

**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
January 26, 2016**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, January 26, 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, Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer, 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

Director Light moved that the minutes for the January 12, 2016 be approved as presented. With no objections the minutes were approved.

Patrolman B.W. Copenhaver and Patrolman M.D. Pertee conducted two live K-9 demonstrations. Ace, one of the K-9 units located a small package of marijuana that was hidden in the board room. The second demonstration was a simulated attack on a police officer by a suspect, which prompted Ace to subdue the suspect, Patrolman Ellison wearing a bite suite. The K-9 units were purchased with donations. The K-9 units are bonding with the officers 24/7 and will be stationed at the new police substation on Bland Street. City Manager Rideout hopes an arson K-9 unit will be purchased in the near future. Mayor Cole stated he would post the demonstration on Facebook.

CITY MANAGER REPORT: DANE RIDEOUT

Snow removal is ongoing. Preparation began last Wednesday and continued through the State of Emergency. Most citizens reported at least fifteen (15) to nineteen (19) inches of snowfall for the area. City Manager Rideout, the Board of Directors, and many citizens commended crews (street, fire and police) for doing a phenomenal job in very dangerous conditions. City Manager Rideout stated crews focused on primary highways first and additionally worked to clear many of the state roads that were not being treated inside the city. One snow plow turned over on Carolina Avenue when the crew was working to clear a path for a dialysis patient who needed care. The experienced driver and co-worker were in the process of a shift change and were not harmed. The truck will need some cosmetic repairs. Danialey of Princeton towed the truck for repairs. Public Works Director Junior Beggs and City Engineer Tony Wagner did a great job in organizing and orchestrating priorities. City calls were directly sent to Candy Sayers, Paula Rose and Bobbi Kersey. The ladies would forward concerns to the appropriate departments. Citizens could contact a city staff throughout the storm. City Manager Rideout was very complimentary of the staff working as a team. Bluefield Area Transit was also a part of the team. Unfortunately, one vehicle caught fire but no one was hurt and the vehicle will be repaired. The citizens of Bluefield were thanked for staying off the roads and letting the crews do their jobs. The majority of the Citizens were very positive and co-operative and it is greatly appreciated.

Andre Stevenson was recognized for his eighteen plus years of dedication to the City of Bluefield. City Manager Rideout stated that Andre (69 years old) is a work horse and single handedly shoveled the Martin Luther King Bridge and City Hall sidewalks, over and over. Mr. Stevenson was thanked for all he does for the citizens of Bluefield.

Comprehensive Plan public meetings for citizens to give feedback are scheduled at the Herb Sims Youth Center on Stadium Drive on the following dates:

January 26th from 5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

January 27th from 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

January 28th from 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.

The format for these meetings will be open sessions. City Manager Rideout, Assistant Manager Josh Cline, Community Economic and Development Director Jim Spencer and other Department Heads will be present at all three meetings. There will be three stations where focus areas of the Comprehensive Plan will be discussed with the public. Members of the public are encouraged to stop by each station, hear about ideas that have been discussed and share their ideas.

In addition, the Planning Commission will have a public hearing on January 27th at 3:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Board Room to take recommendations to the Board of Directors concerning proposed revisions on a revised definition of a family and a proposed revision concerning the Planning Commission's membership/voting representatives. A copy of the proposed Ordinances in their entirety may be obtained from the City Clerk.

February 16th at the First Christian Church at 6:00 p.m. sixth (6th) month review is scheduled. This is a chance to look back at the last six (6) months (July – December 31st) and discuss what has happened in the City. There will also be a discussion concerning future plans for the City.

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR: JIM SPENCER

The Federal Court system is seeking a place to store furniture and office supplies during renovations at the Kee Federal Building. They are interested in renting space at the old Wells Fargo Building for approximately 9 to 15 months. City Attorney Brian Cochran will write a lease, if approved by the Board, stating a monthly payment of \$450.00 and the court system will provide insurance on contents.

Community and Economic Development Director Spencer stated handout would be available for citizens at the various stations during the Public Meeting concerning the Comprehensive Plan. The example shared was for economic development goals and strategies for the City of Bluefield (Station I). Director Spencer discussed the following:

Goal 1: Partner with Existing Businesses

Goal 2: Target Business and Industry that would be a good fit for the City

Goal 3: Create a Talented Workforce to meet current and Future Demands

Goal 4: Expand on Tourism and Recreational Opportunities

Goal 5: Diversify the Local Economy

Goal 6: Capitalize on Events and Festivals in the City

Goal 7: Develop a Marketing Plan

Goal 8: Pursue opportunities to develop the Historic Downtown into a more vibrant destination

Goal 9: Create a Business Friendly Climate

Goal 10: Develop Sites, Buildings and necessary infrastructure for Economic Development Projects

Goal 11: "Sharpen the Saw" (Annually review economic policies, procedures and plans to evaluate what is working and where changes are needed.

For a complete list of the strategies or to share your input and ideas, please submit to

jspencer@cityofbluefield.com.

Station #2 Topic: Land Use, Rural, Preferred Areas of Development, Renewal/Redevelopment, Housing and Historic Preservation

Station #3 Topic: Public Services, Transportation, and Safety

During the public meetings, city staff and planning commission members will share large, visual maps of the city for residents to point and show where their ideas are in the city. Participants will also interact with elected officials during the event. In addition to the public meetings that will provide comment and feedback, social media posts will be presented on the City of Bluefield's Facebook page and Twitter account for individuals to share their ideas should they not be able to attend the public meetings. Posts will begin on Monday, January 25, 2016 and run through Friday, January 29, 2016. City officials have established a webpage on the website, www.cityofbluefield.com, with previous plans for citizens to review along with helpful information on the planning process. This can be found under the "Government" section by clicking on the "Comprehensive Plan" section for all the details.

PUBLIC COMMENT

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

1. The business merchants and citizens gave a great big thank you to the staff and crews for their hard work during the snow storm. It really helped the merchants in the downtown area.
2. One tentative plan to get people to the downtown area would be to rent space on three billboards:
 - Large Billboard on I-77 before Exit 9 Southbound
 - Small Billboard on John Nash Blvd with detail
 - Small Billboard on 460 in Tazewell County Eastbound.

The cost for preparing the signs, installing, and maintenance for a 52-week period is \$11,000. The merchants are requesting the City consider paying one half (1/2) for the plan, and the rest will be borne by Antique Malls, the Merchants Association, and the members and citizens who choose to participate. Director Michael Gibson requested the Board receive a list of interested merchants. Mayor Cole requested Economic and Community Development Director Jim Spencer gather more information and report to the Board at the next meeting.

3. The City of Bluefield has a vacant building ordinance that authorizes inspection such buildings every year by code enforcement and the fire department.

Charles Blankenship, citizen, stated his neighbors requested that he remind the City Board that a full line grocery store was still needed in Bluefield. Secondly, he thanked the Board of Directors, City Manager, City Staff, First Responders, Public Works, and citizens for their part in the snow removal and purchasing the new equipment. This was a mammoth storm and he heard trucks going twenty-four hours a day. Mr. Blankenship stated he was disappointed in those who posted negative comments on social media. He said he was thankful for all the folks that worked continuously to make the City safe.

ACTION ITEMS

Mayor Cole and the Board had tabled the first action item at the last meeting and had requested City Manager Rideout research the program and provide more information regarding sponsorship of the National League of Cities Service Line Warranty Program. City Manager Rideout stated this program picks up where the Sanitary and West Virginia American Water stops coverage in the event of a line or drain problem, inside or outside, at a residence. The service is currently being used by over 200 cities nationwide. Nineteen cities in West Virginia offer the service. This is an optional program paid for by citizens. It is recommended by the Better Business Bureau, which has rated the program with an A+. Locally licensed contractors will be utilized, keeping business within our community. City Manager Rideout recommended the Board approve the sponsorship and offer this program to citizens. Director Ellen Light made a motion to approve the

sponsorship of the National League of Cities Service Line Warranty Program, second; unanimously approved and so ordered.

City Manager Rideout stated the National League of Cities Service Line will conduct a campaign to inform citizens of the program. The City does not have any part in the program other than authorizing the company to use the city logo in their advertisement and the City will provide a list of licensed contractors within the city.

Director Michael Gibson made a motion to approve lease space for the Federal Court System at the Wells Fargo Building, second; unanimously approved and so ordered.

REPORTS OF OFFICERS

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith, Director Ellen Light, Director Chuck McGonagle, and Director Michael Gibson thanked all the people and departments/crews involved in keeping everyone safe during the State of Emergency. City Manager Rideout was recognized for his outstanding job during the storm. City Manager Rideout kept the Board and staff abreast of events, sending updated text messages and was on the road checking road conditions.

Art Riley was thanked again for his coordination, effort, and time for a great Christmas Parade. The weather was beautiful and the parade was well attended. Mr. Riley thanked the citizens and participants for making the 2015 Christmas Parade a success.

Mayor Cole acknowledged the passing of R.W. “Buzzy” Wilkinson. Mr. Wilkinson passed away Friday, January 15th in Myrtle Beach, S.C. For years, Mr. Wilkinson was CEO and president of First Century Bank and worked with many organizations. He cared a great deal about the city and his death is a tremendous loss. Thoughts and prayers were extended to the family.

Mayor Cole echoed how proud he was for the job that all city employees under took during the recent storm. Mayor Cole stated that he should delete Facebook due to the fact he became so upset over some of the “cowardly” comments posted. Mayor Cole stated that if someone had something to say that he was available and would speak with them. He stated many of the employees were risking their lives and those who posted negative comments were the problem. Those who posted rude and unnecessary comments are not part of the solution. Any member of this Board will talk with citizens if they are respectful and if something can be done they will work toward that goal. Shame on those who sit behind a keyboard in the comfort of their home and post negative comments about those who are out working to keep us safe. Mayor Cole read one post from mid- Saturday when it was still snowing saying, “They have only plowed my street twice”. Mayor Cole stated City Manager Rideout had a detailed plan knowing the storm was headed our way. Again Mayor Cole said he was proud of the staff, crews, administration, and the majority of citizens in Bluefield.

Director Chuck McGonagle made a motion to adjourn for executive session to discuss property acquisition only to return to adjourn, second; unanimously approved and so ordered.

Director Ellen Light made a motion to adjourn, second; unanimously approved so ordered.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Thomas J. Cole, Mayor