

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
May 10, 2022**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, May 10, 2022 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Donnie Linkous, Mayor
Rick Holman, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Greg DeGray, Councilmember
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember
Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor

ALSO PRESENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
Shane Gunter, Chief of Police
James Hampton, Asst. Mgr./Treasurer/Transit Dir.
7 members of public

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Steve Branch, Destiny Outreach Ministries led the Invocation. Mayor Linkous led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Holman added a discussion and vote on the Sanitary Board \$300k contribution.

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

CONSENT AGENDA

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

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Liz Lester, Meadow Street/East End stated that she had complained quite a bit about a dog that lived on a chain, had no medical care, food, etc. and was also concerned about wrecks occurring at the end of the street due to cars being parked there (one of the wrecks including a police officer).

Mr. Crewe stated that we had responded numerous times.

Chief Gunter stated that the times they were there, the dog had adequate shelter, food and water and there was nothing that could be done.

Ms. Lester asked if there was a recent law passed on animals being out in certain temperatures.

Mr. Crewe stated yes.

Chief Gunter asked that she not hesitate to continue to call them.

Ms. Lester stated that she had offered to buy the dog to get it out of those conditions but they would not do it.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS

Sanitary Board \$300k contribution, ROLL CALL VOTE – Rick Holman

Mr. Crewe stated that the ARPA numbers they had talked about last time were the same and did not include a contribution to the Sanitary Board.

Mr. Holman stated that they had previously agreed verbally to contribute \$300k.

Mr. Holt asked if there was any reason that it was not included.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was not voted on and was only discussed contingent upon the City of Bluefield making a similar contribution. He stated that they voted to give \$200k.

Mr. Holman stated that it was originally \$800k but was voted down.

Mr. Crewe reminded them that the Town was not obligated to pay anything and had given it all to the Sanitary Board for them to run.

Mr. Holman stated that it was contingent upon the City funding their portion but it was not equal. He stated that the soft engineering cost on our side was \$6.8 million and we could not control the City's contribution.

Mrs. Payne asked what would happen if we did not fund it.

Mr. Holman stated that it may not get to the point needed.

Mr. DeGray asked if the City of Bluefield understood our contribution.

Mr. Holman stated no.

Mrs. Payne stated that the Town had \$700k in repairs, etc. that we needed to fix and asked if we could afford a contribution.

Mr. Holman stated that it was a council decision but he would ask for the full amount of \$300k.

Mr. Trigg stated that he would like to match the City's contribution. He stated that the Sanitary Board had control of it all.

Mr. Holman stated that he was sure it would get done but may come at the expense of a rate hike.

Mrs. Payne suggested that they wait and see how the money "panned" out for the town and give later.

Mr. Holman stated that they could vote yes or no.

Mr. Crewe stated that it would more than likely come out of next year's budget.

Mrs. Payne asked if it needed to be given all at one time.

Mr. Holman stated the whole amount or payments.

It was asked where it would come from.

Mr. Hampton stated out of the \$2.3 million allocated for our water projects.

Mayor Linkous stated that they would be taking from our water to help the sewer when the water was on us. He stated that the \$300k could possibly be doubled with grant funding etc. for our project. He stated that they were seeing more and more unexpected expenses and the top priority was to financially take care of Bluefield, VA.

Mr. Crewe stated that these water projects were 5 years in the books and totaled \$9 million that we did not have money to fund. He stated that he hoped we would get matching grant money.

Mayor Linkous asked the advice of the Town Manager/Treasurer on giving \$300k away.

Mr. Crewe stated that he did not think we should due to the fact of the water projects and other needs. He stated that yes it could be done but would have to be taken from other places. He stated that rates would probably go up regardless and they were robbing themselves.

Mr. Holt stated that this had been talked about and talked about and they had agreed to give whether it was ours or not and they needed to honor that obligation. He stated that he would vote to approve a match of \$200k and they as a board allocated where money was spent.

Mr. DeGray stated that our \$300k plus \$200k (City) would cover a lot of that soft cost.

Mr. Holman stated that WV was separate. He stated that it was the will of council and they could not give them anything which may force them to go to bond.

Mrs. Payne asked if the Town gave was there any guarantee that the rates would not go up.

Mr. Holman stated no with the cost of things going up. He stated that this was a solid project in our backyard and they appointed him to the Sanitary Board to look after our citizens.

Mrs. Payne said that we had many issues with equipment, etc. and each meeting was something else.

Mr. Holman stated that the original intent with the ARPA money was for these projects.

Mr. Crewe stated that the Sanitary Board did not get ARPA money.

Mr. DeGray asked if it was for sure that it could be used for this.

Mr. Crewe stated that the Sanitary Board owned the lines and were not taking it to put pipes in the ground. He stated that he would talk more about using the ARPA funds to put into wages and using that money budgeted to purchase things later in the meeting.

Mr. Holman made a motion to approve a \$300k contribution to the Sanitary Board. Mr. Holt seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

The motion tied 3-3.

Mayor Linkous voted no to break the tie. The motion failed to pass.

Mayor Linkous asked that they move it to the end of the agenda to reconsider after the Town Manager presented the budget to see if anything could be trimmed.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

Budget Amendments, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

PURPOSE: Law Enforcement Block Grant

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$206,030.12</u>	<u>\$208,891.28</u>	<u>\$2,861.16</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$206,030.12</u>	<u>\$208,891.28</u>	<u>\$2,861.16</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-8106	Grants	<u>\$4,419.00</u>	<u>\$7,280.16</u>	<u>\$2,861.16</u>
		<u>\$4,419.00</u>	<u>\$7,280.16</u>	<u>\$2,861.16</u>

PURPOSE: Security Services Payment Aramark

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0400-0413	Misc. State	<u>\$208,891.28</u>	<u>\$210,241.28</u>	<u>\$1,350.00</u>
	Law Enforcement	<u>\$208,891.28</u>	<u>\$210,241.28</u>	<u>\$1,350.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3110-1200	Salaries	<u>\$33,410.00</u>	<u>\$34,760.00</u>	<u>\$1,350.00</u>
	Overtime	<u>\$33,410.00</u>	<u>\$34,760.00</u>	<u>\$1,350.00</u>

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the budget amendments. Mr. Trigg seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember DeGray: Yes
Councilmember Holman: Yes

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

Motion carried 6-0 in favor of the budget amendments.

ARPA Line Adjustments, ROLL CALL VOTE – Trent Crewe

Mr. Crewe went over the changes to this year’s budget.

EXPENSE LINE ITEM	Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change	
1252-6009 Vehicle & Power Equipment Supplies	\$1,000.00	\$54,000.00	\$53,000.00	Garage lift & tire changer
4120-8202 Additional Machinery & Equipment	\$1,000.00	\$166,000.00	\$165,000.00	2 new or used trucks 1 Zoning gazebo repair & digital sign
9100-3180 Greenspace & Special Activities	\$1,000.00	\$63,000.00	\$62,000.00	garbage truck payment
9500-9245 New Garbage Truck Payment	\$0.00	\$8,000.00	\$8,000.00	tools
1252-6015 Small Tools	\$2,500.00	\$22,500.00	\$20,000.00	
1241-8107 Replacement of Computer Equipment	\$2,000.00	\$17,000.00	\$15,000.00	new server
4320-3310 Repair & Maintenance Service	\$2,600.00	\$12,600.00	\$10,000.00	Town hall flooring
1200-3320 Maintenance & Service Contracts	\$6,800.00	\$7,800.00	\$1,000.00	New copier lease
				Police body and surveillance cams
3100-8204 Video cameras	\$10,000.00	\$146,000.00	\$136,000.00	
8130.5702 Bluefield University donation	\$0.00	\$25,000.00	\$25,000.00	donation
8120.5642 Christmas Lights	\$3,200.00	\$88,200.00	\$85,000.00	New Christmas lights
9100.5850 Contingency	\$63,010.00	\$113,010.00	\$50,000.00	unexpected expenses
23-4044.3140 Professional Services	\$1,000.00	\$41,000.00	\$40,000.00	Water projects engineering
26-4414-8105 New construction	\$11,150.00	\$31,150.00	\$20,000.00	Pave a section Maple Hill driveway
40.1220.3140 Contingency	\$25,000.00	\$35,000.00	\$10,000.00	Tree Removal
			\$700,000.00	Fincastle
EXPENSE LINE ITEM				
9100.5860 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	\$2,509,234.00	\$1,809,234.00	(\$700,000)	

Mr. Holman asked if they were replacing all surveillance cameras.

Chief stated replacing and adding for a total of 53 indoor and outdoor. He stated that there was a 10 year warranty, licensing, updates/upgrades included.

Mayor Linkous asked how much for the cameras.

Mr. Crewe stated \$136k from this money.

Mayor Linkous asked if there were grants to help get them.

Mr. Crewe stated that we had tried.

Chief stated that the last body cameras we had were through grant money and most grants were specifically to body and not technology.

Mr. Holt stated that VDEM had up to \$250k to give away and suggested staff look into it.

Chief stated that these cameras would also allow any subdivision to purchase their own.

Mr. Holman stated that he knew the Sedgewood group was looking into something.

Chief stated that even Crescentview or any businesses could purchase their own.

Mr. Holman asked if they were wireless.

Chief stated that it was unlimited date through First Net/AT&T.

Mr. Holman stated LTE.

Chief stated yes with a minimum of 30 day storage unless something else was needed to be preserved.

Mr. Holman asked if the old ones could be repurposed.

Mr. Crewe stated that they were too old and would be auctioned.

Mr. Holt asked if Tazewell County would purchase a new fire truck for the town.

Mr. Crewe stated no.

Mayor Linkous asked if the paving for cemetery would not come out of their perpetual fund.

Mr. Crewe stated yes. He stated that the grill at Fincastle caught fire this weekend and had to be replaced. He stated that something was always breaking down.

Mr. Holman asked if the \$700k would offset.

Mr. Crewe stated that \$700k would be put into wages to pay these line items.

Mr. Holman stated they were arguing over the Sanitary Board when there was \$85 for new Christmas lights.

Mrs. Payne stated that they were working to get donations.

Mr. Crewe stated that he would need two votes, a vote to put \$700k ARPA money to reimburse wages and \$700k to spend on these line items.

Mr. Holt asked if they could still allocate out of the remaining ARPA funds and stated that it would be wiser to do it out of next year's budget. He stated that he had a concern about the money for Christmas as well when there was nothing in there for sidewalks this year.

Mrs. Payne asked how much was needed for the Christmas lights.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that she did not have the papers in front of her but the total for all was approximately \$110k, around \$44k had been paid of that with grant money and zeroing out some other accounts that would not be used before June 30th. She stated that what was needed to pay in full was approximately \$66k.

It was discussed to amend the Christmas decorations taking \$40k out of that line item.

Mr. Holman made a motion to approve the ARPA line adjustments for a total of \$660k instead of \$700k. 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 \$660k ARPA monies being adjusted into this year's budget for line adjustments.

ARPA Wage Reimbursement, ROLL CALL VOTE – Trent Crewe

Mr. Crewe stated that he also needed a motion to approve the ARPA Wage Reimbursement.

Mr. Holt made a motion to approve \$660k allocated to Wage Reimbursement.

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 \$660k ARPA monies being adjusted into this year's budget for wage reimbursements.

May 24th Public Hearing (Budget), ROLL CALL VOTE – Trent Crewe

Mr. Crewe asked for a motion to approve scheduling a Public Hearing on the new budget at the May 24th council meeting.

Mr. Holman asked if the water projects received additional grant funding then what would happen with that ARPA money.

Mr. Crewe stated that it would transfer as they were doing now. He stated that the projects were prioritized and if the funding was not there then it would follow the breakdown.

Mr. Holt stated that the last time they raised meals tax 1.5% it would give them \$150k, \$50k to the Police Department raises and \$100k into the LGIP for future projects. He asked what had happened to that.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was not in the LGIP but was in contingency that was not being spent.

Mr. Holt asked why it was not being put into the LGIP.

Mr. Crewe asked why it would need to be when we had contingency.

Mr. Holt asked what happened to that money at the end.

Mr. Crewe stated that it rolled over and was a cushion in the budget.

Mr. Hampton stated that there was nothing ever specifically put in that he saw.

Mayor Linkous asked if it was going to make the payment for Fincastle.

Mr. Hampton stated that they had to move money to Fincastle.

Mr. Holman made a motion to approve scheduling the Public Hearing on the new budget for May 24th. 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 scheduling a Public Hearing on the new budget for May 24th.

CITIZENS COMMENTS

None.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief stated that Police Appreciation Week started on Sunday and asked if they saw an officer out to thank them. He stated that they were busy as usual.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

IDA Vacancy Update

Mr. Crewe stated that the IDA met and agreed to not fill the other vacancy as of yet.

Auction Update

He stated that staff was working with Eddie Pauley on the auction.

Police Walk, May 17th

He reminded everyone about the Police Walk on May 17th.

Community Clean Up Day, May 21st

He reminded everyone about Community Cleanup Day on May 21st followed by a cookout.

Tazewell County MOU

He stated that we had received the MOU from Tazewell County for fire services.

Mr. Presley asked if they were paying us.

Mr. Crewe stated no that the agreement was we would pay for fire and they would pay for EMS.

Mr. Holt stated that he had asked Charlie for \$50k since we provided more coverage in fire to the county. He stated that he also asked that the county give \$10k or whatever for bumps in salary for any officer who was a certified EMS. He stated that he would consider it.

Mr. Crewe stated that we had 5 EMT and 1 medic already on our Fire Department and did not think many of the officers were interested in doing it.

VDOT Meeting

He stated that he would be attending the 6 year plan VDOT meeting tomorrow in Bristol.

Harmony Acres ADA

He stated that he had received the ADA report and most of Harmony Acres was exempt. He stated that we had a handicap lift and was in the process of complying with the other things.

High Street/Cleco

He stated that we were still going back and forth with Cleco regarding their absences and time away from work. He stated that he was done negotiating.

Downtown Masterplan Meeting

He stated that there was around 30 in attendance for the Town Hall Meeting, that they had met with individuals one on one Wednesday morning and also attended the IDA meeting. He stated that they were pleased with the feedback they had received and would be back two more times. He invited them to complete the survey that was on Facebook.

Comcast Rate Increase

He stated that he had received a letter that the rates for Comcast were going up again.

Fire Trucks

He stated that we had two fire trucks that were down. One with a recall on oil lines and the other with transmission issues.

Field Fest

He stated that the dates for Field Fest had been set:

- June 2nd – Summer in the ‘Field
- July 7th – Cruz N the ‘Field
- August 4th – Back to the ‘Field

Fincastle Weekend

He stated that the Bluefield University Gala was a success and they had to tear down from it to set up for the Mother’s Day Buffet which was also a success. He stated during those events the grill caught fire. He stated that it was taken out today and a new one put in.

Sanitary Board Contribution, ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Holt stated that he would compromise on the Sanitary Board and give an equal amount from the additional ARPA money. He stated that he would like to make sure that our citizens had adequate sewer.

Mr. Holt made a motion to approve contributing \$200k out of next year’s budget. Mr. Holman seconded the motion.

Mr. DeGray stated that he had some issues with doing it but they did say they would help even though it was the Sanitary Board’s responsibility to fix.

Mr. Holt agreed that we did not have to give anything but this was the Sanitary Board and would help our people.

Mr. Presley stated that we were not keeping up with our equipment and if he ran his business like the town then he would not have a business. He stated that that the county was obligated to give us Fire and EMS and now our taxpayer’s money would be used to put something in Springville and that was not fair to the citizens. He stated that our taxpayers were paying for something they should not have to be.

Mrs. Payne did not have anything else.

Mr. Trigg stated that he would agree to contribute \$200k.

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 contributing \$200k to the Sanitary Board.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Trigg asked that staff look at the drain at the tracks again for grass.

Mrs. Payne thanked Shane for the crosswalks.

Chief stated that they had nothing to do with it.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was Public Works.

Mrs. Payne thanked them. She stated in years past the Town had a Beautification Award for yards and asked that it be reactivated.

Mr. Presley stated that Mr. Hale had the nicest yard. He thanked everyone for coming out and reminded them of the quilt show on June 24th and 25th. He stated that we had the best Police Chief and department and stated that James, Kim and Trent were all doing a good job. He asked that staff cut the weeds around the bank building and to put the small area at Fincastle Estates on their mowing list. He stated that he had been mowing it and did not mind to keep mowing it if needed.

Mr. Holt stated that he appreciated our Police Department and Chief's leadership. He stated that he appreciated the compromise on the budget items.

Mr. Holman agreed and thanked the board for a spirit of debate. He thanked Trent and James for all of their work on the budget and Chief and his staff for all that they did.

Mr. DeGray thanked staff. He stated that the budget was a lot of information. He stated that he had received several compliments while at Fincastle last weekend from out of state people.

Mayor Linkous asked if any work had been done on the kiddie pool at Fincastle.

Mr. Crewe stated that it had been started and that a water leak to the pool had to be fixed recently. He stated that they promised it would be finished before we opened.

Mayor Linkous asked about the franchise with Comcast.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had not found it yet.

Mayor Linkous stated that there was one and it included having that office staffed 5 days per week.

Mr. Crewe stated that he would keep digging.

Mayor Linkous stated that a Sydney Clark told him that the flag on the upper field of the Rec Park needed to be replaced. He asked about the dumpster still being in the parking lot across from The Grind and stated that there was grease all in the front of it. He stated that the weeds in downtown needed to be cut as well. He thanked Chief for all that he and his department did and stated that there was a truck stuck in his neighborhood last week and one of his officers helped them as any of the other officers would do. He asked that everyone come out to the Police Walk on May 17th.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk