

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
March 30, 2021**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 at 7:30 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
Shane Gunter, Police Chief
Tara White, Receptionist
6 members of the public

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Linkous called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA & CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to approve the Consent Agenda/Agenda.

Vice-Mayor Holt made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda/Agenda. Councilmember Presley 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 in favor.

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

Budget Amendments, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez went over the following budget amendments:

PURPOSE: Security Services (BB&T)

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0400-0413	Misc Law	<u>\$282,884.60</u>	<u>\$283,059.60</u>	<u>\$175.00</u>
	Enforcement	<u>\$282,884.60</u>	<u>\$283,059.60</u>	<u>\$175.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-1600	Investigative	<u>\$26,000.00</u>	<u>\$26,175.00</u>	<u>\$175.00</u>
	OT/Police	<u>\$26,000.00</u>	<u>\$26,175.00</u>	<u>\$175.00</u>

PURPOSE: DMV Safety Grant

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0400-0413	Misc Law	<u>\$283,059.60</u>	<u>\$283,772.52</u>	<u>\$712.92</u>
	Enforcement	<u>\$283,059.60</u>	<u>\$283,772.52</u>	<u>\$712.92</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-1600	Investigative	<u>\$26,175.00</u>	<u>\$26,887.92</u>	<u>\$712.92</u>
	OT/Police	<u>\$26,175.00</u>	<u>\$26,887.92</u>	<u>\$712.92</u>

PURPOSE: Security Services (Aramark)

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0400-0413	Misc Law	<u>\$283,772.52</u>	<u>\$287,272.52</u>	<u>\$3,500.00</u>
	Enforcement	<u>\$283,772.52</u>	<u>\$287,272.52</u>	<u>\$3,500.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-1600	Investigative	<u>\$26,887.92</u>	<u>\$30,387.92</u>	<u>\$3,500.00</u>
	OT/Police	<u>\$26,887.92</u>	<u>\$30,387.92</u>	<u>\$3,500.00</u>

PURPOSE: DMV Equipment Grant

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0400-0413	Misc Law	<u>\$287,272.52</u>	<u>\$288,147.52</u>	<u>\$875.00</u>
	Enforcement	<u>\$287,272.52</u>	<u>\$288,147.52</u>	<u>\$875.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-8106	Grants	<u>\$47,568.51</u>	<u>\$48,443.51</u>	<u>\$875.00</u>
		<u>\$47,568.51</u>	<u>\$48,443.51</u>	<u>\$875.00</u>

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to approve the Budget Amendments.

Mrs. Payne made a motion to approve the Budget Amendments. 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.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Joyce Johnston stated that as she has said before Mr. Linkous and all of the councilmembers made such a difference in the lives of the citizens in the town of Bluefield VA and surrounding areas. She stated she had a special request and had been there since 1972 and had seen a lot of good and bad times but saw growth in the town. She stated even her garbage boys as she called them and that she taught one of them many years ago in school that it was amazing how nice they were. She stated that she and Mr. Trigg went way back and he was an amazing man for all that he did for the children and students at GMS that were struggling. She stated she would like to make a special request and that they had been very supportive in the past to the Graham High School Academic Foundation and thanked them for that. She stated that they had what was called table sponsors each year and that was when they recognized all the academic teams and when she was president of the board they did not include the technology students and now they did. She stated they had 3 winners from the technology school and one was in brick laying and all of those things were good. She stated this past year they were unable to have the banquet due to COVID and some competed virtually like the MAC team and FBLA and she was in charge of the fundraising and had already left information with Mr. Crewe about The Town of Bluefield VA being a table sponsor in the past. She stated the table sponsors were \$200 plus and would like to ask for a bit more if they could but if they could not she understood. She stated that she wanted to let them know that in that letter to Mr. Crewe the \$12,000 they spent last year for the teachers and students at GHS were the teachers writing grant requests to the foundations and the foundations reviewed them and would approve or not. She stated the first was \$400 for a document scanner for the school counselor, \$796 for two portable stages for music and theater department, \$600 for virtual band for use at GHS and GMS, \$1,450 for a license agreement for the Ed Puzzle Education Technology tool that was used for all GHS teacher for online and virtual teaching and was an amazing tool. She stated she was invited to observe how it helped all the teachers and all the students during a time when they were all on virtual learning. She stated \$1,140.60 for white boards in the Social Studies Department, \$119.99 for document instructional cameras for the art department, \$620 for DECA virtual competition expenses, \$1,125 for Hugh O'Brian leadership camp for 5 students and also \$3,537.83 for the Science Department. She stated that years before they updated their Science Department because they had so many students coming back and saying they had no idea how many different things there were to use but they had not had access to them until college, \$2,000 estimated expenses for approximately 20 students that qualified for state and national FBLA competitions with a grand total spent this past year at GMS and GHS of \$12,049.42. She thanked them for their support and always sponsoring a table and for helping as

much as they could and hoped if possible that the town could donate more than \$200 this year and asked if they had any questions.

Mayor Linkous stated that he attended once and thought the tables were \$875.

Mrs. Johnston stated no and there were some stipulations for some of the foundations that did not give grants or money to another. She stated that The Jam Foundation and Ethel Bowen Foundation had already given.

Mr. Presley stated to call him Monday and he would give \$100.

Mrs. Johnston stated that she stayed after him all the time and always asked for money for the library but they were good right now. She stated that Mr. Presley was always generous and gave a lot. She thanked all of the councilmembers and Pete Sleeman and his helpers that came to the library after they got off work to work on their grass and shrubs and it was not on the town's time but their own. She stated that they helped her with the landscaping and she offered to pay them but they would not take it.

Mayor Linkous asked Mr. Trigg what he thought of it and if it was something they should do.

Mr. Trigg stated that he liked to be consistent.

Mayor Linkous asked if he thought they should wait until the next council meeting.

Mr. Trigg stated that he thought they should let the town manager review it and get back to them and not make hasty decisions.

Mr. Crewe stated there was a place in budget for it.

Mr. Trigg stated that if he bought a car he would not just buy one that he would want to try it out and shop around first and felt the same with council that anytime someone came in asking for something they should discuss it with the town manager. He stated that he was not saying they would not give it to them but that it should be discussed first and that was just his opinion.

Mayor Linkous asked if anyone else had any discussion about it.

Mr. Holt stated that they had the letter and had time to go over the packet and he knew that they gave the \$200 annually but this was exceptional circumstances and he felt bad for the many

youth organizations he was a part of and would not mind acting on it tonight if the majority of council wanted to act on it.

Mayor Linkous asked if there was any other discussion.

Mrs. Payne stated she was on the board and asked if she could vote.

Mr. Crewe stated as long as she was not paid for the position on that board.

Mr. Bailey asked Mr. Crewe if he knew how much additional was being requested by Mrs. Johnston.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had her letter and no amount was specified but he had gone through the budget and he knew they paid the \$200 in the past and had people that attended the banquet but could not tell them a specific amount. He stated that he was sure they could make it work.

Mr. Holt stated that he would make the motion if the rest were on board.

Mr. Bailey stated that he was in favor of giving the \$200 but felt it would be wise to let the town manager go through the budget and let them know at the next meeting because if they made the motion to give \$500 and the town manager came back next week and said they could have given \$750 then there would have been \$250 more that they could have given to the kids.

Mr. Crewe stated that they had donation lines in the budget that was not specified for anything and if they wanted to give \$2,000 they could but there would not be any money left for anyone else and he did not know what they were thinking in terms of but \$200 would not take a hit nor would \$300 to \$400. He stated anything over \$500 would be taking a hit because they did not know who would come in next asking for money.

Mr. Bailey asked if there was anything left in this year's budget.

Mr. Crewe stated they did not have anything left for that specific line but had a non-profit restricted donation line item with \$1,000 and had 29 specified line items for charitable expenses. He stated that they had a line item for project graduation that was \$500 and also in the budget it showed GHS Educational Foundation or grants for schools that specifically was listed. He stated that there was \$6,000 that was already spent and the \$500 for project graduation that was spent which left the restricted non-profit line of \$1,000 that had not been spent.

Mr. Holt stated that Mr. Crewe had said if they use the full \$1,000 that it would be detrimental since they had a couple months left in this fiscal year but if they gave \$400 that it would not be earth shattering.

Mr. Crewe stated that was correct and there would be some left over for another group if asked.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to give the GHS Academic Foundation \$400.00.

Mr. Holt made the motion. Mr. Presley 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.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

None.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Mr. Crewe stated that he would be quick and in the P&A report it gave a rundown of all that he had been doing.

Donation Requests, ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Crewe stated that the donation request from Mrs. Johnston they had just acted upon and the other was a request for \$7,500.00 from the Friends of Southwest Virginia Organization. He stated at the bottom of that letter it gave about 8 organizations tied to that request. He stated to his knowledge they had not been asked for this request in the past and that was why it was in the packet to decide what they wanted to do on it.

Council chose not to act on this donation request

S. College/Rollins Street, ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Crewe stated also in the packets was a communication from Street Wise Property Investments, LLC pertaining to a property on South College/Rollins Street and it was his understanding they were not donating it but wanted to sell it. He stated that it was located down South College towards town on the right and he did not foresee any need the town would have for this property.

Mr. Holman asked if the property was zoned B1.

Mr. Crewe stated that he believed it was and was residential.

Mr. Holman stated that he thought there was about an acre on top.

Mr. Crewe stated it was wooded and nothing on it.

Mayor Linkous stated that he thought this was the group going around everywhere wanting to buy people's houses.

Mr. Crewe stated that it could be.

Mayor Linkous stated he was sure it was and now they wanted to sell it to the town after they had purchased it.

Mr. Holman stated that particular property was for sale before this company purchased it and he did not want to buy any property at this time.

Mayor Linkous stated he did not either and asked if anyone else would. Council did not and Mayor Linkous asked Mr. Crewe to move forward.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had learned from a group led by Mrs. Green that they had received notification by VDOT and were approved to place a marker at the cemetery and would be no cost to the town but they wanted the town to approve the location for the sign. He stated that he and Jody Shrewsbury met with them on several different occasions and they came up with a location next to 460 at the cemetery. He stated that it would be shipped in about 30 days and the town would be responsible for digging the hole and pouring concrete for the sign. He stated the next thing on his list was that the pond was almost completed at the golf course and should be done in the next few days. He stated that staff had made arrangements with Regency Auction to dispose of old town equipment. He stated that some had reserved pricing and that the town owned around 100 parcels that he was reviewing and a few could hold some value and recommend reviewing them all to decide which ones they should keep and to auction the rest in May or June.

Mr. Holman stated they did not have much value and the tax burden alone did not seem to be in the best interest to keep them.

Mr. Crewe stated not in his opinion unless it had potential but the residential areas did not benefit the town. He stated the other thing he wanted to go over was that he and Mr. Hampton had been going through the budget and there were a lot of expenses that were not accounted for in the correct places for example the town managers salary showed up in 5 different departments and the reasoning was they had duties that dealt in other departments and so on. He stated that when he started tracing all of the departments and with Mr. Hampton's help they had come up with a budget that had no tax or fee increase. He stated that he had met with 5 department heads who had never seen the budget before. He stated there were a lot of zeros on a lot of lines and had been for years but they had to stay there due to accounting purposes and auditing would not allow them to be removed because it would look like money was taken away and hid somewhere else.

Mr. Bailey asked if that was for a limited time.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was forever but they could ask the auditors if there was a statute of limitations of 20 years but that it was a big deal to remove a line.

Mr. Holman asked if there was any way to clean up the salaries as they went through the budget.

Mr. Crewe stated that he was trying to clean it up and on the budget they could see it showed four categories of wages in every department which was salaries regular, overtime regular, salaries part-time and overtime part-time and what he tried to do was put together a number. He stated that on all salaries he had a cheat sheet that had all of the town employees' wages on it and he bounced the numbers for example the employees that made under \$9.50 he bounced up to \$9.50 and the ones that made \$9.50 he bounced them a little further. He stated that there were a couple of people that were about to go off of probation and they would be automatically raised. He stated that the four numbers they seen would not show the individual person but the department. He stated that town council had their own section that he was leaving alone.

Mr. Holman stated that it made sense because certain individuals worked in several different departments and had responsibilities in different departments.

Mr. Crewe stated that was correct and if there were any grant money they would have to allocate the money where it needed to go and into whichever department. He stated this was why it was taking so long to get through it.

Mr. Bailey asked if a line item could not be removed could the GL code be changed.

Mr. Crewe stated he did not think so because all of the accounts were tied in a numerical order but he would ask James and Vickie if it could be done.

Mr. Holman asked in regard to salaries were they factoring in cost of living.

Mr. Crewe stated yes and the department heads were aware of that too and it was 3% across the board. He stated that the Police Department would not receive raises this year because they had done well over the last couple of years and he had discussed it with the Chief. He stated the

hydroelectric project in Bland that would be done soon was offering higher wages and factoring that in he wanted to raise wages for the Water Plant workers. He stated that they only had 3 licensed operators and if someone left and went another direction the town could lose workers to another company and he wanted to keep that from being a threat.

Mayor Linkous asked if there was any information for the Attorney's Report.

Mr. Crewe stated there was none.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Trigg had none

Mrs. Payne had none

Mr. Presley gave a shout out to the best Police Department out there and that Chief Gunter did a great job. He thanked Mr. Crewe for all he had done with the budget and stated that they needed to think about a 4 year plan for the budget with the minimum wage increase. He thanked everyone who came out and stated that he missed Mr. Wohlford tonight and that everything was going well with schools and our football team was 5-0.

Mr. Holt stated he had a few things and asked Mr. Crewe to thank Greg Quesenberry for everything he had done to help the little league get ready for the season. He stated they lost about \$500 of equipment and the Police Department stepped in and really did a great job trying to help with that and they now had cameras up. He stated that he and the Sheriff attended a rotary meeting and it was discussed how there was a litter problem and the town was dirty now and with the pandemic they were not getting the inmates out and work crews out to help clean up and they were trying to get creative and had a conference call that the Community Development Director was on and if anyone in the community or organization would like to help with clean up they needed to contact the Community Development Coordinator to coincide with the Sheriff's Department to schedule a time to pick up bags, gloves and materials to use. He stated that he volunteered his division for April 21st but did not have a route yet. He stated if anyone wanted to help to contact Mrs. Roberts and they would appreciate the help and needed it.

Mr. Holman stated that he would like to thank Mrs. Hernandez for coordinating the last two months for the Bluefield Sanitation Board Meeting and thanked Mr. Crewe along with the whole town staff for a phenomenal job that they had a lot on their plate and he appreciated all of their hard work and effort. He thanked Chief Gunter and stated that they had a good Police Department in Bluefield that a price could not be put on.

Mr. Bailey had none.

Mayor Linkous stated that he had a couple of items and welcomed Libby and told her that council was honored to have Mrs. Payne on their council. He stated that he had talked to Mr. O'Neal and they should have their new golf carts soon but were running behind on shipping but should have them soon. He stated there was a big announcement for Friday at 3 p.m. that there

was going to be a celebration to honor Double Gates Grocery for their service to this town for 50 years and it was supposed to be a surprise but their granddaughter came out and informed them about the party. He stated that he calculated over the years how many burgers they had sold and it was around 7,000 cows. He asked everyone to come out and support them. He stated the other thing was and it had been brought up once before was a one way sign as you come off of 460 and asked if it could be removed.

Mr. Crewe stated they were working on it but it was a VDOT issue.

Mayor Linkous stated he thought it would be ok if town crew took the sign down.

Mr. Crewe stated he did not want them to do it illegally and was working on getting it done.

Mayor Linkous stated that he had the opportunity to attend the Graham/Tazewell football game and our guys did a wonderful job and so did Tazewell.

Mrs. Payne reminded everyone of the ribbon cuttings tomorrow at 3 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Linkous stated that he had asked for it to include the Councilmember making the request to give council a chance to talk to that councilmember and to ask any questions. He 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) (29) of the Code of Virginia as amended, The specific purpose for this motion is to discuss the following matter(s):

Discussion of the award of a public contract involving the expenditure of public funds, including interviews of bidders or offerors, and discussion of the terms or scope of such contract, where discussion in an open session would adversely affect the bargaining position or negotiating strategy of the public body.

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

Vic-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 Bailey:	Yes
Councilmember Holman:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holt:	Yes

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

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 7-0 in favor.

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 March 30, 2021, 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 March 30, 2021.

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 March 30, 2021, to which this certification applies and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening such closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia in such closed meeting.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to approve the certification.

Councilmember Holman made a motion to approve the certification. Vice-Mayor Holt 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: Yes

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 7-0 in favor.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Holt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:31 p.m. Mr. Bailey 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