

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
February 22, 2022**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, February 22, 2022 at 6:00 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
Greg DeGray, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
James Hampton, Asst. Mgr./Treasurer/Transit Dir.
Kris Williams, Zoning & Property Maint. Official
Jarried McFarland, Planning Commission Member
2 Members of Police Department
30 members of public
1 member of media

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Linkous called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Mayor Linkous opened the floor for discussion.

Mr. Holt asked James if he was going to go over the information he had requested during this time or in the meeting.

Mr. Hampton stated that he was having computer issues and not able to connect and asked Mr. Crewe if he had the information.

Mr. Crewe stated that there would be the following increases: \$15k-Bank Stocks, \$52k-Cigarette Tax, \$129k-Meals Tax and \$40k-Street Maintenance Revenue. He stated that was without any rate increases. He stated there would be an increase in revenue in the amount of \$236k but that the insurance was going up 8.5% along with VRS 6.2% which would cost the town around \$250k plus he was looking to do a wage increase of \$200k per year. He stated that routine maintenance within the budget would easily take the \$236k.

Mr. Presley stated that he did not want to use the ARPA money only for water infrastructures and that no one could afford to fix their lead issues at one time.

Mr. Holman asked if the Town was applying for VDH Funding, Foundations, etc. and that the State Revolving Fund had \$75 million ready to drop. He stated that we needed to be looking at these and that the Sanitary Board would be doing three projects in Bluefield, VA and would be asking for \$200k to help offset the engineering. He stated that they needed to look at this as stewardship and not ownership.

Mr. Holt agreed with Chuck and Rick.

Mr. Crewe stated that it would not all be spent on that and stated there were new expenditures not in the budget that they had agreed to do and included \$100k to Bluefield University, up to \$25k to the cemetery for the monument and he had received requests from the following: library donation with no amount specified, Robert Duff \$175, \$8k for the Sanders House, \$2,500 Heart of Appalachia, \$2,500 Crab Orchard and that we were just now receiving donation requests.

Mrs. Payne stated that she thought the Sanders House was in the budget.

It was determined that it was.

Mr. Holt stated that he did not think the health insurance would be that big of an increase and suggested maybe \$80k.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had \$1 million in water projects, 3% across the board wage increase plus compression which would total around \$600k at the end, \$175k for air packs for the Fire Department, \$500k to fix the outdoor recreational facility, \$400k-\$500k in equipment including a new garbage truck, street sweeper, etc. and the pool needed to be fixed.

Mr. Holman asked what the cost estimate was to fix the pool.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was \$750k a couple of years ago. He stated that it was exempt from ADA guidelines but that it needed some plumbing, cosmetic work, etc. to make it more feasible.

Heather Sharp stated that the back building was sinking and needed to be fixed along with the deck and piping.

Mr. Crewe stated that OSHA had showed up at the shop today but we did not know what all they had found yet.

Mayor Linkous stated that the Town was broke but we did not know it. He stated that they had a new council member that was a financial guru and had only been to one council meeting prior but had made an observation and was right when he said we had to take care of our house first. He stated that the manager needed to fix the employees first and to budget for new equipment.

Mr. Holman stated that it could not all be fixed in one day and they needed to have a 3-5 year plan for replacing equipment.

Mr. Presley asked if it were across the board in all departments.

Mr. Crewe stated no. He stated that a government budget was not the same as a private budget and we would come up short every year. He stated that things were increasing and we would have to adjust for that. He stated that we had to have employees and a big chunk of the money over four years should be spent on them for performance. He stated that it would continue into the 5th year but with our own money.

Mr. Holman stated that it would be \$800k over four years.

Mr. Crewe stated yes with benefits.

Mr. Holt stated that he had talked with James and that our Real Estate tax had not been raised in 31 years. He stated that they had to find revenue and agreed that they needed to keep employees. He asked how they could bring in revenue in increments and not all at one time.

Mr. Holman asked what the last increase was.

Mr. Hampton stated \$1 increase. He stated that we were paying off a garbage truck this year and were due to budget for another one.

It was discussed that the tax assessments would be going up in Tazewell County.

Mr. Crewe stated that when real estate went up along with personal property and meals tax that our revenue would increase because of this. He stated that he and James would look at the money for ARPA and bring back suggestions to council. He stated that they were budgeting for capital improvements in all departments.

Mr. DeGray stated that they were going forward with an increase in pay for the employees since there was an increase in health cost.

It was discussed how to communicate on the budget and if they wanted the whole budget at one time or to separate and work on it in parts.

Mr. Hampton suggested working on the ARPA money separately.

Mr. Crewe agreed and stated that once they got a handle on that then it could be plugged into the budget.

Council asked that they continue to have discussions regarding the ARPA money.

Mr. Crewe stated that he was looking at all the free money we could get.

The meeting was recessed at 7:18 p.m. and resumed at 7:30 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Brad McMillion, Highlands Fellowship Church led the Invocation. Mayor Linkous led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Mayor Holt asked that a discussion for a vote be added for a resolution of an outdoor learning facility after citizen's comments.

Mayor Linkous asked the Town Manager if there were any reason they would need to go into Executive Session.

Mr. Crewe stated that was a board decision but he did not see of any need to do so.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Tazewell County Fair – Donnie Yates

Donnie Yates introduced Viola Asbury, Chairman of the County Fair.

Viola Asbury thanked the town for partnering with the Tazewell County Fair. She stated that this would be the 150th Anniversary of the fair which was founded in 1872. She went over a list of some of the events that would be at the fair this year and stated that it would be the first week in August once again this year. She stated that the cost was \$10/adults and \$5/child.

Donnie Yates thanked the town for their contributions over the year and asked if they could do a little more this year. He also asked that they designate one person to represent the town on their board. He stated that they met every 2nd Tuesday of each month.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

Simple Subdivision-Titleist Drive, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kris Williams

Mr. Williams stated that he had received a simple subdivision preliminary plat for property located on Titleist Drive which would establish new lot lines to better served the current property owners. He asked for a vote from council to approve.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to approve the Simple Subdivision-Titleist Drive. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of the Simple Subdivision-Titleist Drive.

R-4 Zoning Language Change, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kris Williams

Mr. Williams stated that at the most recent planning commission meeting that Planning Commission voted to revise the R-4 Zoning District. He stated in council's packet was a copy of the proposed changes highlighted in red and that based upon Planning Commission's recommendation that it would be his recommendation to the R-4 Zoning district changes.

Mr. Holt made a motion to approve the R-4 Zoning Language Change. Mr. Trigg seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of the R-4 Zoning Language Change.

Sign Code Change, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kris Williams

Mr. Williams stated that at the most recent planning commission meeting that Planning Commission voted to change a portion of the sign code regarding off premise signs. He stated in council's packet was a copy of the proposed changes highlighted in red and that based upon Planning Commission's recommendation that it would be his recommendation to approve the sign code changes.

Mr. Holt made a motion to approve the Sign Code Change. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of the Sign Code Change.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Jay Ferguson, First United Methodist Church stated that his church had an idea on how to develop the land behind the creek. He stated that he had contact with other communities and was talking to them regarding repurposing sacred places and was gathering information on this. He stated that he would write up a presentation to bring before them.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had spoken a couple of times and after discussing with council that the option may be to lease it to the church for \$1/year.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

Resolution: Outdoor Learning Facility

Mr. Holt stated that he had talked to several in the community over the past few weeks and they wanted council to show their support for this project and asked that he bring it up for discussion. He stated that he was in support of it and that the kids needed this because there was not much for them to do here. He stated that he had given staff sample language of a resolution and was told it was not in the correct format, etc. He made a motion for the Town Manager/Attorney to draft a resolution in support of that project.

Mr. Holman stated that it was important for a number of reasons with one it being in our backyard and they as council needed to get behind it.

Mr. Presley agreed that they needed to stand behind it as well.

Mr. Crewe stated that there had not been a second.

Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous stated that they were “threatened with their life” to not disclose anything but he guessed tonight it was being made public that they were doing an outdoor learning center at Graham High School.

Mr. Holt stated that it was an outdoor learning facility and the educational benefits aside that what they were doing was making a large turf area to grow and accommodate for things such as soccer, football, track, etc. and be VHSL certified. He stated that it would be a huge impact on various parts of the community that were underserved.

Mr. Presley stated that it was not only for us but for everyone.

Mayor Linkous clarified that it had now been publicly announced and he did not do it.

Todd Baker stated that he was not there with the project but the money that the Town of Bluefield had saved from the lack of investment in our kids, he could not begin to tell them what that was. He stated that he and Lee Riffe were invested in the basketball league and had kids from WV wanting to join ours because it was consistent. He stated that it changed hands when they got into football, swimming, etc. and that money was exhausted on those programs. He stated that their money was consistent and was enough to run the program. He stated that the Town helped he and Lee with half of the \$15k to put mats on the walls of the new gyms and other than that the Town helped with buying the medallions/trophies needed. He stated that the town needed to put in an investment for this project and breakaway from Mitchell Stadium.

Mr. Holman stated that there was not a lot of recreation here which was key.

Jarried McFarland stated on behalf of the Little League that they were in support of this project because a lot of them had come to their cages to practice because they did not have anywhere else to go. He stated that it had to be shut down during COVID but that this was an important thing for our youth and would get us on the map.

Mr. Crewe stated that he did not care because he did not have a vote, did not live in Bluefield, did not pay taxes here and was representing the council. He stated that this was not for nor against sports but what he was understanding was that he as the attorney was to draft a resolution in the proper format. He stated that he wanted to make sure that council understood it all and that the language that was in the proposal given by Mr. Holt he had not seen until just a few minutes ago stated that the Town of Bluefield would move forward in the spirit of cooperation and fully endorsed Tazewell County Public Schools efforts to update and expand the outdoor learning facilities at Graham High School, would work diligently to resolve any matters that may hinder the project from moving forward and may provide any reasonable manner of assistance to the school board as the project moves forward. He stated that there was nothing in there regarding money so it was not the expenditure of funds. He stated that his suggestion was that it was a bit premature in that the county had not moved forward with it, he stated that they could do whatever they wanted to do with it but that this was not a town project and would happen with or without the involvement of the town. He stated that they needed to be careful when giving it the green light that there was a zoning issue with the school presently which would be 100% a town issue later down the road when the county asked for the permits. He stated that it was a county project and yes the town could benefit but right now we were not using those facilities although it had been discussed. He stated that they would be hearing from the taxpayers who paid the same as everyone in Tazewell County plus also paid Town taxes on top of that. He stated that council could do whatever they wanted to do and this was not for sports nor against it but that it was obviously a surprise by their faces that some of them had not seen it nor staff had seen it and a lot of people that were in attendance had never been to another council meeting but were invited for this one issue. He stated that it was a public meeting and anyone was allowed to attend but that it was up to council if they would like to take action now, later, never, refine it, etc. He stated that if he were instructed to draft a resolution that the language he thought this resolution had was that we simply support it and would cooperate but he wanted to make sure that they were not saying that the Town of Bluefield was automatically stating that they were approving any rezoning request. He stated that had to come before this project could move forward and the reason he felt it was a bit premature. He stated that they could not approve the rezoning tonight because it had not been through the Planning Commission nor the proper steps had been taken but the zoning issue was out there and had been discussed with the school representatives during the last meeting.

Mr. Holt stated that there was a motion and a second.

Mayor Linkous asked council if there was any more discussion.

Mr. Trigg stated that he was for the project but would like to see more and was surprised to see this resolution and thought they were going to be discussing it more.

Mr. DeGray stated that it was great for the kids and it was in his heart to help Graham but that it was also a Tazewell County Project and not the town that was doing this and he did not want to steal their thunder. He stated that he would like to support them if they could but financially they had things in their budget that needed to be addressed. He stated that this project was 2-3 years down the road before the field would be there.

Erik Robinson asked if he could speak and stated that the project was not 2-3 years down the road that they had already received grants for this and was not asking for anything money wise that they had a grant to pay for the outdoor learning facility as well as the track

Mr. DeGray stated that he was just saying as of when the field would be there.

Mr. Robinson stated that Thompson & Litton was doing everything right now which included the studies, the write-ups and they were not asking for anything money wise from the Town of Bluefield that he believed that Councilman Holt and Holman were wanting to do something to show that the town was going to support them but they were not asking anything money wise from the Town of Bluefield right now. He reiterated that it was not 2-3 years down the road and whatever the zoning issues were that they would like to get them taken care of. He stated that he was not knowledgeable of the zoning issues because there was already a field there so it would be just replacing a field that was already there. He stated that it was already paid for and they wanted to get this done as soon as they were finished with all of the studies of where everything would go then they would like to move forward. He stated that they were not asking for anything monetarily from the town but that Councilman Holt and Holman wanted to show support for their project and for the youth of the area. He stated that they appreciated the support from the town both academically and athletically and it would affect both entities. He stated that they wanted to do this resolution and they had individuals from the community that were there to show support in hopes that the town would also.

Mayor Linkous stated that there were zoning issues that could take 3-6 months to fix and that he was not sure they were aware of them. He suggested that they get started on it immediately because if they were to come in next month for a building permit that nothing could be done until the zoning issues were first resolved.

Mr. Robinson asked what those were.

Mayor Linkous stated that the Zoning Administrator may could tell them but he remembered a few years ago when they tried to rezone that area that the neighborhood did not like that and it was pulled.

Mr. Robinson asked how there were two fields already there.

Mr. Crewe stated that if you stand in the road facing the high school that the right of the fence line was zoned R-2 and the left side of the field/hill was R-1 neither of which allowed educational facilities. He stated that he did not remember the exact dates but in looking at the previous minutes that there was an attempt to rezone as a school which would allow the other to happen 4-5 years ago but it blew up in the process. He stated that it was a non-conforming use and the issue would be do you expand the non-conforming use but his town attorney hat said no and the reason it was not allowed now was that schools were not allowed in R-1 or R-2. He stated that if he were missing anything that Kris could fill it in.

Mr. Williams stated that before when a stadium was talked about going in there that they had a Public Hearing and the public came out in droves in opposition of it and it did not move forward.

Mr. Presley and Mr. Holt interrupted and Mr. Holt stated that he did not ever recall the public coming out in droves.

Mr. Williams stated that he was not here then.

Mr. Holt stated that he was on Town Council when they talked about it the last time.

Mr. Williams reiterated that he was not on council then.

Mr. Crewe stated that his name was not on the minutes.

Mr. Holt stated that this was beyond 5 years and that was why he was confused.

Mr. Williams stated that he did not know the exact date but did know that he was not on council at the time.

Mr. Crewe stated that was an issue right in front of their face that had to be addressed and his concern as Town Manager and Attorney was that council did not need to be putting themselves in a box until all of the issues were addressed. He stated that if they said they supported it then said no it was not zoned right then they were taking two different positions.

Mr. Presley stated that he did not believe that and they could support it. He stated that he was hearing every way that they could not support it and no ways that they could.

Mr. Crewe stated that the language said that the town would work diligently to resolve any matters to prevent this project from moving forward. He stated if they were to take a vote and it not move forward because of rezoning then they would be in violation and he was working to

protect them. He stated that he did not believe there was anyone on council that was not for the project but if there were a request for money down the line would they be obligating themselves to some type of contribution and the precedence that would be set. He stated that the mayor was right and they were told not to discuss this in the public. He stated that there was a lot of opposition to this in the past.

Shane Watkins stated that he understood what he was saying legally and that a PE teacher could not take their students outside for a class right now because of the zoning.

Mr. Crewe stated no that what he said was that the facility sitting there now was a non-conforming use.

Mr. Watkins stated the grass field with a track.

Mr. Crewe stated that he did not know if he should say anything in public but from what he understood that would be going away and would be completely changed. He stated to answer his question if it were zoned R-1 and someone were to put a classroom on it that would be considered improper.

Mr. Watkins stated a brick and mortar.

Mr. Crewe stated that was corrected and gave an example.

Mr. Watkins stated that he understood what he was saying but agreed with Mr. Robinson if they re-laid the asphalt or redone the grass and organized it a little differently it would be for the same purpose.

Mr. Crewe stated that there was a hillside there currently and if it went away that would be a different use and if the hillside went away and turf was put down and a parking lot made then that would clearly be a use that was not currently there. He stated that it was moving full steam ahead and as Mr. Robinson said they did not need anything from the Town right now which was fine but his concern was the town not playing any advanced roll in giving the green light.

Mr. Watkins stated that he understood that legally and he had said in a couple of statements that he did not care either way and did not spend a lot of time here but that they would like for it to care to him in his position.

Mr. Crewe stated that he understood that and he was representing council.

Mr. Holt stated that he did not want Kris to think they were against him.

Mr. Williams stated that he followed the code adopted by council.

Mr. Holt stated that he appreciated what he did and asked what the process would be working with them moving forward.

Mr. Williams stated that they could come in tomorrow and fill out the application and start the process of rezoning but it would have to go to a Public Hearing and Planning Commission would have to be involved as well.

Mr. Holt stated that they were not locked into the current zoning and it could change.

Mr. Williams and Mr. Crewe stated yes.

Mr. Holt stated that the reason he did not think that this was premature was that he and Rick had been talking with Erik and the school board for months now about this project with council's blessing. He stated that they had come to them talking about it and they asked that council appoint them to work with the school board but COVID stopped everything and they were just now able to work with them again. He stated that the last time they were in the meeting that a few days later the City of Bluefield wanted to talk to them regarding how we could work with them on their stadium. He stated that it was like that every single time and he was reluctant to meet with them but was glad he did because he amongst a few other council members made it crystal clear if they wanted to sit down and have a discussion with them to work with our facilities and maximize those for both of our communities then they would do that. He stated that they were going to have to come up with some clear path forward on what they were going to do and support as elected officials. He stated that he appreciated what staff done but it was his right to have a conversation with all of the people in attendance and to have this conversation on their behalf. He stated that all he was saying was that they would support this project moving forward and were not talking about money right now and that he would work with staff to help them. He stated that he would personally make the motion but it would have to work financially for the town.

Mayor Linkous thanked everyone for their comments, he stated that one thing that council did not like was surprises and this was a big surprise. He stated that the management of the Town did not know anything about this resolution and should have which was the way the town operated.

Mr. Holman stated that was a two way street and communication had to go both ways.

Mayor Linkous agreed.

Mr. Holman stated that there were conversations had and the Mayor told him that he had not spoken to them since November 11th.

Mayor Linkous asked who he was talking about.

Mr. Holman stated with the City of Bluefield.

Mayor Linkous stated that he had not.

Mr. Holman stated that the City Manager of Bluefield told him that there had been numerous discussions.

Mayor Linkous gaveled the argument and stated that he and Rick were still friends but he was going to stop him there that this was over. He stated that it was the will of council to support this project and he hated when they got into arguments but they would work on that later. He stated that there was a motion and a second on the floor and asked the Clerk to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of preparing a resolution in support of the outdoor learning facility.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

None.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

AEP Outage

Mr. Crewe stated that there would be a planned power outage on Saturday from 7 a.m. – 10 a.m.

High Street/Cleco

Mr. Crewe stated that Cleco was still working with the gas company on those issues.

Body Cameras

Mr. Crewe stated that we had several body cameras with issues and were looking at new ones with warranties.

Reopening Town Offices

Mr. Crewe stated that he was close to reopening Town Offices to the public. He stated that we had a couple of employees who were out with COVID.

Donations to respected charities

Mr. Crewe stated that with respect to the wishes of Eva Saunders, Jack Spencer and Gail Williams that the town would be making a donation to their respected charity.

VT Organization Visit

Mr. Crewe stated that there was an incubator type organization from Virginia Tech who had asked for us to show them some buildings that were available and he would be doing so next week.

Sanitary Board Line Replacement

Mr. Crewe stated that the Sanitary Board had notified the town of some line replacements which would begin soon and they would be handing out flyers alerting the citizens.

Fincastle functions

Mr. Crewe stated that Fincastle had 97 big functions scheduled between now and June and already had some booked into 2023. He stated that they were moving forward.

Building Official

Mr. Crewe stated that Building and Zoning had been unusually busy and that John had been working diligently doing inspections the two days a week he was here.

Update on bridge cost

Mr. Crewe stated that the company that we received the bridge quote from did not install the bridges but provided an updated quote including the abutments increasing the cost to \$83,595. He estimated another \$15k-\$20k for installation.

Update on Budget Process

Mr. Crewe stated that they had already gone through the budget process and that he and James would bring back recommendations on how to use the federal money.

Discussion with Tazewell County

Mr. Crewe stated that this had already been discussed.

Discussion with Bluefield, WV

Mr. Crewe clarified that no such meetings were had beforehand.

Mr. Holman stated that the City Manager had said there was.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had heard what was said and that the City Manager said there had been several conversations. He stated that it took 4 telephone calls to schedule a meeting and that Ron did not want to attend.

Mr. Holt stated that what he said was he would like to leave it up to council to decide as a group.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had asked all four entities to sit down that were complaining about usage and discuss it. He stated that the town did not have anything to do with it other than some possible recreational things.

Mr. Holt stated that 6 weeks ago he and Rick and maybe some other council members got hit with questions about the town giving \$2 million for Mitchell Stadium then to hear there were multiple conversations after they had sit down with the school was frustrating.

Mr. Crewe turned it around on him and said it was frustrating to be told that we were spending \$1 million on a project that had not been discussed until the last council meeting in Executive Session. He stated that he had heard it on the street that we were putting money into a project but did not know what project it was.

Mr. Holt stated that any conversations that were had with the school board were brought back and relayed to council.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had also relayed any conversations to council and that the discussions that were had was when can you meet which were relayed to council. He stated that he was not short sheeting anyone and he would not be short sheeted by anyone and would do what was best for the town no matter if he and Mr. Holt were on the opposite sides of an issue or not. He stated that he did not make any agreements with anyone because he was not authorized to speak on behalf of the town.

Mr. Holt stated that he appreciated his position and that he hoped that he appreciated his as well.

Mr. Crewe stated that they would agree to disagree.

Mr. Holman stated that he had made that statement because rumors were circulating amongst council and the public and he had to ask the question.

Mr. Crewe stated that no one had asked him.

Mr. Holman stated apparently when Cecil said multiple discussions were had, but he did not clarify what those were, but that they were with him and the Mayor. He stated that was what the man said.

Mr. Crewe stated that he did not know what he was talking about and the only discussion he knew with the mayor was the night they met when the attorney general from West Virginia was in town and they had invited them to attend. He stated that he did not recall any discussions about any athletic complex of any kind that night and that was the only time they had all been in the same room. He stated that the other discussions with him were by telephone trying to get a meeting together and work with everyone's schedule. He stated that fortunately everyone was able to attend but Mr. Trigg.

Mr. Holman stated that he needed to understand that they had to field these comments.

Mr. Crewe stated that he would leave it at that and that was the end of his report.

Mr. Presley stated that overall it was a good meeting with Bluefield, WV and showed the issues and how this future project of ours could help the whole community. He stated that this was a usage issue and not that we hated Mitchell Stadium.

Mr. Holt agreed that it was a good conversation and that they were understanding of our issues. He stated that there was a lack of communication and he did not want to stop the communications but the people in our community had come in droves wanting this facility for our kids and he was in support of it. He stated that they needed to have a clear path forward on where to go as a town.

Mr. Crewe stated that was a council decision and he had no say but they would be smart to listen to him. He stated that all were in attendance at the Bluefield, WV meeting except for Tazewell County School Board.

Mr. Holman stated that was not what they were saying.

Mr. Crewe stated that he worked for them and he believed that they needed to be there to hear what was being said. He stated that it did not hurt to listen to them or for them to listen to us.

Mr. Holman stated that he wanted him to understand the context of which his comment came.

Mr. Crewe stated that the context was incorrect.

Mr. Holman stated that if they were going to work together then a little communication went a long way.

Mr. Crewe stated that he could not make any decisions and a comment that he said frequently was he had 7 councilmembers going in 8 different directions. He stated until council discussed anything that he did not know what direction they would be leaning towards.

Mr. Holman stated that he had not heard anything about him committing to anything but when a comment like that was made he wondered what was being said. He stated that when he married that comment and heard what the public said that several of them had gotten that exact same comment as well and it gave a thought of impropriety whether there was anything there or not.

Mr. Crewe stated that he was accused of impropriety and he wanted to set the record straight.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. DeGray stated that it irritated him that on the VDOT signs it did not relay our restaurants, gas stations, etc. on the signs. He stated that it would be helpful for our local economy.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had to be no more than 3 miles from the sign and the businesses had to pay \$1,500/year to have their name placed on the sign.

Mr. Holman had none.

Mr. Holt had none.

Mr. Trigg stated that he did not like that when he came in there was a resolution laying in front of him because he did not have time to look at it nor analyze it. He stated that things needed to be run through Trent that they were going about it in the wrong way. He stated that he wanted to help the school board but he thought they would have had a discussion about it first. He stated that now that it was known, that he would have people asking him about it tomorrow. He stated that Ron had suggested that Trent meet with a couple of them and he did not like that and he would like for them all to talk at the same time. He stated once again that he was all for the program but he liked to look at things before and not get last minute.

Mrs. Payne asked that the speed limit be increased past Savory Flavors on Virginia Avenue going to Dudley Primary from 25 mph to 35 mph.

Mr. Crewe stated that it could be set at 25 mph during school hours and 35 mph otherwise.

Mr. Presley stated that they needed to do something about that spot near his intersection because he almost got hit again. He stated that the recreation department was going a great job and that they needed to work with them more. He asked for a list of town properties so that they could look at selling and have the money from it. He stated that James and Kim did a great job

and asked that we get a quote for a metal bridge as well. He asked if there had been any more discussion with Tazewell County regarding the fire and rescue.

Mr. Crewe stated that nothing had been planned and we had run the numbers and it would not be good to get back into EMS. He advised that they continue the trade off with the fire department who had run over 100 calls in the past 12-18 months outside of the area. He stated that he would come back with a recommendation.

Mr. Presley stated that we had the best Police Department and he would like to have another meeting with the City and their whole board soon.

Mayor Linkous asked for an update on the Bluestone Clinic.

Mr. Williams stated that there were moving along and had done their electrical and plumbing inspections.

Mayor Linkous stated that he intended 100% to take a witness with him to ask Cecil to his face if he told someone that he said this because the fingers were being pointed at him that the Town of Bluefield would give them \$2 million.

Mr. Holman stated that was not what he said.

Mayor Linkous stated that was what they insinuated and neither he nor Trent had.

Mr. Holman stated that what he said was there had been numerous or many discussions.

Mayor Linkous clarified regarding the \$2 million that he had gone up to Erik at a Christmas event because he knew what was going on about the football thing and said to him which Erik later told him that he misunderstood what he had said to him about if the town could come up with \$2 million to own Mitchell Stadium would he be for that and he stated that he would be for anything they could own. He stated that the way he said it was if they could partner legally with them and own just as much of it would they be interested and what he understood Erik to say was that might be a thing but that they were building their own. He stated that he and council wanted to do whatever they could to help especially now since there was a zoning issue and advised that they get started on it now. He apologized to Rick regarding their argument and stated that it was as much his fault but that they would move forward. He stated that it was difficult though when not everyone knew what was going on which happened from time to time but was one of the reasons they were having these Work Sessions to talk about things and he asked that they do it again at the next meeting to discuss the \$5 million and get that down first then they could talk about something else. He stated that they have had some really good discussions thus far. He stated that when council got behind a project that they were behind it 100%.

Mr. Presley clarified that it was an outdoor learning facility and not a stadium.

Mayor Linkous stated that he would make sure to get an email or something in writing from Cecil. He stated that they were talking about many things with Bluefield, WV not just one

and they now had a golden opportunity to talk to them. He asked if anyone else had anything to say.

Todd Baker stated that he had been removed from the box seats at Mitchell Stadium when we played Bluefield yet it was our home game. He stated that it had taken years for Graham to be allowed to sit on the home side for its home games against Bluefield. He stated that when Bluefield played at home on Friday that Graham had to choose to play on Thursday or Saturday. He stated that we have not been treated fairly.

Mayor Linkous stated that he had been on the sidelines for years and honestly did not know there were any problems.

Mr. Holt stated that the board had conveyed to them that there were some serious issues and there was a willingness from them to work on them with us. He stated that it was conveyed to them that the only time we were going to work with them was when it was beneficial for both sides.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous adjourned the meeting at 9:14 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk

