

**Board of Directors  
Bluefield, West Virginia  
October 28, 2014  
12 noon**

The Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, West Virginia met in a regularly scheduled meeting October 28, 2014 at 12 noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Thomas Cole, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith, Directors Ellen Light, Chuck McGonagle and Michael Gibson, City Manager Dane Rideout, Assistant City Manager Josh Cline and Attorney Brian Cochran. City Clerk Bobbi Kersey was absent.

Mayor Thomas Cole welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Invocation and Pledge**

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith gave the Invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Minutes**

The minutes from the October 14, 2014 meeting were unanimously approved and so ordered.

**Presentation**

Executive Director of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, Marie Blackwell discussed the following items from the 2013 -2014 annual report.

1. Accomplishments
2. Projects
3. Accreditation
4. Publications
5. Budget, Taxes and Revenue Report

\* A copy of the full report is available in the City Clerk's office.

**Discussion Items**

City Manager Dane Rideout discussed the following:

- Public works crew is doing a great job on leaf pick-up and removal. The men are working on Saturday and Sunday afternoon.
- Code Enforcement is now performing code inspections on rental properties to ensure that owners of the rental properties are keeping the buildings up to code and those that are living in the structures are in safe and compliant housing.
- Paving has been put on hold due to the amount of rain during the last two months. A less desirable product would be laid if crews started at this point. Crews are patching potholes.
- Appalachian Power Company is proposing a rate increase. The City of Bluefield will file a petition against the rate hike proposal and a petition will be available for citizens to sign at City Hall. The rate will increase the City of Bluefield's budget approximately \$65,000.
- Fire Chief Jeff Warden is retiring but the city will hire him back as a civilian

- employee.
- The analysis regarding grass-cutting crew vs. contracting was completed. Results showed that it is cost prohibitive to contract a crew. The City will create a crew in house and save approximately nine thousand dollars.
- Assistant City Manager Josh Cline stated efforts to finalize the city's new home rule designation was continuing.
- The unveiling of "Fix it Bluefield" was delayed due to technical issues.

## Public Comments

Citizen Alan Light strongly disagreed with a Bluefield Daily Telegraph editorial on city work sessions. According to Mr. Light, the editorial insinuates that citizens cannot attend work sessions but the record shows many citizens do not attend work sessions or board meetings. Mr. Light stated the work sessions are needed so the board can sift through the large amount of information and then present clearly the information to the public. Mr. Light recommended that the board move the work session to 3:00 p.m. prior to the 6:00 p.m. meeting. Mr. Light encouraged public participation and challenged the paper to work with the City Board. Mr. Light also reminded everyone of the Bluefield Elks Lodge Veteran Dinner on November 9.

Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchant's Association, gave the following reports/questions:

1. Mr. Riley acknowledged how hard the City Board works. However, there are individuals that have the perception that the board does the work and makes the decision in the morning session work session.
2. The Bluefield Christmas parade will be December 13 at 1:00 p.m. The theme this year will be *Christmas in Bluefield*. The Bluefield Preservation Society will be hosting *Blue Holly Days* the same day. Santa Claus will be in the parade and in the basement of the Granada Theater. The Preservation Society will have an ice skating rink. The Grand Marshall is Oretta Hubbard.

## Action Items

Director Ellen Light made a motion for the City of Bluefield to create an in-house ground crew instead of outsourcing a crew; unanimously approved so ordered.

- Mayor Thomas Cole discussed and read the First Reading of AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND PART II, CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, CHAPTER 40 TRAFFIC AND VEHICLES, ARTICLE IV. PARKING, DIVISION 4 ABANDONED OR UNATTENDED MOTOR VEHICLES, BY THE ENACTMENT OF SUBSECTION (e) OF SECTION 354, STORAGE OF ABANDONED OR UNATTENDED MOTOR VEHICLES PROHIBITED; AND BY THE AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 356, IMPOUNDMENT; SALE; AS SET OUT HEREINAFTER BY THE AMENDMENTS AND ENACTMENTS OF SUBSECTIONS (a), (1), (2), (3), (4), SUBSECTION (b), AND AMENDMENTS TO SUBSECTION (c) AND (d); AND BY THE ENACTMENT OF SECTION 40-357, PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF ABANDONED MOTOR VEHICLES, AND OR JUNKED MOTOR VEHICLES.
- Mayor Cole noted the section concerning abandoned or junk vehicles was added and second or subsequent violations will double the penalty. The second amendment to the ordinance clarified ordinance notices for the city to begin impounding vehicles.

The proceeds from impounding vehicles and junking cars must be put in an account for enforcement of this code and code enforcement initiatives. Mr. Riley questioned if there needed to be a public hearing due to potential revenue. City Attorney Brian Cochran stated that nothing in this amendment to the ordinance produces new revenue to require a public hearing. Director Michael Gibson made a motion to approve the First Reading of AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND PART II, CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, CHAPTER 40 TRAFFIC AND VEHICLES, ARTICLE IV. PARKING, DIVISION 4 ABANDONED OR UNATTENDED MOTOR VEHICLES, BY THE ENACTMENT OF SUBSECTION (e) OF SECTION 354, STORAGE OF ABANDONED OR UNATTENDED MOTOR VEHICLES PROHIBITED; AND BY THE AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 356, IMPOUNDMENT; SALE; AS SET OUT HEREINAFTER BY THE AMENDMENTS AND ENACTMENTS OF SUBSECTIONS (a), (1), (2), (3), (4), SUBSECTION (b), AND AMENDMENTS TO SUBSECTION (c) AND (d); AND BY THE ENACTMENT OF SECTION 40-357, PROCEEDS FROM THE SALE OF ABANDONED MOTOR VEHICLES, AND OR JUNKED MOTOR VEHICLES.; unanimously approved so ordered.

- A discussion was held concerning authorizing the city manager and assistant city manager to participate and purchase desired properties at the Mercer County Tax Sale. Mayor Cole stated there is a limit on what the City is authorized to spend and what properties can be purchased. Mayor Cole noted that the City recently sold property and the proceeds from the sale would be used for this purchase. Director Ellen Light clarified it was the sale of the original transit property. Director Ellen Light made a motion to authorize the city manager and assistant city manager to participate and purchase desired properties at the Mercer County Tax sale; unanimously approved so ordered.
- Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith made a motion to authorize Kelly Davis, Peggy Ball, Angie Foley and Nancy Bailey to be updated on the signature card for the City bank accounts; unanimously approved so ordered.
- Director Michael Gibson made a motion that the city board has the morning work session in the boardroom and they be merged in with the actual board meetings. Director Gibson stated he envisions a 30 – 45 minute meeting to prepare before the board meeting for board members to ask questions concerning the agenda. Director Gibson noted that items on the agenda are now presented electronically on iPads.

Discussion concerning the motion:

- Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith asked if the agenda could be reviewed.
- Director Michael Gibson stated that work sessions in the morning are open to the public. He is hoping that by merging the meetings, the public will have the ability to understand the issues and citizens will be able to comment on the issues before the board meeting. Director Gibson stated this is not a recognition that the board is doing something wrong; it is an opportunity for citizens to participate further. It will allow the citizens to know what is important to the board of directors. It would forever put away the notion that there are secret meetings, as there have never been secret meetings.
- Director Ellen Light stated that she counted nine (9) individuals present at the meeting (outside of the press and city employees). Averages of 7.4 citizens attend the noon meetings and averages of six citizens attend the 6:00 p.m. meeting. No one from the press attends the 9:00 a.m. work session. The board

could hold a board meeting at 9:00 a.m. Director Light asked for a show of hands in favor of a 9:00 a.m. meeting and five individuals raised their hand.

- Citizen Kristen Pujari stated that work schedules prevent attendance, but the noon meeting allows citizens to come during lunch.
- Citizen Art Riley reminded everyone that many citizens watch the board meetings that are filmed and aired on the community access channel through Comcast Communications as opposed to attending the board meetings. He stated the college film crew does not have the opportunity to be in the work session.
- Mayor Cole said he disagreed with Mr. Riley's wording of "back room meetings" and is disappointed in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph's editorial. Mayor Cole said he met with the editor of the paper when the board took office and stated that the board would be transparent. The work session allows the board members to take their time to gather facts and is open to the public. Work sessions are an opportunity for the board to meet with members of the public who do not want to talk with the board in a formal setting. Mayor Cole stated that he thought they were trying to solve a problem that did not exist.
- Director Chuck McGonagle stated it was important for the city board to get past this so-called "secret meeting."

Director Michael Gibson amended his motion that the city board have the morning work session in the boardroom and they be merged in with the actual board meeting for the November and December meetings. Director Ellen Light clarified that this would be the November and December meetings. The motion was seconded by Director Ellen Light. Mayor Thomas Cole and Director Chuck McGonagle voted no. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith abstained, stating she needed more information on both sides of the argument before casting a vote. The motion failed 2 yes, 2 no, and 1 abstained.

## **Announcements**

- The City Board of Directors is interested in hearing from the residents, business owners, employees and visitors to Bluefield. To hear directly from you in a casual setting, "Lunch with the Mayor" was established by Mayor Tom Cole. Mayor Cole or a City Board of Directors member will meet with four individuals at a local establishment on Mondays at noon for lunch and general conversation. Individuals may request to be added to the list by completing the form on the City website. For additional questions, please call Joshua Cline at 304.327.5568.
- **HALLOWEEN** will be observed on Friday, October 31 from 6:00p.m – 8:00p.m. Participating households should turn on their porch light during trick-or-treat hours and for everyone's safety trick-or-treaters are asked to only visit those homes or those decorated for Halloween.
- **The City of Bluefield Calendar** - for a more detailed list of events and activities in Bluefield and the surrounding area visit the [cityofbluefield.com](http://cityofbluefield.com) website.
- **Veteran's Day Observation and Celebrations** –the City of Bluefield honors our nation's veterans by observing Veterans Day on Tuesday, November 11. City Offices will be closed. Garbage collection and recycling collection will resume on Wednesday,

November 12. The Board of Directors meeting has been moved to November 18 at noon and the work session will begin at 9:00 a.m. For more information, please call 304.327.2401 for more information. Local events honoring Veterans in Bluefield include:

- **November 8 - Honoring our Veterans at Cole Harley Davidson:** Veterans will receive a free lunch and gift while supplies last as well as 20% off merchandise. The event will begin at noon and conclude at 3:00 p.m. For more information, please call 304.324.8116.
- **November 9 - East River Mountain Town Band Veterans Day Concert:** The annual concert will take place at the Bluefield Performing Arts Center at Bluefield High School at 3:00 p.m. Admission is free. For more information, please call 304.325.9117.
- **November 11 - Veterans Day Parade:** The Mercer County Veterans Day Parade is held on Mercer Street in downtown Princeton and begins at 11:00 a.m. For more information, please call 304.487.1502.
- **November 11 - Veterans Always Free Walk of Honor Ceremony:** The Denver Foundation will be involved with the unveiling of the Veterans Always Free Walk of Honor where bricks purchased in memory/honor of a veteran will be unveiled at the Memorial Building in Princeton (1500 West Main Street) across from the courthouse. The event will begin at 1:00 p.m. For more information, please call 304.320.6032 or email [pfccoulbourne@gmail.com](mailto:pfccoulbourne@gmail.com).
- **City Offices** – Will be closed Election Day (November 4), Veteran’s Day (November 11) and Thanksgiving (November 27).
- **Next Board Meeting** – Will be November 18 at 12 noon.
- **Bluefield Birthday Bash** – November 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Arts Center

## Adjournment

Director Michael Gibson made a motion to adjourn, second; unanimously approved so ordered.

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Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

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Thomas J. Cole, Mayor