REGULAR MEETING ~ CITY COUNCIL
PRINCETON, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
April 20, 2026

A Regular Meeting of the Common Council for the City of Princeton, Mercer County, West Virginia was held in the Council Chambers of the Municipal Building, 800 Bee Street, on Monday, April 20, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were Mayor David Graham, Vice Mayor James Hawkins, Council Members Joseph Allen, Jacqueline Rucker, Abigail McCune, James Hill, and Dewey Russell. City Attorney Paul Cassell, City Manager Mike Webb, and City Clerk Kaitlyn Ellison. A quorum was constituted thereby.

I. Call to Order
Mayor David Graham called the meeting to order.

II. Resolutions-Proclamations-Presentations-Public Hearings
1. Mayor David Graham and Railroad Museum Director Pat Smith presented a Resolution in support of a Train Excursion from Princeton to Mullens.

Councilman James Hill made a motion to accept the Resolution.

Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

III. Public Input
Andrea Washington of Ward IV in Princeton asked if there would be a cost to ride the train.

Mrs. Smith stated that there would be, but did not know the amount.

Mason Bowling of Princeton asked if it would cost to fix the railways.

Mrs. Smith stated it would be no cost to Princeton.

IV. Consent Agenda
Without any corrections noted, Mayor Graham asked the City Clerk to commit the minutes from the following meetings to record:

a. July 1, 2025, Special Meeting
b. October 23, 2025, Special Meeting
c. March 11, 2026 Budget Meeting
   March 11, 2026, Special Meeting
d. March 16, 2026, Council Meeting
   March 24, 2026, Special Meeting
   April 2, 2026, Special Meeting

With corrections noted by the City Clerk, the minutes were committed to record.

V. Policy Agenda
A. Committee Reports
1. Public Works and Recreation
Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker reported that the Public Works and Recreation Committee of Princeton City Council met on April 15th, 2026, with the following to report to City Council:

Public Works Department

Public Works Co-Director Terry Blankenship presented the following progress report for the month:

Old Business:

- Public Works continued patching potholes as they are identified and reported. Some areas will require cutting, milling, and repaving this summer.
- Public Works continued picking up litter along roadways as time permitted, with several areas cleaned that were previously covered by winter snow.
- The lights for the "Welcome to Princeton" signs have been repaired, as well as the Princeton sign at the island at the beginning of Lower Mercer Street. The light at the Princeton sign near the State Road Police Station has recently gone out, and batteries have been ordered for repair.
- Public Works continued assisting other departments with maintenance needs.
- The guardrail at the corner of Morrison Drive and Courthouse Road has been repaired.
- City Park has been opened for the season, with water turned on to the new ADA restrooms. The older restrooms remain closed in anticipation of removing Shelter No. 1, which currently supplies power to those facilities, until power can be restored from a new source.
- Public Works has been in contact with AEP regarding missing light poles and restoring removed power drops.
- Work has continued at the Public Works facility, including hanging sheetrock, completing plumbing work, and establishing internet service in the office and breakroom.

New Business:

- Public Works completed 20 service requests for March, including two in coordination with Code Enforcement. Requests have increased with warmer weather.
- A new sign has been installed at the Police Station. Power has not yet been completed, but the sign has been tested. Appreciation was expressed to Bobby King and Mark Basham for their work.
- A tree was removed on Washington Avenue at the property owner's request. The tree was located in the City right-of-way, overhanging the road, and posed a potential risk to service lines.
- The alley behind Knob Street, extending to South 7th Street, was graded and graveled due to poor conditions.
- An area at the bus stop on 12th Street Extension was also graded and graveled.
- Work was completed at City Park to paint over graffiti on parking bollards and playground equipment. Additional painting is planned for shelters and the pool house.
- Mowing operations have resumed throughout the City. Maintenance has also begun at the mini golf course, with plans to reopen this year.
- The stormwater project behind South Walker Street to the former City Hall property is nearing completion. The project has improved drainage in the area and reduced flooding concerns for nearby businesses and residences along Airport Drive.
- Drainage repairs were completed on Meadow Street due to issues from previous construction. Work is ongoing on aging terracotta piping along Hale Avenue, particularly in the 200 block. A new drainage inlet is being installed to improve maintenance and prevent future issues. Additional pipe work will be needed in the future.

Parks and Recreation Department

Director Amanda McCabe presented the following report for the month:

The department's annual Easter Egg Hunt in the City Park was once again a huge success. The weather was excellent, and approximately 500–600 individuals attended the event. A total of 6,000 plastic eggs were hidden, each filled with a small toy or piece of candy. In addition, 629 prize eggs were distributed. Prizes included three bicycles, seven scooters, a fishing pole, three free bounce house parties at the Recreation Center, as well as a variety of grab bags, toys, and candy.

The disc golf tournament held on March 28 also went very well. The event benefited from good weather and included approximately 30 competitors from West Virginia and Virginia. The next tournament is currently being planned for May 22–29.

Southern Highlands and the Mercer County Day Report Center successfully met all of their goals with their second Unity Hoops event, held in the Recreation Center gymnasium. A total of eight teams participated, with approximately 150 spectators in attendance. Additionally, 773 food items were collected and donated to the Bluefield Union Mission.

The department's annual cheerleading competition is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14, at 5:00 p.m. Eight squads will be participating, and a large crowd is expected in the gymnasium.

The department's three spring basketball leagues have been drafted and will begin practices following the cheerleading competition. There are a total of 159 participants forming 20 teams. This includes 48 junior varsity girls making up six teams, 53 varsity girls forming five teams, and 68 boys comprising nine teams. Games are scheduled to begin in May and will be played six to seven days per week.

Mrs. McCabe thanked Assistant Director Malinda Edwards for planning and organizing the Easter Egg Hunt at the City Park on April 4th.

Princeton Railroad Museum

Railroad Museum Director Pat Smith presented the following report for the month:

Attendance: 276
Sales: $152
Donations: $153

Future Events

- April 16- Pisgah Preschool
- April 17- Graham High School Class Tour
- April 24 - 1:45 – There will be a walking tour of Princeton by the Mercer County Visitors Bureau; Open History of Princeton at the Museum
- May 9 – 2nd Saturday at 2:00 - A Day at the Museum – Monthly History Lectures and Historic Re-enactor Presentations. First presentation is May 9, 2:00 – The History of Princeton, Pat Smith, Mercer County Historian.
- June 13, 2:00 p.m. – Coach Lee Patton: The Untold Legend. This event will feature author Bill Yearout and Carolyn Gordon (granddaughter of Lee Patton). Mr. Yearout, a Princeton native, and Ms. Gordon will discuss the book, which is scheduled for release around May 30 on major platforms including Amazon, Apple, Barnes & Noble, and Kobo. The book highlights many individuals from Princeton and shares a compelling historical narrative. This session is suitable for all audiences, from older children to adults, and attendance is welcome regardless of whether you have read or plan to read the book.
- June 20, 11:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. – West Virginia Day Celebration (New Addition: Evening Street Dance). Featuring trolley tours, historic re-enactors, crafts, food, and exhibits.

- July 11 - 2:00 – Author Phyomena French presents her book "My Endearing Appalachia Memoirs of Southern WV Coalfield Life."

Mrs. Smith expressed her appreciation to the City Attorney for his assistance in preparing the Resolution on short notice.

Princeton Public Library

Councilwoman Abigail McCune presented the report for the month:

- The Library made 55 new library cards and circulated 4,459 digital and physical items.
- The Library hosted or participated in 35 programs and events with 1,254 participants.
- They did several school visits or tours with Princeton Primary, Silver Springs, Maranatha Christian Academy, and Head Heart and Hands Learning School.
- They also attended the Special Needs Collaborative's Born to Stand Out event.
- They also assisted with Mercer County 4H by providing a judge for their public speaking event that took place on the evening of March 31st.
- Poet Rob Marritt will be visiting to discuss his book "Sense of Direction" on April 18th at 11 a.m.
- On April 16th at 5:30 p.m., Concord Bonner Scholar students will be presenting a program about Summer Safety and providing take-home goodies for all participants.
- April 21st at 10 a.m., Living Historian Lori Sexton will be at the Library as Confederate soldier Corporal Levi for an engaging performance.
- Ukulele Underground begins on April 28th at 5 p.m. and is for those 10 years of age or older. This is for any level of player, including beginner, but you must bring your own ukulele. The class is being taught by former Concord professor and music aficionado, Tim Mainland.
- The Library thanked the Princeton City Police Department for their walk-throughs at the Library and for keeping a check on the outside grounds when they are closed. Their consistency is helping to prevent mischief and deter wrongdoers in addition to providing a level of confidence among staff to reach out when a need arises.

2. Public Safety

Councilman James Hill reported that the Public Safety Committee of Princeton City Council met on April 15th, 2026, with the following to report to the City Council:

Code Enforcement Department

Code Enforcement Director Ty Smith presented the following for the month:

Area Patrol Summary:

Initial Complaints:	176
Cumulative Total	51,658

Demolition Program Status:

Condemnations/Unsafe:	8
Demo in Appeals Process:	0
Demo Notice to Proceed:	1
Total Demos To Date:	790 (Grant and Non-Grant)

Animal Control:

Cases for the Month:	4 (3 Dogs, 1 Pig)
Dogs Impounded:	0

Cats Impounded:	0
Cumulative Impounds:	3,774
Cumulative Complaints:	11,205
Property Maintenance:	58

Building Inspections/Permits:

Total Permits:	27 (18 Residential, 8 Commercial, 1 Gov.)
Total Inspections:	41
Total Project Costs:	$383,733.00
Total Permit Fees:	$2,188.00

Flood Plain Management:

Determinations:	27
Permits Issued:	2

Zoning:

Occupancy Applications	2
Occupancy Inspections:	2
Appeals Cases:	0

Rental Compliance:

Monthly Fees Collected:	$100.00
New Units Registered:	0
Cumulative Total:	1,075
Renewals:	0
Units Inspected:	12
Total to Date:	$39,154.95

Vacant Buildings:

New Units Registered:	2
Total:	36
Fees Collected:	$400
Property Maintenance:	36

Fire Department

Chief Charlie Croy presented the following for the month:

I. **Emergency Calls for the Month:** 101
   a. 8 Fire Calls
   b. 59 Medical Calls

Total emergency calls for FY ’25-’26 = 905

II. **Inspections:**
   a. Fire Inspections: 2
   b. Certificate of Occupancy Inspections: 2
   c. Preplans: 4

III. **Training:**
   a. Training Hours: 539

IV. Vehicle Accident Billing:

a. for the month: 0
b. Total for FY '25-'26 = $1,838.44

V. Other Updates / Information:

- On March 16th, the Fire Department had a 5-year inspection from the State Fire Marshals' Office. Everything from the training records to the equipment on the trucks was checked. The department passed the inspection "with flying colors," per the Assistant State Fire Marshal Bradley Scott. Once the inspection has been approved by the State Fire Commission at their next meeting, the department should receive a certification.
- A hiring test was given on Saturday, March 21st. Five candidates tested, four passed both the physical and written testing. Interviews were held on March 30th. Dalton Bowman was selected to fill the vacant spot. His first day was April 8th. He will work 8-hour days until he completes Fire Fighter I.
- A Fire Inspecter Class is planned for May 18th-21st. The department hopes to have four or 5 additional inspectors trained in the department. The class is also open to Fire Departments across West Virginia and the surrounding areas.

Rules and Regulations of the Fire Civil Service

The Fire Department Civil Service Commission President Sean Wyatt spoke about the update to the Rules and Regulations, stating that they mainly focused on the process of competitive examinations for hiring and promoting. He stated that he researched other departments' Civil Service Guidelines, along with the requirements through the State Code.

Councilman James Hill made a motion to approve the Rules and Regulations of the Fire Civil Service Commission for the City of Princeton.

Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Police Department

Chief Ben Woodard reported the following for the month:

- Incidents: 840
- Citations: 85
- Arrests: 12

- Chief Woodard delivered snacks to Child Protect of Mercer County, on behalf of the Police Department, for the children who visit their office daily.
- Patrolmen Jones and McGuire provided security for Rodney Carrington at the Chuck Mathena Center.
- Chief Woodard, Deputy Chief Gibson, Lt. Weatherly, and Det. Cpl. Gibson attended the ROCIC Gangs and Narcotics Conference in Nashville, TN.
- Det. Cpl. Gibson completed specialized Evidence Room Procedure Training at Tygart Lake State Park.
- Lt. Combs, Lt. Weatherly, and Ptlm. McGuire attended Close Quarter Combat Training hosted by the Kanawha County Sheriff's Department.
- Lt. Combs, Sgt. Shrewsbury, and Ptlm. Ford successfully passed the FAA Part 107 test and are now certified drone operators.
- Ptlm. Epperson completed two weeks of intensive training in Lewisburg, WV, and is now a certified D.A.R.E Officer.
- The department purchased two new Dodge Durangos Police Cruisers.

- Public Works installed the new sign at the Princeton Police Department.

3. Finance and Administration Committee

Councilman Dewey Russell reported that the Finance and Administration Committee of Princeton City Council met on April 15th, 2026, with the following to report to City Council:

March 2026, Financial Report – Finance Director Brian Conner reported that as of the end of March, the ninth month of FY2026, the actual revenues collected stood at 74.49% compared to the budgeted amount of 75%, while actual appropriations spent were 74.33%. Total funds available for City operations at the end of the month were $3,330,032.

Noteworthy Expenditures for the month:

PEIA:	$78,150.12
Morgan Stanley:	$45,856.47 (Fire and Police Pension)
First Community Bank:	$27,814.33 (Bond Payment)

Councilman Dewey Russell reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council the March 2026 Financial Statements, and he moved to approve them.

Councilman James Hill seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

General Fund Budget Revision #4- Mr. Conner stated that General Fund Budget Revision #4 is required to appropriate additional expected revenue and to correct the fund balance for unappropriated funds in the prior year. Furthermore, the additional funds need to be allocated to funds showing an actual deficit in the accounting records. This revision will increase the estimated revenue by $52,244. This revision brings the FY2026 General Fund Budget to $11,375,253.

Expenditure adjustments include the following:

- Increase City Council's line for Municipal League Expenses
- Addition to the Regional Development Authority for annual increase
- Appropriations to Other Buildings 1 and 2 for delayed invoices
- Increase to Investigative Services for unbudgeted demolition
- Increase to the Fire Department for Fire Prevention and Computer updates
- Increase in garbage for an increase in postage expense
- Allocate to Fairs and Festivals for July 4th deposits
- Increase the Museum Commission to increase utilities

Total revisions increase the General Fund Expenditures Budget by $52,244, bringing the total General Fund appropriations for FY2026 to $11,375,253, thereby creating a balanced budget.

Councilman Russell continued by reporting that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council General Fund Budget Revision #4, and he moved to approve it.

Councilman James Hill seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Transfer from Capital Equipment for Police Department- Councilman Joseph Allen made a motion for the City Council to transfer $10,697 from Capital Equipment for the Police Department to outfit a new Police Cruiser with K-9 equipment.

Councilman James Hill seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Councilman James Hill "Yes"
Councilman Joseph Allen "Yes"
Vice Mayor James Hawkins "Yes"
Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker "Yes"
Councilwoman Abigail McCune "Yes"
Councilman Dewey Russell "Yes"
Mayor David Graham "Yes"

CVB Appointment- Councilman Dewey Russell reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to the City Council to appoint Marketing Director Chris Mabe to the CVB (Visit Mercer County), and he moved to approve the appointment.

Councilman Joseph Allen seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously.

Transfer from Rainy Day Fund for Wave Pool Slide- City Manager Mike Webb stated that there is a spot prepped and ready for a slide. He stated the slide is approximately $38,000 and recommended that the motion include a not-to-exceed amount of $40,000 from Rainy Day Funds.

Councilman Dewey Russell reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended to City Council a transfer from the Rainy-Day Fund for the wave pool slide, not to exceed $40,000, and he moved to approve the transfer.

Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Councilman Dewey Russell "Yes"
Councilwoman Abigail McCune "Yes"
Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker "Yes"
Vice Mayor James Hawkins "Yes"
Councilman Joseph Allen "Yes"
Councilman James Hill "Yes"
Mayor David Graham "Yes"

PRINCETON EDA REPORT

EDA Director Samuel Lusk reported the following:

New Business Licenses in '26: 15

Ribbon Cutting: Buckland's, located at 514 Rogers Street, on April 10, 2026

Social Media:
Sites for Music in the Park, Police Dept., Fire Dept., Princeton EDA, Railroad Museum, and City of Princeton results:

Metric	March To-Date
New Page Followers:	381
Followers:	12,296
Views:	139,694
Interactions:	2,861

Community Center Update: The following items are actively being worked on to allow the City to soon close on USDA funding: an updated financial feasibility study for $7,000,000 in loan funds, an as-built appraisal of the land to be improved by the project, and legal documents for the loan closings. They anticipate these items will be wrapped up in the coming weeks to proceed to the first reading of loan documents in May or June.

Police Department Update: They continue to navigate documents for the monies appropriated for Phase 1. For phase 2, a congressional request was submitted to Senator Capito's and Senator Jim Justice's Offices in the amount of $1,452,162.50. If awarded, this amount will be used to complete the department's holding, processing, and storage areas at the City Complex.

Other Updates:

Fire Department: A funding request was also sent to Senator Capito's and Senator Jim Justice's Offices in the amount of $1,089,121.00 to request assistance in the renovation of the existing spaces at 100 Courthouse Road, mainly related to sleeping quarters and sprinkler systems.

Special Facilities: Good interest has been shown in lifeguard, concession worker, and facility manager positions. They have received twenty-eight applications, and a job fair took place on 4.6.26 to invite interested applicants to learn about these positions. They will continue to push these roles out and hope to hire close to 20 lifeguards, 6 concession workers, and a couple of pool managers.

Wave Pool Drawdown #14- Mr. Lusk stated the recommendation is for a project drawdown of $642,717.32, to be funded through bond issuance funding at First Community Bank. This amount is represented through 9 invoices: 1) Swope Construction for $467,875.00, with notable improvements being CMU Block, Plumbing, and Rough Carpentry; 2) Aquatic Builders for $131,100.00, with submitted costs generally relating to wave pool structure, mechanical, and general conditions; 3) ETB Boggess for $25,539.41 generally relating to construction administration and reimbursement for publication costs; 4) Westwood Professional Services for $900.00 for April drawdown inspections; and 5-9) East River Aggregates relating to rock needed for groundwork in the amount $17,302.91. Thereby constituting a drawdown of $642,717.32.

Councilman Dewey Russell reported that the Finance and Administration Committee approved and recommended the Wave Pool Drawdown #14, contingent on notarized copies of certain invoices received by the Architect and concurrent approval by the Princeton Building Commission, with the City Manager to sign all necessary documents. He then made a motion for City Council to approve Wave Pool Drawdown #14.

Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Councilman Dewey Russell "Yes"
Councilwoman Abigail McCune "Yes"
Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker "Yes"
Vice Mayor James Hawkins "Yes"
Councilman Joseph Allen "Yes"
Councilman James Hill "Yes"

Mayor David Graham "Yes"

VI. City Attorney

a. Second Reading and Public Hearing of an Ordinance Establishing and Fixing Sewer Rates, Fees, and Charges

City Attorney Paul Cassell stated that the City Council was ready for the Public Hearing and Second Reading of an Ordinance Establishing and Fixing Sewer Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Mayor Graham opened up the public hearing and asked if there was any Public Comment.

Joann Gaspersich, Honaker Avenue- Ms. Gaspersich stated that the recent utility increases have become a big concern, and she wondered who would be benefiting from that and the potential sale of the Sanitary Board, the people or corporate powers.

Brianna Wade- Ms. Wade stated she was opposed to the proposed rate increase. She noted that West Virginia American Water reported revenue of approximately $5.14 billion and implemented a 9.7% rate increase in 2025. She further stated that the company has acquired 18 businesses as of last year and expressed concern that residents of Mercer County may not be able to absorb an additional increase, particularly in light of recent increases from AEP, as well as rising gas and grocery costs. Lastly, she stated that she had reviewed a toxicology report from Bluefield and claimed that, since West Virginia American Water acquired the Sanitary Board, certain chemicals have been identified that have been linked to cancer or complications during pregnancy.

Andrea Washington, Ward IV- Ms. Washington asked if someone could explain the rate increase process.

Princeton Sanitary Board Attorney Jay Barringer stated that it is a 3-step process. The first increase will be 11%, about $3.38, beginning July 1st of 2026. The second step is a 10.6% increase, $3.62, that will take effect July 1st, 2027. The last step will take effect July 1st, 2028, and will be an 8.2% increase, $3.02. Mr. Barringer stated that over time, it will be a $10-$11 increase. He also stated that the Sanitary Board has not had a rate increase since 2017 and is one of the lowest in the state.

Savannah Mills, Glenwood- Ms. Mills asked how this increase would benefit the customers.

Princeton Sanitary Board CPA Michael Gibson stated that it will fix the deficit and in year three will help with planned $2 Million Dollar improvements.

After no more Public Comment, Mayor Graham returned to regular session.

Councilman James Hill made a motion to approve the Second Reading and Public Hearing of an Ordinance Establishing and Fixing Sewer Rates, Fees, and Charges.

Councilman Dewey Russell seconded the motion, and the motion carried unanimously with a roll call vote as follows:

Councilman Dewey Russell "Yes"
Councilwoman Abigail McCune "Yes"
Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker "Yes"

Vice Mayor James Hawkins “Yes”
Councilman Joseph Allen “Yes”
Councilman James Hill “Yes”
Mayor David Graham “Yes”

b. First Reading of an Ordinance Approving and Authorizing Agreement for Purchase of Princeton Sewer System by and between West Virginia-American Water Company and the City of Princeton

City Attorney Paul Cassell stated this is the First Reading. There will be a subsequent Public Hearing and Second Reading that will be noticed in the newspaper, on the City’s website, and on the City's Facebook Page.

Councilman James Hill made a motion to approve the First Reading of an Ordinance Approving and Authorizing Agreement for Purchase of Princeton Sewer System by and between West Virginia-American Water Company and the City of Princeton.

Councilman Dewey Russell seconded the motion, and the motion carried with a roll call vote as follows:
Councilman James Hill “Yes”
Councilman Joseph Allen “Yes”
Vice Mayor James Hawkins “Yes”
Councilwoman Jacqueline Rucker “Yes”
Councilwoman Abigail McCune “No”
Councilman Dewey Russell “Yes”
Mayor David Graham “Yes”

VII. City Manager
City Manager Mike Webb presented a slide show with updates on current projects around the City.

VIII. City Clerk
The City Clerk had nothing to report.

IX. Human Resources
Human Resources had nothing to report.

X. Council Roundtable
No roundtable discussion was conducted.

XI. Adjournment
The meeting was recessed at 7:51 p.m.

These minutes were prepared by City Clerk Kaitlyn Ellison and approved by City Council on the 18th day of May, 2026.

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Kaitlyn Ellison, City Clerk