

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
October 26, 2021**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, October 26, 2021 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Donnie Linkous, Mayor
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Jarrod Bailey, Councilmember
Rick Holman, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
James Hampton, Asst. Mgr./Treasurer/Transit Dir.
11 members of public

ABSENT

Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor
Shane Gunter, Police Chief

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Don Scott, Retired Minister/Planning Commission Secretary led the Invocation. Mayor Linkous led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA/CONSENT AGENDA

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

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Board of Supervisors Presentation/Update, Charlie Stacy

Charlie Stacy stated that he would like to present a resolution for one of our own in Bluefield, VA to Joe Tyson. He stated that he was the National FBLA Champion. He read the resolution and presented it to him. He stated that the county was living COVID just like everyone else but the daily average was going down and they hoped to end the state of emergency at the end of this month. He stated that the hospitals managed to hang on from diversion to diversion and that some of our citizens were transported out of the area.

Mayor Linkous asked if he knew when the moderna booster would be here.

Mr. Stacy stated within this week we should know but it would be in all pharmacies, doctor offices, etc.

Mayor Linkous stated that if needed, they could use the council chambers to set up.

Mr. Stacy congratulated the Town on receiving the CProp grant in the amount of \$50k.

Bluefield University Update, Josh Cline

Josh Cline thanked the ones who attended the ribbon cutting on Friday. He stated that the exhibits would be open throughout the year. He stated that they had raised \$310k for Phase 1 on the entryway and had \$5k towards Phase 2 which was the circle and the total cost for that phase was \$150k. He stated that they were waiting on the millstone to be delivered and building would begin once that was on site. He stated that the engineer felt that they could work through winter and that paving would happen in March. He stated that they hoped to raise funds for Phase 2 by then as well. He thanked the Town for their involvement.

Mr. Holman asked how much Phase 3 cost.

Mr. Cline stated that there were only the two phases.

Mayor Linkous stated that the students were really like the name change and it being a university.

Mr. Cline stated that it had been a quiet and calm year. He stated that all students on campus received an IPAD this year that was preloaded. He invited everyone to come join them on December 4th for their Arts Department Christmas performance.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Gail Cook stated that Food City had the moderna boosters now.

Kim Hernandez stated that Josh Cline had also said that Wal-Mart had them.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

None.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Holiday Time Off Request, ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Crewe asked that council approve 3 extra days off for the upcoming holidays. He stated that Christmas and New Year's both fell on a Saturday this year and he backed it up to give staff Thursday and Friday each week and the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the additional holiday time off request. Mr. Trigg seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 5-0 in favor.

DMV Select Office Update

Mr. Crewe stated that Richlands turned down having a DMV Select office. He stated that he had met with Mr. Browning a number of times and he would explore it further and let him come in and make a presentation if council would like. He stated that it would not be a full service DMV and would be for vehicle functions only, no driver services. He stated that we would be required to hire 2 fulltime employees, provide an office space, purchase a DMV approved printer and have at least one terminal dedicated only to the DMV for DMV purposes. He stated that it would be a one year contract beginning on July 1st to June 30th and it was possible to receive up to \$500k value in services. He stated that we would receive 4.5% of each transaction so a car with personalized tags would cost \$80-\$100 and the Town would make \$4.50. He stated that Tazewell was now open 3 days per week for walk-ins.

Mr. Presley stated that the one in Lebanon was good but he did not know if we had the capacity here.

Mayor Linkous stated that the one in Lebanon was supposedly closing.

Mr. Crewe stated that we would also have to use the DMV's appointment system and did not have to be open on Saturday's. He stated that we would have to have a special UPS system paid for by the DMV but we would pay postage, fees, etc. upfront and be reimbursed for them. He stated that the employee and anyone else in the office would have to have a criminal background check, we would be required to have a lockable filing cabinet and required to keep the cash separated. He stated that he did not think the numbers were there for us to have a location.

Mr. Bailey asked about the \$500k.

Mr. Crewe stated up to \$500k we would make 4.5% and over that amount we would make 5%.

Mr. Bailey stated that it would be a lot of work.

Mr. Crewe stated that Town Hall along with the Treasurer's Office because of their drive through had both been looked at but the potential was there to back up the drive through. He stated that it was not a friendly service nor financially wise but that he could explore it further.

Mayor Linkous stated if it were a money maker then they would not let us have it but they were wanting us to do the work for them.

Mrs. Payne stated that it was expensive and would be a headache.

Mr. Presley stated that it would be a lot of extra work for nothing.

Mr. Crewe stated that he would tell them we were not interested. He stated that Mr. Holt had asked for him to include a detailed list on the agenda which is what had been done this time.

Public Works Director Announced

Mr. Crewe stated that Pete Sleeman would be retiring and he had named Danny Evans and Tim Price as co-directors. He stated that it had been a long decision and he did not want to bring in an outside person to disrupt things. He stated that Danny and Tim worked well together and with others and both had different skills. He stated that if they had to vote on something and it were a tie that he would have to make the decision but he did not see that happening. He stated that he announced it to Public Works on Thursday during their lunch and that they gave them a standing ovation.

Mr. Holman asked if it would have to be backfilled pulling them both off.

Mr. Crewe stated no, that he was shifting duties around but that they also needed to hire more staff.

Mr. Holman stated that he was making one position out of two.

Mr. Crewe stated that we were still short staffed right now.

Mr. Presley stated that Danny was good.

Mr. Crewe stated that if they were both here doing paperwork then they would be missed in the field but he wanted to have one here while the other one was in the field and not both in the office at the same time. He stated that they would attempt to hire more staff.

Mr. Holman asked what he meant by a shortage.

Mr. Crewe stated that they have been pulling from one crew to cover on another crew to fill in as needed. He stated that he had been thinking about raising the entry level to hire better qualified employees.

Mr. Holman stated that it would continue to be a problem.

Mr. Crewe stated that there was no end in sight.

Mr. Holman asked if it would require budget adjustments.

Mr. Crewe stated not yet but it would.

Mr. Holman asked if there was room in the budget.

Mr. Crewe stated yes and that it was being split between them but was less than what Pete was making.

Mr. Holman asked if the entry salaries were adjusted would there be room in the budget.

Mr. Crewe stated he thought so. He stated that Pete would be back on November 29th and asked that they mark their calendars for noon to thank him. He stated that he did not want any recognition and refused to attend a council meeting.

VDOT Funding

Mr. Crewe stated that we did not make the cut for VDOT Funding but that part of the sidewalk may be funded through another project.

Paving Contract Awarded

Mr. Crewe stated that paving should start by the end of this week or next and it was awarded to AAA Paving.

Mr. Presley asked if he had received his list.

Mr. Crewe stated yes but he did not know if they were on the list. He stated that the two quotes were \$314k and \$372k.

Fire Department Mutual Aid Agreement

Mr. Crewe stated that he had been meeting with the City Managers from Bluefield and Princeton about no mutual aid agreement for insurance purposes. He stated that he and Danny had come up with a draft for a total of 5 Fire Departments that would pledge equipment and manpower.

Mr. Holman asked if it was needed for insurance.

Mr. Crewe stated yes that if a truck were damaged while in WV we may or may not get paid for it.

Recycling Schedule

Mr. Crewe stated that he and Jeff had discussed picking up cardboard and having to come back and sort it out and keeping it until they had a truck load, picking up plastic on one day and paper on another day. He stated that they had decided to leave it alone and that they were finished by 3 p.m. on recycling days. He stated that changing the routine would be disruptive for the citizens.

Fincastle Construction

Mr. Crewe stated that Fincastle had rebuilt the bathroom on the 5th hole. He stated that interior work was finished and the pool should be ready in the spring. He stated that events were booking up fast.

Cemetery Marker

Mr. Crewe stated that a historical marker had been ordered for the colored section of Maple Hill Cemetery. He stated that they would be holding one event in May next year and the other one would be held on November 26th at 2 p.m. He stated that Susie Green and her committee had asked for this. He stated that staff would not be working that day but would have the pole in the ground and the marker put on and covered a couple of days before. He stated that she would be inviting all of council to attend and speak and the reason she wanted to do it on this day was that family members would be in for Thanksgiving.

Thompson & Litton Reimbursement

Mr. Crewe stated that a new compressor generator had been installed at the Water Plant to replace the other one which was not water proof. He stated that it was a design failure on the part of Thompson & Litton and they had stepped up and would be paying for the mistake.

High Street Update

Mr. Crewe stated that High Street should be done in around 10 days and that the new gas line was in. He stated that the gas company allowed Cleco to continue to work in other areas while this was happening and that curb and guttering along with asphalt should happen this week. He

stated that the deadline was October 18th and after that it would cost them \$500 per day but that was a point of discussion between them and the gas company holding them up.

Recreation Department Update

Mr. Crewe stated that the Recreation Department hosted their first Haunted Hayride event and had around 2,500 people who come through. He stated that it was done free this year and they were looking at having it two nights next year and charging.

Mr. Presley stated that there were a lot of complaints about the ride wait.

Mr. Crewe stated that they were trying different things.

Newsletters

Mr. Crewe stated that the newsletters would be going in the mail tomorrow.

Mr. Presley asked that it be emailed to him.

Mayor Linkous stated that no one understood the work that went into them and suggested pricing a piece of equipment to fold and label them which would help in the long run. He stated that staff did reach out to the GHS Principal but never heard from her. He stated that he would be asking her at the ballgame Thursday night.

Mr. Crewe stated that the newsletter this time was bigger.

Employee COVID Update

Mr. Crewe stated that 4 employees were out with COVID, two had been exposed with no systems, one had mild symptoms and one had been in the hospital for 8 days but came home yesterday on oxygen.

Planning Commission Meeting

Mr. Crewe asked that council let staff know if they planned to attend the Planning Commission Meeting on November 8th for discussions related to modular housing and the sign ordinance. He stated that it would not be a joint meeting but this was for them to discuss it with Planning Commission.

Mayor Linkous asked if the paving needed to be voted on.

Mr. Crewe stated that it had not been in the past.

Mayor Linkous asked if it was a budgeted item.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was approved when they approved the budget.

Historical District

Mr. Crewe stated that the gentleman was sick when he was supposed to give a presentation to council concerning historical districts. He stated that there was a lot of legwork to it and asked if council would like for him to reach out and have him make a presentation.

Council agreed that they would like to hear what he had to say.

Mr. Holman stated that he would be concerned with the restrictions.

Mr. Crewe stated that they did not have to follow them but we would not get credit for it.

Mr. Holman stated that he would like to hear the ins and outs.

Trick or Treat

Mr. Crewe stated that Halloween would be celebrated on October 30th from 6-8 p.m.

Former Employee

Mr. Crewe asked council if anything had changed on his instructions regarding the former employee that had been discussed in closed session. He stated that the consensus was to pay nothing.

Mr. Holman asked if there had been any new developments.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had been talking back and forth and had agreed to freeze the process until that got closer. He stated that they had been back and forth on a settlement offer and there was a tentative offer if the Town would end up paying for the insurance deductible. He stated that a problem that they did not know about was we had not been able to restore the laptop/IPAD and he did not think we would be able to and also the auditors had been asking questions and we were jumping through hoops trying to find answers. He stated that there was more there than what we all originally knew. He stated that the proposed new development from her attorney indicated the deductible amount would settle it.

Mr. Holman asked for an estimated amount.

Mr. Crewe stated \$1,000.

Council had no further questions/comments.

Mr. Crewe thanked them for their concerns and stated that the Town was busting at the seams with things going on. He stated that the Tree Lighting was coming up and he thought that we had weathered the storm on COVID.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Bailey had none.

Mr. Holman had none.

Mr. Trigg had none.

Mrs. Payne had none.

Mr. Presley gave a shout out to Kim, James and Trent. He stated that the haunted hayride seemed to be a success and that our G-Men were undefeated. He asked that something be done for John and Jess who had been working really hard. He asked if we needed to buy salt in case of a shortage.

Mr. Crewe stated that we had purchased 180 tons and had 80 tons on hand.

Mr. Presley asked if they would be having Legislative Days in January.

Mr. Crewe stated that they were talking about having it virtually.

Mr. Presley gave a shout to Lee and Gail for helping fold the newsletters and to the citizens who had come out. He asked if anything had been done regarding the Warhawk bathrooms and the bridge.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had gone back in the old files and they were looking at a prefab bridge which would be easier and they were also fixing the bathrooms.

Mayor Linkous asked that the Town do a resolution as well for Joe Tyson.

Mr. Presley stated that he helped the soccer team make it to state.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to approve a resolution for Joe Tyson.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve preparing a resolution for Joe Tyson. Mr. Bailey seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Bailey:	Yes
Councilmember Holman:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt:	Absent
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes

Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 5-0 in favor.

Mayor Linkous stated that there was a list a mile long of those who needed something.

Mr. Bailey included cheer going to state and possibly the football team and suggested having a massive celebration at the end of the year.

Mr. Crewe reminded them of those who had academically won something as well.

Mayor Linkous stated that they could go to the school and do something. He thanked staff for all that they did and that one of the persons with COVID did not have family here. He asked that the manager and department head look at providing food for him.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had a family member who was able to come in to help take care of him.

Betty Kuppusami stated she was enjoying the exercise class and was trying to get more people involved.

Mayor Linkous stated that we were in dire need of a senior living place with individual housing in a certain area in Bluefield. He stated that many were downsizing and suggested that we look at land and developers to talk about this. He stated that Ron could not be there because he had a family member at the hospital and asked that everyone pray for them. He wished Cathy and John safe travels tomorrow and told everyone to come out and support the G-Men.

Mrs. Payne asked if a date had been set for the parade/tree lighting.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the tree lighting was always the Saturday before Thanksgiving and the parade we always waited to see if the football team made it to state which looked like we would this year.

Mr. Presley stated that state would be the second Saturday.

Mrs. Hernandez stated if that were the case then it could be the first Saturday. She stated that the committee would be meeting tomorrow to discuss it.

Mayor Linkous asked if a representative from the Sanitary Board could come in and give an update at the next meeting.

Mr. Holman stated yes that a couple of the projects that had already been bonded were Mountain Lane and Valley Dale which he had talked to Trent about today.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Presley made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:39 p.m. Mrs. Payne seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk