

**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
APRIL 14, 2015**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, April 14, 2015 at 12:00 noon. 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 24, 2015 and the Town Hall Meeting of March 31, 2015, were approved without correction.

PRESENTATION

Police Chief Dennis Dillow introduced the following Bluefield City Police promotions:

Mike McPherson – Sergeant to Lieutenant- Joined Police Force August 1996
Aaron Crook – Corporal to Sergeant – Joined Police Force February 2008
Bobby Ham – Corporal to Sergeant – Joined Police Force August 2002
James Vance – Corporal to Sergeant – Joined Police Force July 1998
Arron J. Burnopp – New Hire – March 30, 2015.

City Clerk Bobbi Kersey administered the Oath of Office.

Mayor Cole commended Chief Dillow and his entire staff.

Director of Parks and Recreation Charles Ridlehuber stated he has been employed by the City of Bluefield for three months. One of the first objectives accomplished by Mr. Ridlehuber and his staff was to formulate a SWOT (strength, weakness, opportunities, threats) analysis of the Parks and Recreation Department. Mr. Ridlehuber presented and discussed a PowerPoint presentation of the SWOT analysis. Director Ridlehuber introduced staff member Chawn Martin who discussed the Parks and Recreation program plan/ calendar. Mr. Martin discussed existing programs, new programs and expanding activities for junior high children. Mr. Martin thanked the community for its support. Staff member Brandon McCain discussed the new *Get Outside Series*. Parks and Recreation has partnered with WVVA to sponsor six events: CITO event, Crying Wolf Mountain Bike Race Trail Days, Youth Biathlon, Take a Kid Mountain Biking Day, and Holiday of Lights 5k. For more information and registration for events or shelter rentals, go to www.cityofbluefield.com. Director Ridlehuber thanked Public Works Director Junior Beggs and his staff for their hard work at the park and Mitchell Stadium.

Parsons Brinckerhoff Project Manager David Hafley presented the final Roundhouse Square Development Project briefing. Mr. Hafley presented the Board of Directors with a booklet and discussed the following: project purpose, master planning and market analysis recap, estimate of probable costs, implementation options, questions and discussion section. The project was originally envisioned as a central downtown transit hub with connected lots for prospective businesses. It will take additional funding to complete the original intermodal center. A copy of the report is on file at the city clerk's office.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Dane Rideout advised the board of the following:

Thank you to Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith and Mt. Zion Baptist Church for hosting the Town Hall Meeting on March 31. It was a great opportunity for citizens to be informed and ask questions concerning the construction of the Martin Luther King Junior Bridge.

Thank you to the Public Works Staff, they collected 13 tons of trash during the *East River Overlook Mountain Clean Up* and that does not include the 8 to 10 tons of street sweeping. West Virginia House of Delegate John Shott, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith and Director Ellen Light participated as volunteers. The mountain overlook has now been placed on a rotation for clean up and new signage is being added. One more clean up the overlook will be scheduled. The City would like to have more volunteers. Three semi-truck loads of tires were collected last week. Tire disposal is available this week in Princeton at the City Garage. Also, Clean Sweep has begun.

Holiday of Lights pole barn structure was approved by the Board of Directors and construction should begin in approximately three to four weeks or as soon the track loader is delivered.

O'Riley's Auto Parts has begun construction on Princeton Avenue. The Sanitary Board has been working to assure proper stormwater drainage.

Bluefield City Park is having some trench work and electrical work completed.

Lumos Network and the City of Bluefield have signed an agreement. Lumos Network will provide fiber phone and internet service to all city offices. This system will be more efficient to citizens and internet speed will increase from 16MB to 50MB with the fiber service. City Manager Rideout thanked IT employee Billy Hester for his hard work in making this change possible.

City Fees and Business Licenses have been discussed for the past four to five months. After meeting with staff members involved with fees and licenses, City Manager Rideout stated he was seeking permission to bring forth new ordinances concerning these issues.

City fees have not been adjusted in the City of Bluefield in an excess of five years. There is a deficit in three of the essential services offered by the city: fire, garbage and street. The fees that are currently being collected for those three services are being supplemented by B & O revenue. B & O revenue should be used for updating infrastructure, equipment and capital improvements. Based on an average household with a 2,000 square foot house, a citizen pays approximately twenty-eight dollars (\$28) a month or three hundred thirty six dollars (\$336) a year. The ultimate fix would be a twenty-eight (\$28) increase in fees, completely eliminating the shortfall. The City Manager offered the following solutions:

- Move to monthly billing to provide a more regular flow of income and be consistent with the way residents interact with other service providers. Online payments will be available beginning the first of July.
- An increase of \$28/month is too large for most households to process at one time. City administrators feel that \$15 is much less burden some especially when billed monthly and it will provide approximately \$780,300 in new revenue.
- To ensure that all processes are legally sound and updated, we need to clean up discrepancies in the Code of Ordinances that govern the municipality.

City Manager Rideout said to receive a business license in Bluefield is “painful.” When researching other cities, many have consolidated to one general business license. The intent of a business license is not for revenue but should be used as an accounting tool. City Manger Rideout recommended a flat fee general business license with only a few exceptions, to streamline the process and make Bluefield more business friendly.

A public hearing will be held on both the proposed rate increases and change in licensing before a final decision is made by the board. The tentative schedule for the first reading of the proposed rate increase will be at the board’s May 12 meeting. Mayor Cole stated that businesses carry a large part of the city’s budget. Mayor Cole was in favor of helping businesses in any way possible, which will only benefit the citizens long term. City Manager Rideout stated options will be discussed and presented to the board concerning business licenses, permits and fee changes. City Manager Rideout will be looking at the general safety, health and economic development necessary for our citizens and city to prosper in the future. The Board gave permission for City Manager Rideout to move forward and present ordinances concerning city fees and business licenses/permits.

Dog Park donations can be made online (www.cityofbluefield.com) under gofundme. Some work is already underway and construction will begin soon. Adjustments to the design are being made to include a children’s playground. City Manager Rideout stated he is still waiting on American Electric Power to complete markings of utilities before digging can begin. City Manager Rideout said he is waiting for the new track loader, as much of the work at the dog park will be done “in house.”

PUBLIC INPUT

Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchants Association,

- Expressed his appreciation to Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith and Director Ellen Light for attending the Downtown Merchants Association meeting. Mr. Riley said he appreciated their input and invited others to attend.
- Mr. Riley asked how many households we have in Bluefield. City Treasurer Kelly Davis stated on average 5,000 to 5,200 and added there are different factors that are considered when calculating the cost of the fees per household.
- Mr. Riley asked if the business manual was ready. Assistant City Manger Josh Cline said the revised manual for business is complete but has not been printed. Assistant City Manager Cline said he will be reviewing the final copy checking for any further revisions, before printing the manual. The business manual will be available on the city website (www.cityofbluefield.com)
- Questioned if a skate park was being considered. City Manager Rideout stated he had spoken with Parks and Recreation Director Charles Ridlehuber. Director Ridlehuber is doing some research and looking at possible grants for funding. Director Ridlehuber is looking at an

indoor skate park and several other ideas.

- The Ridge Runner is now open on Saturday and Sunday from 12 noon to 6:00 p.m. The train is also available for private functions upon reservation. For more information, please visit www.theridgerunner.org.

ACTION ITEMS:

Mayor Cole read a **Proclamation Saluting the Bluefield State College Lady Blues Basketball Team and Coaches 2015 Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference Champions.**

PROCLAMATION SALUTING THE BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE LADY BLUES BASKETBALL TEAM AND COACHES 2015 EASTERN COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC CONFERENCE CHAMPIONS

Whereas, the Bluefield State College Lady Blues women's basketball team achieved an outstanding regular season, with a 21-7 record; and,

Whereas, the Lady Blues won the Eastern College Athletic Conference postseason tournament semifinal game over Le Moyne College, advancing to the ECAC final round; and,

Whereas, the Lady Blues won the ECAC Division II Women's Basketball Championship by defeating Lincoln University 72-70 in overtime in a thrilling championship game; and,

Whereas, the Lady Blues have achieved the distinction of being the ECAC Division II Women's Basketball Champions for the second consecutive year, and

Whereas, the Lady Blues defeated NCAA Division I opponent North Carolina Central University for the second straight season; and,

Whereas, the Lady Blues have distinguished themselves as outstanding ambassadors for BSC on the court, in the classroom, and in the community;

Now therefore be it resolved that the City of Bluefield, WV Board of Directors enthusiastically congratulates each member of the Bluefield State College women's basketball team, Coach Oliver, and Assistant Coach White on their superior accomplishment and extends sincere wishes to all for continued success.

Adopted by the City of Bluefield, WV Board of Directors on this fourteenth day of April, and two thousand fifteen.

Director Michael Gibson made a motion to approve the PROCLAMATION SALUTING THE BLUEFIELD STATE COLLEGE LADY BLUES BASKETBALL TEAM AND COACHES 2015 COLLEGIATE ATHELETIC CONFERENCE CHAMPION, second; unanimously approved, so ordered.

Mayor Cole requested City Manager Rideout to discuss traffic issues on Rockbridge Street before the first reading of a traffic pattern change. City Manger Rideout stated the change in traffic pattern for Rockbridge is a safety issue because this road is narrow, residents park on the street and tow way traffic is not conducive for emergency response vehicles. Two letters have been sent to residents along with verbal communication.

Mayor Cole read the **First Reading of An Ordinance Providing for a Traffic Pattern Change on Rockbridge Street From Two-Way to One-Way, from Wythe Avenue to East River Avenue**

WHEREAS, pursuant to Section 40-11(a)(2) of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Bluefield, the City Manager of the City of Bluefield recommends an amendment to the Bluefield traffic control map regulating traffic on Rockbridge Street; and

WHEREAS, the City manager recommends that traffic on Rockbridge Street be changed from two-way to one-way, as described on the attached map; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors finds that the City Manager's recommendation is in the best interests of the City, its residents, and the businesses located in the area affected; and

WHEREAS, the governing body of the City of Bluefield is the duly elected Board of Directors thereof.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to West Virginia Code § 8-12-5(4), the Board of Directors hereby amends the traffic control map of the City of Bluefield by changing the traffic pattern of Rockbridge Street, from Wythe Avenue to East River Avenue, from two-way to one-way, as described on the attached map.

Director Chuck McGonagle made a motion to approve the First Reading of An Ordinance Providing for a Traffic Pattern Change on Rockbridge Street From Two-Way to One-Way, from Wythe Avenue to East River Avenue, second; unanimously approved, so ordered.

Financial

City Treasurer Kelly Davis stated she provided documentation for the March financial report during the morning work session. In summary, at the close of March 2015, the 9th month of the fiscal year, revenue collected totaled \$7,031,831 (86.30%) of the projected amount of \$8,147,874. Expenditures total \$7,006,281 (69.37%) of the projected budget of \$10,099,424.

Thompson Smith made a motion to approve the March Financial Report as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis provided the Board of Directors a list of seventy six city accounts that she is requesting be sent to collections. **Director Ellen Light made a motion to approve the requested accounts be turned over to collections. The motion carried unanimously.**

OTHER:

Mayor Cole stated The Mountain Festival will be the week after Memorial Day.

Lay the Levy public meeting will be April 21 at noon.

The next Board of Directors meeting will be at noon (April 28) and will be Student Government Day with seniors from Bluefield High School.

Director Michael Gibson made a motion to adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Thomas J. Cole, Mayor