

**TOWN OF DUNE ACRES  
COUNCIL MINUTES  
January 20, 2026**

The Town of Dune Acres Town Council met for its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at the Clubhouse. Council President Richard Hawksworth called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm., with Council member Paul Woidkr; Clerk-Treasurer Bonnie Hawksworth; and Town Attorney Adam Mindel in attendance. Maintenance Commissioners Dick Taylor was in attendance.

The meeting was broadcast live and recorded via Zoom. The recording will be archived online for 90 days and can be accessed at:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/qVyl06jDdNvNjFka4XbLaU5ya6jGPXOHuBNZlDoVURcYXZ4PyMBmHYH\\_7PI94jXW.pfe-6AdzTYRSIOAF](https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/share/qVyl06jDdNvNjFka4XbLaU5ya6jGPXOHuBNZlDoVURcYXZ4PyMBmHYH_7PI94jXW.pfe-6AdzTYRSIOAF)

Passcode: +AW8hWt\*

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

There was a motion and second to approve the minutes from the December 16<sup>th</sup> meeting. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed. It was noted that there was an Executive Session on Saturday, January 17 at Noon at Town Hall.

**APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

Clerk-Treasurer Hawksworth presented the December month-end financial report. The combined bank account balance as of December 31 is \$800,682.19. Year-to-date revenue is \$1,063,876.96, which includes the December property tax distribution. All funds balance as of the end of December.

It was moved and seconded to approve the financial report. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

**PAYMENT OF CLAIMS:**

Clerk-Treasurer Hawksworth asked the Town Council to approve Accounts Payable Vouchers for December ([http://duneacres.org/apv/apv\\_2026-01.pdf](http://duneacres.org/apv/apv_2026-01.pdf)) totaling \$59,752.55. This includes a \$17,000 snow removal expenditure, and repair fees for the Clubhouse fire suppression system. It was moved and seconded to approve the APVs. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

**CORRESPONDENCE:** None

**EXECUTIVE REPORT:**

**TRAIN CROSSING**

Since the November meeting, the Mineral Springs Road crossing has been blocked ten times, for a total of just over 5 hours. This is roughly the same as what we reported at the last meeting.

**BUILDING LEGISLATION**

We spent the end of 2025 developing some contingency plans for building and planning related legislation that went into effect on January 1st and new legislation that has been proposed during the current session.

The 2025 bill mandates certain changes in the permitting process and will allow interested applicants to outsource plan review and building inspections. This will impact our own processes, but does not appear to impact planning and zoning.

The new bill (HB1001) goes a step further and creates broad new preemptions around local authority to plan and zone housing projects in an attempt to compel higher-density development and lower costs for housing developers. This bill is concerning because it treats every community the same and would permit certain types of development that are currently prohibited in Dune Acres.

**FINANCIAL REVIEW**

2025 Budget Order total levy (4 property tax receiving funds): \$524,806

Total Circuit Breaker: \$4,865 — this is the amount we would have collected if not for the state's limits on property tax rate growth. We expect this negative impact will become more severe in the next few years.

Total property tax collections: \$510,460, which is a 98.40% collection rate, net of circuit breaker. This is very good

2026 Assessed Values: As we expected from the fall, and now see in the 2026 Budget Order, the Town's overall Assessed Value did drop by \$5,558,353 to \$120,809,611, a 4.4% loss. Again, as expected, this drop in assessed value caused our tax rate to increase (by \$0.0332 / \$100 of assessed value). The Council did not vote to "increase taxes" but when the assessed value falls, the rate goes up so that we can cover our budget.

The total tax rate for the properties within the Town of Dune Acres increased by \$0.2084 to \$2.2570.

#### Overall Financial Review

Town Leadership and staff should be proud of the financial stewardship this year.

- transferred \$30,000 to the Rainy Day Fund
- And, even in doing so, the General Fund balance is only \$6,000 less than January 1st. This balance equates to a 38% operating balance (cash balance against budget). Striving to maintain or increase this operating balance will go a long way in trying to weather the SEA-1 effects on the Town's finances.
- Collectively, the three street funds (MVH, LRS and MVH-R) increased in cash balance by approximately \$20,000, which will be of benefit in future road projects and/or years of heavy snow and ice.

Most other funds also increased, even if minimally in cash balance. Of the few funds that did not, the decrease was nominal.

#### ROADS

Our weather has been unusually wintery this year. Consequently, we've plowed more than we have in the past few years. Road salt is in very short supply. The Roads Commissioner is looking at options should the roads become slick.

#### COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

**BEACH:** None

**BUILDING:**

**ENVIRONMENT:** None.

**FIRE:** None

**MAINTENANCE:** Commissioner Dick Taylor reported that the fire suppression system repairs are underway at the Clubhouse. The drainage work that has been complete has been helpful with most recent rain events.

**PARKS:** None

**ROADS:** None

**SECURITY:** None

**OLD BUSINESS:** None

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Ordinance 2026-01, Amendment to Chapter 34 – Traffic and Vehicles, Article II – Parking & Vehicle Operations: President Hawksworth provided an overview of the current ordinance and proposed amendments which cover vehicle parking permits, guest parking passes, and golf cart registration.

#### Current

- Resident permits cost \$40 for 4 years, though the ordinance has conflicting language "set periodically by town council."
- Eligibility is vague, e.g. "residents and property owners"
- Guest "day" passes are issued on upon request, no charge, good for only a day or weekend

- Residents are confused about eligibility, generally express and want to “give” passes to children, etc. Creates tension when town attempts to comply with the ordinance. Town lacks an efficient means to police such actions.
- Virtually no enforcement
- Golf Carts require registration and a “golf cart use” permit (it’s vague as to whether it additionally requires a parking permit)
- Questionable compliance with safety requirements
- Frost law prohibits vehicles over 5 tons during frost period; no option for legal passage during this time

### **Proposed**

- \$40 per year. Town faces declining revenues; cost of a permit serves as a throttle to the number of permits desired.
- Expanded eligibility to match zoning language for “family” *“individuals related by blood, marriage, or legal adoption.”* This would include spouses, children, parents, siblings, grandchildren, grandparents, and in-laws. Other individuals may be considered on a case-by-case basis if they reside at the same Dune Acres address as the property owner or at the same address of record as established by the Porter County Assessor.
- For each vehicle sticker issued, applicants would be eligible for one annual guest pass (e.g. a durable hanging style) with permit number to match vehicle sticker.
- A vehicle parking sticker would be issued for golf carts to certify registration, removing any duplicative processes)
- Security would inspect golf carts prior to issuance of permit
- \$250 for an oversize load during the Frost Law period. This will be communicated to residents as well as contractors working in town.

Mindel & Mindel Contract: There was a motion and second to approve the contract as presented, which includes a 2% cost of living increase. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

Insurance: Clerk Treasurer Hawksworth reported that Shepherd Insurance is working to provide updated insurance quotes for this year’s renewal.

Commissioner Appointment: President Hawksworth appointed Alex Demkovich as Building Commissioner.

### **OTHER BUSINESS:**

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:02 pm. The next regular meeting of the Town Council is on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at the Clubhouse.

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RICHARD HAWKSWORTH, Town Council President

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PAUL WOIDKE, Town Council Member

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ALEXANDER STEMER, Town Council Member

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BONNIE HAWKSWORTH, Clerk-Treasurer