

**TOWN OF DUNE ACRES
COUNCIL MINUTES
February 17, 2026**

The Town of Dune Acres Town Council met for its regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, February 17, 2026, at the Clubhouse. Council President Richard Hawksworth called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm., with Council member Paul Woidke; Clerk-Treasurer Bonnie Hawksworth; and Town Attorney Adam Mindel in attendance. Commissioners present were Shawn Fitzpatrick (Parks) in person, and Lee McKinley (Security) and Rob Carstens (Beach) participated via Zoom.

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/HULO4u88thoTAusO0yiTs9Fz-4w9UWUokQwEpScSAW2cvGJBZbTBDq2yomr30N0.YIIKs88iwDK_Z0B4
Passcode: W7%9?@1e

Jim Anton, representing Shepherd Insurance, presented the annual renewal by Bliss McKnight. Renewal premiums will increase 5.4% for 2026 due to an increase in property coverage as well as an increase in payroll on the worker's compensation. Deductibles remain the same. A policy update may be available in July to extend the liability coverage. There was a motion and second to approve the Bliss McKnight proposal. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

There was a motion and second to approve the minutes from the January 20th meeting. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

APPROVAL OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

End-of-year activities are almost completed. The Annual Financial Report will be submitted in advance of the February 28th deadline. We have begun a State Board of Accounts audit of the years 2021 through 2024.

Clerk-Treasurer Hawksworth presented the January month-end financial report. The combined bank account balance as of January 31 is \$761,194.73. Year-to-date revenue is \$30,445.99.

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 January (http://duneacres.org/apv/apv_2026-02.pdf) totaling \$84,292.44. This includes just over \$10,000 for snow removal, and just over \$20,000 for our annual insurance premium. It was moved and seconded to approve the APVs. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

CORRESPONDENCE: None

EXECUTIVE REPORT:

Train Blockages: Council member Stemer stated he was in contact with the office of Representative Mrvan regarding the blocked rail crossing at Mineral Springs Road. Stemer asked what action the council seeks from Mrvan. Council President Hawksworth recited the history of the issue, noting that the Indiana State Supreme Court ruled that issues related to interstate rail service are under the exclusive jurisdiction of the federal government and that new federal legislation preventing prolonged blockages is the exclusive remedy for the issue.

HB 1001: Council President Hawksworth stated that he has been in contact with State Senator Rodney Pol regarding HB 1001, which creates broad new preemptions around local zoning authority to compel higher-density development and lower costs for builders and developers. The bill would preempt regulations on density, setbacks, and parking ordinances; limits impact fees; and prevents regulation of short term rentals. Hawksworth said he had spoken to [Beverly Shores president] who will appear before the senate judiciary committee on February 18 to make a statement on behalf of Porter County's shoreline communities.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS:

BEACH: Beach Commissioner Rob Carstens reported that fireworks will be held on Friday, July 3.

BUILDING: None

ENVIRONMENT: None.

FIRE: None

MAINTENANCE: None

PARKS: Parks Commissioner Shawn Fitzpatrick presented park improvement recommendations including new playground equipment, tennis and pickleball court upgrades, a permanent shelter, a walking path, and workout equipment in a multi-phased approach. Sample renderings and a draft budget were provided, though these will be updated for the March meeting to include a PowerPoint presentation.

ROADS: None

SECURITY: Commissioner Lee McKinley reported that security operations are running smoothly. Train blockages will continue to be tracked.

OLD BUSINESS:

Garbage RFP Submissions: President Hawksworth stated that two proposals were received for trash and recycling collection with the goal of securing uniform pricing for all residents. Pricing from Total Disposal and Republic Services was comparable in most categories. The Republic proposal reflected a cost that was \$2 per month lower for trash collection. Several questions were posed from the floor, including add-on fees and price escalation. A motion was made to clarify the terms of an agreement and, if acceptable, enter into a contract with Republic. The motion included the stipulation that if terms are not acceptable, the council would revisit the business at its March meeting.

Ordinance 2026-01, Amendment to Chapter 34 – Traffic and Vehicles, Article II – Parking & Vehicle Operations: President Hawksworth provided an overview of the proposed revision to Section 34 of the Town code related to parking permits, guest parking passes, and frost law restrictions. The proposed revisions adjust the fee to \$40 annually, include an annual guest parking pass for each permit issued, and define “family members” as it relates to who can obtain a resident permit. In addressing comments from the floor, Hawksworth noted the fee is reasonably related to the town’s cost of regulating parking, including security salaries, signage, cameras, and the cost of administration. He added that, in light of state-imposed revenue restrictions, the town must be more aware of accurately reflecting the cost of regulation when establishing the cost of permits. The council agreed that the ordinance should be further revised and reviewed at the March meeting.

NEW BUSINESS:

Commissioner Appointment: President Hawksworth appointed Mary Boeke to a second term on the Plan Commission.

Clubhouse Rental: The council reviewed a Clubhouse rental request for Saturday, September 27, 2026. There was a motion and second to approve the rental. The vote was unanimous in favor; motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS:

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm. The next regular meeting of the Town Council is on Tuesday, March 17, 2026 at the Clubhouse.

RICHARD HAWKSWORTH, Town Council President

PAUL WOIDKE, Town Council Member

ALEXANDER STEMER, Town Council Member

BONNIE HAWKSWORTH, Clerk-Treasurer