

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

February 28, 2017

NOON

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, February 28, 2017, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Thomas J. Cole, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith, Assistant City Manager Joshua Cline, Director Ellen Light, Director Michael Gibson, Director Chuck McGonagle, City Manager Dane Rideout, Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer, City Treasurer Kelly Davis, and City Clerk Bobbi Kersey.

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith thanked City Clerk Bobbi Kersey for her display recognizing some of Bluefield's Black American leaders for Black History Month. City Clerk Kersey said Danielle Taylor had helped her on the project.

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith requested the Stepp family, from Bluewell, be remembered during prayer. Mr. Benjamin Stepp was a seventeen-year employee of the Bluefield Sanitary Board. Mr. Stepp and his son lost their lives during a house fire this past week.

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.

Mayor Cole and the Board of Directors congratulated Assistant City Manager Josh Cline and his wife Peyton on the birth of their son. Crawford Cline was born Saturday, February 18 at 3:30 in the morning. He is a healthy baby boy and we all wish them much happiness.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved that the minutes of the February 14, 2017, Board of Directors meeting be approved as presented; unanimously approved and so ordered.

Recognition

Police Chief Dennis Dillow congratulated and presented LT. Dean A. Pennington with a plaque recognizing his retirement from the Bluefield Police Department. LT. Dean Pennington is a twenty-seven year veteran of the police force. Police Chief Dillow said LT. Pennington's retirement was difficult for him because on May 15, 1990 they started their journey on the police force at the same time. He felt LT. Pennington was like a brother and he shared many memories. Police Chief Dillow stated he was happy and proud to have known LT. Pennington and wished him the best. LT. Pennington was recognized for his outstanding grant writing skills. The Board of Directors thanked and congratulated LT. Pennington.

CITY MANAGER DANE RIDEOUT

City Engineer Tony Wagner was thanked for his hard work on coordinating projects. There was an article in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph showing City Engineer Wagner's construction project of the upper tennis court restoration at the City Park and other positive events taking place in the city. City Manager Rideout stated, working in cooperation with AEP, Bluefield Gas, Department of Highways and City Department Directors, projects would be prioritized. Before a road is paved, the city wants to make sure it is not going to be torn up by another company. City Engineer Tony Wagner is working with the Department of Highways to stabilize the bank along Stadium Drive.

A Dog Park will be located in the grassy area next to First Community Bank. Engineer tape/ribbons have sectioned off areas for small and large dogs. One suggestion made during an earlier discussion of a dog park was to look for an alternative place. The dog park will be paid for through private donations and the Parks and Recreation budget. This will be a test run and the building material can be repurposed. There will be signage, security/code enforcement, and maintained by city crews. Construction will begin soon.

City files are in the process of being digitized. The city has an overload of paper. One fire could destroy a lot of history. Our IT Specialist has been researching various companies. This would be a three to five year process. LexisNexis has search engine capabilities that allow us to rapidly find information. Maps can be enhanced, minutes, documents and much more will be available.

Midway Tunnel is receiving some construction. The scrapes on the side of the tunnel are from the fire trucks. There is only an inch and a half clearance with the fire engine. The sidewalk will be removed. The City is working with the Stormwater Board, Railroad, and the Department of Highways to get the area passable and safe. Our new fire engine truck is taller than the current fire engines.

Reminder please call 811 before any construction work that requires digging. Digging without knowing the approximate location of underground utilities can result in damage to gas, electric, communications, water and sewer lines, which can lead to service disruptions, serious injuries and costly repairs. Federal and State Government are getting involved due to this being a safety issue.

An Administrative Assistant position is in the finals stage. This person will work with code enforcement, the fire department and will be the city operator. Over one hundred fifty five applications was received. Human Resource Director Angie Foley has done a great job setting up the interviews.

Benjamin Stepp was a seventeen-year employee at the Sanitary Board and worked as Westside Plant. Mr. Stepp died when he went upstairs to rescue his father during a house fire last week. He was a great American who was trying to save a family member. Our hearts and prayers go out to the family.

Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer:

- City Engineer Tony Wagner, Intern Jacob Carey, and Community and Economic Development Director Spencer spent five hours with E. L. Robinson looking at the Commercialization Station/Freight Station to proceed with improvements. There is still some paper work to be completed.
- It is important that all Policies and procedures must be in place dealing with an incubator space. Community and Economic Development Director Spencer applied for a grant from BB & T to help pay for a national consultant. A grant was awarded for \$5,000.
- As part of National Entrepreneurship Week, the City of Bluefield hosted a “Meet the Millennials”, from 3 to 5 p.m. at the Clover Club. Nine different business owners moved from table to table to talk with students. Over sixty millennials attended and were very engaged in listening and talking with the entrepreneurs. He hopes that an “entrepreneur boot camp” for high school students will be offered this summer.
- Senior level engineering students from Bluefield State College will be doing a site plan project on Exit 1. They will work on possible projects for the future.
- Representatives from the EPA’s Sustainable Communities Program and the Appalachian Regional Commission and Smart Growth America visit the City of Bluefield on March 21 and 22.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchants Association, asked who owned Midway Tunnel. Mr. Riley said approximately ten or twelve years ago, there was a discussion to develop alternate route. City Manager Dane Rideout said the railroad owns the tunnel and the Department of Highways maintains the road. They are working together with the city for citizen’s safety and response time for emergency vehicles. Mr. Riley

stated he attended the Winter Warmer at the Arts Center sponsored by the Beautification Commission and it was a great event. He also said the building looked great and everyone should be commended for his or her hard work. Mr. Riley noted an action item concerning annexation and asked if the City owns some properties that they have not annexed? City Manager Dane Rideout stated these properties are owned by the city but have not been annexed. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Board concerning the type of zoning.

ACTION ITEMS

City Treasurer Kelly Davis requested approval of the February collections for \$21,304. Director Ellen Light moved to approve the February Collections as presented; unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Cole requested approval to provide office space for the County Sheriff at no cost to the County. City Manager Rideout stated the Sheriff's office is located on the second floor of City Hall. Citizens can pay property taxes, purchase car registration renewal stickers and pay various other fees. The convenience of having the office is a benefit for all residents of Bluefield. As a cost saving measure, there was consideration to consolidate the employees and close the office. The county was paying \$100 a month. We would like to keep this office in Bluefield so our residents do not have to go to Princeton. City Manager Rideout recommended that the City provide office space for the County Sheriff at no cost to the County. Director Chuck McGonagle moved to approve providing office space at no charge to the County Sheriff; unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Cole requested approval to recommend to the Planning Commission for zoning discussion on the following annexed properties: Goodwin Property (Exit 1), Godwin Property (behind Bluefield Gas), and Transit Property (3 to 5 acres). This Board gives direction to the Planning Commission to discuss and return with a recommendation on how each property should be zoned. Director Michael Gibson moved to approve to recommend to the Planning Commission for zoning discussion on the three properties presented; unanimously approved and so ordered.

City Manager Rideout stated the next item for action concerned an ordinance. The company that is preparing the ordinance is not ready. Director Chuck McGonagle moved to table the first reading of a Sanitary Ordinance; unanimously approved and so ordered.

Director Michael Gibson moved for approval of a motion to have the City Manager investigate a lawsuit that is currently pending in the Circuit Court of Mercer County, involving a major asset of the City and a major expenditure of City monies to maintain on an annual basis. We are asking that the City Manager investigate what is in the best interest of the City with respect to the lawsuit. The City is not currently part of the lawsuit. Mayor Cole stated this was part of an executive session, earlier this morning, discussing legal matters. Mayor Cole requested a vote for approval of a motion to have the City Manager investigate a lawsuit that is currently pending in the Circuit Court of Mercer County, involving a major asset of the City and a major expenditure of City monies to maintain on an annual basis. Four- yes (Cole, Thompson, Gibson, McGonagle), 1-abstained (Light).

Director Michael Gibson moved to adjourn, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Thomas J. Cole, Mayor