

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
February 13, 2023**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a Special Called Meeting on Saturday, February 13, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Donnie Linkous, Mayor
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Lee Riffe, Councilmember
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember
Rick Holman, Vice-Mayor

ALSO PRESENT

James Hampton, Co Interim Town Mgr/Treasurer
Kim Hernandez, Co Interim Town Mgr/Town Clerk
Alan McGraw, Interim Attorney
Shane Gunter, Chief of Police
6 Members of Public

ABSENT

Ron Holt, Councilmember

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Linkous called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

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) of the Code of Virginia as amended, The specific purpose for this motion is to discuss the following matter(s):

Discussion or consideration of prospective candidates for employment with such closed meeting being confined to the following subject (s): Town Manager Applications.

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

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

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of going into Executive Session.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to resume open meeting.

Councilmember Presley made a motion to enter back into regular session. Councilmember Riffe seconded the motion.

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 February 13, 2023, 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 February 13, 2023.

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 February 13, 2023, 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 for a motion to approve the certification.

Councilmember Presley made a motion to approve the certification. Councilmember Payne seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Riffe: Yes
Vice-Mayor Holman: Yes
Councilmember Holt: Absent

Councilmember Presley: Yes
Councilmember Payne: Yes
Councilmember Trigg: Yes
Mayor Linkous: Yes

Motion carried 6-0 approving the certification.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Jim Drake, Parkview Baptist Church led the Invocation. Mayor Linkous led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

CITIZEN REQUESTS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATION

Susie Green, Monument Unveiling Update

Ms. Green invited all of council to attend the unveiling on February 18th at 1 p.m., thanked everyone for their support and stated that this had been going on since 2007, that there would be some good soul food following the ceremony at the church on Vencil Street and they were still receiving donations which would continue to go towards the monument. She stated that the food was not a part of the donations they had received.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS & REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS & REPORTS

Donation Requests, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez stated that we received three unbudgeted donation requests with the first one from Personalized Drawings for \$185 for each senior to have a drawing of the high school,

Clinch Valley Community Action for \$1,875 to help cover day and night camp for 25 kids and the last from the Model General Assembly for \$1,500 towards the transportation to attend competition.

Council asked that they be voted on individually.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the first one was for the personalized drawings.

Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the \$185 for the personalized drawings. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 5-0 approving the \$185 donation for the personalized drawings.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the next one was \$1,875 for Clinch Valley Community Action.

Mrs. Payne asked if we had ever given to Camp Joy in the past.

Mrs. Hernandez stated not to her knowledge.

Mayor Linkous stated that they received a lot of unbudgeted requests each year and they had been saying for years that they were going to stick to the budget but kept giving.

Mr. Riffe asked if any kids were sponsored at the Wade Center.

Mr. Presley stated no, that they were usually given free pool days for picking up trash.

Mr. Riffe asked if any of these kids were from Bluefield, VA.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that she was sure there were but that it did not specify.

Gail Cook stated that she thought it was just Tazewell County kids.

Mr. Riffe asked if Tazewell County gave any money.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it showed that the Board of Supervisors gave \$5k, local donations of \$5k, USDA-Federal \$500, Camp Fees were \$6k and Grants for \$5k.

Council asked that it be tabled until the next meeting so that Liz Lester could come.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the last one was the \$1,500 for Model General Assembly for transportation.

Mr. Riffe stated that it appeared that Tazewell County Schools cut the budget.

Mrs. Hernandez read that they used to get \$2,200 yearly for the 3 schools.

Mr. Presley stated it was a good program.

Mayor Linkous stated that they were given \$5k.

Mr. Hampton stated that it was \$1,500 divided by the 4 schools.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that was correct and the school used it for whatever they chose.

Mayor Linkous stated that at one time, it was not divided.

Mr. Hampton stated that it had always been divided.

Council asked that it be tabled until the next meeting.

COB Community Plaza Request, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez stated that this was something that had been discussed many times regarding the engineering for the “community arch” and the cost for the Town was \$10k. She stated that the engineer doing the project would come and give a presentation on the project if council would like for him too.

Mayor Linkous stated this was just for the engineering and there would be more cost for the actual project.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that from her understanding that the Shott Foundation would pick up a big chunk of this project.

Mr. Holman asked what was discussed in the meetings.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that nothing was finalized, it was just some ideas.

Mayor Linkous stated that he thought Trent had already approved it.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that nothing was ever approved that she could find other than he mentioned it was one of those things he would move forward on if they did not say otherwise. She stated that was why it was brought back to council for their approval and nothing had been signed by the Town.

Mr. Holman asked if there was a verbal commitment on behalf of the Town.

Mrs. Hernandez stated yes.

Council asked that it be tabled until it could be presented at the next meeting.

Town Hall Vehicle Purchase, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez stated that council had received the quotes and this could be purchased as a small purchase not requiring sealed bids, etc. She stated that what she saw as the best used deal was through Newberry for \$41,143 with 14k miles, no processing fee and if they wanted to go with a new one that Ramey Ford, Princeton quoted a 2023 for \$50,662 and there was a new 2022 under state contract for \$47,450. She stated that David Sluss had reached out to staff and asked that we purchase from him that they sponsored a golf tournament at Fincastle each year and gave \$5k. She asked that they direct staff in which way they would like to go.

Mr. Holman asked if we had a listing of all vehicles.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that she could email them what was sent to the insurance each year that showed year, make and model.

Mr. Holman asked if we had a rolling replacement for vehicles.

Mr. Hampton stated no.

Mr. Holman asked if the Police Department was on a schedule.

Chief Gunter stated that they were for 2-3 vehicles per year. He stated that they had more officers now and were running the cars longer and by the time the Town got them, they were junk. He said that right now they did not have any extra and had to keep what they had for spares.

Mr. Holman stated if they were looking at a long time vehicle replacement that it would take some time to manage. He stated before they proceeded he would like to see the list.

Mr. Presley suggested looking at leasing.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the mileage may be an issue.

Mayor Linkous stated that he would like to buy locally and that Ramey Ford did contribute quite a bit locally. He asked why we were buying one right now.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the one Building & Zoning was driving was really old and one day when they were driving it that every light came on.

Mrs. Payne asked how often they were out.

Mrs. Hernandez stated between the Building Official and the Zoning Administrator every day.

Mr. Holman asked if there was an option to have one vehicle for all at Town Hall to use.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that right now we did not have any extra vehicles.

Council asked that it be tabled until they had more information.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

None.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Gunter stated that we had lost an officer to AEP and were now down two officers and would be down more when Martha and Tim Carroll retired this summer. He stated that they would look for certified officers first, that the School Resource Officers would be holding a youth camp for all schools which would consist of 1-2 weeks and would be days trips making a positive impact on these kids' lives and that SRO day was coming up as well.

Mrs. Payne asked if the camp would be at Camp Joy.

Chief Gunter stated no, that they would seek donations with this being the first year and see what they could do.

Mayor Linkous stated that they needed to donate to their own camps first.

Mr. Holman stated that he had sat through listening to the SRO the first day at Graham Middle School and was quite impressed that it was a positive for the kids.

TOWN UPDATES

Town Offices closed February 20th for President's Day. Monday's trash will be picked up on Friday, February 17th.

TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Bridge Update

Mr. McGraw stated that after looking at the code that design build would require a lot and it would not fall under small purchases.

Mr. Holman asked if that was his original thinking.

Mr. McGraw stated yes, that it was \$200k but excluded non-transportation and \$25k for everything else.

Mayor Linkous stated that he did not agree that this was a design build that Brad presented a turnkey project.

Mr. McGraw stated he would have to disagree.

Mayor Linkous stated that they would have to advertise to build a bridge, have engineers design, etc. and that Enwood sent us a bridge.

Mr. McGraw asked if they designed it.

Mayor Linkous stated yes.

Mr. McGraw stated that it would be a design build and could send them information on what that classified as and suggested that they look at the Tazewell Train Station. He stated that they would need to solicit design bid proposals, adopt a resolution or ordinance but the engineer on retainer could say yes.

Mayor Linkous stated that he understood.

Mr. Holman stated that they had to follow the procurement guidelines.

Mr. McGraw stated yes that his job was to tell them his legal opinion.

Mr. Riffe asked what the first step was that needed to be done.

Mr. McGraw stated that they would need to adopt procedures following the state regarding design builds to allow for Brad's turnkey.

Mr. Holman agreed to adopt a resolution.

Mayor Linkous stated that they had 3 bridge companies with specs and abutments that this would escalate the price.

Mr. McGraw stated that Ayers gave a turnkey price.

Mrs. Payne agreed to go with Alan's suggestion.

Mr. Riffe agreed as well.

Mr. Holman made a motion to develop a resolution using language from the state code allowing them to use a design build approach. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 5-0 approving the resolution.

Mr. McGraw stated that Tazewell County had filed a delinquent tax suit against a Bluefield resident and the town was a part of that suit. He stated that both would be paid out of the sale proceeds unless the owner paid.

Mr. Holman asked if there was a docket yet.

Mr. McGraw stated no that they had to pay the county money to actually see the details. He stated that he had been working with James and Kim on some things, that there was a short piece in The Voice that he wanted to clarify. He stated that the Town Charter defined council which consisted of the mayor and 6 councilmembers and a quorum was of all members.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Trigg stated that he was glad for those who came out.

Mrs. Payne also thanked everyone for coming out.

Mr. Riffe thanked everyone as well and thanked Alan, Chief, Kim and James for everything they did.

Mr. Holman stated that sometimes things were chaotic but local government did not always agree but they had to come together and work. He thanked Chief, Alan, Kim and James as well.

Mr. Presley asked with the shake up in the Recreation Department would the Haunted Hayride still happen and asked for an update on Ridge Road and Bone Hollow.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that she did not know that they would have to start things from the beginning, stated that we were waiting on VDOT and were aware of the situation on Bone Hollow Road.

Mr. Presley stated that he had some people asking about the street sweeper in West Graham and asked about people with tarps on their roofs.

Mr. Hampton stated that the particular person in West Graham had a suit against the contractor.

Mr. Presley stated that there were still some sewer issues on Stockton Street.

Mr. Hampton stated that he would call the Sanitary Board about it once again.

Mr. Presley asked about the Pinehill Park playground with the new water project.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that Rick Chitwood would be at the next meeting to present the project to them.

Mr. Presley stated that Ron was in the middle of an incident in Richlands and was currently getting his arm checked out.

Mayor Linkous had none.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion and a second to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk