

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
January 25, 2022**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, January 25, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Donnie Linkous, Mayor
Rick Holman, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Shane Gunter, Police Chief
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
James Hampton, Asst. Mgr./Treasurer/Transit Dir.
Kris Williams, Zoning & Property Maint. Official
6 members of public
Don Scott, Planning Commission Secretary
Jarried McFarland, Planning Commission Member

ABSENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Linkous called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Steve Branch, Destiny Outreach Ministries led the Invocation. Mayor Linkous led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Linkous added Executive Session 1&6 and a vote to accept Councilman Jarrod Bailey's resignation to the agenda.

Vice-Mayor Holt made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Councilmember Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Holman made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilmember Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

Resignation of Councilmember

Mayor Linkous stated that Jarrod Bailey had resigned as of Friday from his position on Town Council due to accepting a new position with his job that would not allow him the time for both.

Mr. Holt mad a motion to accept the resignation. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Holman:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of accepting Jarrod Bailey's resignation.

Council Goals

Mayor Linkous stated that he had been on council now for one year and they had not accomplished any goals. He asked that council give each goal.

Mr. Holman stated #1-ARPA funding to be used for capital line replacement on College Avenue/720. #2-improvements on Harmony Acres and #3-wireless projects for downtown/camera systems throughout.

Mr. Holt stated #1-Recreation Projects for our kids including lighting/dugouts at Graham Rec, #2-West Graham part of town had dilapidation issues. He stated that he had mentioned to the Town Manager about having a Law Enforcement/Code Enforcement position to handle these

issues but had not heard back from him. He stated that Kris was doing a good job but was busy and #3-West Graham/Downtown area including Harmony Acres upgrades.

Mr. Presley stated #1-bridge downtown including the East End/North Side and suggested giving a tax break or incentive to help beautify our downtown area, #2-Harmony Acres/having Senior Citizens Programs (have a Bluefield app to let everyone know what we had) and #3-water upgrades.

Mrs. Payne stated #1-bridge across the creek and Depot Street playground, #2-Bluefield University sidewalks towards Bluefield, WV and into the City Park, and #3-downtown area including gazebo, parking and Veteran's Memorial. She stated that they need to have an active DDC.

Mr. Trigg stated #1-bridge, #2-pavers to make it easier for the older ones to move around in the downtown area and #3-cameras in all parks.

Mayor Linkous stated #1-bridge/pavers, #2-Depot Street bathrooms and #3-sidewalk from the dome into City Park and suggested a wood structure. He stated that Kim could tally these up and bring them back at the next meeting. He stated that by this time next year he would like to see something accomplished.

Mr. Trigg stated that they needed to make sure things lasted and not always take the lowest bidder that we needed to have a good grade.

Mr. Holman stated that it would be the focal point of the downtown area and it needed to be done right.

Mayor Linkous stated that cameras were big and we had ARPA money to help with them. He stated that Chief and Trent had been looking into it.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Dave Wohlford asked if the crosswalk/sidewalks at the fountain were included in any of this.

Mayor Linkous stated no but they were being looked at through VDOT as well as the ones needed at the schools. He stated that they needed to hire a contractor and do it right.

Mr. Wohlford asked if they were looking at a wooden structure for the bridge.

Mayor Linkous stated yes.

Mr. Wohlford stated that they would be better off with a steel structure which would last longer.

Jay Ferguson stated that First United Methodist Church appreciated those goals. He stated that the church owned part of the land across the creek which had been turned into an open prayer area and behind it in the flood plain the town owned and had looked at putting in benches and tables and one time had a garden there. He stated that he had ideas to develop our entire community and his church would be willing to invest in the repurposing of sacred spaces/churches so that they would not be left empty and could be utilized for our community.

Mayor Linkous asked that he come in and talk to the Town Manager and then come back to them so that they could all work together to accomplish this.

Mr. Ferguson stated that he had planned to do some research around us.

Mr. Holman asked if that property was owned by the church.

Mr. Ferguson stated the part with the cross on it was.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Gunter stated that he had a few officers out with COVID but they were managing well. He stated that he had received a letter from the academy thanking our Police Department for sending instructors there. He stated that he had 3 instructors and had once been an instructor as well.

Mayor Linkous stated that he was out early in the mornings and he noticed our officers out helping people.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Mr. Hampton stated that council had chosen some excellent goals that could be achieved. He stated that he had applied for a capital grant for two new buses but the prices had gone up. He stated that in the past a bus cost \$70k whereas now they cost \$95k-\$100k per bus. He stated that he had also applied for a \$300k operations grant. He stated regarding water to the prison that it generated 7 million gallons per month, regarding the cameras that they had to have high speed internet to be able to use the ARPA money for, he had secured the July 4th fireworks for the celebration at Fincastle to be held on July 2nd and the price had gone up 28% so instead of it costing \$4k that it would now cost \$6k. He stated that snow removal had went well and the new equipment was doing good.

Mayor Linkous stated that he hoped they would never forget a certain street again.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Holt stated that snow removal had improved and asked if we had two people per vehicle.

Mr. Hampton stated yes.

Mayor Linkous stated that it was for safety issues and insurance.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was OSHA regulations.

Mr. Holman asked about the sidewalk priority.

Mr. Presley stated that they were hand shoveling and we needed to have a 4-wheeler with a blade on it.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the priority was businesses and not the residence.

Mr. Holman asked to schedule a Work Session in about two weeks to discuss funding projects.

Mr. Presley suggested having a longer council meeting and start earlier.

Mr. Holt stated that he would like to prioritize them.

Mayor Linkous stated February 8th at 5:30 p.m. and we would have food.

Mr. Holt stated that he would not vote on spending any of the money unless they talked about it as a team. He stated that he had received a call from Charlie Stacy about not being able to be on the agenda.

Mayor Linkous stated that he asked on Saturday after the agendas had already gone out.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that was also her understanding and if he could let her know on the Wednesday before a council meeting, she would include him on the agenda.

Mr. Holt stated that we needed to include him because there was a lot we needed to know.

Mr. Trigg stated that they had done an excellent job on the snow.

Mrs. Payne asked Chief Gunter about painting crosswalks at the schools.

Chief Gunter stated that was not up to the Police Department.

Mrs. Payne stated that the driveway going up to the library had several potholes. She stated that the Smithsonian Exhibition would be at Crab Orchard in the next few weeks and invited all to attend.

Mr. Presley gave a shout to the Police Department, Kim and James. He stated that he had done some research on cameras at all entries and it was around \$120k.

Mayor Linkous asked that something special be done in the town that was permanent for Eva Saunders.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to read the Executive Session.

MOTION FOR CLOSED MEETING

It is hereby moved that the Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia enter into a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1,6) of the Code of Virginia as amended, The specific purpose for this motion is to discuss the following matter(s):

Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body and discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affected with such closed meeting being confined to the following subjects: discussion of vacant council seat and contract negotiations with Graham High School facility upgrades.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session.

Vice-Mayor Holt made a motion to enter into Executive Session as described above. Councilmember Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Holman:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	Yes

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of going into Executive Session.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to resume open meeting.

Councilmember Holman made a motion to enter back into regular session. Vice-Mayor Holt seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to read the certification:

CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, the Town Council of Bluefield, Virginia convened a closed meeting on January 25, 2022, pursuant to a duly adopted motion, attached hereto, and such closed meeting was convened in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of Bluefield, Virginia returned to its open meeting held on January 25, 2022.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA HEREBY CERTIFIES that to the best of each member's knowledge (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were discussed in the closed meeting held on January 25, 2022, to which this certification applies and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening such closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia in such closed meeting.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Holman:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	Yes

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of the certification.

RESUME COUNCIL MEETING

Sanitary Board Seat

Mr. Holman made a motion to remove Jarrod Bailey from the Sanitary Board. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Holman:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt:	Yes

Councilmember Presley: Yes
Councilmember Payne: Yes
Councilmember Trigg: Yes
Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 to remove Jarrod Bailey from the Sanitary Board.

Mr. Holt made a motion to recommend to the City Board that James Hampton fulfil the seat on the Sanitary Board. Mrs. Payne seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Holman: Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt: Yes
Councilmember Presley: Yes
Councilmember Payne: Yes
Councilmember Trigg: Yes
Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 to recommend James Hampton to the Sanitary Board.

Council Seat Vacancy

Mr. Presley made a motion to appoint Greg DeGray to the council seat vacancy. Mr. Holt seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Holman: Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt: Yes
Councilmember Presley: Yes
Councilmember Payne: Yes
Councilmember Trigg: Yes
Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 to appoint Greg DeGray to the council seat vacancy.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous adjourned the meeting at 10:01 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk