

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Reconvened Minutes
March 10, 2021**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council reconvened the regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting from Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. on Wednesday, March 10, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Donnie Linkous, Mayor
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Jarrod Bailey, Councilmember
Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Anglis Trigg, Jr. Councilmember
Rick Holman, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
Tara White, Receptionist
James Hampton, Treasurer/Transit Dir.
1 member of public

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Linkous reconvened the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

FINCASTLE BUDGET

Mr. Crewe stated that he had asked for \$230k for Fincastle pool renovations and stated that it would be taken out of the present budget and if needed out of the LGIP. He stated that he was no expert on our budget that James was and he explained how they got to where they were by moving numbers around. He stated that they were able to do exactly what they said they could do last night and that before he got home and within an hour of the meeting adjourning that James had emailed him a way to accomplish this. He stated that our budget was a 56 page excel spreadsheet and that this would stay within the existing budget. He stated that \$228k would fix, repair and open the pool and in that number he had added a pond aerator which was \$5,400. He stated that today you could not get a car in because they had two golf events and had to call in a college aged young man to clean carts as one person was getting off to put another one on. He stated during the middle of this that he bugged them about their budget and if James would have had his laptop last night that he could have done this then. He stated that it was a team effort and done across the board and that James should be doing the presentation. He stated on September 2, 2020 that they had sent out 5 requests.

Mr. Holman asked if that was RFP.

Mr. Crewe stated no but only one of those called asking questions. He stated that National Pools came and looked at it and he had received an email today with the leak detection report and the proposal that was sent. He stated that council had approved \$1,850 for the pressure testing on February 9, 2021 and it was done the next day. He went over the amounts: \$106,950 to re-plaster

the interior of the main pool only, remove all interior paint, remove all tile, etc. \$4,950 for the installation of a new spectrum motion trek ada lift, \$34,950 to replace and rebuild the filter system for a total cost of \$148,700. He stated that another \$75k would be for things not included such as tearing down the shed, redoing the bathrooms, re-plumbing the kiddie pool and putting in kiddie fixtures.

Mr. Holman asked if we had \$75k already.

Mr. Crewe stated that there was \$68,500 left from a grant and there were other funding sources available.

Mr. Bailey asked if the \$75k included a heater.

Mr. Crewe stated that he thought so and when they redid the plumbing that there was a heater unit there. He stated that he would ask that question.

Mr. Bailey stated that #4 showed the installation of a new motor but his main concern would be the heater.

Mr. Crewe stated that this did not include the aerator which was like a floating shower head that floated on the water and could be moved if needed. He stated with that added in it was \$229,100 so he asked for \$230k. He stated that the town had bought Fincastle and it needed to be run correctly or they needed to do something different.

Mr. Holman asked the amount.

Mr. Crewe stated \$5,400 and the \$75k would include pool furniture. He stated that the best estimate they could get was \$230k. He stated that they were up against a timeline to open in June if it was approved now. He stated that the pressure testing was good. He stated that they would be moving line items to other line items and that he, John, Jess, Anthony and James had worked on it throughout the day. He stated that account 1220 was the golf side and they would take \$6,000 out of 1220-6003 agricultural supplies leaving \$33,001.26 in the account. He stated that they had already ordered some supplies.

Mr. Holman asked if supplies had been pre-purchased.

Mr. Crewe stated some had been but the \$33,001.26 was enough to pay what they needed through June 30th.

Mr. Holt stated that was going to be his question and if this was current year.

Mr. Crewe stated yes through June 30th. He stated that Anthony bought cheap and would be ok with the amount left. He stated that no new funds would be reallocated. He stated that 1230-1200 was the restaurant side.

Mr. Bailey asked what date the spreadsheet went through.

Mr. Crewe stated June 30th.

Mr. Bailey asked if it included up through February because it did not match up to the numbers they had.

Mr. Crewe stated that there were a couple of entries that had not been included yet. He stated that 1230-1200 was salaries-overtime. He stated that there were two employees who were drawing retirement and did not get overtime and they did not anticipate any overtime since none had been spent. He stated that they would take out \$10,873 zeroing that line item out. 1230-2300 health insurance-employer was the cost for the town. He stated that two were insured on another policy and did not need the Town's insurance so he would be taking out \$48k leaving \$10,642.

Mr. Holman asked how they forecasted these that had not been spent.

Mr. Crewe stated that these were expenditures that they did not have to pay but were budgeted.

Mr. Presley asked if this could be done on all line items.

Mr. Crewe stated yes if there were reason to do so. He stated that they were moving a lot of money within.

Mr. Holman stated that he understood the need to move and asked if we blew out each line item.

Mr. Hampton stated some but not all.

Mr. Crewe stated that at the end of the year some went on a spending spree but he had told them they would not lose it if they did not use it this year. He stated that he was looking at budgeting for things such as a snow plow truck, etc. and by budgeting 1/5 of the cost each year then at the end of the 5th year you would have the money to purchase it. He stated 1230-5657 other programs & events was a catch all for town sponsored events which did not happen so they would zero that line item out taking \$36,986. The next one he stated that he was not sure where the money came from but was 1230-5850 contingency and would be taking out \$33,486 zeroing it out, 1230-6002 food supplies, he stated that they had 5 big events between now and June 30th if they could be done and suggested taking out \$41,127 leaving \$178,379 which was what they needed for these events.

Mr. Holt asked how they came up with \$310k.

Mr. Hampton stated that was the budgeted amount.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had verified the numbers that were showing and they were accurate amounts. He stated the reason the number was so big was they would have to buy alcohol, etc. for these 5 events.

Mr. Presley stated the good thing about that was we would have profit from these events.

Mr. Crewe stated yes and that the average event would be \$9k for 200 people for the rental fees alone not including what we would make from food and alcohol sales.

Mr. Holman asked if they deducted any amount from that line item 6002 would they be ok.

Mr. Crewe stated that this one had been discussed several times throughout the day and Fincastle was comfortable with the number they would have left for their 5 big events if COVID allowed and if not then they would have that extra money.

Mr. Holman stated that it could be the opposite if they were able to open up full force in two weeks and asked what would happen if they needed the money.

Mr. Crewe stated that he would come back and move line items again. He stated that we would be able to recoup some money from these fees and that two of these weddings were on the books for last year and were cancelled. He stated that John, Anthony and Jessima have assured him that \$178,379 was good for these 5 events. He stated that 1200-6007 repair & maintenance supplies would be zeroed out taking \$14,409. He stated that there would not be a lot to repair between now and June and that there had already been some repairs done in house by staff working together such as painting and putting shading on the windows instead of putting the curtains back up, 1230-6014 other operating supplies was a catch all and they would be taking \$7k leaving \$872, 1230-8101 machinery & equipment they had gotten all that they needed or it was in route. He stated that they had put in new tables, a range head, freezer, etc. in the kitchen and were good through June. He stated that they would be zeroing it out by taking \$29,366, 1230-8201 equipment purchase they had not spent anything out of so they would be zeroing it out by taking \$4,500. He stated that total was \$230,747 which was the worst case scenario and it all came from Fincastle.

Mr. Holt stated that his concern was if it came from another department.

Mr. Crewe stated that \$6,000 was from the golf side and the rest was from the restaurant. He stated that as he told them last night, it could be done and that this \$230,747 was moved around within the Fincastle budget only.

Mr. Holman stated that if this could have been done last night then he would have felt better but he understood that James could not answer it then but there were also some concerns that it would come from the LGIP.

Mr. Crewe stated that they did not think so but could not tell them for sure.

Mr. Holman stated that from his stand point that this satisfied that due diligence had been done.

Mr. Crewe stated that he understood that and it was the way things were done here. He stated that they had 5 people working on this today and that he wanted to work with Fincastle on

this. He stated that they had originally planned to take more out of the food budget but Fincastle told them no.

Mr. Bailey stated that for the month of February they operated at a deficit of around \$14k.

Mr. Crewe stated that was on paper.

Mr. Bailey asked where the money came from to break even since we have had to spend that money.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was in the budget from tax revenue but that all revenue went into one pot and was divided out. He stated that the numbers he was looking at were slightly skewed because part of the golf and all of the restaurant were coming out of that. He stated that it was heavier on the restaurant side because it was not making money but it was not hemorrhaging as bad as it looked either. He stated as he said last night in the past 5 weeks they had brought in around \$30k on the restaurant side alone.

Mayor Linkous stated that it was not fair because if you looked at those figures there was almost a \$14k per month payment so if you had \$8k coming in then it would look like the restaurant was losing \$6k.

Mr. Bailey stated that debt services was not classified in facilities.

Mr. Hampton stated that was correct that it was total budget. He stated that another thing they had not mentioned was that \$180k was coming out of the General Fund to offset Fincastle which had not been done yet. He stated that the General Fund owed Fincastle that money which did not show up yet.

Mayor Linkous stated that they raised meals tax 1%.

Mr. Hampton stated 1 ½%.

Mayor Linkous stated 1 ½% so for every 1% it raised \$200k. He stated that it was his understanding that \$200k per year would go into the Fincastle budget.

Mr. Holt stated no that they did not know then they would purchase Fincastle but that it was raised for special projects. He stated that he did not know if any was set aside for Fincastle.

Mr. Hampton stated no.

Mr. Bailey asked what the total annual meals tax estimate was in revenue.

Mr. Hampton stated around \$1.5 million.

Mr. Bailey stated that was a little over 10% of that money. He stated that if he had a business and spent \$50k and took in \$40k then he lost \$10k but the bills were still getting paid. He asked if they were constantly transferring.

Mr. Hampton stated no that they had prior year reserves from the previous physical year that was offsetting.

Mr. Holman stated that was hard to see on the papers they were looking at.

Mr. Bailey stated that he understood that we had \$300k budgeted but the revenue was not where it needed to be and that was his concern that when revenue was short they would still be shorting themselves an additional \$230k however if they did not spend the money that was budgeted then they would not be losing that additional amount.

Mr. Crewe stated that would be true if the only source for Fincastle was Fincastle income.

Mr. Holman asked if there was a way to show a better real time view.

Mr. Crewe stated yes and that they were only looking at one piece of the budget/one department at the expense side only. He stated that this was a small percentage of the entire budget and if they were only looking at Fincastle then yes it was losing money because it spent more than it was taking in but that was not the only source of the funds to pay Fincastle expenses. He stated that they may break even or a little better.

Mr. Holt stated that the initial goal was to pay for services and asked if they anticipated that in a few years.

Mr. Hampton stated yes.

Mr. Bailey stated that his goal was not even to breakeven but if they continued to subsidize that portion of the meals tax money. He stated if you made \$150k per year and you spent that money to provide services for the community to draw in tourism to bring other people in then that was money well spent.

Mr. Holt stated that was right but the hope was to break even and start building that fund for other projects.

Mr. Crewe stated that was the part they needed to focus on and there were 3 parts-golf which COVID helped, restaurant which COVID stopped and the pool which you did not have working and would need to spend money which would generate some income. He stated that those three pieces were connected and you had to have food to sell beer which they were making good money selling beer. He stated that we could not sell beer without an ABC license or selling food and the expectation was that he had a waiting list for people wanting pool passes. He stated that John's expectation was if the pool was open that it would be a little nicer than it was and one set of parents would come and spend the day and would want to eat and they hoped to have the menu poolside.

Mr. Holman stated that he appreciated what they had just done.

Mr. Crewe stated that he did not think they had ever done this.

Mr. Presley agreed and stated that he had learned more in the last 30 minutes with the budget than he had in the past 4-5 years.

Mr. Holt stated that this was exactly what he just told the Mayor that they needed in the form of Work Sessions. He stated that he was not there last night but felt it could have been adverted if they would have had the information communicated to them upfront. He stated that he was not pointing fingers but was saying this was where they needed to get better with communication and agreed with those who wanted to sit down and do their due diligence before saying yes.

Mr. Presley stated that he wanted them all to be uniformed in their decision. He stated that this was great and felt they could find more money in the budget for other things.

Mr. Crewe stated that they were not spending any new money that this was already budgeted and what they were trying to tell them last night was they had not run the numbers yet because they had not had time but was confident telling them that they did not need any new money and if they did it would be minuscule.

Mr. Presley stated that they needed to be able to explain to the citizens when questioned.

Mr. Crewe stated that he was not being patronizing but the budget was a 56 page spreadsheet that no one could digest other than James who knew it inside and out and he called him all the time asking questions. He stated that he knew what he was doing more than anyone he had ever met. He stated that he did not know how to go about getting it to them with it being 56 pages.

Mr. Presley stated that this was where they needed to sit down with James and have a 4-5 hour Work Session to go over it all.

Mr. Crewe stated that they would wear themselves out. He stated that Fincastle was their biggest asset, single expense and money maker although they were not there yet and he had lots of hands on meetings with them and knew how they operated and also had a lot of hands on meetings with Pete and knew what they did but what he was trying to do in his mindset for the budget was that the employees have not had a raise in 2 years and he was trying to work on a 3% raise.

Mr. Presley asked if he had worked out the ones going to \$9.50.

Mr. Crewe stated that was his next thing that we only had 14 employees but would have more for seasonal help and suggested hiring 8 instead of 6 to work less hours. He stated that if someone was making less than \$9.50 then they would be bumped up but then he would have to look at the supervisor to see if they also needed to be bumped up. He stated that he was looking

at them independently but those being bumped up to \$9.50 would not receive a 3% increase on top of that.

Mr. Holt stated that was good that he was addressing that because we forget about the people who have been here 10-15 years and that compression was important.

Mr. Crewe stated that you had to take care of your people because if you did not then they would leave. He stated that they had some really skilled people working for the Town and if you asked them to do something then they did it just like James sent him an email at 10:40 p.m. last night with the answer. He stated that it was a skill that could not be bought or learnt. He stated that the department heads also knew their stuff as well and his job was to keep the wheels on the bus and the wheels on the bus were quite well but council did not know it because they had never had this much level of detail to it which he was not saying was bad but made this discussion much more difficult because all they were looking at was Fincastle. He stated that there were 14 other departments plus the General Fund and the Transit.

Mr. Holman stated that he appreciated it but that it would go a long ways to have a better view.

Mr. Crewe stated that was his intention and that he had gone through all 56 pages more than once but had not had the chance to start in one area but he would like to give them a recommendation. He stated that once salaries were bumped up then retirement, social security, etc. would also bump up.

Mayor Linkous suggested that they handle the issue at hand.

Mr. Crewe stated that what he was saying was they were doing what they told them they could do last night and that was moving money around in line items within the departments.

Mrs. Payne made a motion to approve the amount needed to update the Fincastle pool. Mr. Trigg seconded the motion.

Mr. Bailey stated regarding the amount made in the motion that they would not necessarily be spending it all and would be using the \$68,500 that was left from the grant.

Mr. Crewe stated yes and other grants they may receive along with any other income received. He stated that what they were doing was moving line items on a budget and looking at the expense side only and not the income side.

Mr. Bailey stated that was allowing them to spend up to that amount.

Mr. Crewe stated yes that this was moving line items in an existing budget to put into a line item for the pool.

Mr. Holman stated that it was not viewed as such last night and was not discussed as a Fincastle only budget.

Mr. Crewe stated that was his fault that he thought it would be but that he and James had not run the numbers yet.

Mr. Holman stated that he appreciated the effort put forth into explaining it thoroughly and that he felt better knowing where the line items were coming from and not from other pieces of the budget and thanked them.

Mr. Bailey asked if they could get clarification on the heating system before signing an agreement because he did not see it listed.

Mayor Linkous stated that the reason it was not included was John said that they thought it worked but would not know until after they filled it with water and could run it to see.

Mr. Bailey stated that was another potential for money.

Mayor Linkous stated yes but it was built in on the top side.

Mr. Bailey stated that he did not want to see them get in a situation where they spent \$230k and they came back asking for more.

Mr. Crewe stated that there was a cushion there.

Mr. Bailey stated that was his biggest concern.

Mr. Presley stated this was the reason they needed a 4 year plan so that discussions like this did not pop up on them and to have a big Work Session once or twice per year. He stated that he would also like to see the bid process made better and for them to be better informed by email.

Mr. Crewe stated that was before him.

Mr. Presley stated that he done a really good job than our previous manager.

Mr. Crewe stated that he was not throwing Mike under the bus that it was a different way of doing things. He stated that he did not know if they would like all of the details but this was the way James had always done and if more money was needed then they just came in and asked.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report

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

Mrs. Hernandez stated it was 6-0 in favor.

Mr. Crewe stated that they still had two issues to discuss with Project Graduation. One was a letter from Project Graduation not stating an amount and that he and James had verified that there was \$500 last year of which \$175 was spent for artwork of the high school that was framed and given to each senior. He stated that another \$500 had been budgeted for this year.

Mr. Presley made a motion to give \$825 total of which \$175 would go towards the artwork and \$650 towards project graduation. Mr. Holt seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to do roll call and report

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

Mrs. Hernandez stated it was 6-0 in favor.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Linkous stated that Mr. Holt was not at the meeting last night and gave him an opportunity to speak.

Mr. Holt stated that they had 200 kids who had signed up for Little League and gave out masks. He encouraged everyone to attend opening day on April 10th and stated that he would send out the time later on.

Mayor Linkous encouraged all to attend the opening day as well.

Mr. Holt stated that they were trying to make it a big event and wanted to do something to honor Lecia Smith for her donation.

Mayor Linkous stated that Trent had proven he was capable and asked that they all give him a chance to get the budget presented. He said that the charter stated that it must be presented by April 1st and to be approved by June 30th after Public Hearings, etc. and asked that they let him and whomever else bring it back to them for a good discussion.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Holt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 5:41 p.m. Mrs. Payne seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 6-0 to adjourn.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk