

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
August 10, 2021**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, August 10, 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
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Ron Holt, Vice-Mayor
Rick Holman, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Trent Crewe, Manager/Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk
Shane Gunter, Police Chief
James Hampton, Asst. Mgr./Treasurer/Transit Dir.
5 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

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

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Vice-Mayor Holt made a motion to add an Executive Session for personnel to the agenda. Councilmember Holman seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

CONSENT AGENDA

Vice-Mayor Holt asked that the July 27, 2021 minutes be amended to include personnel for the Executive Session.

Mr. Crewe stated that he disagreed that the section they went under was regarding budget items relating to the budget and that no names were mentioned.

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

None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS AND REPORTS

None.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Rhonda Buckner asked if the fire hydrants were being serviced.

Mr. Crewe stated rarely and had not been done in about a year.

Ms. Buckner stated that hers had never been opened but if it were opened on Hicks/First Streets it would wash everything down and into the drains.

Mr. Holman asked if it would have enough pressure to put it into the drain.

Mr. Crewe stated that it should.

Mr. Holman asked if the direct path was to the drain.

Ms. Buckner stated that it should be.

Mr. Holman asked if there was a compliance mandate.

Mr. Crewe stated no but was highly recommended and that it needed to be done now but would fill back up two days later.

Betty Watson, Mountain Lane asked if something could be done concerning the speeders on her street and suggested putting bumpers across the road.

Mayor Linkous asked if that could be done.

Mr. Crewe stated that it could be put on any asphalt.

Ms. Watson stated that there were several kids on Mountain Lane.

Mayor Linkous stated that there was also a blind lady and her dog who frequently walked.

Mr. Holman stated that he had family members who lived on that street and it was bad.

Mr. Crewe stated that they could try and patrol a little more.

Mr. Presley asked if there was any kind of technology that would take pictures of speeders.

Mr. Crewe stated that it was not allowed here but it was in Northern, VA.

Chief Gunter stated that they were not authorized to seize a license plate.

Mr. Crewe stated that Richmond was putting up license plate readers and were catching flack for it.

Chief Gunter stated that there was a system to count how many speeders and the times they were speeding but it was expensive.

Mr. Holman asked about a flashing sign.

Mr. Crewe stated that they could.

Chief Gunter stated that he worried about vandalism. He stated that they cost \$5k per unit.

Mr. Holman stated that he was talking about a flashing speed limit sign to make everyone aware of the speed limit.

Mr. Crewe stated that he could price them.

Chief Gunter stated that they did not work.

Mr. Holt suggested putting police cars in the problem neighborhoods. He also suggested that something be put on the new website where citizens can call in and we could check monthly to see the counts.

Mr. Crewe stated that could be done and they had also thought about parking an empty police car in the area.

Mr. Holt suggested putting something on the Police Department's Facebook page as well.

Chief Gunter stated that they received phone calls weekly concerning speeders.

Mr. Trigg stated that they had the same problem in the curve on Vencil Street.

Chief Gunter stated that they enforced traffic and issued tickets if needed.

Mrs. Payne thanked them for the signs at Fincastle.

Chief Gunter stated that John O'Neal had noticed people were slowing down.

Betty Kuppusami stated there were speed issues in Sedgewood near the old tennis courts and it did not help that the bushes there were grown out.

Mayor Linkous stated that we would look at taking care of it. He stated that we had cut the trees in front of Ashley Furniture but stopped at BB&T.

Mr. Crewe stated that he would ask but was not sure that it was us who cut them.

Norma Mahood thanked them for what they were doing and stated that they would like to help in any way needed.

POLICE CHIEF'S REPORT

Chief Gunter stated that the Drug Task Force had a meeting today and had been working 2-5 days per week as early as 5 a.m. He stated that they were making a big difference across Tazewell County and did not get credit for it.

TOWN MANAGER'S/ATTORNEY'S REPORT

Mr. Crewe stated that he had received notification that the Town was approved for the CProp Grant in the amount of \$50k for Fincastle Restaurant repairs. He stated that Fincastle pool was ready but were waiting on the handicap rails. He stated that the Health Department was supposed to have come today but did not. He stated that the automatic defibrillator needed new batteries and this evening the water temp was 82 degrees. He stated that the handicap lift was bolted down on Thursday. He stated that they would like to open and make sure all was good for next year. He stated that Field Fest was on Thursday and thanked Kim and James for their hard work on it. He stated that they were looking at a bear proof receptacle that was a 100 gallon

container and would take two hands to get it off. He stated that the cost was \$11,495 and they were still looking at other options.

Mr. Holt suggested that they get prepared to pay if they could not find anything cheaper. He stated that he knew it was a problem but if a child were to get mauled by one of these bears that it would not be good. He stated that bears had been a problem at the Little League Park for the past several years and DNR would not track them anymore. He stated that trash laid for 2-3 days and he was embarrassed that the Rec Leader would see that and not pick it up. He stated that they had to do better.

Mrs. Payne asked if one would be enough.

Mr. Crewe stated that it would put out the fire for now and would hold Saturday and Sunday's trash in a locked box until it could be emptied on Monday.

Mayor Linkous asked why there was not an employee there on the weekends when we rented out the pavilions.

Mr. Crewe stated that the garbage truck was not available.

Mr. Holt stated that anyone could pick it up.

Mr. Crewe agreed.

Mr. Holt stated that he had received multiple complaints on those facilities.

Mr. Linkous stated that if it were picked up then the bear problem would end.

Mr. Crewe stated that shelter reservations had now been referred to the Rec Department so that they would know when they were being rented, etc. He stated that we were getting there and had people who could go and empty the trash.

Mr. Trigg suggested a big trash dumpster with a lock and bars.

Mr. Crewe stated that may work better than what they had now. He stated that they had been working on it all summer.

Mr. Holt stated that he was not sure how many employees the Rec Department had that it was not a Monday through Friday but was 7 days a week. He stated that he would be in favor of hiring another person if needed to work the parks, clean the bathrooms and for more activities.

Mr. Crewe stated that more activities were coming. He stated that he has had several meetings with Susie Green and her committee regarding the Black Section of the cemetery which had been neglected years ago. He stated that there were unmarked graves there and they were asking for two things. A historical marker which they had raised the money for all except the Town would need to dig a hole and set it up and the other thing was they had someone who had

documented through sources 100 individual unmarked graves. He stated that living relatives knew about where their loved ones were buried and this dated back to the 1930's. He stated that they would like to erect 3 granite markers in a half circle effect that would be 4 ½ x 5ft long. He stated that they had received 3 estimates with Bluefield Monument coming in at \$26,500 but after working with them Ms. Green got the price down to \$17k. He stated that Jody Shrewsbury had also been meeting with them as well. He stated that Ms. Green would like permission from the Town to start raising funds for this project which would also include two benches and a fence which cost around \$25k. He stated that they felt confident that they would receive \$7,500 from the Community Foundation and asked if the Town would contribute. He stated that he thought it would be good for the Town to do so and they could not use the perpetual care money that was in the cemetery for this. He stated that there was a relative who would like to do videos and also asked if the contributions could be accepted through the Town and put into a special account so that they could be tax deductible. He stated that he did not know how much they could raise and had been promised \$4k and would hopefully receive the grant for \$7,500. He stated that they would like to move forward with this project and would plan to have an unveiling and dedication for both on the Friday after Thanksgiving. He stated that Art Mead was also working with them. He asked council if they would like to pay up to \$25k or half which seemed reasonable and if they raised more money we would pay less.

Mayor Linkous stated that this had been going on for years.

Mr. Crewe stated that it had started in 2005.

Mayor Linkous stated that they were fantastic people.

Mr. Holt stated that he had been on council for five years and they had come every year asking for help and it was time to help them. He stated that they had tried on their own to make it better.

Mr. Trigg agreed and stated that he had family members there.

Mayor Linkous agreed that they needed to do it.

Mr. Trigg stated that it would be a good thing to take care of the entire bill. He stated that he could give a history lesson sometime.

Mr. Holman asked what would go on the memorial.

Mr. Crewe stated the names of the unmarked graves.

Mayor Linkous stated that it looked as though they had around \$12k and suggested that the Town pay up to \$13k now or more if needed. He stated that they should make it happen with whatever was needed after the fundraising.

Mr. Crewe suggested the motion be up to the amount that was needed to complete the project.

Mr. Trigg made a motion to give up to the amount needed to complete this project. Mrs. Payne seconded the motion. d

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk 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.

Mr. Crewe stated that Gary Neal would do all of the sandblasting at his shop, we would have benches like what was out front but with the cost of steel the benches would now cost \$2k vs. \$800. He stated that there would also be a 750ft. fence installed as well.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Trigg stated that he liked what they just did.

Mrs. Payne thanked the Town for helping at the Sanders House and stated that her John had seen the Police Department patrolling Fincastle more. She stated that there were bears on Fairlane and had went into someone's garage and tore up several things so they were now keeping their garage door closed.

Mr. Presley thanked everyone for coming and gave a shout out to the Police Department, James and Kim and said they were doing a good job.

Mr. Holt stated that he appreciated the public input and all of the employees. He stated that the issue where the gas line was torn up that someone had made a visit to the citizen.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had made a call.

Mr. Holt stated that it was much appreciated.

Mr. Holman thanked the public for coming out. He stated that the employees did a fantastic job and that it was never ending. He asked if we had a policy to remove dead animals.

Mr. Crewe stated not per say but that Public Works usually went out and got them. He stated that Public Works had been going above and beyond in different places throughout Town.

Mr. Holman stated that was in lieu of trying to find personnel and that they could never get it all done. He asked that his appreciation be expressed to them.

Mayor Linkous stated at 110 Hockman Pike that they were trying to get it cleaned up over a year now and it was on the list for the grass to be cut. He stated that our machines were not capable of cutting this area because a tree had been cut and was laying in the back. He asked that they take the mini excavator to clean it up and then charge the property owner. He stated that it would be an all day job and the lady beside of it had been asking that it get cleaned up.

Mr. Crewe stated that the owner was in the office today and asked that he have until next Wednesday to get it cleaned up. He stated that Kris okayed that and if not done then we would be there on Thursday. He stated that he lived in North Carolina.

Mr. Holt asked if Norfolk Southern was working with Kris on that property.

Mr. Crewe stated that Norfolk Southern was saying that it was abandoned and they were not responsible. He stated that mowing and repairs were the problem and he told them to call their attorney.

Mr. Holt stated that it looked terrible and they could afford to fix it. He stated that whole right of way looked bad and it was in the middle of our downtown. He asked if a resolution of letter from the board should be sent.

Mr. Crewe stated that he had discussed this with them and did not think that would help.

Mr. Holt suggested that we cut it and bill them.

Mr. Crewe stated that was where we were at.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to read the Executive Session.

MOTION FOR CLOSED MEETING

It is hereby moved that the Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia enter into a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia as amended, The specific purpose for this motion is to discuss the following matter(s):

Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment; assignment, appointment, promotion, performance, demotion, salaries, disciplining, or resignation of specific public officers, appointees, or employees of any public body with such closed meeting being confined to the following subject (s): Town Attorney.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session.

Vice-Mayor Holt made a motion to enter into Executive Session as described above. Councilmember Holman seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk 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:	Yes

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 6-0 in favor of going into Executive Session.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to resume open meeting.

Councilmember Presley made a motion to enter back into regular session. Vice-Mayor Holt seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk 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 of returning to open session.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk to read the certification.

CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, the Town Council of Bluefield, Virginia convened a closed meeting on August 10, 2021, pursuant to a duly adopted motion, attached hereto, and such closed meeting was convened in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of Bluefield, Virginia returned to its open meeting held on August 10, 2021.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA HEREBY CERTIFIES that to the best of each member's knowledge (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were discussed in the closed meeting held on August 10, 2021, to which this certification applies and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening such closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia in such closed meeting.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to approve the certification.

Mr. Presley made a motion to approve the certification. Mr. Holman seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked the Clerk 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:	Yes

Mrs. Hernandez stated that it was 6-0 for the certification.

ADJOURN

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Mr. Holt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Mayor Linkous adjourned the meeting at 10:35 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk