

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
July 13, 2021**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, July 13, 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
Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Rick Holman, Councilmember
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
Shane Gunter, Police Chief
Don Scott, Planning Commission Secretary
Greg/Heather, Recreation Department
Tara White, Zoning Administrative Asst.
7 members of public

ABSENT

Jarrold Bailey, Councilmember

CALL TO ORDER

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

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Mayor Holt asked to add a BVLL Request under New Business and Reports.

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

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

MANUFACTURING AND MODULAR HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Mayor Linkous asked if any of council had any other questions for Randy Grumbine.

Mr. Holt stated that the biggest difference was the marriage walls, inside finishes etc.

Mr. Grumbine stated that you could have the same finishes in either that it was based on consumer preference.

Mr. Presley asked which was better.

Mr. Grumbine stated that a modular had more “meat”

Mr. Presley stated that it had 4 axles.

Mr. Grumbine stated that was correct and was a heavier house and cost \$20k-\$30k more for the exact same thing.

Mr. Holt stated that the board was looking for more affordable housing options.

Mr. Wohlford stated that the difference between a manufactured and a modular was that the HVAC was already included in a modular from the factory.

Mr. Grumbine stated that it was HUD restricted on HVAC’s and they were ready to be lived in with completion on site but certain minimums had to be in place. He stated that a modular came nearly finished.

Mayor Linkous stated that they could specify what they wanted in it.

Mr. Grumbine stated if the factory would do it. He stated that the HVAC was done on site and inspected by the building inspector.

Mr. Holman thanked him for coming out and said the presentation was informative. He stated that it was the way they were accessed for tax purposes and that modular homes gained value and were accessed as stick built.

Mr. Grumbine stated that manufactured were the same if they were attached to land.

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: American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
0100-0511	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>
		<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
9100-5860	American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>
		<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>	<u>\$2,509,234.00</u>

PURPOSE: Fire Dept. (donation from Wendy's)

Revenue

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3108-9903	Gifts/Donations	<u>\$5,698.00</u>	<u>\$8,198.00</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>
		<u>\$5,698.00</u>	<u>\$8,198.00</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>

Expenditure

Line Item		Original Budget	Amended Budget	Change
3220-8107	Fire Dept. Donations	<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>
		<u>\$0.00</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>	<u>\$2,500.00</u>

Mayor Linkous asked to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

- Councilmember Bailey: Absent
- 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 5-0 in favor.

Reappointment of Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk, ROLL CALL VOTE

Mayor Linkous stated the next item was to reappoint Kim Hernandez as Town Clerk. He stated that it was for a two year term.

Mr. Crewe stated that was correct and her term would end in August but he was not clear whether it was the beginning or the end of August. He stated that he was doing some housekeeping so things would be ready to roll. He stated that it would be his request to reappoint her for that two year term.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to reappointment Kim Hernandez as Town Clerk for the two year term. Mrs. Payne seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Bailey:	Absent
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 5-0 in favor.

BVLL Contract, ROLL CALL VOTE

Mr. Holt stated that the Little League had asked that they be allowed to lease their fields. He stated that they would be willing to pay and were working and would bring back contracts for approval. He asked that they approve this short term request.

Mrs. Payne asked if a Princeton team could use them.

Mr. Holt stated yes that they could work with them on the details but this would help the Lady Red Devils, Soundwave, Bluefield Ducks and other local based travel organizations. He stated that it was a lot of the Little League kids but was also kids from other areas such as Mercer County, Bland County, and Town of Tazewell. He stated that it would be during off season and Little League would be in control of who was allowed to use them and later on it would be a financial benefit.

Mr. Presley asked about insurance.

Mr. Holt stated that they would have their own insurance.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had talked to Ron, Greg and Mr. McFarland and the way he understood it was that the Little League had two ballfields that were leased from the Town and any subleasing would have to be approved by council. He stated that the Little League was asking to be able to rent those fields out from now until January 1st. He stated after that when the Little League went back into season then they would see how they wanted to address it. He stated that he had to talk to Greg about the Recreation Department scheduling all of this and he felt this was a reasonable request that Little League would choose when, who and the cost. He stated that he did not think they would want to lock this in for an extended time that he felt it would work out but suggested that they only do it through January and look at it again then.

Mayor Linkous asked if they would need a motion to that effect.

Mr. Crewe stated yes if they would like to do it.

Mr. Holman stated that it was not a bad idea at all and asked if they considered maintenance.

Mr. Holt stated that the Little League had not figured out the fees, etc. and this would be a test to see how well it worked. He stated that it was important to him that there would be fairness in terms of the usage. He stated that he did not think it would be a problem this year since there were not that many teams who would use it but agreed with Trent that they needed to look at it again in January.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to approve the short term lease. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked to do roll call and report.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Bailey:	Absent
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 5-0 in favor.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Art Clark, 662 (Mountain Lane) the gravel road that goes across the mountain. He thanked the Police Chief for sending patrols and stated that the biggest problem right now was trash. He stated that he had a house in Alabama but spent 80% of his time here. He stated that from Wal-Mart to the Shell Station that our town workers hit trash when mowing and did not pick it up and it was taking away the town's beauty. He stated that he did not think the town cared because it

kept going on and on. He stated that trees had fallen from the storms and one had actually fallen when he came tonight for the meeting and that someone usually carried a chain saw with them and had cut it themselves. He stated that the patrols would run out soon.

Chief Gunter stated that it was two weeks for extra patrol for anywhere.

Mr. Clark stated that he would have to call every 15th day and ask them for patrols. He stated that people cleaned out big trucks up there with their trash, dumped tires, couches, etc. and asked that council go up and look at it. He stated that the new Town Manager was doing an excellent job and that when the town came to cut trees that they left them in the ditch line which blocked the ditches, etc. He stated that his neighbor had filled potholes himself just last month. He stated that the trash was bad downtown as well.

Mr. Presley stated that it was because people were lazy.

Mr. Clark stated that he hoped council looked into this.

Mayor Linkous stated that he was riding his golf cart up there last weekend and his wife said it looked like a dumping ground. He stated that there were no dumping signs up where they were dumping.

Mr. Clark asked if there was a possibility to put up some cameras.

Mr. Crewe stated that it had been done in the past and was ineffective.

Mayor Linkous stated that they needed to look at the ditches.

Mr. Clark stated that they cut just enough to get it out of the road and left it in the ditch. He asked if anyone was in charge of litter.

Mayor Linkous stated the Police Department.

Mr. Clark stated that the first two curves were the worse and was where cameras were needed.

Chief Gunter stated that they had extended it for two more weeks and had been up there 42 times before 7 p.m.

Mr. Clark stated in the 11 years he had lived there he had only caught one person.

Chief Gunter stated that they had caught people before but because it was biodegradable that the judge dropped the charges.

Mr. Clark stated that they needed to look at the litter laws.

Mr. Presley stated that they needed to be stricter.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was state law and was a Class 1 Misdemeanor and several had been convicted of litter but never charged. He stated that the town only cut to the right of way.

Mr. Clark stated that he thought it was 25ft.

Mr. Crewe stated that he believed the ditch line was the right of way. He stated that he would check on it.

Rhonda Buckner, First Street wanted to talk about the drain issues again and brought a garbage bag of a small portion of what she cleaned out yesterday. She stated that it was still not being taken care of.

Mayor Linkous stated that he knew our crews cut the grass but then it was all in the road. He stated that the Town Manager had instructed someone to get it cleaned along with the drains and was told that it had been cleaned but it was not. He stated that he went by there last night and it needed to be cut again. He suggested getting the East End cleaned up before they did Wal-Mart, etc.

Mr. Crewe stated that they were trying.

Mayor Linkous asked that she keep them informed. He stated that Tara's mother in law also lived in that area and he hoped that they would try their best to address it and put it on a schedule.

Ms. Buckner stated that she lived at 115 First Street and invited them to come and see her.

Mayor Linkous stated that another issue she had asked about involved the church there and that the church had been talked too and had given permission for that individual to be there.

Mr. Crewe stated that being homeless was not a crime and there was nowhere to take them. He stated that it could be monitored if something were to change.

Dave Wohlford clarified that there were two types of modular homes, one that was on a frame and one that was on a flatbed truck and the one on a frame was questionable.

Mr. Holman stated that the gentleman had talked about that some.

Mr. Wohlford reminded them to remember the zoning which was there for a reason and that people built and bought property because of those zoning laws. He stated that the gentleman who came was not a state guy but was a salesman and would tell them all the good things.

Mayor Linkous stated that he was upset with him because he was on Facebook getting everyone angry when he did not have a clue what he was talking about. He stated that they were in the stage of talking not changing things and he was telling everybody that they were changing R1 zoning to allow for doublewides anywhere in the town and that was lie.

Mr. Wohlford stated that whatever it took to get people in there to look at it.

Mayor Linkous stated not telling them a lie would be the best thing. He stated that this was the first time they had talked about it and by him getting on Facebook and telling everyone that they were going to destroy the town was an absolute lie. He stated that he had told him in the beginning not to put lies on Facebook until he knew what he was talking about. He stated that there were 2-3 locations where individuals had asked to put a doublewide and all they were doing was trying to figure out where they could put them. He stated that they were not going to allow people to put them in Briarwood or Sedgewood and were not going to change zoning period but were trying to figure out a way to allow in a few areas of Town. He stated that when he got on Facebook that all people saw was the bad. He stated that he was disappointed with the presentation and thought it would be a different kind although the gentleman did a great job.

Mr. Wohlford stated that if they changed the zoning somewhere to accommodate for someone then it would be other places as well. He stated that an example would be where Crowe & Company was being located.

Mr. Holt stated that if council decided as a board that is what in the best interest of those neighborhoods who could not afford a \$300k house vs. a \$75k doublewide and the board gave permission by changing the zoning then it did not affect Briarwood or those areas who had it built into the language what was and was not allowed.

Mayor Linkous stated that they could work together and that there was a \$450k modular nearby that looked like a \$450k home. He stated that he would take the blame for this because how it got started was there is some land for sell in Pinehill Park that is right beside of a doublewide on Lonnie Yates property. He stated that the person wanting to buy the land was told that he could

not put a doublewide on it. He stated that the way he understood it was that doublewides and modulars were basically the same and what he had suggested to zoning was to require it to be a 2021 model, on a permanent foundation and have a deed. He stated that they were not trying to change the zoning in the town. He stated that they were trying to make a few areas to allow for affordable housing. He stated that the board took a lot of pride in this town and it was wrong when someone put something on Facebook bashing them for something that they had not even done yet and asked that they put the things on there that was wonderful. He stated that they were not out to hurt or play favorites and there would not be any major zoning changes.

Mr. Wohlford asked if they kept changing their minds then what was to stop it.

Mayor Linkous stated that doublewides would look better in some of these areas than what was already there. He stated that if zoning/building denied the request then the person could take it before the circuit judge who may say yes. He stated that they needed to work this out and protect the neighborhoods and in certain areas these would be an improvement by allowing them.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

None.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Mr. Crewe stated that Mr. Bowers was there and with his help through the IDA as of today that all three businesses at the Envision Center were legally occupying their space with one exception that Ax to Grind needed to obtain their business license. He stated that all building code issues that were not met Thursday night through the permit expiring on Sunday had been fixed. He stated that there were three things that Chad had to inspect after they were installed that he could not see and had to have an email from the electrician saying they had been done. He stated that he had received that a few hours ago but that two of the businesses were open which were the Beauty School and The Grind and Ax to Grind still had to obtain their business license. He stated that he and Gavin Scott, State Police Recruiter had been playing phone tag and that Gavin had arranged an event at The Grind for recruitment and invited our Police Department along with the Sheriff's Office and called it Coffee with a Cop which was held on Saturday. He stated that Gail Cook had asked him to talk about a project with the Historical Society which was a monopoly board based on Tazewell County pieces and would be the old Bank of Graham, St. Mary's School and the Logan Street School and would cost around \$800 to get photos of them as pieces on the game board and unless he was told differently that he would approved the expenditure for this. He stated that he thought it was a neat advertising gimmick. He stated that he was working on flag replacements and flags being donated and would work on a presentation.

Mr. Holman asked about the flag at the fountain.

Mr. Crewe stated that there were several flags needing to be replaced and there was an organization willing to donate two flags but he was looking for more. He stated that we could possibly have a presentation at the next meeting but he would proceed with getting these unless told differently.

Mr. Holman asked if they could get a larger flag to go there if possible.

Mr. Crewe stated that a 30x50 could possibly fit there. He stated that on Friday Public Works had a big mower that died and were working on getting another one. He stated that they could not get enough people or equipment to keep up. He stated that the Recreation Department was there and that they had been in discussion over several things but that staffing and facilities were an issue but there was a list they were working on of different programs across the board which included a children's camp that currently had 11 kids and a waiting list. He stated that Harmony Acres was pretty steady. He stated that the Fincastle pool should open in the next few days and the parts were on order for the heater that right now it was around 66-67 degrees. He stated that they were still waiting on the backboard and the ADA lift along with the railing but had finished up the bathrooms today so they were closer than they were. He stated that all of the pavilions had been reserved for the Bluefield Fest which seemed to be getting bigger than they had thought and were giving away \$70k in prizes, paying rent, bills, etc. He stated that it was an organization of different churches of which some were local. He stated that they had revisited the issue and Greg had asked for a Special Events permit to be completed and with 5k people it would need the Police Department and possibly the Sheriff's Department patrolling. He stated that they would have to work with the Fire Department on the fireworks.

Mr. Presley asked if we had to let them do it.

Mr. Crewe stated no and if they did not have the permits, etc. needed then we could not let them have it.

Mr. Presley stated that they would not take care of the mess afterwards.

Mr. Crewe stated that may be true because it was not a local guy but they would make sure of that. He stated that both fire trucks (bucket and the ladder) were back in service.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Holman thanked Ms. Buckner for coming in again. He stated that they would provide as much attention to getting this taken care of and that he knew personnel was an issue and there were other areas with the same problem.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was sent to Pete and he was told that it was done but it was not and he would get to the bottom of it.

Mr. Holt stated that he thought last week's Work Session was beneficial and they needed to have more of them to set a path and to establish goals. He stated that there were other things

that they could do to impact the community and had to work together. He asked if anyone knew what the average household was here.

Mr. Presley stated \$44k.

Mr. Holt stated that was pretty close that he being a cop and his wife being a teacher made twice that amount and that they needed to help the community to find descent homes that they could afford. He thanked the IDA for all of the work that they did especially in the downtown area. He stated that citizens had reached out last year concerning the gas line that was installed on 720 and that there was a brick homeowner who had planted \$2k in shrubbery that was dug up and did not fix. He stated that it needed to be made right because he took care of his portion of the property there. He stated regarding the dumping issues that the Board of Supervisors gave money to the Sheriff's Office for overtime to work litter enforcement and cameras and asked if we could set aside overtime money for ours to be able to do this.

Chief Gunter stated that a lot was shrubs and branches being thrown out.

Mr. Holt stated that it was frustrating. He stated that there was a lot involved to do this and included lots of follow ups but they owed it to the community.

Chief Gunter stated that he still had officers up there.

Mr. Holt stated that he knew Trent was trying but the last two years had been a challenge getting seasonal employees when they could sit at home and make more money from the Federal Government. He stated that the state could stop it but they would not and there was no excuse that the same issues were happening in the county and leadership was having to get out and do stuff.

Mr. Crewe stated that was also happening here and that we had a custodian out for hip surgery and Public Works was cleaning the building. He stated that the main issues were: old equipment, the number of employees and paying them \$10/hour we could not make them care to make the town look good. He stated that Pete ran every time he seen him coming because of giving him a list to do every time.

Mr. Holt stated that it was frustrating and if they needed to sit down with the department heads and make them "stand over" the employees and do the right thing then it needed to be done the right way.

Mr. Crewe stated that the grass in certain areas had been so tall that they could not see if they were mowing over trash or anything else.

Mr. Holt agreed but said that they needed to pick it up afterwards.

Mr. Crewe stated that he intended on meeting with the department heads monthly to open up communication and would block off 1-2 hours for each meeting.

Mr. Holman stated that he was on the Wireless Authority and he was not certain if there was any benefit to the Town. He stated that it was for the underserved areas in the County and felt it was not productive for the Town.

Mr. Crewe stated that he could look into it but if we ever needed them then we had an ally and it helped with Economic Development if nothing else. He stated that it was a longstanding relationship.

Mr. Holman stated that it had changed over the years.

Mr. Presley gave a shout out to the Police Department and said that Kim had two more years to deal with them. He thanked the Recreation Department for coming and asked for another Work Session in the next few weeks. He stated that Matt Freedman was now the city attorney where he was. He stated regarding the trash issues that if they could get them on camera would be good because the Police Department's hands were tied.

Mr. Crewe stated that we would have to find them first.

Mr. Presley stated that it was a nationwide problem that started with COVID.

Mrs. Payne asked how much the cameras would cost.

Chief Gunter stated that it would depend on the type and that the game cameras were not that much.

Mr. Crewe stated around \$100 but the issue would be if it was clear enough to stand up in court.

Chief Gunter stated that they had successfully prosecuted some.

Mrs. Payne asked if the Beautification Commission put up the flower baskets downtown.

Mr. Crewe stated that we had paid for them.

Mrs. Payne stated that they were very nice. She stated that the Quilters would be having their show this weekend.

Mr. Crewe stated that we had been working with them and had worked with them today to get what they needed done.

Mr. Trigg stated that the bus stop at the corner of the Treasurer's Office was dark and needed a street light.

Mr. Crewe stated that he would look into it.

Mayor Linkous stated that the Beauty School was taking parking from the merchant spots and asked if we could ask that they park in the gravel lot.

Mr. Crewe stated that there was a parking study underway that would look at this.

Mayor Linkous asked why there was a dumpster in the parking lot downtown.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was there temporarily for the Envision Center and would be moved after final destruction was done which was today.

Mayor Linkous stated that he knew parking was a big deal.

Mr. Bowers stated that there was one person there with handicap needs.

Mayor Linkous stated that the only way in was through Ax to Grind.

Mr. Bowers stated that Ax to Grind was only open on Thursdays and Friday from 4-10 p.m. and the Beauty School was open Monday through Friday until 4 p.m. so they worked it out amongst themselves.

Mr. Crewe stated that the door entrance on the side of Ax to Grind was ADA Compliant and the other side there was a 14 inch drop and you could not go out that way. He stated that the scheduling should be ok.

Mayor Linkous stated that the door that went out to the road had no threshold and a lady fell going out of it the other day.

Mr. Bowers stated that it was fixed on Friday.

Mr. Crewe stated that the final inspection was done around 2:30-3 p.m. today.

Mayor Linkous stated that the three grand openings and Field Fest were held last Thursday and that everyone seemed to like that area for Field Fest. He stated that Jack Necessary had a car club and they wanted to do a cruise-in in our downtown area on the same evening as Evening Shade.

Mr. Wohlford stated regarding the gas line being put in that it was done under former leadership and the contractors did not have a VA license. He stated that they breached the \$10k limit and that DPOR had no authority to force them to get a license that it was on the town and anything over \$25k required a Town of Bluefield business license as well.

Gail Cook showed council a copy of the monopoly board and how each picture would be placed on the board for the different areas within the Town. She stated that the money she had requested would complete our row and that she had asked for permission from each area to use their pictures.

Tara White stated that Ms. Buckner had to leave and asked that she relay her thanks to council.

Mr. Holman asked if the Sanders House would be doing the Holiday Craft Show again this year.

Ms. Cook stated yes along with Twisted History.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Holt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk