

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
June 27, 2023**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled meeting on Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Donnie Linkous, Mayor
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember
Rick Holman, Vice-Mayor
Lee Riffe, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

James Hampton, Asst. Town Mgr/Treasurer/Transit Dir
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
Alan McGraw, Town Attorney
Shane Gunter, Chief of Police
Lori Stacy, Communications Director
Nathaniel Mitchem, Zoning Admin/Prop. Maintenance
13 Members of Public

ABSENT

Ron Holt, Councilmember

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

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

CONSENT AGENDA

Vote to accept Ron Holt's Resignation and the Unbudgeted Request-Football Building were removed from the agenda.

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

FINANCIALS

May Monthly Budget Reports, ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Hampton went over the May Financials.

It was discussed that Cemetery had a vehicle purchase.

Mr. Holman stated that Fincastle was concerning.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the May Financials. Mr. Holman seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion carried 5-0 in favor.

CITIZEN REQUESTS AND SPECIAL PRESENTATION

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS & REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS & REPORTS

2023/2024 Budget, ROLL CALL VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez stated that a Public Hearing was held regarding the 2023/2024 budget and asked for a vote to approve the final budget.

Vice-Mayor Holman made a motion to approve the 2023/2024 Budget. Councilmember Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Riffe:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holman:	Yes

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

Motion carried 5-0 in favor.

Council Meeting Dates, ROLL CALL VOTE – Mayor Linkous

Mayor Linkous asked to go back to the two meetings each month on the 2nd Monday and 4th Tuesday so that it would be easier to cancel one vs. to call a special meeting.

Mr. Riffe stated that he would rather have two so he knew what was going on vs. a special called meeting.

Mr. Holman stated that they talked about it during the organizational meeting and not having enough for two meetings.

Mrs. Payne stated that she would like to keep it one meeting per month and call a special one if needed.

Mr. Trigg stated that he liked having two meetings per month.

Mr. Presley stated that he did not care either way, that it was done to help Ron but liked having two meetings per month.

Mayor Linkous stated that Ron was okay with having it on the 2nd Monday and 4th Tuesday.

Mr. Riffe made a motion to approve the 2nd Monday and 4th Tuesday. Mr. Trigg seconded the motion.

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

ROLL CALL VOTE

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

Motion failed 3-2.

Commercial Grass Issues Discussion– Mayor Linkous

Mayor Linkous stated that we had an ordinance that stated that the Zoning Administrator would contact the owner and when no response then a certified letter was sent.

Mr. McGraw stated that there was a lack of clarity that the Town Code stated grass as weeds over 10" was a nuisance and the Building Official or Town Manager would create inspections.

Mayor Linkous stated that there was no enforcement.

Mr. Presley stated that it needed to be enforced.

Mayor Linkous stated that Sam's and Wal-Mart were the issues and when he talked to them they told him to send a letter to corporate fining them and then maybe they would do something.

Mr. McGraw stated that they would have to change the Town Code and do something to put some "teeth" in it.

Mayor Linkous asked that he start the procedure to change the code and that it should start at \$500 for corporations.

Mr. Holman stated that it would need to be a structured assessment but as a Town we needed to keep our own done.

Mr. McGraw stated that a bill would constitute a lien if not paid.

Mayor Linkous suggested they send a letter with an amount and what the fine would be each day if not done.

Mr. McGraw stated that a lien would get their attention.

Mr. Presley stated that they had some residential who were habitual offenders.

Mayor Linkous stated that we had a guy who mowed for the town but his prices went up. He asked that they put something in place with a set amount and fine each day.

Mr. Holman suggested a fee schedule.

Mr. Presley asked Mr. McGraw to draft something and send to council.

Mayor Linkous stated that they could discuss it further in a Work Session and this was for commercial property only.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Keith Harman stated that his neighbor did not cut his all year and he had already talked to Nathaniel.

Mr. Mitchem stated that he had sent them a correction notice and re-inspected again that day that it looked like they had gotten part of it mowed but were working on the lawnmower.

Mayor Linkous stated when the 14 days was up then someone would be sent to mow it.

Mr. Mitchem stated that he issued a correction notice by the Code of Virginia and tried that first before issuing a violation but would send the violation notice tomorrow and he would have 14 days from then.

Another citizen talked about the Nativity Scene and asked if it could be moved back downtown this year.

It was discussed about the shape it was in.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that they would have to approve to give her money to purchase a new one.

Mrs. Payne talked about how children were climbing on the animals and that it had become destroyed in many ways.

Mr. Riffe stated that a new one would cost around \$40k - \$50k. He stated that it should have been put up on something at the Sanders House with better lighting to be better seen.

Gary Taylor spoke on behalf of his mom and her issues with the recent flooding and water going under her house. He stated that they needed to clean out the ditches on South College.

Mr. Presley stated that Public Works had been cleaning out ditches, etc. but were having issues obtaining the permitting needed to enter the waterway.

Gail Cook stated that they would be having a flag retirement ceremony on July 8th at the Sanders House. She stated that the nativity was in terrible shape and the reason it was moved to the Sanders House. She stated that they could not even put the angel up because one of the wings was broken, that the camel's ear was broken, etc. She stated that they were a part of the Town.

Mr. Holman asked if we could take our flags.

Mrs. Hernandez stated that the VFW were the ones who took ours.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Gunter stated that he had hired 3 more officers who would be attending the academy on July 18th. He stated that he was full staffed once again until Sgt. Carroll retired at the end of the year. He stated that the academy was 6 months and then it would take another 3-4 months before they would be put out on the road by themselves.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Town Offices Closed-Independence Day, July 4th (No recycling)

TOWN ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Mr. McGraw stated that Ayers was revising his quote on the footbridge to include the wider area in the middle of the bridge.

Mayor Linkous stated that he had already given them the price on just the bridge that the only difference would be the seating and maybe an arch later on.

Mr. McGraw stated that he had been working with administration on a former employee withholding passwords, etc. and had sent him a letter.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Trigg asked if the Depot Street playground swing could be fixed.

Mrs. Payne asked about the roof on the groundskeeper's house.

Mr. Hampton stated that he had 2 quotes now.

Mrs. Payne stated that George McGonagle would be retiring in July and asked that council have him here and present him with a plaque. She stated that Lori was in touch with Rocky concerning the night at the ballpark on July 30th.

Mrs. Stacy stated that there would be dinner in the Coppinger room and all employees and their families would have free admission. She stated that she would be ordering megaphones to put popcorn in.

Mayor Linkous asked if she needed approval.

Mrs. Stacy stated that they had already approved 350 plus \$1k sponsorship during the last meeting.

Mrs. Payne thanked everyone for coming.

Mr. Riffe thanked everyone for coming and stated that he liked that the event would be on Sunday. He stated that the Christmas committee would meet and discuss a new nativity. He stated that the Graham Historical Society would be off the month of July and when they came back in August would start working on plaques for the downtown businesses. He thanked Chief, staff and Public Works.

Mr. Holman thanked everyone for coming, thanked the Town for all the work they did in helping to host the Little League tournaments, Public Works helped with small repairs, it was heavy traffic and a success. He stated that the Lunch & Learn was very informative.

Mr. Presley thanked everyone for coming, Chief and staff and stated that the flood issues would be a long process.

Mayor Linkous stated that Mr. Kinder asked again to buy the alleyway. He stated that he talked to Eric Workman former County Administrator and he told him that if we issued a letter to Virginia that they would give it back to the Town.

Mr. McGraw stated that he would have to disagree that this one was done in the 1890's and he would be happy to reach out to Eric. He stated that it would be a nightmare trying to find all the heirs, successors, etc. of those who set up the subdivisions.

Mayor Linkous stated that Eric had done several in Bland.

Mr. McGraw stated that there was a short period of time that this could be done but was long after this one and was recorded as one of the first families in Bluefield.

Mayor Linkous stated that dozens of properties had been sold related to this property.

Mr. McGraw stated that they could not sell what they did not own.

Mayor Linkous stated that there had to be a solution.

Mr. McGraw stated it would be to find the heirs.

Mayor Linkous asked what the people who lived next to it could do.

Mr. McGraw stated that chances were it could be used by them.

Mr. Riffe asked about condemning it.

Mr. McGraw stated that it would require notice of publication in the local paper and in 50 days it could move on to a judge to condemn it which would then be sent to unclaimed properties.

Mayor Linkous stated that he would call Mr. Kinder.

Mr. Presley asked that Alan call him.

Mr. Hampton stated that he was just trying to square off his property.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion and a second to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk

