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THIS PAPER WANTS TO BE RECYCLED. 



*The US Navy Sea Chanters performance at Shepherd University's Frank Center in late October. Part of the US Navy Band, the Sea Chanters' repertoire includes traditional songs of the sea, along with patriotic tunes, pop melodies, and even some Italian opera.*

**TO OUR READERS** — Veterans Day is easy to overlook, squeezed in between the hubbub of Halloween and the hectic planning for Thanksgiving. The Navy Sea Chanters (above) include a salute to veterans of all of the United States uniformed services in their public shows, a joyful recognition of those who have served. Composer Kimo Williams, who now calls Shepherdstown home, offers a more soulful recollection of the travails of black veterans returning home from World War One in his latest album release (see page 11).

Looking to learn some local lessons in public service, a group of young scouts visited the Jefferson County Commission meeting on October 19. Their visit was cut short as the commission quickly adjourned for lack of a quorum. The standoff between Commissioners Stolipher, Jackson, and Krouse is about to continue into a third month. Stolipher maintains that the commission is required to appoint a commissioner to fill the vacant seat, Jackson and Krouse want the appointment taken off the agenda, citing concerns with the list of candidates provided.

According to Donald Kersey, General Counsel with the West Virginia Secretary of State's office, state law requires that the vacancy be filled. He stated, "it's not an option to not have a decision." While the Secretary of State's office provides advice on election laws, it would be up to a court to force the commission to act to fill the vacancy. One option to compel performance of a statutory duty is for a county resident to file a writ of mandamus in circuit court. State law also allows for a group of registered voters to file a petition in circuit court seeking to remove an official from office for neglect of duty or other wrong-doing.

  
**Steve Pearson**  
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// COMMUNITY

# JEFFERSON COUNTY LIGHTS UP FOR HALLOWEEN

They may look scary, but the Halloween decorations are all in good fun — enjoyable by the young and the young-at-heart. We hope you have the opportunity to explore Jefferson County to experience the community spirit and creative energy that lights up this place. 🎃



In addition to the creepy window display that is a holiday tradition, the Needful Things Emporium is a great place to find whimsical decorations. Owner Melissa Glascock recently expanded and the emporium now houses 70 small business vendors. Scan QR code for link to the full story at [WeAreTheObserver.com](http://WeAreTheObserver.com) >>>



Shepherdstown has a reputation as a haunted place. This house on East German Street is a perennial standout for its decorations.



The Huntfield neighborhood of Charlestown is a fun-filled adventure for Halloween, with many of the residents going all-out to decorate their houses (including the image on page 1).



Halloween is a showcase for the talents of Keriann Rusiniak of Berridge Drive, one of the neighborhoods surrounding Shepherdstown. According to her husband (who admits to being a willing accomplice in the holiday extravaganza), Rusiniak got her start with Halloween decorating as a young child when she would help her grandmother. Her creations have gotten a bit more elaborate since then.

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## // HALLOWEEN FUN

**OCT 25 - NOV 4 – Cryptid Cave Escape Room** – Shepherd University theater students are producing a full-audience participation event. See page 10 for details. Recommended for ages 12+. Marinoff Theater, 62 West Campus Dr, Shepherdstown. \$15 (\$10 alumni). Advance reservations required. Web: Shepherd.edu/Theater (current season).

**OCT 27 (FRI) – Ghost Stories** – At the Bolivar-Harpers Ferry Public Library. Suitable for tweens & up. 6 - 7 pm. 151 Polk St, Harpers Ferry. Call 304-535-2301 for reservations. Web: BolivarHarpersFerryLibrary.com.

**OCT 27 (FRI) – Vampire Ball** – Organized by Shepherdstown Community Club. Energetic dance party, costumes encouraged. 9 pm - midnight. 21 & older. War Memorial Building, 102 East German St, Shepherdstown. Tickets at the door (cash only), \$6/singles, \$10/couples. FB: Halloween in Shepherdstown.

**OCT 28 (SAT) – Halloween Dance Party** – Mr. Jon & Friends at the Shepherdstown Public Library. Ages 3 & up, costumes encouraged. 11 am. 145 Higbee Ln, Shepherdstown. Web: ShepLibrary.org.

**OCT 28 & 29 (SAT & SUN) – Haunted Hallway** – Organized by Shepherdstown Community Club. Spooky adventure for kids. See FB for hours. War Memorial Building, 102 East German St, Shepherdstown. FREE. FB: Halloween in Shepherdstown.

**OCT 28 (SAT) – The Rocky Horror Picture Show** – Movie accompanied by live shadow cast, audience dress up and participation encouraged. Midnight (doors open 11 pm). Under 17 must be accompanied by adult guardian. ID required. Apollo Civic Theater, 128 East Martin St, Martinsburg. Tickets \$20, participation pack \$5. Web: ApolloCivicTheater.org (Apolloween).

**OCT 29 (SUN) – Paw Parade** – Organized by Shepherd University Students. Dress up in costume with your canine companion. 1 - 3 pm. Midway field (next to student center building), 301 N King St, Shepherdstown. FREE. FB: Halloween in Shepherdstown.

**OCT 29 (SUN) – Enchanted Tea** – Organized by Shepherdstown Community Club. A classy tea with readings and a costume contest. 2 - 4 pm. War Memorial Building, 102 East German St, Shepherdstown. \$10 (cash only). FB: Halloween in Shepherdstown.

**OCT 29 (SUN) – Halloween Market** – Vendors & kids activities. 10 am - 3 pm. North King Street (street closed in front of Town Hall), Shepherdstown. FREE. FB: Halloween in Shepherdstown.

**OCT 30 (MON) – War of The Worlds** – Recreation of the 1938 live radio broadcast performance by Black Box Youth Playhouse players. Costumes encouraged (prizes & reception after performance). 7 pm. 113 South Princess St, Shepherdstown. Donation requested, reservations recommended. Web: BlackBoxYouth.org.

**OCT 31 (TUE) – Trunk or Treat At Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Dept.** From 5 - 6 pm. 8052 Martinsburg Pike, Shepherdstown. FB: @SFD303.

**OCT 31 (TUE) – Community Trick Or Treat Events** – From 6 - 8 pm in Bolivar, Harpers Ferry, Charles Town, Ranson, and Shepherdstown. In Shepherdstown, German Street will be closed to traffic from Duke Street (Route 480) and Princess Street.

**NOV 4 (SAT) – Great Pumpkin Roll Competition** – Organized by Harpers Ferry Parks & Recreation. Bring your own pumpkin, pay the entry fee (\$10 adult, \$5 per child), and compete for prizes. 2:30 - 4 pm. Town Park, 575 Washington St, Harpers Ferry. FB: Corporation of Harpers Ferry.

**NOV 4 (SAT) – Bolivar Lantern Parade** – Bring your own lantern or stop by the workshop to make one. Parade on Washington Street at 6:30 pm. Workshop at Public Library 1 - 3 pm (151 Polk St, Harpers Ferry). FB: Town of Bolivar.



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ANALYSIS // GOVERNMENT

# COMMISSIONERS JACKSON & KROUSE ATTACK MEDIA

## Prosecutor Scrambles To Keep \$114,000 Grant For Victim Advocates



By Steve Pearson

THE JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION has not met to conduct business since September 7. The commission has 5 seats, one of which has been vacant since June 2023. In an ongoing struggle over filling the vacant seat, two commissioners — Jennifer Krouse and Tricia Jackson — have been refusing to attend the commission meetings. Since a quorum (at least 3 commissioners) is required to conduct business, the commission has been unable to approve new hires or sign contracts since then.

The commission missed a September 29 deadline to submit an application for a \$50,000 grant for construction of a much-needed third holding cell in the courthouse. Jackson and Krouse took to social media to complain about *The Observer's* coverage of this missed grant opportunity — calling it “fake news” and “lying.” They deflected responsibility from themselves and blamed Commission President Steve Stolipher for not following through on an attempt to approve the grant application via email between the commissioners. On October 11, *The Spirit of Jefferson* newspaper also investigated the issue, coming to the same conclusion as *The Observer* — that the Commission is required to follow the Open Governmental Meetings Act and could approve the grant application only by taking a vote during a public meeting — which Jackson and Krouse did not attend.

The commission had another grant on the agenda of its October 19 meeting, with a deadline of October 30 to accept a \$114,000 award. The “Victims of Crime Act” (VOCA) program funds four victim advocates positions in the County Prosecutor’s office. These advocates work with victims of crimes, assisting them with compensation claims and other services. This program has been in place

for decades, but the acceptance of the federal funding must be renewed each year.

With Jackson and Krouse absent on October 19, and the next regular meeting not until November 2, it appears that the commission will miss its deadline for this grant too.

The four victim advocate positions are included in this year's approved county budget. The Prosecutor's office has indicated it expects these roles to remain fully staffed and funded as budgeted and is working with the Governor's office to find an alternative way to accept the grant. *The Observer* will be posting updates to this story at [ObserverWV.com/JCC-2023](http://ObserverWV.com/JCC-2023).

### COMP PLAN SURVEY

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ANALYSIS // GOVERNMENT

# MORE BATTLES OVER SOLAR FACILITIES

## Commissioners Attempt To Repeal Zoning Ordinance



The Blake solar project is visible from Charles Town Road (shown here, view to the north).

By Steve Pearson

WHEN THE JEFFERSON COUNTY COMMISSION last met to conduct business, on September 7, the published agenda did not include any reference to amending the county’s zoning ordinance under new business or unfinished business. A debate about the purchase of garland to decorate the county courthouse for Christmas took several minutes at the top of the meeting.

About an hour later the commission got to the recurring legal updates agenda item. Assistant prosecuting Attorney Nathan Cochran, the commission’s legal counsel, stated he had no updates on any of the several legal cases, several of which are related to the zoning ordinance and solar projects. Commissioner Jennifer Krouse then interjected to say that she had something to discuss related to the solar zoning. She also asked that Commissioner Steve Stolipher recuse himself from the discussion (Stolipher has made it a practice to recuse himself from discussion on solar zoning as he has business interests that have the potential to benefit from the development of solar projects in the county).

### Lack Of Transparency

Once Stolipher, the commission President, had left the room, and with only three commissioners now present, Commissioner Tricia Jackson immediately moved to appoint Krouse as the presiding officer. Krouse in turn immediately made a motion to “repeal” section 8.20 of the county’s zoning ordinance. Section 8.20 sets forth the conditions for permitting industrial solar projects in the rural zone of the county. Commissioner Jane Tabb raised a concern that this action was not properly noticed in the agenda, a position supported by the county counsel and staff. Cochran attempted to provide advice on the motion but was quickly shut down by Krouse who pointedly said “I didn’t ask you.”

Krouse then called the vote, with she and Jackson voting to repeal section 8.20 and Tabb opposing.

### Not Consistent With State Law

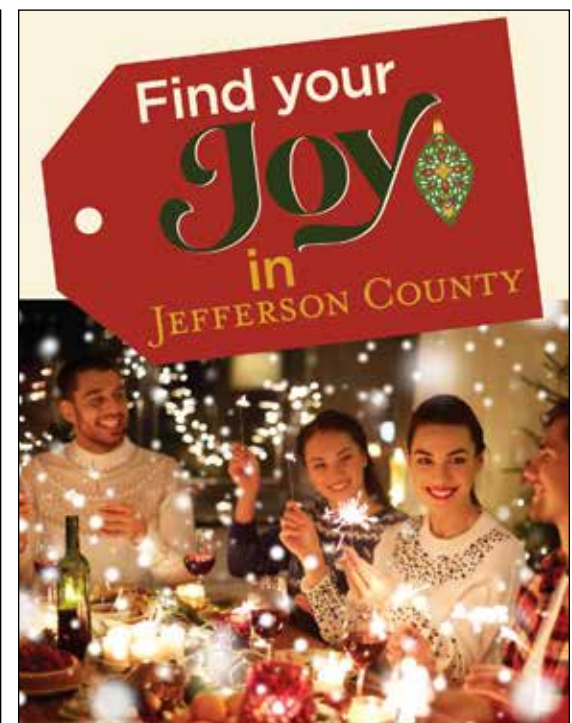
Aside from the stated concerns about this action violating the state’s open meeting laws, this motion to “repeal” a section of the zoning ordinance does not meet the requirements for amendment set forth in the zoning ordinance itself. As stated in section 12, there are several options for amending the ordinance, all of which require review by the Planning Commission and public hearings. During the Commission discussion, Krouse mentioned Robert’s Rules of Order in reference to the repeal action, but Robert’s is merely a procedural guide for how the Commission conducts its meetings. Once an ordinance is legally enacted by the Commission, any modification or amendment is governed by county ordinance and state code, neither of which allow for a zoning ordinance to be simply “repealed.”

### Legal Challenges Ahead

The “repeal” has another potential defect — it was limited to removing section 8.20, the portion of the zoning ordinance which sets forth the specific conditions and requirements for solar facilities. The “repeal” action did not amend the ordinance to undo the other elements related to the conditional use permitting of solar facilities. Absent section 8.20, a solar facility developer could have a legal argument that solar facilities are allowed as a conditional use, but with no specific requirements (e.g. no decommissioning bond, no specific stormwater permitting, no special setback or screening, etc.).

Cochran also serves as the legal counsel for the county’s Planning Commission. At the October meeting of that commission, Cochran stated that legal counsel for the several solar projects underway had informed him that they were contemplating significant litigation depending on how the “repeal” action proceeds.

To date, the county staff has been unable to provide a timetable for making changes to the zoning ordinance based on the commission’s September 7 action. Follow updates at [ObserverWV.com/solar-in-jefferson](http://ObserverWV.com/solar-in-jefferson).



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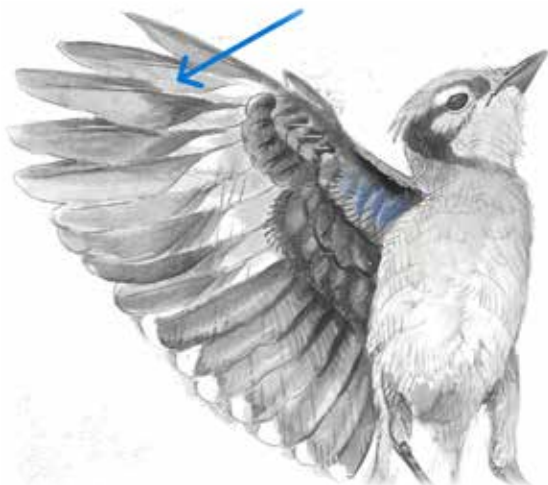
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PERSPECTIVE // NATURE

# A CRASH COURSE IN BIRD FEATHERS

By Doug Pifer

Doug Pifer is an artist, naturalist, and writer. He has a Master's Degree in Journalism from Penn State and has been an editor and art educator. His illustrations have appeared in various books and magazines and he has been a contributor to *The Observer* for several years. He lives with his wife and assorted animals on 5.7 acres in a historic farmhouse near Shepherdstown, West Virginia.



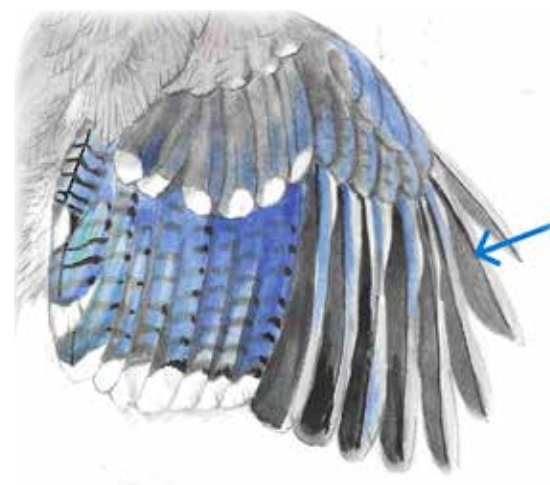
**I SHOWED MY WIFE A FEATHER** I found in the grass under our big tulip tree. Recognizing it immediately as a primary wing feather shed by a blue jay, we marveled at its superb design. Birds keep their feathers clean and in the best condition possible. For these creatures, feathers are life insurance.

Flight feathers are particularly important. Each feather in a bird's wing is specially designed to fit perfectly against its adjacent feathers. Wing and tail feathers overlap like the slats in a window blind. The wing feathers unite for the downward power stroke and separate for the upstroke in each wingbeat. The feathers in a bird's tail overlap so the tail acts as a brake or a rudder, with the central tail feather on top and the side feathers overlapping underneath on either side. It is a perfect, closable fan.

Feathers are built for easy maintenance. The central quill is very strong yet flexible. The webs that extend on either side of the quill are composed of individual fibers with barbs that catch against each other, like Velcro. When a bird musses its feathers, it can repair any damage simply by running its beak along the main shaft and the barbed webs slip into place.

In the drawing, notice how the feather tips of the spread wing open like fingers on a hand. The trailing edges of the five foremost flight feathers are notched so the tips of the feathers separate to catch the wind, while the bases still overlap.

When a bird sheds one primary wing feather, the corresponding feather on the other wing falls out at the same time. This balances the gaps so that a missing feather doesn't hinder the bird's flight. It takes a week or more for new feathers to grow out, so the all-important wing and tail feathers are replaced very gradually. In most birds, the hindmost flight feathers are the



The two sketches above show both sides of a blue jay's right wing. The arrows show exactly where the shed feather I found came from. Studying and sketching feather patterns of a bird wing is only possible on a fresh dead specimen. I owe this sketch to the young blue jay who lost his life by flying into a glass windowpane. Illustrations & commentary by Doug Pifer

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first to be shed and replaced. Then the next two flight feathers are shed, and the process repeats, until all primary flight feathers on both wings are brand new.

Growing feathers are soft and often bluish-colored because they are wrapped in a sheath similar to thin plastic. Called blood or “pin feathers,” they’re very sensitive and must be protected from injury. As a new feather grows, a bird spends a lot of time running its beak along the hardening shaft to peel the outer sheath off the growing feather. When the big quills of the flight feathers are fully grown, the quill hardens.

Looking at the sketches, it’s easy to determine exactly where each feather comes from. On a blue jay’s wing, the bright colors are on the part of the feather that shows, called the outer web. And the dull colors are on the inner web, the overlapping, hidden side of the feather. The inner web of each primary feather has a white area at the base, creating a white band visible on the underside of the spread wing.

From the pattern on the jay feather we found, we could tell that it was the outer primary next to the very tip of the right wing, one of the last two primaries to be replaced this season.

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EXPLORE // THEATER

# CRYPTID CAVE ESCAPE ROOM



Mothman is one of several West Virginia cryptids that will challenge visitors to the Cryptid Cave.

**DON'T EXPECT A SEAT** if you purchase a ticket to the fall production of the Shepherd University theater department. In the spirit of the season, the students have transformed the Marinoff Theater into a multi-room escape cave. Does the floor move? Are the walls closing in? What's in that chest? Visitors will need to figure things out for themselves in this creepy experience. For the audience, the goal is to keep walking and figure out how to get out by themselves — if they can!

The production is the work of the Advanced Theater Practice class. The students worked with kb saine, associate professor of theater, over the summer to develop the concept and have spent 20 hours a week for the past months to write the scripts, create costumes, build the puzzles and construct the set.

Chase Molden, the theater technical director, says, "It's been built based on the students' ideas as opposed to what would

normally happen in theater — which is where there's a set script and you get to build based off of that. I'm still not quite sure what's going to happen, so the whole thing is built very flexibly so if at any point something has to change, we can knock out a wall and build something in its place."

Molden noted that, "one of our goals with this project was to show students how theater skills can be applied to a wide range of entertainment businesses. It's also a chance for performers and tech crew to experience a different relationship with the audience, since everyone is together in the same room."

### Event Information & Tickets

The Cryptid Cave escape room will be presented at the Marinoff Theater, 62 West Campus Dr, Shepherdstown. Parking will be available in lot E. Recommended for age 12 and up.

#### Open for one-hour time slot showings:

- Oct 25 (6-10 pm) • Oct 26 (6-10 pm)
- Oct 27 (4-10 pm) • Oct 28 (2-10 pm)
- Nov 1 (6-10 pm) • Nov 2 (6-10 pm)
- Nov 3 (4-10 pm) • Nov 4 (2-10 pm)

General admission is \$15. \$10 for Shepherd employees and alumni; FREE for Shepherd students with a valid Rambler ID.

#### Advance, online ticket purchase only

Tickets available online at [Shepherd.edu/theater](http://Shepherd.edu/theater) (current season)

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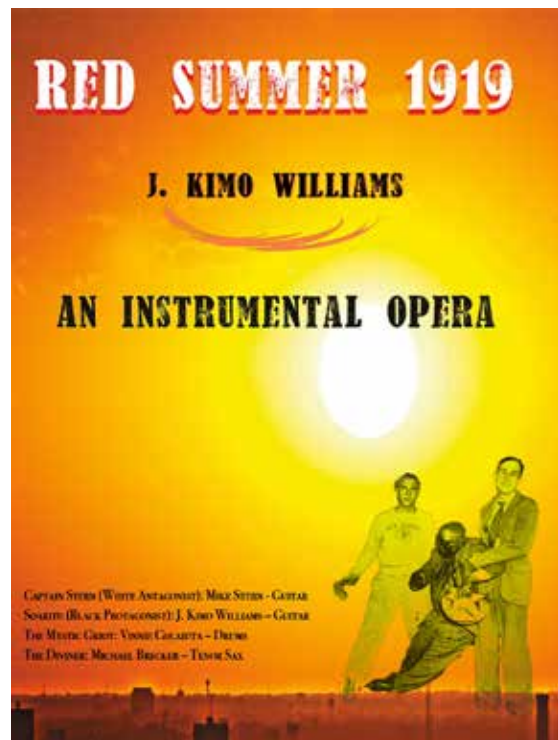
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CELEBRATING OUR 29TH SEASON!

EXPLORE // MUSIC

# RED SUMMER 1919 - AN INSTRUMENTAL OPERA



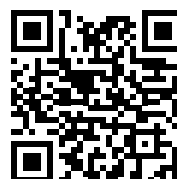
**COMPOSER AND PERFORMING MUSICIAN** Kimo Williams moved to Shepherdstown after a career that took him from the jungles of Vietnam to the halls of academia. He enlisted in 1970, serving in an Army combat engineering company clearing jungle and building roads. A chance encounter with an Army entertainment director led to Williams and his informal band playing for troops in the field, where artillery fire often provided background percussion to the music. He would continue his military career, both active duty and reserves until 1996. He took his formal music training at Berklee College of

Music and has received numerous awards and accolades for his compositions.

Williams says his latest project, Red Summer 1919 - An Instrumental Opera, is intended to bring visibility to Black World War One veterans. He notes that these men had returned home from fighting in France, hoping to be recognized as equal citizens in this country. Despite their sacrifices and service, they faced continued oppression and harsh treatment under Jim Crow laws. The 1919 riots, also known as The Red Summer, marked a turning point as Black citizens supported by these returning veterans fought against their mistreatment for the first time.

“Beyond the common public perception of Veterans as merely fighters or warriors lies a tapestry of individual stories, beliefs, and reasons for serving, unconstrained by political party lines. A poignant chapter in this narrative is that of the Black Veterans of WWI. Their journey, both on the battlefield and upon their return home, intertwines with the long-standing thread of American racism. By delving into their experiences, we are reminded of the richness of each Veteran's story and the need to move beyond monolithic representations. Let this Veterans Day be a celebration of diversity, historical understanding, and deep respect for all those who have served.

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ENGAGE // COMMUNITY EVENTS

**NOV 2 (THU) – History Alive! Mother Jones** – A program of the West Virginia Humanities Council. Storyteller and actress Karen Vuranch recreates the fire and energy that was Mother Jones as she organized and spoke at rallies for the United Mine Workers in West Virginia. Shepherdstown Public Library. 6:30 pm. 145 Higbee Ln, Shepherdstown. FREE admission. Web: ShepLibrary.org.

**NOV 2 (THU) – Dress Rehearsal!** – Live performance (music & comedy skits) at the Charles Town Old Opera House, fundraising event to benefit the Old Opera House Theater Company & the Jefferson G.A.P. Coalition. 7:30 pm. 204 North George St, Charles Town WV. \$40/person. Web: OldOperaHouse.org.

**NOV 2 - 12 – Tis Pity She's a Whore** – John Ford, a contemporary of Shakespeare, wrote this tragedy of corruption, incest, betrayal, and revenge, taking the themes of Romeo & Juliet and Hamlet to a further extreme. Presented by Shepherd University's Rude Mechanicals. Nov 2 & 3, 7:30 pm; Nov 5, 3 pm; Nov 9, 10, 11, 7:30 pm; Nov 12, 3 pm. Reynolds Hall, 109 North King St, Shepherdstown. \$5 (adults), \$2 (students), cash at the door only.

**NOV 11 (SAT) – Pancake Breakfast** – Long-standing community tradition with pancakes, eggs, bacon, sausage, coffee, etc. Handicap accessible. 7 - 11 am. New Street United Methodist Church, 202 West New St, Shepherdstown. \$10 adult, \$5 child. FB: @NewStreetUMC.

**NOV 11 & 12 (SAT & SUN) – Over The Mountain Studio Tour** – 17 artists, 9 stops on this annual tour around Jefferson County. Studios/workshops open 10 am - 5 pm to meet artists. Map & artist bios on the website: OverTheMountainStudioTour.com. [See ad page 9](#)

**NOV 11 (SAT) – Masterworks Chorale - The Armed Man: Mass for Peace** – Presentation of Welsh composer Karl Jenkins' work which combines elements of Catholic Mass and folk songs. Directed by Dr. Steven Grives. Frank Arts Center Theater, 260 University Dr, Shepherdstown. \$15 (\$10 seniors, alumni & students). Web: Shepherd.edu/music.

**NOV 18 (SAT) – Pottery Studio Open House w/ Santa Visit** – Locally-made ceramics & ornaments by a variety of ceramicists. 10 am - 8 pm (Santa from noon - 4), Washington Street Studios, 1441 Washington St, Bolivar. Web: HFClay.com. [See ad page 8](#)

**NOV 24 (FRI) – Shepherdstown Welcomes Christmas** – Kiwanis chili fest at 4 pm, Fire Dept. bonfire at 5 pm, Mrs. Claus storytelling at 6 pm, Tree-lighting & Santa arrives at 6:15 pm. North King Street & McMurrin lawn (street closures). FB: Christmas in Shepherdstown

**NOV 25 (SAT) – Ranson Tree Lighting** – Santa & Mrs. Claus arrive at 6 pm to light the tree at Lancaster Circle. Christmas cottage in front of City Hall, with carriage-rides, hot cocoa & s'mores. 312 South Mildred St, Ranson. FB: Ranson CVB.

**DEC 2 (SAT) – Christmas Parades** – Shepherdstown parade 10 - 11 am on German Street (street closures). Charles Town/Ranson parade 2 - 4 pm through downtown Ranson & Charles Town (street closures). Participant application: for Shepherdstown, email ShepherdstownParades@gmail.com; for Charles Town/Ranson, scan code for registration link (deadline is Nov 17). FB: Christmas in Shepherdstown, Charles Town Now & Ranson CVB.



**DEC 2 & 3 (SAT & SUN) – Holiday Kaleidoscope** – Annual Holiday Gala Concert – Featuring multiple performance groups from Shepherd University's School of Music. Sat 7:30 pm, Sun 3 pm. Program details and tickets at website. Frank Arts Center Theater, 260 University Dr, Shepherdstown. \$15 (\$10 seniors, alumni & students). Web: Shepherd.edu/music.

**DEC 6 (WED) – Community Orchestra & Sinfonia Concert** – Presented by Shepherd University's School of Music. 7:30 pm. Program details and tickets at website. Frank Arts Center Theater, 260 University Dr, Shepherdstown. \$7 (all ages). Web: Shepherd.edu/music.

**DEC 9 & 10 (SAT & SUN) – Harpers Ferry Handmade Holiday Market** – 70 vendors, holiday-themed craft works and hand-made items. 9 am - 5 pm Sat, 9 am - 4 pm Sun. Clarion Inn, 4328 William L. Wilson Highway, Harpers Ferry. FB: Harpers Ferry Handmade Holiday Market.

**DEC 10 (SUN) – Holiday Bingo Bash** – Fundraiser for Delta Sigma Theta Sorority (alumnae chapter). 21 Games, King Tuts, raffles, food & drink. 2 pm (doors open at noon). \$20 advance ticket (\$25 at the door). Shepherdstown Volunteer Fire Dept, 8052 Martinsburg Pk, Shepherdstown. Call 304-876-2277 for details/tickets.

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