

**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA  
MARCH 24, 2015**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, March 24, 2015 at 6:00 p.m., in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Thomas Cole, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith, Director Ellen Light, Director Chuck McGonagle and Director Michael Gibson; City Manager Dane Rideout, Assistant City Manager Joshua Cline, City Attorney Brian Cochran, City Treasurer Kelly Davis and City Clerk Bobbi Kersey.

**INVOCATION – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE – CALL TO ORDER**

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith invoked divine guidance for the conduct of the meeting and led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Mayor Thomas J. Cole called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Upon motion and second the minutes of the Regular Board Meeting of March 10, 2015, were approved without correction.

**PRESENTATION**

Police Chief Dennis Dillow introduced three (3) new hires to the Bluefield Police Department: Justin Lucas, Aaron Miller, and Devon Williams. City Clerk Bobbi Kersey administered the Oath of Office.

**CITY MANAGER**

City Manager Dane Rideout advised the board of the following:

**The State Journal** recognized Assistant City Manager Josh Cline and Cole Harley-Davidson, General Manager Chaz Cole for being recipients of this year's *Generation Next: 40 Under 40 award*. The annual award highlights 40 people younger than age 40 who are working and volunteering to make West Virginia a better place to live. Congratulations to these two outstanding young leaders.

**East River Overlook** clean up will take place April 1<sup>st</sup> at 9:00 a.m. Volunteers are welcome to join city employees. Proper equipment will be provided.

**Town Hall Meeting** concerning the construction on the Martin Luther King Bridge will be held at the Mr. Zion Baptist Church on March 31<sup>st</sup> at 6:00 p.m. with Triton Corporation, Department of Highways District 10 and essential city employees that will be involved with the accelerated bridge project. Experts will share input regarding the construction, staging, demolition, timelines, and emergency response, as well as discuss any other questions citizens may have regarding the bridge construction. The tentative date to begin construction is June 8<sup>th</sup> and construction will be completed by August.

**Online Payments** for city services will soon be available to the public.

**Construction** will soon begin at the tennis courts at the City Park. The June O. Shott Foundation gave a donation a year ago for bleachers. City Attorney Brian Cochran was thanked for all of his “behind the scenes work” in acquiring land from the Mercer County Board of Education to make the bleachers possible.

**Appalachian Power** will soon begin work on some of the transformers in the downtown area.

**Social Security Building** has acquired a \$700,000 construction permit for upgrades.

**Pot Holes** are being cold patched until factories open and the city can purchase asphalt. The cold patch will last approximately 30 days. The crew is working six days a week.

**East River Park** & Midway Park are getting new gravel in the parking areas. Our new Parks and Recreation Director, Charles Ridlehuber, is making the necessary improvements to make the playgrounds safe.

**City Police Department** has been busy due to two shootings in our city. City Manager Rideout thanked the department for their hard work. Those involved in the domestic disturbances have been apprehended with the exception of one person. That person is still at large but has been entered into a nationwide data bank.

**City Financial Officer Kelly Davis and City Attorney Brian Cochran** were recognized for their highly impactful work that is often not visible to the citizens of Bluefield. This last week, City Financial Officer Kelly Davis has been compiling data from months of work putting together a working 2015 – 2016 budget. City Attorney Brian Cochran is constantly asked about legal issues and shares knowledge he possesses from being a past city manager.

## **PUBLIC INPUT**

**Mayor Thomas Cole** spoke to the audience concerning the Dog Park issue before he opened the floor for public comments. Mayor Cole stated he had visited the site (old Fairview Junior High School) and had spoken to several of the residents. One overwhelming desire of the neighborhood is for there to be a place for the children to play. Mayor Cole felt this was a valid point. The Board will take this in to consideration and will make a significant part of the Dog Park a play area. Mayor Cole said on one of his visits to the park there were four (4) unleashed dogs in the park, two or three residents, some kids playing, and a preteen riding a motor bike, making a lot of noise. This Board is trying to be progressive. The Board wants to see the community thrive. One of the responsibilities of a municipality is to provide a community for people to live that is attractive and provides amenities for the citizens. Mayor Cole said the city has become stagnate and property values need to be improved. In the past year one hundred and fifty blighted properties have been torn down. The Board is working for a better place to bring new people and jobs to our area. Mayor Cole asked for an open mind and to give the Board a chance. He understood there was apprehension but felt there was a misconception concerning the Dog Park. The Board will follow through on the promises they have made concerning the Dog Park and the park will bring a great amenity to the city.

**Veteran Al Hancock, Bluefield,** stated there are two hundred two thousand Veterans in West Virginia. West Virginia has a population of one point eight million. Mr. Hancock said we need to

keep talking about Veterans. City Manager Rideout reminded Mr. Hancock of the Vietnam Veterans Recognition Day Ceremony on Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, at 3:00 p.m. in Princeton, West Virginia at the Memorial Building.

**Nancy Campbell, Dreama Butcher and Harold Wells, Bluefield, Citizens,** spoke against the Dog Park. Concerns from the residents included: location, health /safety of residents and funding.

**Bill Nabors, Bluefield, Citizen,** stated he was not against the Dog Park but requested the Board investigate other locations.

**John Brown, Bluefield Citizen,** stated he was excited and looking forward to a Dog Park. Mr. Brown spoke about socialization needs for dogs, being a responsible pet owner, and the amenity of a dog park being an asset for citizens.

**Mrs. Patricia Valentine, Bluefield, Citizen,** read an open letter concerning her granddaughter. Mrs. Valentine stated her granddaughter was injured due to a neighbor letting his dog run loose. Mrs. Valentine was upset that her neighbor was not charged with failure to confine his dog at the time of the incident (dog is deceased) and now the neighbor has another dog that is not being confined. Police Chief Dennis Dillow stated he had received Mrs. Valentine's letter and the neighbor has been charged and cited.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Board of Directors Meeting Time Change**

Mayor Cole read the **SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND PART II, CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, CHAPTER 2 ADMINISTRATION, ARTICLE II. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, DIVISION 2 BOARD OF DIRECTORS, SECTION 2-59, REGULAR MEETINGS; SPECIAL MEETINGS; COMPENSATION OF DIRECTORS, AS SET OUT HEREINAFTER BY THE AMENDMENT OF SUBSECTION (a).**

This ordinance would eliminate the Board of Director's 6:00 p.m., meeting, changing both monthly meetings for the Board of Directors to noon. Mayor Cole stated some concern had been voiced regarding both meetings in the month being held at noon but other opportunities will be made available for the public to attend meetings, such as the Town Hall meetings.

Member Michael Gibson made a motion to approve the **SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND PART II, CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, CHAPTER 2 ADMINISTRATION, ARTICLE II. BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, DIVISION 2 BOARD OF DIRECTORS, SECTION 2-59, REGULAR MEETINGS; SPECIAL MEETINGS; COMPENSATION OF DIRECTORS, AS SET OUT HEREINAFTER BY THE AMENDMENT OF SUBSECTION (a).**

**Director Michael Gibson made a motion to approve the ordinance as presented. The motion carried unanimously.** The ordinance is effective at time of passing.

### **Financial**

City Treasurer Kelly Davis thanked IT Director, Billy Hester for all of his hard work helping her in implementing the new credit card payment process at City Hall.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis stated all municipalities are required by the state to meet on the 3rd Tuesday in April to *Lay the Levy*. At this time the board will approve the property tax rate in the country that will go into effect July 1<sup>st</sup>. **Director Ellen Light made a motion to set the meeting**

**time for *Lay the Levy* on April 21<sup>st</sup> at noon. The motion carried unanimously.**

City Treasurer Kelly Davis submitted for the Board's approval the Fiscal Year 2016 General Fund Budget. The budget is projected to be \$9,906,702. The revenue projections are 6% less as compared to the revenue projections for December 31, 2014. Recommendation for the new budget include a 2% COLA for all General Fund employees, built in increases for anticipated property/liability and workers compensation insurance premiums and a ½ % decrease in the mandatory PERS contributions. The new budget has allocated an additional \$10,000 contribution into the police and fire pensions. Helping the civil service pension obtain a higher funding percentage will help insure the solvency of the pension plans and ease the funding burden on the city. The FY2016 budget sets aside capital equipment funding for Street Department vehicles and equipment, a new garbage truck for the Sanitation Department, various new computers, front counter renovations and lighting upgrades, in City Hall, \$310,000 for street paving, establishment of a fire truck fund, and several Park/Recreation upgrades to include Mitchell Stadium and the tennis courts. Contributions to outside agencies remain unchanged. The FY2016 General Fund Budget will be submitted to the State Auditor for final approval. Over the next two weeks, the budget will be advertised as a Class II legal notice in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph. Today's meeting will remain in recess until April 21<sup>st</sup> when the Board will reconvene to *Lay the Levy*; after which, the property tax rates will be submitted to the State Auditor for certification to the Mercer County Assessor.

**Director Michael Gibson mad a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2016 General Fund Budget. The motion carried unanimously.**

City Treasurer Kelly Davis submitted for the Board's approval the Fiscal Year 2016 Coal Severance Fund Budget. The budget is projected to be \$48,010. It is anticipated that the carry over fund balance at the end of the Fiscal Year 2015 will be \$10,000 and the Coal Severance Tax receipts plus interest will be \$38,010. The Coal Severance Fund has historically been dedicated to purchasing police vehicles and it was recommended this practice continue for Fiscal Year 2016. Upon approval by the Board, the FY2016 Coal Severance Fund Budget will be submitted to the State Auditor for final approval. **Director Michael Gibson made a motion to approve the Fiscal Year 2016 Coal Severance Fund. The motion carried unanimously.**

Mayor Cole thanked City Treasurer Kelly Davis for her many hours of dedication and hard work on the budget. Mayor Cole stated it had been a pleasure working with Ms. Davis and she brought a wealth of knowledge to the city.

### **Boards and Commissions**

Director Michael Gibson stated that many of the sixteen boards and commissions should be re-evaluated based on the necessity of board or commissions and the membership process. **Director Michael Gibson made a motion to direct the City Manager to review, evaluate, and make recommendation with regards to the number of boards and commissions, purpose and membership. The motion carried unanimously.**

### **Track Loader**

City Manager Dane Rideout stated \$11,000 was paid to independent contractors this winter for removing snow from city properties. Various other jobs could be accomplished if the city had the proper equipment. City Manager Rideout said a bid request for a track loader with attachments was placed in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph. One bid was received from Bobcat of Tazewell that included all the requested attachments. City Manager Rideout requested approval to use funds allocated in the budget line item for Public Works be used to purchase a Bobcat with attachments in

the amount of \$69,867.00. **Director Michael Gibson made a motion to approve the purchase of a Bobcat with attachments for \$69,867.00. The motion carried unanimously.**

### **Holiday of Lights Storage Building**

City Manager Dane Rideout stated the Holiday of Lights displays are stored all over the city. A twenty five thousand dollar grant was given to the city several years ago for the purpose of purchasing a storage building for the displays from the Skews Foundation and other donors. City Manager Rideout said a bid request for a pole storage building was placed in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph. One bid was received from RM Buildings in Lost Creek, WV. City Manager Rideout requested approval to purchase a 60x80x16 pole building to be placed at the City Park. **Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith made a motion to approve the purchase of a pole storage building at a cost of \$58,917.00. The storage building will be used for storage of the Holiday of Lights at the City Park. The motion was carried unanimously.**

### **Dog Park**

Mayor Cole stated that he would take a vote from the Board members concerning building a Dog Park at the old Fairview Junior High School Building. Director Ellen Light stated this issue had weighed heavily on her and she had thought about possible solutions. Director Light said she felt a Dog Park would be a good thing for this neighborhood making it safer, with a playground for the children, and offering a new amenity to citizens. Director Light said she knew that everyone had a point of view but the City of Bluefield needs to make some positive changes. **Director Light made a motion to construct a Dog Park on the old Fairview Junior High School site. The motion was carried unanimously.**

**Director Chuck McGonagle** said all this Board is trying to do is offer something new to the citizens of Bluefield. It has been a number of years since a new amenity has been offered.

**Director Michael Gibson** stated he had been to the Fairview site with his dog. He is very concerned with the wall located on Rockbridge and the possibility of someone getting hurt. He believes the Dog Park is a wonderful idea and it will be located in his district. Director Gibson felt that most of the concerns from the residents have been addressed by the Board such as fencing, beautifying the area, safety concerns, and restrictions. Should other concerns come, up the Board will address them. The Board's credibility is on the line and the Board will do what they say they are going to do. Director Gibson hopes the residents find it an attractive addition.

**Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith** congratulated Bluefield High School Boy's Basketball team for their 4<sup>th</sup> trip to the state playoffs. The team received two trophies.

**Mayor Cole** stated that he could not promise that there may not be problems with the Dog Park, but there are problems in that area now. Mayor Cole promised that he, along with the Board, would do everything to ensure the vision becomes the reality of what this Board wants the Dog Park to be. Mayor Cole asked the citizens to give this Board the opportunity to do what can be done. It is the Board's intention to make a place everyone will be proud of and value in the community.

**Director Ellen Light** moved to recess the meeting until April 21<sup>st</sup> at noon. The motion was carried unanimously.