

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

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, March 8, 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.
Shane Gunter, Chief of Police
Don Scott, Planning Commission Secretary
7 Members of Police Department
40 members of public
4 members of staff

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. Crewe stated that there were 4 categories as to what the money could be used for and showed them on the computer. He gave 6 different scenarios for the funding:

- \$1.7 million in wages/benefits
- \$400k Harmony Acres
- \$250k refinish the tennis courts to include pickle ball
- \$250k Warhawk Park/Outdoor Recreation
- \$175k Fire Department Air packs

Total: \$2,775,00.00

\$2,243,468 left towards the water projects

He stated that #1 on the slide was for economic impact but the town had no negative economic impacts #2 was for essential workers premium and eligible and almost any government employee was considered essential. He stated that it would be premium on top of the regular pay but no more than \$13 above the pay. He stated that the total cost of full time employees totaled \$4,109,351.26 which accounted for \$1 million in police and \$3 million non-police. He stated that

there would be a 10% increase to VRS and 8.5% increase in health insurance that would have to be accounted for. He stated that this would be for the remainder of 2022 all of 2023 and 2024 and then the town would have to keep up the numbers in 2025. He stated it would be \$1.7 million in premium pay and that there would be money for the sheriff's departments, corrections, etc. but not local police departments and he would have to watch ours and make sure we did not get too low. He stated that they had received a premium payment from Tazewell County but our transit did not get anything and should have.

Mr. Holt stated that he believed our starting pay was \$38k and the Sheriff's Department would be raising to \$42k minimum if it were passed.

Mr. Crewe stated that he thought our starting pay was \$39k. He stated that Public Works was raised to \$11/hour which increased the immediate supervisors to \$13.50-\$14/hour and then their supervisors would have to be bumped up as well.

Mr. Presley asked if they had a budget together without this money in it.

Mr. Crewe stated that James had reworked it and it was tight.

Mr. Holt stated that they needed sustainability.

Mr. Presley stated with the gas prices going up that less people would be eating out and we would probably see a 20-30% decrease and may need to look at ARPA money for that.

Mr. Crewe stated that the main source of revenue would not fluctuate. He stated that real estate and personal property taxes would help because of their reassessment, that the cigarette tax revenue was more than they had budgeted up \$32k and that meals tax was doing great because of Macados but would level out. He stated that the sit down restaurants went to carry out last time and did not slow down.

Mr. Presley stated that we needed to have a disaster budget if we were to lose 20% income.

Mr. Crewe stated that cigarette tax and meals tax could go down but there would not be an impact on the regular budget. He stated that the last quote he had for Harmony Acres was \$716,200 on 3/4/2021 for a complete remodel but the building was the biggest concern. He stated that an architect with Thompson & Litton would do an inspection of Harmony Acres for \$2,500.

Mr. Presley stated that was smart.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was a heavily used asset for outdoor facility.

Mr. Presley stated that it was needed.

Mr. Crewe stated that the back side of Fincastle pool and deck would be used for people to sit on and enjoy dinner. He stated that the tennis courts were at least 20 years old and were cracked but the fence around them was in good shape and the rust could be covered up. He stated that they

would have to dig up the flooring, level then re-lay the tennis courts and discussed putting Pickle Ball under the Recreation Department. He stated that they would have to pay to play which would be an investment and others would be charged to use the tennis courts as well. He stated that there would be spectators attending who would be eating and this would be the last thing at Fincastle to fix there.

Mrs. Payne asked if the \$250k was for the courts only or included the deck.

Mr. Crewe stated just the courts. He stated that they were looking at funding through the Shott Foundation for the deck.

Mr. Holt stated that \$400k was essential to Harmony Acres and asked if he still planned to fix the little league dugouts.

Mr. Crewe stated yes and two options were to shorten by one foot and put aluminum siding enclosing the sides and the top. He stated that the little league had some funds and controlled it but we were still hauling gravel and patching holes over the next few weeks.

Mr. Holt stated that the top fields were the ones needing to be fixed.

Mr. Crewe stated that Bluefield State and Bluefield University were wanting to use them. He stated that he was trying to make sure this money was being used correctly and was going through VML for verification. He stated that they were wanting to put in a dog station, restrooms and sidewalks at Warhawk Park which would be outdoor recreation. He stated that the bathrooms would be heavy duty facilities and locked at night with cameras put up. He stated that the air packs for the Fire Department were expiring soon and we would have to purchase more since they were personal protective gear. He stated that Thompson & Litton had 3 water projects that had been on the board for at least 3 years and included holding basins at the plant-\$2,302,950, pump station leak detectors, generators, etc.-\$865,360, line replacement of older pipes (smaller pipes to larger pipes), new fire hydrants and piping, etc.-\$6,136,060. He stated that there was additional funding and staff would be meeting with VDH tomorrow. He stated some of the options were a 50% grant to a 50% forgivable loan and this would get us in the front of the line. He stated that more federal money may come to the Town for this type of project.

Mr. Presley stated that generators in each location was critical.

Mr. Crewe stated that 3 generators were needed at \$24k each.

Mr. Holman stated that they needed to look at making investments and a sustainability plan to budget for replacements.

Mr. Crewe stated that the guys at the Water Plant were doing a good job and the newest guy just passed his Operator Class 4 license. He stated that they needed to spend all of the \$2.2 million on the water project and what was presented was recommended to them by James and himself.

Mr. Holman stated that the Sanitary Board was asking for \$300k ARPA money from the town to cover the soft cost of engineering for the 3 projects on the Virginia side. He stated that the Sanitary Board would be paying \$1.7 million to secure \$6.1 million.

Mr. Holt stated that he would vote on what was proposed tomorrow as long as the issues with the dugouts were taken care of. He agreed that they needed to work with the Sanitary Board and show good faith whether or not we owned the pipes.

Mr. Holman stated that it had to be done whether or not the town contributed.

Mr. Holt stated that this \$6.1 million would help to offset rate hikes.

Mr. Holman stated that it would have to come from somewhere. He stated that he was in support of it but that it would be council's decision.

Mrs. Payne asked when the decision needed to be made by.

Mr. Holman stated that he would like for it to be today that the City of Bluefield would be deciding in one week and they were being asked for a lot more of a contribution.

Mr. Holt asked if this would fit into the ARPA money.

Mr. Crewe stated that he believed so after looking at the letter given to him by James. He stated that council could do anything they wanted that the problem was on both sides. He handed out a copy of the lease to council and went over it. He stated that on Page 1 it was labeled Sanitary Board, Inc. (VA side) lessor and Sanitary Board (WV side) lessee, #1-history stated that the lessee owned the plant, page 2 #6-lessee shall be solely responsible for all maintenance and repair of the leased premises and the improvements thereon, page 3 of the handout was the agreement that read: Whereas, the Sanitary Board of Bluefield (hereinafter the "Sanitary Board") and entity created by the City of Bluefield, West Virginia, (hereinafter the "City") has operated a sanitary sewer system in the City, the Town of Bluefield (hereinafter the "Town"), Virginia, and surrounding areas for many years and the Sanitary Board of Bluefield, Inc. held legal title to, page 5 #7-stated that the Sanitary Board would keep the system in a good state of maintenance, repair, replacements and improvements, page 4 #3-the Town demises unto the Sanitary Board (transfer property by document). He stated that they had a legitimate legal argument that the Sanitary Board had to keep it up without funds from the town. He stated that we did not own it but they would say we did and his suggestion would be not to fight over it. He stated that after reviewing the letter from James the total cost on the Virginia side was \$6.1 million and they had originally asked for \$1.8 million but reduced it to \$300k from the Town's ARPA money. He stated two facts: #1-with us contributing \$300k they could get \$6.1 million and #2-we were not legally obligated to pay for anything.

Mr. Holman suggested that they act in the best interest of the town.

Mr. Crewe stated that they could easily take \$50k-\$100k from what was just discussed but he wanted to make it easily justifiable if audited. He stated that he believed this would qualify

under the ARPA money but would double check since the authority owned the lines and not the town.

Mr. Trigg stated that they took full responsibility for it some time ago.

Mr. Presley stated that he did not mind either way.

Mr. DeGray stated that it would happen regardless if we contributed and we did not have a responsibility to do it.

Mr. Presley asked if they gave it up would it come back to us.

Mr. Crewe stated the Virginia side only. He stated that they would do the project regardless of our contribution but rates may go up.

Mayor Linkous stated that millions were spent years ago fighting them and the agreement had worked for all. He stated that the powers in West Virginia realized the need to do things and that Shannon Bailey was the best. He stated that he would like to show them cooperation on whatever project that it may cost a lot more in the end. He stated that this would show good unity.

Mr. Holt stated that the City of Bluefield would be giving \$800k.

Mr. Crewe stated that it would cost more in West Virginia and suggested that they make the contribution contingent on the City of Bluefield making a contribution as well. He stated that he and James could change the numbers around or council could tell them how.

Mr. Presley asked if there were certain things they could do now with the water project.

Mr. Crewe handed out the Thompson & Litton breakdown.

Mrs. Payne suggested that James and Trent come back after reworking for this \$300k.

Mr. Holt stated that he was willing to compromise.

Mr. Crewe clarified that his understanding was that all council was in agreement to contribute \$300k. He stated that he and James reworked the numbers sitting there and would take \$25k from wages, \$25k from Harmony Acres, \$25k from the tennis courts, \$25k from Warhawk Park/Depot Street and \$200k from the water project to give them the \$300k needed. He suggested once again making it contingent to the City of Bluefield making a similar contribution since it was one system.

Mayor Linkous stated that this was good faith to get things done. He asked if at the next meeting they would be bringing a list to be voted for the ARPA funding so that it could be sent in.

Mr. Crewe stated that was his intent.

Mr. Holman asked if the water projects were contingent on engineering.

Mr. Crewe stated that these were estimates from Thompson & Litton.

Mr. Holman stated that they may need to scale back on the water projects.

Mr. Crewe agreed unless they could get funding elsewhere.

Mr. Presley asked if he had talked with Recreation on their budget regarding movies, etc.

Mr. Crewe stated no, that he was working on the ARPA money. He stated that he had not talked with any department regarding their budget.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Jay Ferguson, First United Methodist Church led the Invocation. Mayor Linkous led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Ceremonial Swearing In (Officer Perkins and Sgt. Tibbs) – Mayor Linkous

Mayor Linkous asked each to come forward and swore them in. He congratulated each of them.

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: SRO Grant Remittance (GMS)

Revenue		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$157,811.15</u>	<u>\$167,665.90</u>	<u>\$9,854.75</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$157,811.15</u>	<u>\$167,665.90</u>	<u>\$9,854.75</u>

Expenditure		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
3110-1100	Salaries	<u>\$921,678.00</u>	<u>\$931,532.75</u>	<u>\$9,854.75</u>
	Regular	<u>\$921,678.00</u>	<u>\$931,532.75</u>	<u>\$9,854.75</u>

PURPOSE: Security Services Payment (Wal-Mart)

Revenue		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$167,665.90</u>	<u>\$169,945.90</u>	<u>\$2,280.00</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$167,665.90</u>	<u>\$169,945.90</u>	<u>\$2,280.00</u>

Expenditure		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
3110-1600	Investigative	<u>\$52,895.00</u>	<u>\$55,175.00</u>	<u>\$2,280.00</u>
	OT	<u>\$52,895.00</u>	<u>\$55,175.00</u>	<u>\$2,280.00</u>

PURPOSE: Security Services Payment (Aramark)

Revenue		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$169,945.90</u>	<u>\$171,695.90</u>	<u>\$1,750.00</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$169,945.90</u>	<u>\$171,695.90</u>	<u>\$1,750.00</u>

Expenditure		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
3110-1600	Investigative	<u>\$55,175.00</u>	<u>\$56,925.00</u>	<u>\$1,750.00</u>
	OT	<u>\$55,175.00</u>	<u>\$56,925.00</u>	<u>\$1,750.00</u>

PURPOSE: Restitution Payment-Nathanial Hurt

Revenue		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
Line Item				
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$171,695.90</u>	<u>\$171,706.87</u>	<u>\$10.97</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$171,695.90</u>	<u>\$171,706.87</u>	<u>\$10.97</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-8210	Animal	<u>\$6,389.03</u>	<u>\$6,400.00</u>	<u>\$10.97</u>
	Control	<u>\$6,389.03</u>	<u>\$6,400.00</u>	<u>\$10.97</u>

PURPOSE: School Resource Officer Grant Funding

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$171,706.87</u>	<u>\$203,530.12</u>	<u>\$31,823.25</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$171,706.87</u>	<u>\$203,530.12</u>	<u>\$31,823.25</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-1100	Salaries	<u>\$931,532.75</u>	<u>\$963,356.00</u>	<u>\$31,823.25</u>
	Regular	<u>\$931,532.75</u>	<u>\$963,356.00</u>	<u>\$31,823.25</u>

Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the Budget Amendments. 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 Budget Amendments.

Outdoor Educational Learning Facility Resolution, ROLL CALL VOTE – Trent Crewe

Mr. Crewe stated that he wanted to make sure the wording was not obligating them to money or rezoning. He read the following 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 MARCH, 2022.

A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT GRAHAM HIGH SCHOOL’S PROPOSED OUTDOOR LEARNING FACILITY.

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluefield, Virginia has been requested to express its support of the proposed outdoor learning facility at Graham High School; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluefield, Virginia has not been asked to contribute financially to nor address the present zoning of the proposed outdoor learning facility; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluefield has no present plans to utilize the said proposed outdoor learning facility; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluefield believes that the proposed outdoor learning facility will provide educational, sports and recreational opportunities for public school students, citizens of the Town of Bluefield and the greater Bluefield area; and

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluefield has long supported Tazewell County Public Schools in providing opportunities for recreation, education, safety and athletics;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA, without any financial commitment nor predetermined zoning decision, that the Town acknowledges that it supports Tazewell County Public Schools' effort to upgrade and expand the outdoor learning facilities at Graham High School.

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

Mr. Holt made a motion to approve the Outdoor Educational Learning Facility Resolution. Mr. Holman 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 but stated that he was for the project.

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of the Outdoor Educational Learning Facility Resolution.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

Collin O'Donnell, part owner of the Grind wanted to put on record the things that still needed to be done at the Envision Center. He stated that he paid his employees \$14.38/hr. and manager's \$16/hr., was the best rated coffee shop and were never late on their payments or taxes. He stated that he was not sure if the IDA knew everything going on but the HVAC was wrong, Ax to Grind was not operating fully which increased his AEP bill from \$687 to \$2,074 for December/January. He stated that there were gaps in the door allowing small animals in, no floor drain in the kitchen was installed as promised, the windows were leaking, they had done the floors themselves which were ruined with the first rain, the patio was sinking and the smell of dead animals on the Ax to Grind side was horrible. He stated that he had talked to Chuck Presley

regarding these issues. He stated that the cost of maintenance was overwhelming and was putting a strain on the tenants who were asking themselves was it worth it.

Mr. Brown thanked them for their support and to Ron for bringing it up.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

None.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

IDA

Mr. Crewe stated that the IDA had met that day and were aware of all of those issues. He stated that it was not a town project but an IDA who had a plan of attack to get these things done and should be hearing from Brad Ayers soon.

Mr. Holman asked if there were the only two tenants.

Mr. Crewe stated that there were three tenants.

Fincastle Update

Mr. Crewe stated that Fincastle had gotten some new lights on existing poles in the parking lot.

Police Car

Mr. Crewe stated that one of police cars was out of service.

Donation Requests

Mr. Crewe stated that the Tazewell County Fair was asking for more than their \$1k donation and to renew an ad in their brochure for \$400 or in their book for \$175.

Council approved giving them the \$1k from last year along with the \$1k for this year for a total \$2k.

OSHA Inspection

Mr. Crewe stated that we had not received the final report yet but they did not find anything too serious. He stated that staff was working on fixing the issues.

New Digital Sign

Mr. Crewe stated that our current sign was old and we could no longer get any parts for it. He stated that unless told differently that he would spend around \$27k to replace the old one. He stated that the old one may be able to be placed at the Treasurer's Office.

Public Works Sign

Mr. Crewe stated that the town shop would be unveiling a name on one of their buildings on Tuesday, March 15th at noon and invited council to attend.

Light Pole Claim

Mr. Crewe stated that one of our police vehicles backed into a pole with a dust to dawn light on it knocking it down. He stated that the pole was rotten and was not wired nor protected correctly. He stated that we would be putting it back on the side of the building and a release had been sent.

Bluefield, WV Meeting

Mr. Crewe stated that a meeting had been set up with Bluefield, WV for 1 p.m. on Wednesday, March 9th. He stated that it would include the two colleges, Mercer and Tazewell County Schools, the City and the Town.

Thank You Note

Mr. Crewe stated that the town had received a thank you note from Ballard Christian School for the donation made in honor of Jackson Spencer.

Old Platnick Building

Mr. Crewe stated that he had someone interested in leasing part of the brick building and part of the land at the old Platnick Building for agricultural use.

Thompson & Litton contract

Mr. Crewe stated that unless otherwise told that he would sign the contract from Thompson & Litton for Harmony Acres.

Bridge Inspections

Mr. Crewe stated that we had a couple of issues from the last bridge inspections that would be worked on.

Dugout Repairs

Mr. Crewe stated that he was working to repair the dugouts on the upper fields.

Xfinity Cost

Mr. Crewe stated that he had received notice that the basic cost would be dropping from \$20.30 to \$18.80.

Water Plant

Mr. Crewe stated that Zack Davis had passed his Class 4 operator test.

MOU

Mr. Crewe stated that the town had been negotiating with Tazewell County Schools to use some of our fields. He stated that unless otherwise told that he would sign it on behalf of the town.

IDA Appointment

Mr. Crewe stated that the IDA had met earlier and recommended that council appoint Danny Smith to the board vacancy.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve appointing Danny Smith to the IDA. Mrs. Payne 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 appointing Danny Smith to the IDA.

Bluefield University Luncheon

Mr. Crewe reminded council of the luncheon on Friday at noon at Bluefield University.

Mayor Linkous stated that we had an agreement with Comcast to have someone staffed in the Bluefield office at all times and we needed to get someone back in there. He stated that he would talk to his contact to see whom we would need to call to get someone back in the offices.

Town Properties

Mr. Crewe handed out a packet of 62 tax properties and asked them to look over them. He stated that he had put a y or n in the bottom right hand corner and the y indicated to sale. He stated that it would require a Public Hearing declaring them surplus in order for them to be sold.

Meadow Street

Mr. Crewe stated that the town had an agreement with the tenants on Meadow Street and they were having a hard time getting a loan but that we would keep working with them.

Mr. Holman asked if the properties would require advertisement.

Mr. Crewe stated yes a Public Hearing was required and then they could sell however they chose.

Mr. Holman asked private or auction.

Mayor Linkous stated that most of them did not know these properties nor the history of them and asked that James and Kris tell them which ones should be sold. He suggested selling them 10-15 properties at a time.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. DeGray had none.

Mr. Holman had none.

Mr. Holt stated that it was a good meeting.

Mr. Presley gave a shout out to the best Police Chief and Police Department, James, Trent, Kim, trash and recreation who were in attendance. He stated that it was a productive meeting and asked for another work session. He stated that he appreciated everyone for coming out.

Mr. Trigg had none.

Mrs. Payne stated that she usually did not speak but after the last meeting and the video being put online that she had received a lot of telephone calls and an email from a concerned citizen who asked that it be read. She stated that they did not want to sign their name because of repercussions and that this person sent another email earlier that day stating that they would like it to be read during the council meeting. She started reading the email and Mayor Linkous finished reading it.

I am writing this letter in hope that it might be read to the mayor and the members of the Town Council. After viewing the video of the last town council meeting, I'm ashamed of how certain members of the council behaved and tried to bully the other members of the council to pass a resolution regarding

the “Outdoor Learning Center” beside Graham High School. The issue at hand is not really about the “Outdoor Learning Center” but the way in which the proposal was presented and the way some of the council members behaved and how some of the other council members were treated.

Most everyone is fully aware of the issues with Mitchell Field and the problems of sharing a sports stadium with another high school and local university. Most everyone would not be against any projects that would benefit the students of GHS; however, there are issues to consider here before jumping the gun to build a structure that is a precursor to a stadium in the middle of a residential area.

The proposal for a resolution regarding the “outdoor learning center” did not follow proper procedures in presenting it to the town council and according to those who viewed it, not written correctly. The proposal should have been added to the set agenda before the meeting and sent to the council along with the agenda and any other ancillary documents pertaining to the meeting. All members of the council should have had prior knowledge of the request for this resolution and the opportunity to review it in an unrushed manner as Mr. Trigg pointed out. The fact that Mrs. Payne did not know about this proposal is inexcusable because Ron Holt said he didn’t have time to call her. I call this an act of discrimination and misogyny because Mrs. Payne is female.

Despite the fact that proper parliamentary procedures were not followed in introducing a resolution, Holt and Holman appeared unaware of the zoning issues that would have to be worked out and unaware of the past attempts at rezoning this area which failed because of the outcry of the residents in that area. It is reasonable that folks would not want this kind of project in their residential areas. If Holt and Holman had something like this moving into their neighborhoods, they may feel differently.

Sadly, what I find most appalling is the blatant disrespect toward the town manager from Holt and Holman. It is shameful to treat anyone the way the town manager and the rest of the council were at the last council meeting. The events of this meeting are being talked about all over the town and even in other municipalities. This was even on the local news. As the mayor reportedly said: This is embarrassing.

The behavior by Holt and Holman is that of bullies and this is behavior that should not be tolerated by the citizens of our town and community. My concerns are not about the “Outdoor Learning Center” because I don’t live in that neighborhood. My concerns are about the attitudes of two elected members of the town council who have made a power play that disrespected other members of the town council, the mayor, and the town manager. There was also no regard of proper parliamentary procedures. I am regretful that I ever voted for Holt. His behavior was unprofessional and certainly not fitting for an elected official.

To sum this up, the concerns are:

- Bringing an item for a meeting that should have been a part of a previously set agenda formed for the meeting and not a surprise thrust upon the council in the presence of guests and spectators in the audience. (Was this a tactical move designed to ramrod the proposal through or an act born of improper planning and flying by the seat of his pants?)
- Bringing for consideration a proposal that has not been properly researched and written.
- Failure to understand the history of the zoning issues surrounding this proposed site.
- The unacceptable, arrogant behavior and disrespect for the other council members and staff of the Town of Bluefield, especially the Town Manager is a shameful disgrace.
- Having the local news station present and when the meeting devolved into a tense and chaotic spectacle for which the mayor had to apologize for on camera.

All of this sets a bad example for the high school students who attended this meeting. It has also caused many citizens shame for electing such people with contemptible behavior.

I sincerely hope that the members of the council can rise above this unprofessional behavior to become genial, helpful council members who work for the good of all citizens and that self-serving motivations would be seen for what they are: unproductive, unprofessional, and unnecessary.

Mayor Linkous stated that they all learned from their mistakes and sometimes they may get lambasted but that was part of being an elected official. He stated that they may have made a mistake and probably did look bad at times. He stated that the letter was read because the individual asked that it be read but united they would stand and they all worked for the good as Town Council of the Town of Bluefield. He stated when one blundered then they all did but learned from their mistakes.

Mr. Holt stated that he sat there quietly and listened and did not find it productive to read something that was not signed. He stated that he was not in the business to get votes and did not apologize one bit for the way it was done that there was a reason for it. He stated that if that person would like to sit down and put a name to it or send him an email then he would explain himself. He stated that there were a lot of mad people who wanted to come tonight and the one reason they did not was because he asked them not to. He stated that the one reason there was not a lot of nasty comments about board members and staff was because he said to keep it positive. He stated that he made zero apologies and stood by how he did it. He stated when an email was read with no name about another councilmember that he found it to be bad taste and he would not do that to her.

Mrs. Payne stated that she knew who sent it.

Mr. Holt asked that she send them his way. He stated that he wanted to work with the board and that they had a great meeting tonight and wanted to carry on with a spirit of cooperation but that was not how it needed to be done. He stated that they needed to come forward like others and then he would explain the reason it was done the way it was done. He stated that he was not a bully but was passionate and did not sit there and curse or yell but tried to speak where his heart was and found that reading an anonymous email was in bad taste.

Mrs. Payne stated that she was sure they would watch the video.

Mr. Holt stated that he hoped that they did and would reach out to him.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous adjourned the meeting at 8:32 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk