

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
February 28, 2023**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 7:30 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
Ron Holt, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

James Hampton, Co Interim Town Mgr/Treasurer
Kim Hernandez, Co Interim Town Mgr/Town Clerk
Alan McGraw, Interim Attorney
100+ Members of Public

ABSENT

Shane Gunter, Chief of Police

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

Councilmember Holt made a motion to approve the 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 AND SPECIAL PRESENTATION

State Champ Football Team Recognition – Mayor Linkous

Mayor Linkous stated that the 2022 Football Team capped a perfect 15-0 season on December 10 vs Central Woodstock defeating the falcons 34-7 in Salem in the Class 2 State Championship Game. It is the 2nd undefeated team in Graham High School football history and the first in the modern playoff era. This is the first team ever from SWVA and the Southwest District ever to win 15 games in a season. Coach Palmer was honored as Southwest District, Region 2D, and Class 2 State Coach of the Year. This is Coach Palmers 2nd State Championship as Coach and Graham High School's 5th overall.

All players and coaches came up to the front and accepted a small football from the Town.

Thompson & Litton Water Project – Rick Chitwood

Mr. Chitwood went over some updated figures with council and asked if they would be gracious enough to vote to move forward. He stated this was the backwash basins and some improvements out in the field that Mr. Crewe approved while here. He stated that he hoped in mid-March to receive the approval from VDH for Phase II. He stated that they had did a hydraulic study on the back wash to protect the Town and were waiting on a 3rd party review of the E&S. He stated that once done and they had in hand if council would approve that he would like to advertise and go to bid to see where we were. He stated that it would in the local paper along with surrounding areas and after the bid was obtained then he would come back to council with a recommendation to award or not. He stated by using ARPA money that we would not have to follow the Davis Bacon, American Iron and Steel, etc.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to approve advertising to go to bid. 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:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

Mr. Chitwood stated that Phase III was to replace main lines in town that the first funding request to VDH was denied due to the fact that they had so many requests. He stated that he had talked to Kelly Ward and she advised that we should resubmit. He stated that she would have bi-

partisan infrastructure money coming to her agency and if we were to qualify then it could be up to 49% principal forgiveness. He stated that resubmitting it did not obligate the Town to anything. He stated that they would work with Kim and staff again who were very helpful last time and bring it back to council if approved on how they would like to proceed. He stated that the applications were due May 5-7.

Mr. Holman asked about any alternative funding from the state.

Mr. Chitwood stated that Rural Development had some federal funds but it would be a lot of federal requirements and mentioned the Cumberland Plateau Planning District.

Mr. Holman stated that he would like to see them be able to secure funding from somewhere.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to approve re-submitting Phase III to VDH. 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:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

CVCA Donation Request – Liz Lester

Liz Lester stated that Camp Joy opened in 1956 and was 100% built by the people of Tazewell County. She stated that they were having to completely remodel some things because of the asbestos. She asked that the Town donate \$1,875 towards the one week camp for 25 kids to attend free of charge, stated that it was based on the families income at 200% level, salaries for the staff were covered by CVCA and this would cover 100% of the tuition, crafts, supplies, etc. for low income, at risk kids but they did not turn down any children. She stated that they also participated in the Tazewell County Library summer program, petting zoos, Farmers Market Shelters, etc.

Mr. Presley stated that he was the president of the Wade Center and asked that she get with Betty about mission money.

Ms. Lester stated that she had tried but there was nowhere for them to sleep.

Mr. Presley told her they could use the Wade Center.

Mayor Linkous stated that the Appalachian Detention Center in Honaker was willing to do work but the materials had to be supplied.

Ms. Lester stated that she had talked to Sheriff Hieatt about trails being built behind the center.

Mayor Linkous asked how many weeks the camp would last.

Ms. Lester stated 4 weeks.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the \$1,875 donation request. Mr. Holt 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:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

Ms. Lester stated that it would be the last two weeks in June but would skip the week of July 4th.

Several members of council stated that they would donate individually to help.

Mr. Holman invited her back at the end of summer to give an update.

Community Plaza Project – Todd Boggess

Mr. Boggess stated that he was working on this project to be in the parking lot by Mitchell Stadium and Bowen Field to celebrate the community and bring all together. He asked how you celebrate uniqueness, rivalries, etc. and showed a wedding ring holding together both sides, colors could be chosen, have an informative kiosk, LED lights shining up into a gemstone, etc. He handed out a sketch of what it could be.

Mr. Presley stated the only concern he had if it were in the middle of the parking lot would be people doing doughnuts around it.

Cecil Marson stated that he would like something symbolic recognizing the two towns, colleges, and high schools and it would only be good if all were included.

Mrs. Payne asked where it could go.

Mr. Boggess stated on the border somewhere that he would need to study it more.

Mr. Holt thanked him for coming and asked if there were private funding donors, etc. to help with this because at this point the Town had priorities to take care of on its side and asked if it would be costly for both.

Mr. Marson stated that the engineering was \$43k and would be \$10k for each of the two Bluefield's and that the Shott Foundation would pay the other \$23k. He stated that they would not know the cost until all sat down and decided what they would like to have.

Mayor Linkous asked what the purpose was that it was one of the least traveled roads and maybe should think about putting it somewhere else.

Mr. Marson stated that he had asked the Visitors Center to also be a part of it to help with more tourism, etc.

Mayor Linkous suggested putting it at the entrance to both.

Mr. Marson stated that they could put all of the smart people in a room together to discuss.

Mayor Linkous asked the time line on it.

Mr. Marson stated that Todd should have something in the next few months.

Mayor Linkous stated that it was time the two Bluefield's got together and did something. He asked if it was something that had already been approved.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was mentioned to council but never formally voted on.

Mr. Holt questioned if it would be affordable.

Mr. Holman made a motion to pay \$10k towards the engineering on this project. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

Mr. Riffe asked James if the money was there.

Mr. Hampton stated yes.

Mr. Holman stated that going forward he would like to see the Economic Impacts, etc.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

Fire Department Request – Jarried McFarland

Mr. McFarland stated that the Fire Department needed an ATV rescue pumper for brush fires not only locally but to help the county in helping to transport out. He stated that right now the Fire Department did not have anything to go into the trails for rescues or to contain a fire.

Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the purchase. Mr. Holt seconded the motion.

Mr. Riffe asked if the trailer was included.

Mr. McFarland stated no.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS & REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS & REPORTS

Town Hall Vehicle Purchase, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was tabled at the last meeting so she was bringing it back to see what council would like to do.

Mr. Riffe asked what this would replace.

Mrs. Hernandez stated Building & Zoning who were currently using a truck from Public Works.

Mr. Holman stated that this was an ongoing discussion of needing to have a replacement vehicle line in the budget. He stated that he noticed there were 3 vehicles not being used for recreation.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that one was actually a bus and the truck was one of the ones planned by Trent to be replaced.

Mr. Holman asked if they were usable.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that she would have the garage to look at them and see.

Mr. Holman stated that it would take some time to get into replacing vehicles, would like more discussion on inventory, how they were being used and input for a plan going forward and to look at what needed to be replaced first which would require an overview of the condition of the fleet.

Mr. Holt asked that they hold off and discuss since we were getting ready for a new budget.

It was discussed that the Police Department had a schedule for purchasing new vehicles.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that in the past we were given the old Police vehicles and the one she was driving was Chief Cundiff's which had some problems but was drivable.

Mr. Hampton stated that the buses and garbage trucks were on a 4 year schedule with the Transit buses being funded federally at 96%.

Mr. Holman stated the he understood Public Works had vehicles out using every day, was there others that were being underutilized.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that as long as she had been there that all of the department heads had a vehicle that they took home and of course Public Works had multiple vehicles.

Mr. Holman suggested looking at the policy as to how many miles to and from the job and how many miles were being spent on the job to which all need to be considered for the vehicle

maintenance plan. He stated that he was not against buying a vehicle that they just needed to be cautious for the immediate future.

Mr. Presley asked if we only needed SUVs.

Mrs. Hernandez stated at one point we had the old crown vics from the Police Department.

Mr. Holt asked that they all agree to table until budget discussions.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that we pretty much ran them until they could not run anymore.

Mayor Linkous asked when the department heads were allowed to take vehicles home.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that she had been here 14 years and it had always been that way.

Mr. Trigg stated regarding donations, that Camp Joy came and they approved it without allowing James to look and see if the money was there.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that she and James were recently talking about contingency and that the requests were never ending.

Mr. Hampton stated that contingency was blown by about \$50k at this point.

Mayor Linkous asked why.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was pretty much all the unbudgeted items being approved.

Mr. Holman stated that they need to set the budgeted donations.

Mr. Trigg agreed and said to stick to it.

Mr. Holman stated that they would always have requests but they needed to look at the process and put some guardrails around it.

Budget Amendment, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez asked for a vote to approve the following budget amendments:

PURPOSE: Litter Grant

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3204-0407	Litter Grant	<u>\$3,000.00</u>	<u>\$4,320.00</u>	<u>\$1,320.00</u>
		<u>\$3,000.00</u>	<u>\$4,320.00</u>	<u>\$1,320.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item	Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
4230-8112 Litter Control	<u>\$2,060.00</u>	<u>\$3,380.00</u>	<u>\$1,320.00</u>
	<u>\$2,060.00</u>	<u>\$3,380.00</u>	<u>\$1,320.00</u>

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the Budget Amendment. Mr. Riffe 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: Yes
 Councilmember Presley: Yes
 Councilmember Payne: Yes
 Councilmember Trigg: Yes
 Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

Unbudgeted Request, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez stated that we received a request from Friends of SWVA asking for \$7,500. She stated that it was a request we received every year but did not think we ever funded it.

Mayor Linkous stated that it was never funded because the road did not come anywhere close to Bluefield, VA.

Council agreed not to fund it.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Dave Wohlford stated that with food shortages that there were people wanting to have chickens in the Town that it may be something to relook at for certain areas. He stated the next thing was people made mistakes and they got rid of the manager who was also our attorney and he knew what he was paid to go away, another lawyer and manager would be needed and this would cost around ½ million dollars. He stated that Trent Crewe did not have the authority to execute a contract on the pickle ball courts and the Town did not half ½ million dollars to cover what was already paid including all he mentioned. He stated that the Mayor lived at Town Hall or was always on the phone with them and the reason his vote was taken away, he suggested they meet with the Town Manager to get input every week, that Chuck had sent out the cost for a new vehicle and we needed to purchase something cheaper that they were spending the citizens money and needed to be careful, Bluefield WV asked for \$10k and we always got the short end of the stick

that council provided oversight to the Town Manager, that we were spending a lot at Fincastle and he would like to see their finances that we could not keep spending money that we did not have.

Mayor Linkous told him that he did not know what he was talking about.

Mr. Wohlford gave out the following numbers associated with the above: \$120k, \$110k, \$100k for attorney and \$140k for a new manager. He stated that the Town Manager needed to have firm limits before signing any contracts and that council should have the ability to look at anything first, that the whole thing with Mr. Crewe did not make sense.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

None.

TOWN UPDATES

None.

TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Bridge Update

Mr. McGraw stated that he would be seeking several resolutions which would enable use of a design build mechanism by the Town which could provide substantial cost savings going forward to adopt procedures for the Town to be consistent with Virginia Secretary of Administration for design build contracts, a resolution in the case of a foot bridge where competitive sealed bids were not practicable or advantageous due to the cost and nature as well as the cost and administrating burden required by a competitive sealed bid and finally a motion to seek a design build evaluation committee and recommended that Danny Evans and Tim Price be on the committee and to delegate to the Town Manager authority to designate other members to the committee. He stated that the offerors who qualified would receive a Request for Proposal.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the first resolution to adopt the state procedures. Mr. Holman 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:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

Mr. McGraw stated that the second would need council to make a motion finding that competitive sealed bidding was not practicable or physically advantageous.

Mrs. Payne made that motion. 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:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

Mr. McGraw stated the last one would be to appoint a design build committee including the two Public Works Directors.

Mr. Presley made that motion. Mr. Holt 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:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 in favor.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Holt stated that there had been an ad out for an attorney and they needed to move forward on it.

Mr. Presley stated that he was working on the DDC with Lori and Lee, the water projects were a big lift ahead and asked about cameras around town.

Mr. Holman had none.

Mr. Riffe had none.

Mrs. Payne stated that there was a train derailment in Ohio and asked if we had an Emergency Response Plan in Bluefield for such an incident.

Mr. McFarland stated yes that they worked with NFS.

Mr. Holt stated that the local resources would be limited that they would bring in state and federal resources.

Mr. Trigg asked when Chief was not here that he send someone in his place.

Mayor Linkous stated that an offer had been made and accepted for Town Manager but they were still working out the details.

ADJOURN

Mr. Holt made a motion to recess the meeting until Thursday at 5 p.m. to go into Executive Session for the purpose of contracts and negotiations. Mr. Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

The meeting was recessed at 9:27 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk