

**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA  
January 12, 2016**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, January 12, 2016 at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Thomas J. Cole, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith, Director Ellen Light, Director Chuck McGonagle, Director Michael Gibson, City Manager Dane Rideout, Assistant City Manager Joshua Cline, City Attorney Brian Cochran, City Treasurer Kelly Davis, and Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer. City Clerk Bobbi Kersey was absent.

**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**

Director Light moved that the minutes for the December 8, 2015 be approved as presented. With no objections the minutes were approved.

**PRESENTATIONS**

Mayor Cole departed from the agenda to complete the recognitions in the meeting's agenda. He read APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING WILLIAM "BILL" ARCHER.

**WHEREAS**, Bill Archer was the senior editor at the Bluefield Daily Telegraph and has retiring after thirty-three years in the field of journalism, and

**WHEREAS**, he began his career supplying articles and photographs to the Telegraph as a stringer in 1983, wrote for The Twin-State Marketer weekly newspaper in Bluefield Virginia and served as its executive editor, and in 1992 joined the staff of the Bluefield Daily Telegraph full-time, and

**WHEREAS**, during his time at the Telegraph he exited only for brief stints in television journalism and to work for a statewide weekly newspaper, and

**WHEREAS**, he maintained throughout his career an active community service schedule in addition to his demanding profession serving as a board chairman for the WE CAN (Working to Eliminate Child Abuse and Neglect) program for sixteen years, a past treasurer of the Bluefield Rescue Squad, a former member of the Wade Elementary School Improvement Council, board member of the Bluefield Salvation Army, board member of the United Way of the Virginias, past officer of the Bluefield Community Center board of directors, and an active member of the Greater Bluefield Chamber of Commerce since 1983, and

**WHEREAS**, he has authored eight pictorial histories of several communities and counties in the region in Arcadia Publishing's Images of America series and has authored approximately 125 magazine articles for a variety of magazines and regional trade publications, and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to several Awards of Excellence for feature writing and in-depth reporting from the West Virginia Press Association, he received the Outstanding Journalist Award in 2000 from the West Virginia Trial Lawyers Association; the Recognition of Merit Award in 2003 from the Mercer County Branch, of the

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; and the 2005 Meritorious and Distinguished Service Award from Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 9696 of Bluefield, Virginia. In 2013, he was a Shott Excellence in Media Award recipient from Bluefield College, and in 2015 was presented the annual Distinguished Citizenship Award from Riley-Vest Post No. 9 of the American Legion in Bluefield, West Virginia, and

**WHEREAS**, he and his musical partner of twenty-six years, Karl Miller, perform original compositions as well as music with connection to the region through composers or subject matter, and

**WHEREAS**, he holds a Bachelor's degree in English from West Virginia University and has also completed twelve hours of graduate studies in English at West Virginia University, and

**WHEREAS**, he is husband to Evonda and father to Dannie Morgan, Adrienne Bickers, and Coleen Martinez and six grandchildren.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, the Board of Directors gives thanks for Bill Archer and the way he has contributed in telling the wonderful story of Bluefield and the greater region during his journalism career, and wish him the best in the next chapter of life.

**Given under our hands this the 12<sup>th</sup> day of January 2016.**

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Thomas J. Cole, Mayor

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Barbara Thompson-Smith, Vice Mayor

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Michael Gibson, Director

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Ellen Peters Light, Director

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Chuck McGonagle, Director

**Attest:**

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Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Police Chief Dennis Dillow was then called upon to present retiring police officer, Lieutenant Gary Ruth, with a plaque for his service to the City of Bluefield. Mr. Ruth thanked the city for the opportunity to serve and thanked his family for their support during his years of service.

Fire Chief Rick Cary was called upon to present promotions from the fire department. Adrian C. Conner was promoted to Captain and David Thompson was promoted to lieutenant. The two members of the fire departments were pinned during the presentation. Mayor Cole offered congratulations to all four individuals on behalf of the board of directors and City of Bluefield.

Berkley Hopkins from the House of Prayer church presented to the Board of Directors on a future project of the church. She passed parcel maps that were color coordinated out to board members and board officers. Ms. Hopkins shared the church wishes to acquire a city lot for parking. Her map key included parcels colored pink as sites for housing, parcels colored green as parking lots, parcels colored yellow as facilities to be built, parcels colored blue as the church, and parcels surrounded with blue as lots the church wishes to obtain. Long-term, the church desires to open facilities for a daycare for children, a senior citizen daycare, homeless shelter, and run programs such as meals on wheels. She shared that the church would staff a state-

licensed social worker, RN-BSN nurse, activities coordinator, and members would be CPR certified. Ms. Hopkins stated that getting the parking lot was the starting place. Several directors asked which parcel was the city's parcel. Parcel 176 on Map 10 from the Mercer County Assessor's Office was identified as the parcel in question. City Manager Dane Rideout shared that the new plans raised several zoning issues and would need to be vetted through the proper channels. Ms. Hopkins shared that she believed she was bringing the larger plan as she was asked. Board members asked Ms. Hopkins if the church owned other lots and she replied the church was in negotiations for the lots. Mayor Cole shared with Ms. Hopkins that a purchase could be arranged by auction, but the city may be interested in donating the property if the intent was agreeable. Ms. Berkley clarified that she was looking for a lease on the property for parking. The Board thanked Ms. Berkley for her time and directed her to follow up with City Manager Dane Rideout to gather more information on the issue.

Region I Planning and Development Council staff member Cori Edwards had a scheduling conflict and was unable to attend. The Board of Directors tabled her presentation on Hazard Mitigation Plans until the next meeting.

### **CITY MANAGER REPORT: DANE RIDEOUT**

**Firefighter Promotions** was a notable event and congratulations were offered.

**Patch and Repair** of City Streets totaled 8,192 tons of asphalt being poured on city roads. The asphalt is currently closed but will continue once the weather changes in the spring.

**Holiday of Lights** brought in over 50,000 visitors for the 2015 season. Nick Harrison is to be congratulated for his work on the project.

**Snow Systems** are on the roads for this winter. Three new snow systems were purchased to include two new mainlines and two systems were refurbished. City Manager Rideout reviewed the first dusting, shared that there was not enough snow to plow, and reminded citizens to drive safely and slow down when the weather is bad.

**Fire Station #2** rehabilitation into a police substation continues with an anticipated completion and opening date in April. City Manager Rideout thanked Gerald Steele for his continued leadership on this project and the construction of the Holiday of Lights building.

**Demolition** continues with seven new properties ready to come down in the city.

**City Hall** will see the front counter being redesigned in the months ahead. This will make for a better customer service experience when visiting city hall. Lights are gradually being replaced around city hall thanks to Billy Hester. These new lights will provide energy savings in the future and help reduce our electric bill.

**Parks and Recreation** continues to see the right changes in its programs and its facility improvements. City Manager Rideout shared that the new youth center was coming along and programming was family-friendly and safe for youth.

**Fire Department Shift Changes** will be put in effect in the near future. The department will be moving to a 48/96 hour shift model. City Manager Rideout shared that this is a better form of scheduling and is used in major departments like the Los Angeles Fire Department.

**K-9 Units** in the police department are now just two weeks away from being fully trained. The units have had public interaction at the Lemon Drop and at local events. The police department has also received

matching funds for the USDA grant for new police vehicles. These will be on the road soon. Traffic stops continue and are improving behavior of drivers in the city. More warnings tickets than violation tickets continue to be written with 63% percent of stops resulting in a warning ticket.

**German Exchange Student Interns** are at city hall for the semester working. City Manager Rideout shared he was grateful for the partnership with Bluefield State College to host this program.

**Brian Cochran** was praised for his behind-the-scenes work as the city attorney that makes much of what happens in the City of Bluefield possible.

**The Next Six Months** was discussed last with the following projects being listed:

- Staggard elections
- 1% Sales tax implementation
- Revamp of boards and commissions
- Four-day trash collection
- Refreshing signage around the city
- Nine streets to be paved
- Youth Center upgrades and a possible scholarship started for programs
- B&O clerk hired
- New police substation opened
- New police vehicles purchased
- Arson dog coming to Bluefield
- Volunteer firefighters arrive in Bluefield Fire Department
- Shift change in fire department
- Economic development projects announced

City Manager Rideout closed by announcing the Six Month Review will be held February 16, 2016 at 6:00 p.m. The meeting will be held at First Christian Church on Bland Road.

Assistant City Manager Joshua Cline and intern Ericca Farrington presented a review on the website and social media outlets' activity used by the City of Bluefield. A copy of the report was presented to each board member and was posted on the City of Bluefield website. Assistant City Manager Cline shared that social media usage continued to grow in the past year with heavy traffic on Facebook. Use of Twitter focused on the ability to have tweets retweeted by other users and agencies with larger followings. Use of Google+ had improved the search results of the city on the search engine Google. Intern Ericca Farrington shared that the city staff would be utilizing new social media outlets YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest as well in the upcoming year. A focus would center on the heavy use of video and photo in the upcoming year to remain constant with existing trends.

Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer reported that the website [www.myBluefield.org](http://www.myBluefield.org) would be receiving an upgrade in the months ahead. Assistant City Manager Cline and IT Director Billy Hester had prepared a request for proposal (RFP) that was released. Retail analysis is currently being completed on the City of Bluefield. Ribbon cuttings to note were for Hall & Associates and the ribbon cutting at the Corner Coffee Shop that would be completed later in the week. Director Spencer shared that A&J Sportswear downtown was now open and a ribbon cutting date would be announced in the future. In closing, Director Spencer shared that he met with the Greater Bluefield Chamber of Commerce's Youth Leadership Program for a speaking engagement. He encouraged each of them to be "sparkplugs" for the community and not negative members of society that do not bring solutions. He challenged them to bring him two good ideas by the end of their twelve-week program. One student, Nathan Nickols, emailed

Director Spencer after the meeting and encouraged the city to offer tax incentives and to be an open government willing to help business. Director Spencer commended Nathan for his comments.

### **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchants Association, commented that the city is on the fast track and seems to be getting ahead. He complimented the board and staff on their efforts.

### **ACTION ITEMS**

City Treasurer Kelly Davis supplied the December Financial Report to the Board of Directors. She shared that revenues are at 58.56% for the 2015-2016 year and expenditures are at 48.47% for the year. City Treasurer Davis commented that December is typically a tough month for cash flow. **Director Barbara Thompson-Smith mad a motion to approve the November 2015 monthly financial report and it was unanimously approved and so ordered.**

Mayor Cole presented the city staff recommendation of Melvin Ross for a three year term to the Planning Commission. City Manager Rideout shared that Mr. Ross was a resident of Bluefield, age 31, employed by Honeywell and contracted by Appalachian Electric Power to conduct energy home audits. He shared Mr. Ross was interviewed and is anxious to be part of the new direction of the city. **Director Ellen Light made a motion to appoint Melvin Ross for a three year term to the Planning Commission and it was unanimously approved and so ordered.**

Mayor Cole stated that action was to be taken on the condemned Hardy Street Recreation Facility. City Manager Rideout shared that the group of citizens interested had provided a document but provided no proof of fundraising for the project. He shared a timeline of activity on the project that was in the board members' meeting packets. Mayor Cole asked if anyone in the meeting room was there to speak to the project and no response was given from the audience. City Manager Rideout continued to share the city's initial plan was to take down the condemned structure, leave the concrete pad for future construction options, fill in the wading pool, clear the city-owned lot next to the property, and create good parking for the playground. He continued to share that future plans were to place a shelter on the pad and continue improvements to the playground. Director Barbara Thompson-Smith stated that by voting for demolition of the structure this did not preclude the committee from raising funds for a project on the site in the future. Mayor Cole stated the building cannot be saved and the city must ensure there is not a duplication of efforts in the city. **Director Chuck McGonagle made a motion to reset a standard order of demolition for the Hardy Street Recreation Center and it was unanimously approved and so ordered.**

Mayor Cole presented the Bluefield Sanitary Board's recommendation for the City of Bluefield to purchase a CASE 580 Super N backhoe that would in turn be leased to the Bluefield Sanitary Board. City Treasurer Kelly Davis shared information on the agreement. The equipment would be purchased with funds from the Stabilization Fund and as payments are made by the Bluefield Sanitary Board, those fund would be deposited back into the Stabilization Fund. The lease agreement would likely run from February 1, 2016 until January 1, 2019. **Director Ellen Light made a motion to approve the recommendation of the Bluefield Sanitary Board for the purchase of a new 2015 CASE 580 Super N backhoe from State Equipment at a cost of \$84,214.80 to be funded by money from the city's Financial Stabilization Fund and furthermore, said backhoe is to be leased to the Bluefield Sanitary Board for a period of 36 months beginning upon the execution of the backhoe equipment lease and receipt of a \$30,000 down payment from the Bluefield Sanitary Board, with the understanding that monthly lease payments of \$1,624.87 will begin February 1, 2016 and continue each month through January 31, 2019 with all money from the lease to be returned to the Financial Stabilization Fund. The motion unanimously passed and was so ordered.**

Mayor Cole presented the city staff recommendation to enter into the National League of Cities Service Line Warranty Program. Questions were asked about the program in the board work session. **Director Michael Gibson made a motion to table the action item until more information could be presented. The motion was unanimously passed.**

**OTHER**

The Board of Directors encouraged citizens to attend the public meetings on the Comprehensive Plan to be held on the following dates:

- January 26, 2016 from 5:00 - 8:00 p.m.
- January 27, 2016 from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.
- January 28, 2016 from 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

**Director Michael Gibson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was unanimously passed.**

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Joshua D. Cline, Assistant City Manager

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Thomas J. Cole, Mayor