

**Town of Bluefield  
Town Council  
Minutes  
April 12, 2022**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, April 12, 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  
Greg DeGray, Councilmember  
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember

**ALSO PRESENT**

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney  
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk  
Shane Gunter, Chief of Police  
James Hampton, Asst. Mgr./Treasurer/Transit Dir.  
Don Scott, Planning Commission Secretary  
Kris Williams, Zoning & Property Maint. Official  
31 members of public  
2 members of staff

**ABSENT**

Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Linkous called the meeting to order at 6:07 p.m.

**COUNCIL DISCUSSION**

***Discussion of Town Properties***

Trent and Kris discussed each property as to whether to sale or keep. It was discussed for Trent to work with Jay Ferguson/FUMC to lease or sale the area they were interested in behind the church. There were 14 properties agreed upon to sale.

Mayor Linkous stated that they needed to encourage those with vacant buildings to keep them up and to keep the insurance.

Mr. Crewe stated that they could not require them to keep insurance.

Mr. Holman suggested imposing a monthly fee such as Bluefield, WV.

Mr. Crewe stated that there were different laws in WV. He went over a list of requested donations most of which were not budgeted items:

- \$1,503 for baseball trophies paid in past but not a budgeted line item
- \$7,500 SWVA tourism not a budgeted line item
- \$500 Project Graduation budgeted line item
- \$175 Robert Duff drawings paid in past but not a budgeted line item
- \$500 Southwest Educational Fund budgeted line item
- \$1,500 Library budgeted line item
- \$2,500 Appalachia tourism not a budgeted line item. He stated that we were missing an opportunity with tourism.

He stated that he and Greg met with the City Manager and the new Recreation Director and discussed a bridge going behind Hardees to access both VA and WV for ATV's, biking, etc. He went over some more items that were not budgeted: two new garbage trucks were needed, \$20k was needed for tools, \$20k for pavement repairs at the Cemetery, \$10k was paid to cut down and clean up the trees from the last wind storm at Fincastle and on East View Street, \$100k for new Christmas decorations to replace the worn ones, \$120k to put a bridge across the creek in downtown which may have to wait, \$15k for a new server at the Treasurer's Office, replacing the flooring in Town Hall \$10k full repair or fixing only the 11-3x3 squares and 2-5x5 flower squares.

Mayor Linkous asked why it would not be fixed correctly to begin with.

Mr. Crewe asked that he keep that thought that there was not enough money and it did not qualify for the ARPA funding. He stated the next replacement was for a new copier in the manager's office-\$12k which we would lease instead of purchasing and included the maintenance, \$27k to replace the digital sign, \$36k for body cameras for the Police Department, putting up surveillance cameras which would now require separate meters on separate poles so that we would be charged a monthly bill, 60 cameras for a total of \$200k which we may have to wait on. He stated that Bluefield, WV was planning to do the same thing with 200 cameras but were only going to be able to do 100 but were having the same issues as us. He stated that they had promised up to \$25k to the cemetery and had raised around \$7k to date. He stated that it would be late fall before they could get the stone here, \$25k for 4 years to Bluefield University, \$300k to the Sanitary Board project and Bluefield, WV would be giving \$400k for their side, \$40k to fix the gazebo and \$93k to redo the tennis courts at Fincastle to make them available to be used for Pickle Ball. He stated that after meeting with the City of Bluefield that they may be able to partner on Pickle Ball by paying rent, lease, etc. to be able to play on either side. He stated that the Police Department was purchasing 3 new cruisers which would cost around \$143k but some of that was in the budget.

Chief Gunter stated that \$90k was budgeted and that a fully equipped 2022 Ford Explorer cost around \$47k each.

Mr. Crewe stated that Depot Street may have to wait, \$157k was needed for air packs for the Fire Department and the grand total for all was \$1,461,000. He stated that \$350k was already voted to spend that was not budgeted (\$300k to Sanitary Board, \$25k each year for 4 years to BU

construction and up to \$25k for the monument in Maple Hill Cemetery), \$320k for the cameras and the bridge which were not budgeted and would probably need to be delayed until next year's budget or maybe later (\$120k for the bridge, \$200K for surveillance cameras). He stated that left \$791k in non-optional cost that he could not see any way around paying which included the garage lift, mowers, vehicles, etc.) He stated that this did not include improvements to Depot Street, increases in wages, \$157k for FD air packs, nor the \$9,304,370 in water projects. He stated that January 1<sup>st</sup> minimum wage would increase to \$14/hr. and that it was hard getting employees or keeping them. He stated that council had stressed the need to take care of its employees and with this ARPA money that salaries could be reimbursed which would free up non ARPA money. He stated that this premium pay would have to continue on after 2024 and what he had figured was 3-4% increase each year. He stated that they were a half million short to balance the budget and would need to cut from the water funds. He stated that we may be able to get other funding sources/grant money but with grant money we could not budget an amount.

Mr. Holman stated that we would have a liability with salaries after 2024 which would put a hole in our budget.

### **INVOCATION AND PLEDGE**

Don Scott, Retired Minister/Planning Commission Secretary led the Invocation. Mayor Linkous led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

### **CONSENT AGENDA**

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

### **CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS**

#### ***Jim Drake, Parkview Baptist Church***

Mr. Drake thanked Chief, the Police Department and specifically Channing Mooney for the help when his daughter was attacked by a dog at the City Park. He stated that the professionalism he showed needed to be publicly acknowledged. He stated that he appreciated it and asked that it be passed on to him.

#### ***Ellie Williams, Graham Middle School 8<sup>th</sup> Grade student (Post-It Note Program)***

Ellie Williams stated that she was 14 years old and an 8<sup>th</sup> grader. She stated that the post it project included putting encouraging words/bible verses on bathroom mirrors, etc. She stated

Mr. Kennedy stated that was the last thing to be designed. He stated that right now they would use the bridge at the Magic Mart building.

A citizen asked what the transformer size would be.

AEP stated 25 mba.

A citizen asked if the work would be Monday through Friday or 7 days a week.

Mr. Kennedy stated that they would work with the town and it would not include nights.

Ms. Robinson asked if there would be any power interruptions and if so would they be contacted.

Mr. Garrison stated that they did not anticipate any but may be something right when the station was put in.

Ms. Robinson asked how tall it would be.

Mr. Garrison stated 50ft with a total of 4 double circuits.

Mr. Kennedy stated that it would be a short distance.

A citizen asked if it would be tied into the existing.

Mr. Garrison stated yes.

Dave Wohlford stated that it would be good for the Bluestone to have its own source and adjust this to meet our needs.

Mr. Kennedy stated that they would figure out the Bluestone if needed.

Mr. Garrison stated that they were expensive to build without customers.

LaDenia Lemmon asked if the bill would be raised.

Mr. Kennedy stated that they were paying for old lines in WV and Kentucky.

Mrs. Lemmon stated that she did not like to hear that we were paying for lines in Kentucky.

Mr. Kennedy stated that the lines were being rebuilt.

A citizen asked if this was how they did things and there was nothing to stop them that this seemed like a done deal.

Mr. Kennedy stated that it was introduced to talk about and they were there to listen. He stated that the location was chosen because of the capacity.

A citizen asked if pine trees would be planted since they were year round and grew 40-60ft tall.

Mr. Kennedy stated that they would work with a local nursery to see what would work the best and was the fastest growing.

Ms. Robinson asked if they were to be taken offline would AEP contact them first.

Mr. Kennedy stated that they would.

Mr. Holman asked what the next step would be.

Mr. Kennedy stated a mailing for the area and they would listen to the comments.

Lee Riffe asked if this would be a benefit to the other areas within the town with outages in the West Graham area.

Mr. Garrison stated yes.

Mr. Riffe stated that this substation would help.

Mr. Crewe asked what the noise anticipation would be with the new line as well as harm from the radiation.

Mr. Garrison stated there would be no noticeable noise away from it and no harm from the radiation away from the station.

Ms. Robinson asked about the one at the Graham Rec Park.

Mr. Garrison stated that it was bigger and had two transformers.

Ms. Robinson asked if that would take the load off to service the Bluestone.

Mr. Garrison stated yes.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

None.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS**

None.

**NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS**

***Simple Subdivision-123 Fawn Circle, ROLL CALL VOTE*** – Kris Williams

Mr. Williams stated that he had received a simple subdivision preliminary plat for property located at 123 Fawn Circle. He stated that the proposed simple subdivision would establish new lot lines that would better serve the current property owners.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the Simple Subdivision-123 Fawn Circle. 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:	Absent
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of the Simple Subdivision-123 Fawn Circle.

***Smartscale Resolution, ROLL CALL VOTE*** – Trent Crewe

Mr. Crewe stated that a resolution was in council's packet and was required by VDOT for the Smartscale application.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the Smartscale 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:	Absent
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of the Smartscale Resolution.

## **CITIZENS COMMENTS**

Dave Wohlford stated with the trees being cut down that we needed to follow the safety guidelines and wear protective glasses, ear protection, etc. He stated that another safety issue was when you had one guy on the back of a garbage truck that there needed to be two at all times. He stated that there needed to be safety programs in place to hold accountability.

Tom Moses, 503 Mountain Lane stated that the sewer had been dug up and they did not have any information on what was being done.

Mr. Holman stated that they were doing the project in stages and the communication was being done the same. He stated that the completion date was scheduled for July 31<sup>st</sup> and that most line replacement would be in the grassy area. He stated that they have had a number of delays due to vendor issues, COVID and the flu. He stated that another issue was that it was a high traffic area with school so it limited them on the times they could work. He stated that they had also hit rock which caused another delay. He stated that the first ones affected had received door hangers.

Dave Wohlford asked if anything was being done to get Harmony Acres opened.

Mr. Crewe stated yes that they had been working on it the past month. He stated that we had not received the ADA report done by Thompson & Litton as of yet.

Betty Watson asked if they closed her driveway for the detour while working how she would get out.

Mayor Linkous stated that they would have a way for her to get out.

Mr. Holman stated that he would address it with them.

Gail Cook stated that there was a bad dip on Ridge Road at the guard rail. She stated that you could see the pavement cracking.

Mayor Linkous stated that it was on his list to tell Trent.

## **POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT**

Chief Gunter stated that it was business as usual and congratulated Casey Justice on his second son being born.

## **TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT**

Mr. Crewe stated that the Police Department always went above and beyond.

### ***Bus Rodeo***

Mr. Crewe stated that Mark Davidson scored 100% on the written which had never happened before and Everett had a perfect score on the obstacle course.

### ***City of Bluefield Meeting***

Mr. Crewe stated that there was discussions with the City to design a monument state line to include four entrances, seating on the VA and WV side, an informational kiosk, an LED lighted floor, large glass diamond shape lit and in the day would look like coal. He stated that there would be a meeting tomorrow with the Gold Star Memorial to discuss planting trees on a 2 acre area in the City Park. He stated that dog tags would be placed on these trees. He stated that he, Greg, Cecil and the new Recreation Director for the City all met to discuss working together on some things. He stated that years ago there was a study done by the Town to connect the two parks, permits were done, mapping, etc. but due to funding reasons it was cancelled. He stated that the two entities wanted to work together to bring kids back outside through events such as swim teams, gymnastics, dance, etc. He stated that it was a productive meeting and they would continue talking.

### ***Harmony Acres ADA Study***

Mr. Crewe stated that Thompson & Litton had done an ADA study on Harmony Acres but we were waiting to receive the report. He stated that they had a sealing company to look at fixing the dugouts and the backside of the building at Harmony Acres.

### ***Little League Bathroom***

Mr. Crewe stated that staff was working to replace the Little League bathroom doors which were steel doors on wooden frames. He stated that the wind storm had done some damage to the batting cage which Public Works had helped to fix. He stated on April 22<sup>nd</sup> the golf tournament fundraiser would be held for the Little League at Fincastle.

### ***POV Breakfast***

Mr. Crewe asked council if they would like to be a sponsor for the two Chambers Point of View Breakfast to be held on Friday at 8 a.m. at Fincastle. He stated that they had done so in the past and it was \$300 that was not in the budget.

Mrs. Payne made a motion to approve sponsoring the POV Breakfast in the amount of \$300. 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: Absent  
Councilmember Presley: Yes  
Councilmember Payne: Yes  
Councilmember Trigg: Yes  
Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of the sponsoring the POV Breakfast in the amount of \$300.

***Old Platnick Building***

Mr. Crewe stated that a portion of the old Platnick Building on the right side including the brick building had been leased with the option to purchase. He stated that it would be an agricultural type business with green houses being put up soon and would sell flowers and vegetables.

***Fire Station***

Mr. Crewe stated that he had talked with Eric Young and the county was seeking funding for a Fire Station to be located in the industrial park. He stated that we had tentatively agreed to man it and they were asking for a letter of support to be sent to the federal government. He stated that there was no downside and that 5 of our volunteer firefighters lived that way and had to pass it to get to our fire station. He stated that it would cost between \$600-800k and we would put one of our trucks there. He stated that he had received an MOU that day from the county regarding a resolution passed in 2017 to provide fire services to the county.

Mr. Holman asked if it had the potential to be full time.

Mr. Crewe stated yes, farther down the road that fire and rescue would be under the same.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to approve sending letters of support. 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: Absent  
Councilmember Presley: Yes  
Councilmember Payne: Yes  
Councilmember Trigg: Yes  
Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of sending letters of support.

### ***Jim Baldwin Resolution***

Mr. Crewe stated that Jim Baldwin would be retiring and asked if council would like to prepare a resolution to be presented to him.

Mayor Linkous stated that they needed to do something for him with all of the help he had given to the Town.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to approve staff preparing a resolution for Jim Baldwin. 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:	Absent
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of staff preparing a resolution for Jim Baldwin.

### ***Montvale Street***

Mr. Crewe stated that there was a recent issue with Montvale Street and West Montvale Street and the rescue squad responding to the wrong one. He stated that all signage, etc. was correct and we were looking at ways to fix this including sending a letter.

### ***Personnel Policy Changes***

Mr. Crewe stated that he would be adding a couple of things to the personnel policy which included no immediate family could be supervisors of other family members and allowing drug test that show THC in the system to a certain degree now that the use of was no longer illegal.

### ***Police Appreciation Walk***

Mr. Crewe stated that the Police Appreciation Walk would be held on May 17<sup>th</sup> and would start at Town Hall.

## COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. DeGray stated that his kids had started soccer practice at the Rec Park and for the most part it was kept up and thanked staff but stated that some things could be fixed.

Mr. Holman had none.

Mr. Presley gave a shout out to the Police Department and everyone for coming out. He stated that another Work Session was needed soon and asked Jay Ferguson to talk to Trent regarding the property behind the church. He stated that the downtown committee would be up and going again soon.

Mrs. Payne stated that she had someone to ask her who did the newsletter and she told them Kim. She stated that she knew people helped to fold and thanked them as well. She stated that they were very complimentary of it and the information included.

Mr. Trigg had none.

Mayor Linkous stated that we had some fabulous volunteers who helped fold them along with Lee who helped work the sound system. He thanked them all.

Mr. Crewe stated that he planned to bring back a balanced budget.

Mayor Linkous stated that they needed to get stuff done within the town such as lawn mowers, etc. now.

Mr. Holman stated that the impact on wages would have to be sustained. He stated that he would like to know the numbers.

Mr. Crewe stated that it would be close to \$1,000,000 which was about a 4% increase each year. He stated that personal property taxes would generate more money because they were going up. He stated that total wages including the Police Department would be \$2,065,000 and would have to factor in VRS, Social Security, etc.

Mr. Holman stated that he appreciated the expedience and the fact that items were needed but he would like to see the numbers first.

Mr. Crewe stated that there would be a hole in the budget going forward.

Mayor Linkous stated that they never had designated anyone to be a representative on the Tazewell County Fair Board. He asked Mrs. Hernandez if anyone had shown interest.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that Gail Cook and LaDenia Lemmon and after talking with the two of them that LaDenia would like to do it.

Mr. Presley made a motion to appoint LaDenia Lemmon as representative to the Tazewell County Fair Board. 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:	Absent
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 5-0 in favor of appointing LaDenia Lemmon to the Tazewell County Fair Board.

Dave Wohlford stated that regarding THC that the Town would be opening up a can of worms because it was still a federal law.

James Hampton stated that Transit would still follow under the Federal law.

**ADJOURN**

Mayor Linkous adjourned the meeting at 9:53 p.m.

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D.S. Linkous, Mayor

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Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk