

**Board of Directors
Bluefield, West Virginia
February 11, 2014
12:00 Noon**

The Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, West Virginia met in regular session, February 11, 2014 at 12:00 noon in the Municipal Boardroom. Present were Mayor Thomas Cole, Vice-Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith, Directors Chuck McGonagle, Ellen Light and Michael Gibson; also attending were City Manager Jim Ferguson, City Attorney Brian Cochran, Chief Financial Officer Ken Mulkey and City Clerk Bobbi Kersey.

Mayor Thomas Cole welcomed everyone to the meeting.

A slide show recognizing distinguished males from West Virginia was presented prior to the meeting in acknowledgement of Black History Month.

Invocation and Pledge

The invocation was given by Father Russell Hatfield; pastor of St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Bluefield, Virginia. Vice-Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Minutes

The minutes from the January 28, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved with a motion by Director Ellen Light and seconded by Vice -Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith.

City Manger Jim Ferguson thanked and recognized retiring Ms. Shelia Leggett, a twenty-three year city employee. City Manger Ferguson commended Ms. Leggett on her dedication, work ethic and positive attitude. Ms. Leggett was presented a plaque for her years of service.

Discussion Items

City Manager Jim Ferguson gave the following reports:

- The City of Bluefield had a record year in 2013 for building permits. The month of January has been slower due to the weather. A primary focus during the winter months will be to prioritize and be ready in the spring to continue demolition projects. Hopefully the city will receive assistance from the Civil Readiness Training (CRT) offered by the National Guard in helping with demolition.
- Two major projects are underway: (1) MRI at Bluefield Regional Hospital and (2) Dollar General Store has submitted building plans. The location will be on Cumberland Road.
- Marie-Elisabeth Seidl, the city intern, is working to update the database on rental property. Marie started with over one thousand rental properties listed in the City of Bluefield. Approximately four hundred properties have had a change of ownership.
- Public Works is doing a great job keeping our roads cleared during the bad weather. Manager Ferguson reminded all citizens and businesses of the

ordinance to take care of their property and clean sidewalks as soon as possible.

- Volunteers from Bluefield, WV and Bluefield, VA will meet February 12 to begin discussion on the 90th anniversary celebration.
- Open house for the veterans' mobile health clinic will be February 13 @ 11:00 a.m. at the Herb Sims Recreation Center. A team will be present to enroll any veteran and once enrolled veterans can schedule an appointment.
- Parks and Recreation has installed two new scoreboards. Donations covered the cost of the scoreboards.
- The City of Bluefield has hired a new accounting clerk, Peggy Ball. Ms. Ball has seventeen years of experience.
- The Chamber meeting released the dates for the Cole Chevy Mountain Festival, May 20 -25th. Two new attractions have been added to the Mountain Festival: (1) Horses, Horses, Horses – directed by Lisa DeFrance. Ms. DeFrance worked with Ringling Brothers Circus for eighteen years, (2) the Puppetone Rockers. James H. Drew is planning to bring the original carousel that was brought to Bluefield in 1951. The City of Bluefield will again sponsor an 8k run for Blessings in a backpack.

Action Items

Redevelopment and Planning Director, Josh Cline presented a power point overview concerning the Home Rule process. Mr. Cline discussed the home rule definition, home rule pilot program, home rule contracts via resolution, home rule disposition of city property, B &O tax reduction, retail sales and use of tax, and a home rule time line. Mr. Cline requested approval to set a date for a public hearing for Home Rule on March 25, 2014.

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith made a motion to set March 25, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. for a public hearing concerning Home Rule, seconded by Director Michael Gibson. Unanimously approved and so ordered.

Director Chuck McGonagle made a motion to move into executive session, after reports and public comments, only to take action and then return, seconded by Director Ellen Light. Unanimously approved and so ordered.

Reports of Officers, Boards and Standing Committees

Director Chuck McGonagle stated that he is looking forward to the Winter Warmer and warmer temperatures.

Director Ellen Light invited citizens to come see *Back to Vegas* presented by the Summit Players. Director Light thanked the city employees for their hard work and dedication.

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith stated she was honored to meet Dr. James Blume Jr. on Saturday, February 8, 2014. Dr. Blume announced that the King's Warriors' United Soccer League's – Premier Development League will be moving to Bluefield, WV. The team will play at the main stadium at the East River Soccer Complex. The King's Warriors will play 14 regular-season PDL matches, 7 at home and 7 on the road. Southern West Virginia will open its' 2014 season at home on Friday, May 16 when it hosts the South Carolina United Bantams at 7:00 p.m. at the East River Soccer Complex.

Vice Mayor Smith welcomed the King's Warriors' United Soccer League and encouraged citizens to support and enjoy the opportunity that is being given to our city. A schedule is posted at City Hall.

Director Michael Gibson stated he was glad to be present at the Board Meeting.

Mayor Thomas Cole stated the Winter Warmer will be February 22 from 3:00 – 7:00 p.m. - 529 Commerce Street in the Depot District. Mayor Cole encouraged everyone to attend and enjoy the bands, food and beverages. This is the third year this event has been sponsored by the Beautification Commission.

Mayor Cole reminded everyone that City Offices will be closed for President's Day.

Mayor Cole said citizens should be excited about the semi pro King's Warriors' Soccer Team coming to our area. Mayor Cole requested we support the team and the visitors that will travel to our area and will affect our economy in a positive way. Mayor Cole reminded us of the dream Dr. Randy Lester and Kim Lester had in making the soccer complex a reality. Since then the East River Soccer Complex and the Mercer County Youth Soccer League is now one organization.

Public Comment

Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchants Association, made the following points:

1. The snow removal ordinance states three hours after a snowfall so giving citizens twenty-four hours is very generous.
2. The old Lin-Electric site still has debris that needs to be disposed. Old tanks at the old Texaco also needs to be addressed. Mayor Cole agreed and said he would check on the site.
3. Streets in the downtown area need to be paved. The Dept. of Highways only takes care of the state roads. With the downtown construction and years of not being paved, the streets are in poor condition. No paving has been done by the City in the past 30 years and street fees are paid by the business owners with very few benefits according to Mr. Riley. City Manager Ferguson stated Public Works in the process of prioritizing the city streets for paving.
4. There are two disadvantages in continuing the noon Board Meeting: (1) no parking (2) breaks the day in half. It was requested that the Board revisit having only evening meetings.

Citizen Ed Stevenson, property owner, would like to put in a double wide. Mayor Cole and City Manager stated this was an issue that needed to be brought forth before the zoning commission and City Engineer Tony Wagner. Mayor Cole requested Mr. Stevenson leave a contact phone number and would call to discuss the matter further.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

February 14-16 & 21-23: Summit Players presentation "Back to Vegas" opens Valentine's Day. Friday and Saturday @ 6:00 p.m. / \$30.00 includes dinner. Sunday matinee @ 2:00 p.m. Call for more information: 304.325.8000.

February 17, 2014: The offices of the City of Bluefield will be closed on Monday in observance of President's Day. Regular scheduled garbage for Monday, February 17 will be collected on Tuesday, February 18.

February 22, 2014: West Virginia Winter Warmer will be held in the Depot District at 529 Commerce Street from 3:00- 7:00 p.m. Come and enjoy funky tunes, nippy drinks and crafty food. Featured bands include the West Virginia Music Hall of Famers "The Carpenter Ants," Bluefield favorite "JC/BC," and a special appearance by "Vic Sorrell & the Lemon Drops." Craft beer, wine, coffee, hot cocoa, artisan foods by David Hardin and a smores bar make this an event you do not want to miss! Tickets will be \$25 at the door. This event is sponsored by the Bluefield Beautification Commission.

Executive Session

Upon returning from executive session, Mayor Cole stated the board had received a letter of resignation from City Manager Jim Ferguson. The resignation would be effective as of February 16, 2014.

Director Michael Gibson made a motion to accept the resignation of City Manager Jim Ferguson effective February 16, 2014, seconded by Director Chuck McGonagle. Unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Cole thanked Jim for his contributions and dedication to the City of Bluefield. City Manager Ferguson was wished the best for the future.

Mayor Cole stated the board had discussed Police Chief Dennis Dillow to serve as interim city manager until the position can be filled.

Director Ellen Light made a motion to appoint Police Chief Dennis Dillow to serve as interim city manager effective February 16, 2014, seconded by Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith. Unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Cole stated that Chief Dillow had an outstanding record with the City of Bluefield, was a twenty year (20) plus employee that had worked his way through the ranks of the police department. Mayor Cole thanked Chief Dillow for accepting the interim position as city manager.

Director Chuck McGonagle made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Director Ellen Light. Unanimously approved and so ordered.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Thomas J. Cole, Mayor