike Gibson – Town Maintenance
- Sue Bisbee – Town Clerk
- Kevin Best – Town Attorney

#### Absent

- Jack Duhamell – Council Member
- Marisa Pisapia – Town Administrator

#### Also Present

- Dennis Hickman – Kent County Sheriff
- Jacoby Smith – Co-Owner, Fil-a-Belly (public attendee)
- Bud Felty (public attendee)
- Jackie Darling (public attendee)

### PUBLIC HEARING

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The Mayor opened a public hearing at the start of the meeting covering three items.

#### 1. Charter Amendment Resolution 2026-02 – Mayor's Duties

This Resolution amends Section 404 (Powers and Duties) of the Town Charter to expand and clarify the Mayor's authority, in alignment with Maryland House Bill 615 (2018 Session) and Article 9E, Section 4 of the Maryland Constitution. **Key changes adopted:**

- Emergency Powers (expanded language): The Mayor, as Chief Executive Officer, may exercise the full powers of the Town Council during a declared emergency when it is impractical to convene a quorum. Actions may include issuing orders, authorizing expenditures, suspending ordinance deadlines, and directing town personnel. All emergency actions must be reported to the Council no later than the next regular or special meeting. The Council may subsequently modify or rescind such actions, but prior actions taken in reliance on the Mayor's authority shall remain valid.

Discussion noted this update replaces a single sentence of prior emergency-powers language with more comprehensive, detailed provisions.

#### 2. Ordinance 2026-03 – Article XV, Section 101 (Special Exception Procedures)

This Ordinance amends the Town's 2020 Zoning Ordinance to correct the findings-of-fact criteria for special exceptions by removing erroneous variance standards and clarifying the appropriate special exception review process. **Key changes:**

- Eliminates 3 variance criteria (unusual lot size/shape, topographical conditions, adjacency conditions) that were incorrectly included in the special exception section.
- Simplifies and clarifies the process for residents seeking special exceptions in the downtown area.

### 3. Ordinance 2026-04 – Civil Emergency Powers

This Ordinance authorizes the Mayor and Council to issue proclamations and orders in response to civil emergencies, establishes criminal penalties for violations of such orders, and comprehensively incorporates the emergency powers delegated to municipalities under Sections 14-101 and 14-301 of the Public Safety Article of the Maryland Annotated Code. **Key provisions:**

- Formalizes the proclamation process including required findings of fact.
- Proclamations are effective for up to 30 days; the Council may modify or rescind the Mayor's emergency powers.
- Provides an oath of office for individuals serving in volunteer emergency capacities.
- Serves as a comprehensive guide for newly elected Councils responding to emergencies.

The Mayor closed the public hearing and reopened the regular meeting at 7:15 PM.

## SHERIFF'S REPORT

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The Kent County Sheriff provided the following update for April 2026:

### Community News

- **Mock Crash Exercise:** The Galena Fire Department joined multiple Kent County agencies (fire, rescue, sheriff, state police, county paramedics, Health & Human Services, and the state police helicopter) at Kent County High School for a mock crash exercise ahead of prom weekend. Students participated as actors. This type of exercise had not been conducted since approximately 2017.
- **New School Resource Deputy:** The County Commissioners approved a permanent deputy position for the upcoming school year, providing an ongoing law enforcement presence at Galena Elementary School.

### April 2026 Incident Summary (3 calls)

- April 12 – 200 block of Phelps Avenue: Caller reported a neighbor threatening their dogs. Contact made; situation determined to be verbal only; dogs had been loose and appeared aggressive.
- April 23 – Traffic arrest: Male, age 66, from New Cumberland, PA, charged with driving on a suspended out-of-state license. Released on citations.
- April 27 – 100 block of Main Street: 911 hang-up call; deputy responded and found an individual had been stuck in a church elevator but self-extricated. No injuries.

### Traffic Enforcement Statistics – April

- 30 traffic enforcement actions resulting in 39 warnings, 10 citations, and 1 arrest.
- Present at Galena Elementary School on 11 days.
- 9 special patrol checks in other areas.

## GOOD OF THE TOWN

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### Community Solar Project Exploration

Mayor Carpenter reported on a waterways tour hosted by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, attended by Mayor Carpenter, Council Member Carroll, and Town Administrator Pisapia. The tour led to a meeting with solar consultant Tom Dietz of Chestertown. **Council Member Carroll summarized the Chestertown community solar model:**

- The town financed a community solar array via bond, supplemented by state and federal grants.
- Projected outcomes: net-zero electricity costs for all town buildings, facilities, wastewater treatment plant, and streetlights; an estimated \$200,000 annual net revenue after debt service; and potentially \$500,000–\$600,000/year in revenue once the bond is retired in ~10 years.
- Community discount program: ~350 Chestertown residents can sign up for a 10% electric bill discount (20% for households earning under \$40,000).

The Town is exploring a smaller-scale version, focused on under-utilized town property (primarily near the wastewater treatment plant) with minimal visual impact on residents.

The Town Attorney noted that a recently enacted state law (Energy Solar/Alternative Energy Certainty Act) preempts local zoning for solar installations of 1–2 megawatts, though municipal projects would be exempt. The Town's goal is to proactively develop its own solar project. Mr. Dietz will present at a future meeting.

### **Green Infrastructure – Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay**

Tom Leigh of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay toured town-owned parcels with Mayor Carpenter and Town Administrator Pisapia, including the 22-acre pond/wooded area in the new annexation area.

- Mr. Leigh specializes in green infrastructure projects and grant funding coordination. He is preparing a scope of work at no cost to the town and will seek grant funding for an engineering concept plan.
- Once the concept plan is funded, the town will host public input meetings for residents to weigh in on development of the park area. A formal presentation to the Council is anticipated.

## **MAYOR & COUNCIL REPORT**

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### **Ordinance 2026-05 – AI Governance (First Introduction)**

The Mayor introduced Ordinance 2026-05, which is an Ordinance establishing standards, governance, and restrictions for the use of artificial intelligence systems in municipal operations. AI governance was identified as the main topic at the Mayor's Association Conference and will be a focus at the MML Summer Conference. Current town uses of AI include form design, flyers/signage, and meeting transcription (being piloted at this meeting). The town has transitioned from ChatGPT to Claude (Anthropic) to ensure town data remains private and is not shared externally. Full introduction and vote scheduled for the next meeting.

### **Ordinance 2026-06 – FY2027 Budget (First Introduction)**

The Mayor introduced Ordinance 2026-06: An Ordinance adopting the budget for Fiscal Year 2027 (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027) for the General Fund, Sewer Enterprise Fund, and Water Enterprise Fund.

- The budget was reviewed by Mayor Carpenter and Town Administrator Pisapia; it is balanced.
- Approach: prior-year expenses carried forward; over- and under-spent line items realigned.
- The Town is maintaining the constant yield tax rate – property tax rates are adjusted downward as assessed values rise, so residents pay the same effective amount year over year with no tax increase.
- A public hearing is required at least 21 days before the start of the fiscal year. Timeline is on track.
- Draft budget available upon request.

The Town Attorney noted that Galena does not currently levy a personal property tax and that given the town's business mix (primarily small, independent retail), the revenue potential from such a tax would be minimal. The town's revenue sources include real estate tax (residential and commercial, including Delmarva Power and Verizon line assessments), local income tax, and Comcast franchise fees. No amusement or admission tax is currently levied.

### **Ventrac Tractor – Sealed Bid Sale**

The Town received 1 sealed bid for the surplus Ventrac tractor (declared surplus at a prior meeting). The bid was submitted by Samuel Cox of West Virginia for \$26,099 – above the \$25,000 minimum.

Motion was made by Council Member Carroll to accept the bid, seconded by Council Member Merrell and was approved pending staff verification of the buyer and coordination of deposit and payment. All were in favor; motion was passed.

### **Independent Audit Services – RFP**

No bids were received in response to the RFP for independent audit services (posted on MML, emailed to all Maryland CPA offices, and listed on job boards). The prior auditor significantly increased fees in recent years. The Town Attorney noted that professional services contracts (audit, legal, engineering, surveying) are typically exempt from competitive procurement requirements. The Council authorized the Mayor and Town Administrator to solicit quotes at their discretion and select a provider within the approved budget.

## **TOWN ADMINISTRATOR - Report was as submitted.**

## CLERK REPORT

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### Finance & Billing

- All water bills distributed; payments received and recorded; daily bank deposits completed.
- Remote check deposit machine operational; staff has resolved early scanning issues.

### Utility Billing Software

- Contract executed with new utility billing software vendor; kickoff meeting held.
- Data collection process underway; go-live target is July 15, 2026 (side-by-side with vendor support).
- Full independent operation expected by Q3 billing cycle.

### Permits & Forms

- All permit applications updated on the town's new web platform (JotForm); QR codes now available for online submission – residents no longer need to print and hand-deliver forms.

### Bank Balances

A motion was made by Council Member Merrell and seconded by Council Member Carroll to approve the bank balances. All were in favor; motion passed.

Account	Balance
General Fund (Checking)	\$53,311.78
General Fund (Savings)	\$219,197.58
Sewer Fund (Checking)	\$87,783.20
Sewer Fund (Savings)	\$542,653.91
Water Fund (Checking)	\$112,533.58
Water Fund (Savings)	\$263,233.96
PNC Account	\$5,000.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,283,814.01</b>

Note: Water Fund checking balance is elevated as transfers have not yet been processed for the utility billing quarter.

### Inter-Fund Transfers (Dues)

A motion was made by Council Member Carroll and seconded by Council Member Richwine to approve the Due-To-Due-from transfers. All were in favor; motion passed.

- Sewer to General: \$4,248.58
- Water to General: \$9,218.56
- General to Water: \$6,829.94
- Water to Sewer: \$68,275.06

## MAINTENANCE & FACILITIES REPORT

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### Wastewater Treatment Plant

- Digester cleaning completed: 5 loads removed; filter cleaned with pump truck (~7,000 gallons pumped out). Work performed in-house by staff rather than hiring county crew, reducing costs.

- New air compressor approved by County Commissioners (\$35,000 from county capital funds); installation expected in FY2027 (July 2026).

### **GMB Monopole / AT&T Antenna**

Required documents submitted to AT&T (Mike West) for the special exception application before the County Commissioners meeting (~May 22). Upon approval, the project will be bid out for construction. This will provide a guaranteed antenna spot, generating revenue for the town when existing tenants vacate.

### **Equipment**

- Ferris Mower purchased from Sys Cycle for \$2,600.00.
- Ventrac Tractor: sealed bid accepted (see Mayor & Council section above).

### **Road Paving – Jarman Avenue**

S&M provided a quote of \$61,520.20 to pave Jarman Avenue from the Jarman/Seminary intersection to Route 290, including six speed humps spaced approximately every 300 feet (recommended by contractor based on street length). Jarman Avenue is used as a cut-through to avoid the traffic light; speeding is a concern. A paving bid was obtained in 2022 but was paused pending water lateral replacement work. Staff is working with contractor DE Nicholson to verify whether all laterals have been replaced, who indicated they may meet with staff Friday to walk the street and potentially dig test spots. If any laterals remain, directional drilling after paving is possible (though not guaranteed to avoid asphalt damage). The Council approved proceeding with seeking additional bids for comparison. **Speed hump requirements (per Town Attorney):**

- Must comply with the Maryland Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- Advance warning signage required.
- Pavement markings (heat-set into asphalt) required at each hump.
- The town should confirm the paving contractor can install required markings, or arrange a separate contractor.
- Speed bumps (sharper) vs. speed humps (gradual/wave): humps are preferred and fire department-compatible; humps cost ~\$3,000 more than bumps.

Note: This will be the town's first speed humps. Liability considerations noted: street maintenance is a proprietary (not governmental) function under Maryland case law. Proper signage is essential to limit liability.

A separate state road pothole at a key intersection was noted and will be escalated to constituent services/transportation contacts.

## **MEETING & EVENT SCHEDULE**

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- Dogwood Festival – Saturday, May 9 (parade at 10:00 AM; ~80 vendors; festival all day)
- Town Office Closed – Monday, May 26 (Memorial Day)
- Park & Tree Committee Meeting – Tuesday, May 27, 7:00 PM
- Mayor & Council Meeting – Monday, June 2 (next regular meeting)

## **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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Jacoby Smith, co-owner of Fil-a-Belly (100 S. Main Street), introduced himself and expressed interest in participating more actively in town government. He noted that the outdoor benches will be available to the public during the Dogwood Parade and that the restaurant will be open during the festival.

## **INFORMATIONAL / UPCOMING ITEMS**

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### **ADU / Accessory Dwelling Unit Legislation**

The Town Attorney briefed the Council on new state legislation affecting accessory dwelling units (ADUs):

- Effective October 1, 2026, municipalities are prohibited from zoning out ADUs in residential areas. Property owners may build a second dwelling unit on their lot (up to 75% of the floor space of the principal dwelling) or convert/add to an existing structure (e.g., garage conversion, garage apartment).
- The law supersedes HOA and condominium restrictions that prohibit ADUs.
- The 45-day application acceptance requirement for housing-related developments also takes effect; once approved, rights vest automatically without physical construction required.
- Galena's existing rental registration process will apply; water allocation fees remain applicable for any additional unit.
- Primary concern for Galena: density/parking impacts in areas with limited on-street parking, particularly if investors acquire and convert multiple properties.
- The Town Attorney will prepare a summary of the legislation and recommend Zoning Code changes for council review prior to October 1.

### Council Recruitment Workshop

The Mayor proposed hosting a summer workshop ('What is it like to be a Council Member?') to inform residents about Council roles, time commitments, and how to get involved, with the goal of identifying potential candidates and volunteers. Council expressed support; Clerk will include brief council recruitment information at the Dogwood Festival info table.

### Media Outreach

Council Member Carroll met with Jim Descent, editor of the Chestertown Spy, who will launch a dedicated Galena page on the Chestertown Spy website and was invited to cover the Dogwood Festival. He will be introduced to the Mayor and Clerk Saturday to establish an ongoing media contact.

## MOTIONS SUMMARY

Motion	Moved By	Seconded	Result
Approve minutes from previous meeting	Council Member Carroll	Council Member Merrell	All in favor – Approved
Approve Charter Amendment Resolution 2026-02 (Mayor's Duties)	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Richwine	All in favor – Approved
Approve Ordinance 2026-03 (Section 101 Amendment)	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Carroll	All in favor – Approved
Approve Ordinance 2026-04 (Emergency Powers)	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Carroll	All in favor – Approved
Accept Ventrac tractor sealed bid (\$26,099 – Samuel Cox, WV), pending deposit and buyer verification	Council Member Carroll	Council Member Merrell	All in favor – Approved
Authorize Mayor & Town Administrator to solicit and select professional audit services (no competitive bids received)	Council Member Carroll	Council Member Merrell	All in favor – Approved
Approve bid for paving Jarman Avenue (S&M, \$61,520.20) with six speed humps	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Carroll	All in favor – Approved
Approve bank balances as read into record	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Merrell	All in favor – Approved
Approve inter-fund transfers (dues) as read into record	Council Member Carroll	Council Member Richwine	All in favor – Approved
Approve audio minutes	Council Member Merrell	Council Member Carroll	All in favor – Approved

## ADJOURNMENT

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Meeting adjourned at 8:28 PM. A motion to adjourn was made by Council Member Merrell and seconded by Council Member Carroll. All were in favor.

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Minutes Recorded By

Date Approved