

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
February 8, 2022**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, February 8, 2022 at 5:30 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.
Shane Gunter, Police Chief
11 members of public

CALL TO ORDER

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

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Mayor Linkous opened the floor for discussion.

Council asked if there were any preliminary numbers on the goals.

Mr. Crewe stated that staff had contacted the bridge company and received an updated quote in the amount of \$82k for an 8'x 67' bridge.

Council asked if there were any other quotes and there were none. They asked to receive turnkey pricing including maintenance.

Mr. Crewe discussed the Thompson & Litton proposal for the lead projects. He discussed using \$300k of the ARPA money to do an across the board 3% increase on wages not including the Police Department at this time. He recommended the money be put into the employees over the next three years. He went over the goals in the order of importance and if there was any money left then they could move on to the next one.

Council discussed raising taxes, garbage rates, etc. if justifiable.

Mr. Crewe talked about legislation that was being looked at to increase wages for the Sheriff's Department, Game Wardens, etc. but nothing locally. He stated that they were looking

at another \$100k to stay competitive. He stated that BCBS would be going up 8.5% which would also increase VRS.

Council asked if staff had looked at any other funding sources besides VDH for this water project and asked if pricing was being obtained for downtown projects.

Mr. Crewe stated that Thompson & Litton was looking into funding sources. He stated that the quote for Harmony Acres was \$750k but that quote was two years old, cameras would be around \$90k (59 total) and that businesses were interested in putting up their own to tie into this project, sidewalks from Bluefield University down would be around \$200k but we may be able to get VDOT funding for, he was not for sure what the College/720 sewer line was concerning but did not think we could use the ARPA money since we did not own it.

Council discussed that the Sanitary Board was wanting \$66k from the town to help with this project and that bid openings would be this month with the project to start in 2023/2024. It was asked that we reach out to their attorney concerning ownership of the lines. It was also asked if we could pay any loans off with the \$2.5 million to lower our debt.

Mr. Crewe stated no but they could look at refinancing. The next item under the goals was Graham Rec Park lighting and dugouts and all that was needed would cost around \$1.5 million.

Council asked that they look at the dugouts and mounds now because of safety issues with the dugouts.

Mr. Crewe stated that staff was sending in foundation letters for grant money for these projects to be completed over 3-5 years. He stated that very little could be done with the issues in West Graham unless they were a health hazard or building issues and that none were violating code.

Council stated that the issues were on the back streets and growing and that ordinances could be enforced. Council asked how long the new water projects would take.

Mr. Crewe stated that it would take 2-3 years for funding and would be broken down into smaller pieces with a 5-10 year plan for completion. He stated that he and James were working on a proposed budget to give to council by April and that the ARPA money had to be decided on by April as well. He stated that he would bring recommendations as to where the funding should go and the projected plan was to increase rates/wages.

Council discussed how years ago they had problems with employees/departments and that one department had a very big budget but they were not seeing what was being done. He stated that several on council had talked about it but that certain department had stepped up in the last year. Trash Revenue was discussed including tipping fees at the landfill that should not be charged to the Town. The Counties donation to our Fire Department, Fincastle's game plan for the future to include incremental increases, building a clientele and making it known that the restaurant was open to the public were also all discussed.

The meeting was recessed at 7:10 p.m. and resumed at 7:30 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Linkous stated that Greg DeGray was appointed to fill Jarrod Bailey's term and that he looked forward to serving with him.

Mr. DeGray thanked them for the opportunity.

Mayor Linkous added an FBLA Proclamation to the agenda.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Graham Historical Society – Lee Riffe

Mr. Riffe stated that the Historical Society had met and appointed him as president. He stated that they were looking to have an event in the spring downtown to promote the Town's downtown area. He stated that they would also like to host a Veteran's Day event downtown at the memorial and possibly have a parade.

Mr. Presley stated that he had a group interested in doing a Veteran's Day program and they needed to form a committee and work together.

Mr. Riffe stated that he would do another update next month.

Mayor Linkous stated that the Town was looking at something to recognize Eva Saunders.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

Resolution-VDH Funding Application, ROLL CALL VOTE – Trent Crewe

Mr. Crewe stated the following resolution needed to be passed to request funding through VDH for the water projects. He read the resolution:

VIRGINIA: AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE TOWN HALL IN BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA ON THE 8th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2022.

A RESOLUTION TO AUTHORIZE THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA TO APPLY THROUGH VDH/FCAP FOR REPLACEMENT OF THE EXISTING WATER LINES (LEAD JOINTS) WITHIN ITS SYSTEM.

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluefield, Virginia (“Town”) has determined it necessary to continue with upgrades of replacing existing water lines (lead joints); and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Health-Office of Drinking Water provides for projects such as this one; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA, does hereby vote to seek funding from the Virginia Department of Health-Office of Drinking Water for such project.

IT IS SO RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA on this 8th day of February, 2022.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the VDH Funding Resolution. 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 VDH Funding Resolution.

FBLA Proclamation, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mayor Linkous stated that the Town was asked to pass an FBLA Proclamation so that the group would continue to earn points.

Mrs. Hernandez read the proclamation:

VIRGINIA: AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE TOWN HALL IN BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA ON THE 8th DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2022.

**PROCLAMATION COMMEMORATING
FBLA WEEK**

WHEREAS, Future Business Leaders of America-Phi Beta Lambda is a nonprofit educational organization whose first chapter was established in Johnson City, Tennessee, in 1942; and

WHEREAS, this organization has grown now to encompass over 250,000 members nationwide in middle schools, high schools, colleges, universities, career and technical schools, and private business schools; and

WHEREAS, FBLA-PBL is a professional business organization dedicated to bringing business and education together in a positive working relationship through innovative leadership and career development programs; and

WHEREAS, members perform community service activities and strive to build a student's understanding of the realities of the modern business world; and

WHEREAS, FBLA-PBL teaches middle school, high school, and college students business and leadership principles, and assists in the transition from school to work;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Town Council of the Town of Bluefield hereby recognizes February 13-19, 2022 as FBLA week.

IT IS SO RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA on this 8th day of February, 2022.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the FBLA Proclamation. 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 FBLA Proclamation.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Dave Wohlford stated his opposition once again to homes on frames. He stated that zoning was changed for certain people and that he would like to know who on Planning Commission and Town Council was in favor of this. He stated another issue was members not attending meetings including the Planning Commission and they needed to be off of those boards if they could not attend.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Gunter stated that all was going well.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Recreation Department Personnel

Mr. Crewe introduced Heather and her husband who both work in the Recreation Department and were in attendance.

New Weather Policy-Tazewell County Administrator's Offices

Mr. Crewe stated that he had adopted a weather closing policy to follow the Tazewell County Administrator's Office for bad weather.

Winter Newsletter

Mr. Crewe stated that he had received several complimentary calls on the winter newsletter.

Snow Removal/Trash Pickup

Mr. Crewe stated that staff had done well on snow removal although a mailbox had been knocked over and one of the trucks slipped off of the road. He stated that we missed two days of trash pickup and was a day late due to the landfill being closed but that all it was taken care of and all were doing a great job.

John Mills, Continuing Education Credits

Mr. Crewe stated that John Mills would be continuing his education credits and would be current for another two years.

Kris Williams, Erosion & Settlement Control Program Administrator Test

Mr. Crewe stated that Kris had passed the first test at his own will of wanting to better himself.

Train Derailment

Mr. Crewe stated that there had been a train derailment last week of four cars with two going in the creek. He stated that there was no leakage or damage and it took them a couple of days to get it cleaned up.

BCBS Increase

Mr. Crewe stated as they had already discussed that BCBS would be increasing 8.5% this year.

IDA Vacancies

Mr. Crewe stated that there were two IDA vacancies with Greg and Lisa both resigning. He stated that the IDA had meet earlier and had three names they would recommend to council.

Property behind FUMC

Mr. Crewe stated that Pastor Ferguson's church would like to lease from the town the property located behind the church to put play equipment, picnic tables, etc. on and that they would keep it insured.

Mr. Holt asked if it could be conveyed to them.

Mr. Crewe stated no that it would have to be advertised as surplus. He stated that the reappointments to the BZA & IDA were entered into the Circuit Court. He stated that no special election would be needed to fill Jarrod Bailey's seat because it was on the November docket. He stated that if the town were to hold a special election that it would cost around \$10k.

Planning Commission

Mr. Crewe stated that Planning Commission had met last night and adopted proposals that would be coming to council.

Digital Sign

Mr. Crewe stated that the electronic sign had some issues and staff was looking to replace it which would cost around \$25k.

July 4th Celebration

Mr. Crewe stated that Fincastle was looking to hold a 4th of July celebration on Saturday, July 2nd with fireworks, etc.

COVID Tests

Mr. Crewe stated that because of confusion over the availability, reliability, accuracy, and uniformity of home COVID tests, they would no longer be sufficient in missing work and that the test would have to be administered by a medical professional such as a doctor, other healthcare provider or laboratory.

Mr. Holman asked if the testing at Bluefield University would be allowed.

Mr. Crewe stated yes.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. DeGray had none.

Mr. Holman thanked staff for the planning session and stated that it was useful to move forward. He thanked everyone for coming out, thanked staff, the volunteers and Chief.

Mr. Holt thanked Greg for his willingness to serve and thanked James for stepping up at the last council meeting. He stated that the planning session was beneficial.

Mr. Trigg thanked everyone for coming out and for the planning session.

Mrs. Payne had none.

Mr. Presley stated that Greg would do a good job. He stated that they needed to talk to Dave Bowers regarding the downtown stuff and gave a shout out to the best Police Chief to Kim for doing a great job and to James who was the mastermind of numbers. He stated that they needed to have another planning session and suggested the first meeting in March.

Mayor Linkous thanked Kim for getting food and for the planning session. He welcomed Heather and stated that was the first time he had seen her. He suggested having another planning session at the next meeting if the information was available. He thanked staff for the snow removal efforts and that he always saw our officers stopped helping people in the cold early morning hours.

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

Discussion or consideration of the investment of public funds where competition or bargaining is involved, where, if made public initially, the financial interest of the governmental unit would be adversely affected with such closed meeting being confined to the following subject: contract negotiations with Graham High School facility upgrades.

Mayor Linkous invited Chris Stacy, Erik Robinson and Joanne Young into Executive Session. He asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session.

Vice-Mayor Holt 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 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 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 Payne seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

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 8, 2022, 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 8, 2022.

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 8, 2022, 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 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:	Yes

Motion carried 7-0 in favor of the certification.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk