

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
December 14, 2021**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, December 14, 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
Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor

ALSO PRESENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
James Hampton, Asst. Mgr./Treasurer/Transit Dir.
Shane Gunter, Police Chief
Jarried McFarland, Planning Commission Member
8 members of public

ABSENT

Jarrold Bailey, Councilmember
Rick Holman, Councilmember

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

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

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Payne 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

Budget Amendments, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez went over the following Budget Amendments:

PURPOSE: Restitution from Nathaniel Hurt

Revenue		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$146,658.46</u>	<u>\$146,782.15</u>	<u>\$123.69</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$146,658.46</u>	<u>\$146,782.15</u>	<u>\$123.69</u>

Expenditure		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
3110-8210	Animal	<u>\$6,265.34</u>	<u>\$6,389.03</u>	<u>\$123.69</u>
	Control	<u>\$6,265.34</u>	<u>\$6,389.03</u>	<u>\$123.69</u>

PURPOSE: Security Services Aramark & Graham High School

Revenue		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$146,782.15</u>	<u>\$148,497.15</u>	<u>\$1,715.00</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$146,782.15</u>	<u>\$148,497.15</u>	<u>\$1,715.00</u>

Expenditure		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
3110-1200	Salaries	<u>\$31,695.00</u>	<u>\$33,410.00</u>	<u>\$1,715.00</u>
	Overtime	<u>\$31,695.00</u>	<u>\$33,410.00</u>	<u>\$1,715.00</u>

PURPOSE: Grant Funding to purchase new digital cameras and emergency first aid tourniquets

Revenue		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$148,497.15</u>	<u>\$152,916.15</u>	<u>\$4,419.00</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$148,497.15</u>	<u>\$152,916.15</u>	<u>\$4,419.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-8106	Grants	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$4,419.00</u>	<u>\$4,419.00</u>
		<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$4,419.00</u>	<u>\$4,419.00</u>

PURPOSE: Grant for Maple Hill Cemetery

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3105-9913	Cemetery	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$7,150.00</u>	<u>\$7,150.00</u>
	Misc.	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$7,150.00</u>	<u>\$7,150.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
4414-8105	New	<u>\$4,000.00</u>	<u>\$11,150.00</u>	<u>\$7,150.00</u>
	Construction	<u>\$4,000.00</u>	<u>\$11,150.00</u>	<u>\$7,150.00</u>

PURPOSE: Grant for Christmas tree (Community Foundation of the Virginias)

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3108-9903	Gifts &	<u>\$8,798.00</u>	<u>\$28,798.00</u>	<u>\$20,000.00</u>
	Donations	<u>\$8,798.00</u>	<u>\$28,798.00</u>	<u>\$20,000.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
8120-5657	Special Events	<u>\$10,000.00</u>	<u>\$30,000.00</u>	<u>\$20,000.00</u>
		<u>\$10,000.00</u>	<u>\$30,000.00</u>	<u>\$20,000.00</u>

PURPOSE: Grant for Christmas tree (June Oblinger Shott Foundation)

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3108-9903	Gifts &	<u>\$28,798.00</u>	<u>\$42,517.60</u>	<u>\$13,719.60</u>
	Donations	<u>\$28,798.00</u>	<u>\$42,517.60</u>	<u>\$13,719.60</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
8120-5657	Special Events	<u>\$30,000.00</u>	<u>\$43,719.60</u>	<u>\$13,719.60</u>
		<u>\$30,000.00</u>	<u>\$43,719.60</u>	<u>\$13,719.60</u>

Mr. Trigg made a motion to approve the Budget Amendments. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 4-0 in favor.

Updated Transit Policies, ROLL CALL VOTE – James Hampton

Mr. Hampton stated that the Transit Policy had to be updated every 3 years and approved by council. He stated that there were no changes and that this was required for funding.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the Updated Transit Policy. Mr. Trigg seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 4-0 in favor.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

James Proffitt stated that he was concerned about North College near the Fire Station and asked if the Town planned to widen that road.

Mayor Linkous asked if he was referring to the road going towards Falls Mills.

Mr. Crewe stated that there were no plans to do anything more than what had already been done.

Mr. Presley asked what part he was referring too.

Mr. Proffitt stated at the curve.

Mayor Linkous stated that they could address it again with the state.

Mr. Presley asked that he keep up with the town manager.

Mr. Crewe stated that the signage at New Graham would be changing to reroute the tractor trailers.

Mr. Proffitt stated that the sign was up.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Gunter stated that they had Shop with a Cop and had 27 kids who were able to spend \$150 each.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Christmas Parade – December 18th at noon

Mr. Crewe stated the Christmas Parade was Saturday at noon.

Fincastle July 4th Event

Mr. Crewe stated that Fincastle was proposing a July 4th event with fireworks on the golf course.

Mr. Hampton stated that he could ask the people who do the fireworks for the Autumn Jamboree.

High Street Update

Mr. Crewe stated that High Street was opened yesterday but they were still needing guardrail installed in some locations. He stated that Thompson & Litton were working on the last bill and there was still the litigation over the gas line. He stated that a Cleco sign had fell damaging a property owners fencing that was also being talked about.

Mr. Presley asked if it was open to drive on.

Mr. Crewe stated yes.

Comcast Channel Update

Mr. Crewe stated that Comcast would be adding the ACC channel to basic.

Ribbon Cuttings

Mr. Crewe stated that Casa Familia had their ribbon cutting and that Macados was doing good and had not scheduled their ribbon cutting as of yet.

Building Official

Mr. Crewe stated that Chad was no longer employed and that we were not in a position to issue permits or do inspections. He stated that he was negotiating with Eric Young and the County and right now AEP had agreed to do the electrical inspections.

Mr. Presley asked by law if the county had to do them.

Mr. Crewe stated that in Eric's opinion no. He stated that we would be willing to pay but they did not have enough staff.

Water Cutoffs

Mr. Crewe stated that water cutoffs were scheduled for December 20th and Public Works had raised the issue about the upcoming time off and not being able to cut them back on. He stated that cutoffs would be delayed until after Christmas.

Paving Update

Mr. Crewe stated that AAA Paving was finished with all the paving in town and had 3 streets that they did not roll the asphalt in the driveways but were working on fixing as many as they could this evening.

Future Water Projects

Mr. Crewe stated that VDH had verbally approved the extension of the water project which would allow 1.9 million gallons per day.

Mr. Presley asked if we were still pumping to the prison.

Mr. Crewe stated yes. He stated that Thompson & Litton was finalizing numbers for 3 contracts: holding basin-\$2.3 million, to improve the water delivery system-\$865k which they think both of these would qualify for the ARPA money and the last one was upgrading the water system. He stated that it would be a 50% grant and 50% forgivable loan through VDH. He stated that Chief had gotten estimates on cameras for police observation that we could use the ARPA money for as well.

Mr. Presley asked if the Sedgewood citizens paid would they be able to have extra cameras.

Chief Gunter stated yes but they would be required to pay the yearly license and would have to give the Town permission to monitor them.

Mr. Crewe estimated that they would cost around \$2k.

Former Employee

Mr. Crewe stated that all had been settled with the former employee and the complaint was withdrawn. He stated that they were paid what was owed for time and telephone.

Shop with a Cop

Mr. Crewe stated that an officer had mentioned they would like to see them also have breakfast or lunch with Santa during this event.

Building/Zoning Department

He stated that Tara was the assistant in the Building & Zoning Department who was answering multiple calls right now and had been very professional. He stated that there were 5 permits/projects that needed something right now that we could not do anything about.

Mr. Presley stated that the county should help with this because we paid taxes.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had sat with Eric Young during the football game on Saturday and Eric told him that they did not have the manpower. He stated that he thought they would do it for free but was still negotiating. He stated that the county would be hiring 2-3 more people when the fish farm went in to do inspections but it was months down the road and suggested that we could use them now for town jobs. He stated that he was going to talk to 3 other individuals.

Mr. Holt asked how long it would be to fill the position.

Mr. Crewe stated that it needed to be done immediately.

Mr. Presley asked if the county had paid us for the fire department.

Mr. Crewe stated no. He stated that Gary Jackson was the head official in Tazewell County and that he and Chad had talked and assumed the county would take over. He stated that we had filled in for them in the past.

Mr. Trigg asked if it had to be a Virginia Inspector.

Mr. Crewe stated that they would have to be licensed in Virginia and asked if they knew of a retired building official, etc. to let him know.

Mr. Holt asked what the timeframe was to spend the ARPA money.

Mr. Crewe stated that it had to be committed by next December.

Mr. Holt asked if they should move forward now because of the higher price of things.

Mr. Crewe stated that we would not know cost until we went out to the market.

Mayor Linkous stated that we had a good Building Inspector and asked if council would be ok if Trent talked to this person to try and get him back. He stated that all around us the Building Official was making more money.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had talked to him this afternoon and he was thinking.

Mayor Linkous stated that we had some big projects that would need inspections, etc.

Mr. Crewe stated that they needed their commercial certification as well.

Mayor Linkous stated that he was receiving a lot of phone calls concerning this.

Mr. Crewe stated that he thought the viable option was the county.

Mayor Linkous stated that he knew Chad had helped them.

Mr. Crewe stated that he was not giving up and was looking at other avenues.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Holt stated that he appreciated that we were trying to compensate them.

Mr. Crewe stated that was only fair.

Mr. Holt stated that he believed they could work something out. He stated that salaries over the last few years for law enforcement was fairer and that they needed to look at them across the board. He stated that Hobby Lobby would be paying \$18.50/hr. for their full time employees which would create a problem and others would have to pay more to keep employees. He stated that a Work Session was needed so that council could look at this.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was up to him for salaries and that January 1st minimum wage would be going to \$11/hr. He stated that they would need to look at wage compression all the way through and that the Governor's proposed budget included a 20% increase for deputies and jailers but not local police officers. He stated that right now we were a little ahead but may not be if this passed. He stated that we had good people and needed to look at an increase across the board.

Mr. Holt stated he agreed it was up to him but if it were a significant increase then council would have to find a way to pay for it. He asked that the fire hydrant on Franklin Street be looked

at to see if it were leaking. He stated that whomever came up with the idea for the \$2k contribution for the bus to go to state was a fantastic idea.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was a joint effort.

Mr. Holt stated that the Police Department under Chief's leadership had done a wonderful job getting out and meeting the public. He stated that he had been receiving phone calls again regarding a rumor that the Town was going to buy Mitchell Stadium.

Mr. Presley gave a shout out to Chief and Kim and everyone that came out. He agreed with Ron that they needed to figure out better pay. He asked if some of the increase had been repealed.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was set to go up but had some opposition and may be repealed. He stated on January 1, 2022 it would be \$11/hr., \$13/hr. in 2024 and \$15/hr. by 2025.

Mr. Presley stated that Graham had a good season.

Mr. Crewe stated that they would be the grand marshals in the parade.

Mrs. Payne stated that the Fall Mills Adult Daycare would have an open house on Thursday from 4-7 p.m.

Mr. Trigg stated that there was a drain stopped up going across the tracks to Depot Street.

Mr. Holt asked that a resolution be prepared for the football team and all of their accomplishments. He stated that he would like to see the Youth League 5th & 6th Graders recognized for winning their championship against Beaver that they were our future. He asked that everyone pray for Councilman Holman's family.

Mr. Trigg asked for more details.

Mr. Holt stated that he would talk to him after the meeting.

Mr. Crewe stated that staff was having a hard time getting information from the schools and that there would be a lot to recognize.

Mayor Linkous stated that he had a conversation with Comcast about honoring their franchise. He stated that until COVID they had someone in the office 5 days week and we should see someone there again after the first of the year. He stated that he had talked to the principal about honoring the kids and her recommendation was to get a list and go by groups. He stated that he would like to present a plaque to Brody Meadows at the first meeting in January and stated that he would be making his choice tomorrow. He presented Cathy with her official certificate on being re-elected to council. He stated that all of the Christmas dinners had gone well along with the grand openings. He stated that he had asked Comcast about getting Bristol stations and was told that a lot of people had been asking for this and they were looking at getting Bristol and

Roanoke. He stated that the ceremony for the Historical Monument Marker went fabulous with 50-75 people in attendance and that Ms. Green did a great job. He stated that the next ceremony for the stones would be in the summer.

Chief Gunter thanked the Fire Department for their help with Santa during Shop with a Cop each year.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous adjourned the meeting at 8:23 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk