

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
January 9, 2018**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, January 9, 2018 at 7:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Don Harris, Mayor
Jimmy Jones, Councilmember
Ron Holt, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Lee Riffe, Vice-Mayor

ALSO PRESENT

Mike Watson, Town Manager
Shane Gunter, Police Chief
Billie Roberts, Comm. Dev. Coordinator
Matt Freedman, Town Attorney
Kim Hernandez, Executive Assistant
Kris Williams, Zoning Administrator
James Hampton, Treasurer/Transit Director
6 Members of Public

ABSENT

Lesley Catron, Town Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Harris called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. He asked for a moment of silence in memory of Jim Hardy and Steve Danko.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Councilmember Riffe led the Invocation. Mayor Harris led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Harris removed the Executive Session and the Sanitary Board vote from the agenda.

Councilmember Holt made a motion to approve the amended agenda. Councilmember Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Pg. 94: he stated showed all compliances they were required to test. He stated there was one finding under internal controls on pg. 96 which was problems we had in the past by not having enough employees to do checks and balances. He stated that they found similar findings in other localities. He stated that the second finding was a reimbursement that was filed twice and would be fixed this year.

Mr. Watson stated that what happened was we received Revenue Sharing funds and at the end of the year reported to VDOT what was spent. He stated that no money was spent incorrectly but was reported on the wrong line.

Mr. Wickham stated that the IDA report was mainly due to the Welcome Center construction but he would not go over it. He continued on with the small handout he gave staff.

Pg. 2: He stated showed that revenue increased $\frac{3}{4}\%$ each year from 2008-2017 and an increase was seen in the general property taxes. He stated that we may have to increase the tax revenue to fund expenses. He stated that staff had done a great job in getting grants. He stated that the total operating expenses was 1.22% which was down from last year. He stated that Public Works decreased due to paving and Recreation had increased because of the purchase of playground equipment. He stated that the fund balance or cash on hand was 5.41% which showed solid growth.

Pg. 3: he stated showed \$3.4 million cash investment of \$3.8 million and 63% of total expenditures. He stated that was in line of where we had been the past few years and was good.

Pg. 4: he stated showed flat lines which meant no increases in tax assessments.

Pg. 5: he stated showed the Debt Summary (not just bonds) of \$7 million including water, buildings, etc. He stated that 1,287 was debt per capita which was less than $\frac{1}{2}$ of the state average and a good place to be. He stated that we decreased in total debt service from last year.

Pg. 6: he stated showed the revenue and expenses by year.

Pg. 7: he stated showed where the revenue and expenses come from and went. He stated that we were comparable to other towns.

Mr. Watson stated that local taxes were meals and BPOL taxes and 40% of the bills was being paid by meals tax.

Pg. 8: he stated that you always seen a trend increase at the top and that both were the right trend to have.

Pg. 9: he stated was the Water Fund and from 2008-2017 there was a decrease in water revenue. He stated that it showed the need for an increase in rates. He stated that it was impressive to see a negative for expenditures.

Pg. 11: he stated showed the net pension liability and in 2015 the law started requiring everyone to report a liability with VRS and to pay what was requested. He stated that they originally asked for 12% and were told that no one could afford that and changed it to 10%. He stated that this was where the liability was coming from and it showed the liability at 3 different discounts.

Pg. 12-13: he stated showed where they tested VRS online to make sure each employees pay was correct. He stated that it all came back good and there were no issues found.

Pg. 14-15: he stated showed a few issues that management had already taken care of.

Pg. 16-18: he stated was a letter to let staff know of the changes to the audit process and the new OPEB next year.

Mr. Wickham thanked staff for all of their help.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS & REPORTS

IDA Member Reappointments, VOTE – Billie Roberts

Mrs. Roberts stated that there were 2 IDA Members that were up for reappointment, Greg DeGray and Lisa Watkins and both had expressed their interest in continuing to serve on the IDA. She stated that it was her recommendation that Council reappoint these two individuals.

Mr. Riffe made a motion to reappoint Greg DeGray and Lisa Watkins to the IDA. Mr. Holt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Bluefield Manufacturers Roundtable, VOTE – Billie Roberts

Mrs. Roberts stated that on January 31st the Heart Project funded thru an Art Grant to help coal affected areas would be hosting a manufacturers roundtable and everyone was invited to attend. She stated that it would be from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. and lunch would be provided.

Mr. Watson stated that the object was to get manufacturer's in a room to talk to other manufacturers to see what problems they were having.

Mrs. Roberts stated that it would be an opportunity to talk together about challenges that are faced and to learn of opportunities to match support and services to business needs. She stated that participants would also have the opportunity to learn more about resources that are available to assist their businesses based on their needs. She stated that the event was a Heart Project supported effort and would be facilitated by Heart Project Manager Amy Braswell and GENEDGE program manager, Sam Wolford.

Mr. Jones stated that Joy Manufacturing was looking for 40 welders.

Mr. Holt made a motion to approve hosting the Bluefield Manufactures Roundtable request. Mr. Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Proclamation: National School Choice Week, VOTE – Kim Hernandez

Mrs. Hernandez stated that there was a proclamation in council's packet for National School Choice Week. She stated that School Choice Week was celebrated across the country by millions of students, parents, educators, schools, and organizations to raise awareness of the need for effective educational options and we had chosen the week of January 21, 2018 – January 27, 2018 as the Town of Bluefield's School Choice Week. She asked for a motion to approve it.

PROCLAMATION INDEX NUMBER

VIRGINIA: AT A REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA HELD AT THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS OF THE TOWN HALL IN BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA ON THE _____ DAY OF _____, _____.

**PROCLAMATION COMMEMORATING THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD'S
SCHOOL CHOICE WEEK**

WHEREAS, all children in the Town of Bluefield should have access to the highest-quality education possible; and,

WHEREAS, the Town of Bluefield recognizes the important role that an effective education plays in preparing all students in the Town of Bluefield to be successful adults; and

WHEREAS, quality education is critically important to the economic vitality of the Town of Bluefield, and

WHEREAS, our area offers excellent educational opportunities for students, including a variety of options, such as general and advanced education programs, as well as trade and vocation programs within our public school system; and

WHEREAS, our area has many high-quality teaching professionals who are committed to educating our children in all of these areas; and

WHEREAS, School Choice Week is celebrated across the country by millions of students, parents, educators, schools, and organizations to raise awareness of the need for effective educational options;

WHEREAS, such tax incentives will encourage businesses to locate and develop in our area, which will create additional employment opportunities for Tazewell County residents, and therefore, improve and boost our local economy; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia shows their support of the said legislation by joining with the counties, cities, and towns qualified as described in House Bill 222 by adopting this resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Town Council of the Town of Bluefield, that this Town Council strongly supports Delegate Morefield and House Bill 222 as it is presented into the Virginia General Assembly for consideration in the upcoming session, for the purposes of increasing economic development opportunities for Tazewell County and surrounding areas.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA that this resolution is hereby adopted and becomes effective on this ____ day of _____, _____.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA that Donald R. Harris, the Mayor of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia, shall execute this resolution on behalf of the said Council.

IT IS SO RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA on this _____ 8day of _____, _____.

PUBLIC HEARING: NONE
ADOPTION DATE: _____
EFFECTIVE DATE: _____
RECORDED VOTE: _____
MEMBERS PRESENT: _____
MEMBERS ABSENT: _____
RESULT OF VOTE: _____ AYES _____ NAYES _____ ABSTENTIONS

COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA

BY: _____
DONALD R. HARRIS, MAYOR DATE
TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, A VIRGINIA MUNICIPAL CORPORATION

ATTEST:

LESLEY CATRON, TOWN CLERK DATE

Mr. Holt made a motion to approve the Resolution Supporting House Bill 222. Mr. Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

NEW BUSINESS & REPORTS

None.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Donnie Linkous, 234 Wintercreek Drive, Bluefield, VA stated that he believed in giving credit where credit was due and thanked the Mayor for representing at Jim Hardy's funeral. He stated that the Mayor done an excellent job and it was the most impressive funeral he had ever been too. He stated that J-Rod had put it all together in honor of Chief Hardy and that the Police Department represented themselves as well. He stated after the service there was a reception at the Fire Department with dignitaries in attendance. He stated that Chief Hardy gave 65 years of his life to the Fire Department. He stated that Mr. Watson also represented the Town as well and that he liked to let people know when they were doing a good job. He stated that he was disappointed that no news sources were in attendance. He thanked council for all that they did and asked them to go by the Fire Station to encourage the guys and also Pete Sleeman who was close to Chief Hardy.

Sandy Thompson, Fincastle Turnpike asked for an explanation on the 40% that the meals tax paid for.

Mr. Watson stated that 46% was other taxes in the Town and that \$1.2 million was made in meals tax each year. He stated that money was used so that tax paying citizens did not see a rate increase.

Mrs. Thompson asked if a lot of bills was paid from that.

Mr. Watson stated that it all went into a big pot but the last money was set aside for projects, to pay expenses, capital improvements, etc.

Mr. Jones stated that whenever he would take the newspaper to Westwood in the mornings that Chief Hardy always recognized him.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Regional Recreation Authority Discussion

Mr. Watson stated that the next Regional Recreation Authority Meeting was next week and they would be talking about funding agencies, etc.

Rt. 720 Speed Limit Discussion

Mr. Watson stated that based on the recent speed study conducted on Rt. 720 between Fairway Street and Woodspoint Drive that it appeared the average speed exceeded the posted speed limit sign. He stated that it would be his recommendation to increase the speed limit to 45 mph in that area.

Mr. Jones made a motion to approve increase the speed limit to 45 mph. Mr. Holt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

2018 Recycling Schedule

Mr. Watson stated that a copy of the 2018 Recycling Schedule was in council's packet and was also on the website.

COI Forms

Mr. Watson stated that COI Forms were due January 15th. He stated that the auditors looked to make sure they were completed.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Riffe stated that he did not get to attend Chief Hardy's funeral but watched it on Facebook and commended the Fire Department on a great job.

Mr. Presley asked about the Town Stickers and if they were a money maker for the town.

Mr. Watson stated that they were to show if you were a resident of the Town of Bluefield. He stated that at one time they were annually but the Town went away from that. He stated that he would be bringing it up in the Work Session since the state would be moving their placement to the left side. He stated that it would cost \$1,600 to buy and replace stickers so that they could be moved to the left side. He stated that the citizens were charged \$10 per year

Mr. Presley stated that there were some trees hanging over the power lines on Tazewell Avenue headed towards West Virginia and asked that staff check on getting them cut. He stated that they may need to relook at the Police Department salaries again since they were still losing officers and other Towns were paying more. He asked that the water project be included in each newsletter until they were done with it. He asked if they offered municipal bonds.

Mr. Watson stated that we had bonds out and would issue one for the water project. He stated that he would bring back a report on the police officers as to why they were leaving.

Mr. Holt stated that the Town had lost 2 leaders and his thoughts and prayers were with their families. He asked if the Town stickers were replaced, did the citizen have to pay an extra \$10.

Mr. Hampton stated that it was \$5 to replace it and \$2 if they had a portion of the old one.

Mr. Holt thanked staff for making council's job easier and that it was good to know the Town was financially stable. He stated that he had been on council for 1 year and thanked everyone. He stated that sometimes they disagreed but that was ok.

Mr. Jones stated that he appreciated when they disagreed because in the end they were ok. He stated that the tennis courts in Sedgewood had wires coming off of their pole that had been reported. He stated that they had the trees cut down and they left a mess.

Mr. Presley asked if there was anything the town could do if someone left a mess like that.

Mr. Watson stated that staff was made aware of the wires today and AEP was contacted and an emergency ticket was submitted. He stated there was nothing that could be regulated for the trees.

Mayor Harris thanked staff for all that they had done in December with the 2 dinners, etc. He stated that both dinners were well attended and he owed a debt of gratitude to staff for all of their hard work. He stated that he attended the School Board meeting last night and read the proclamation against the closure of any schools. He stated that there did not appear to be any immediate concern and was under the impression that Richlands Middle School needed the most attention. He stated that Charlie Stacy represented as well.

Mr. Jones stated that they were holding off until they found out if the power and fish farm would happen. He stated that they should know something in March.

ATTORNEY REPORT

Term Limits Discussion

Mr. Freedman stated that term limits came up in the December meeting and after looking into it he found that it would require a constitutional amendment to have term limits. He stated that he had asked others and there was an Attorney General's opinion in 1991. He asked council what they would like to do.

Mr. Presley stated that he was for it and would like to talk about it during a Work Session.

Mayor Harris asked what was involved in a constitutional amendment.

Mr. Freedman stated that it would take a majority vote and would have to be voted on by the voters to approve it or 2/3 of the General Assembly would have to approve it. He stated that they would also have to have someone to present it to the General Assembly whether hiring a lobbyist or having Morefield to present it.

Mr. Presley asked that it be discussed at the next meeting.

ADJOURN

Mr. Holt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:35 p.m. Mr. Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Don Harris, Mayor

Lesley Catron, Town Clerk