

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

November 14, 2017 - Noon

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, November 14, 2017, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith, Director Matt Knowles, Director Michael Gibson, Director Robb Williams, City Manager Dane Rideout, City Treasurer Kelly Davis, City Attorney Colin Cline, Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer and City Clerk Bobbi Kersey.

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 Ron Martin called the meeting to order.

Public Comments or Public Discussion

Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchants Association, reminded citizens the Christmas Parade will be December 9 at 1:00 p.m. Entry forms are available on the city website (www.cityofbluefield.com). Entries for the parade will be taken until 1:00 p.m. on the ninth and walk-ins are welcome.

Mr. Riley said with the recent fires in the area questioned if there been a discussion concerning hiring more firefighters. City Manager Rideout stated he would like to have more firefighters, however there had to be a balanced approach concerning hiring, equipment, pension obligations and various other issues. City Manager Rideout stated we have the required firefighters and great leadership. The priority is to have the latest technology and equipment. Fire Chief Cary agreed with City Manager Rideout that the top priority was the safety of his men and upgrading the capital equipment. City Manager Rideout stated the efforts toward the fire last night was a county effort. However, the Bluefield City Fire Department was first to respond and are a professional, full-time department. The ISO rating has been lowered under the leadership of Fire Chief Cary.

Mr. Riley said the City of Princeton was awarded several grants to help local businesses enhance their local downtown business. Some years ago, there was an incentive program in Bluefield. Funds were available as loans from a financial institution. With the help of the city and development, businesses could come in with a plan and the city would give them a "hand up". Mr. Riley requested the board consider this incentive. Mr. Riley stated he would like to see the Comprehensive Plan completed to help give the downtown merchants direction.

Approval of the Minutes

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to approve the minutes of the October 24, 2017 Board of Directors meeting were unanimously approved and so ordered

Action on New Business

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval to erect a 6 ft. fence across the alley between Baldwin Avenue and Allen Street (Lots 1 and Lot 4). City Attorney Colin Cline stated the owner; Mr. Scott had requested the extension of a 6 ft. boundary fence. The alley is unopened and is owned by the city. The city would have the right to access the alley at any time and Mr. Scott would be responsible for dismantling the fence. Two other owners have been allowed

to erect carports with stipulations on city property. The city retains the right to dismantle structures and would retain ownership of the property. City Attorney Cline recommended approval of the fence. Director Michael Gibson moved to approve Mr. Scott's request to erect a 6 ft. fence across and along the western boundary of the alley between Baldwin Avenue and Allen Street, subject to verification of ownership and continue the city's easement and right – of – way through the alley; unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of plans for the Commercialization Station by E.L. Robinson. Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer stated E.L. Robinson came back to the Commercialization Station for some plan revisions: to raise two doors to 14 ft. and some of the paddocks. E.L. Robinson representative, Dave Cole stated electrical upgrades will be the top priority and fire suppression, plumbing and drainage will be addressed. There will be individual bays and each tenant will be responsible for their utilities. Plans must be submitted and approved by the USEDA before going to bid. Community and Economic Development Director Spencer said the key is to be flexible. Mr. Cole recommended the Board approve the plans presented and it be submitted to the USEDA. Director Michael Gibson moved to approve the plans as presented for the Commercialization Station by E.L. Robinson and submit as soon as possible; unanimously approved and so ordered. Community and Economic Development Director Spencer noted once the plans are submitted there is no time frame – we wait for a response.

Mayor Ron Martin requested a discussion concerning the donation agreement with the Greater Bluefield Community Center, Inc. City Attorney Cline stated the city has explored the possibility of the Community Center donating the bulk of its real and personal property to the city. The city would then assume operation of the facility beginning January 1, 2018. City Treasurer Kelly Davis had reviewed the financial records and Parks and Recreation Director Charles Ridlehuber is working on options to improve the family wellness facility. City Attorney Cline stated the center would retain responsibility for unknown liabilities and the city would assume responsibility for three contracts and the center's existing membership agreements. The overall plan calls for the center to close for two weeks or more during the 2018 summer for improvements and rebranding. Mayor Ron Martin and the Directors approved the ongoing discussion but would like review the final agreement. Director Mike Gibson moved to continue discussion concerning the agreement with the Greater Bluefield Community Center and table a vote until a final agreement is reached, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of leases with former Stovall Tenants. City Attorney Cline stated there is only one formal Stovall tenant at this time. The city received a number of donated property parcels from the Stovall Real Estate, LLC. At the time there, four of the properties were occupied but by the time the transaction closed and the deed was transferred; only one tenant remains. City Attorney Cline requested approval of a residential lease agreement with the Gardner Street property for a one-year rental of \$225.00 a month. The city has no immediate plans for this property. Director Michael Gibson moved to approve the lease with the former Stovall Tenant, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Action on Accounts

City Treasurer Kelly Davis requested approval of the October financial statement. At the close of October 2017, the 4th month of the fiscal year, revenue collected totaled \$4,749,636(51.78%) of the projected amount of \$9,173,101. Expenditures totaled \$3,643,148 (32.24%) of the projected budget of \$11,299,600. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to approve the October financial statement as presented, unanimously approved and so ordered.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis requested approval to transfer money from the General Fund to the Rainy Day Fund for \$20,158.40. This amount represents five months' worth of payments from the Bluefield Sanitary Board to the City for the two equipment leases. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to approve the transfer of \$20,158.40 from the General Fund to the Rainy Day Fund, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Receipts and Action on Petitions, Resolutions or Appeals

Director Michael Gibson asked update concerning the lawsuit related to the opioid epidemic and influx of addictive prescription drugs. City Attorney Cline said it was his understanding the Board had authorized Brewster, Morhous, and Cameron, LLC to pursue a claim but he had not received any information. He will follow up with Attorney Brian Cochran and report to the Board.

Action on Unfinished or Pending Business

Mayor Ron Martin requested discussion concerning action to renew contract with the New River Travel Council, Inc. City Manager Rideout stated this contract/agreement has been in place for at least ten years. Fifty percent of the hotel/motel tax received goes to the CVB and the city receives fifty percent. To date, the CVB pays 30% to the Travel Council and Bluefield pays approximately \$8,000 to \$10,000 thousand to the Travel Council. At one time, the council played an important part in promoting tourism but with technology that has changed. The CVB is doing an excellent job in promoting our area, as is our Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer. City Manager Rideout recommended not renewing the contract with the New River Travel Council and providing a one hundred twenty day (120) notice. Director Michael Gibson moved to provide the one hundred twenty day notice to New River Travel Council, Inc. and the City will terminate its contract, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Enactment of Ordinances

NONE

Report of City Manager

- Thank you to the citizens for their support during the construction on College Avenue and Maryland. A citizen came forth and suggested changing a yield sign to a stop sign based on the traffic flow to make it safer. The change was made and citizens are encouraged to provide feedback, which is appreciated.
- Public Works is massively involved with leaf clean up. Leaves are picked up at no cost to citizens based upon our storm water permit. This aids in keeping leaves out of the storm drains and allows us to protect properties from flooding. Please rake your leaves so they do not go into neighbor's yards or the street. Leaves are being picked up on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday. To report a leaf picked up use the Fix It Bluefield App.
- The new flags were displayed on Veterans Day. There was an issue with the brackets but that has been fixed. The flags were donated by citizens in remembrance of loved ones. City Ambassador Marie Blackwell headed the flag fundraiser.
- Code Enforcement has had forty-three permits in the last two weeks. Citizens are improving their properties. They were instrumental in a dog rescue and the Bluefield Daily Telegraph did a great job reporting the story.

- IT Specialist Billy Hester is reviewing and updating the City website. Department heads participated in an online demonstration from one of the prospective web developers. We are looking at a progressive website. The Board will give input and then the public will be asked to provide feedback. One component being evaluated is the search capability within the website.
- Almost all the lights have been converted to LED – just a few left to complete in the Police Department. Once completed, we will submit a rebate request to AEP.
- Congratulations to the Bluefield Beavers High School Football team for an undefeated season and winning their first play-off game. There have been over fifty-five games played at Mitchell Stadium this season and now we are getting ready for play-off games. We are keeping track of the weather because the stadium cannot be winterized until after play-offs are completed.
- The Holiday of Lights 5K Challenge will be Saturday, December 2 @ 5:30 p.m. Pre-register in person at Parks and Recreation or online. This year there are over a million lights.
- The Afterschool Program will be offering day camp while students are out of school through the holidays. For more information, see Katana Mullen in Parks and Recreation.
- The Community and Economic Development Department is advertising and accepting applications to assist with Community and Economic programs. For more information, contact Human Resource Director Angie Foley.
- Holiday of Lights will be ready to open by Thanksgiving night. This year there will be a Christmas Market on Friday and Saturday, however some food vendors will be open during the week.
- The Police Department reported the following: 965 calls for service, 100 arrest, 135 reports filed, 748 citations written (386 warnings), and 23 motor vehicle accidents. All officers successfully completed their annual fall firearms qualification.
- City Manager Rideout was with The Fire Department at the last fire and stated they are doing an outstanding job. He was impressed with the equipment and professionalism displayed in a very dangerous situation. A propane tank exploded and a wall fell down.

Action on Recommendations by City Manager

City Manager Dane Rideout stated the new employee handbook is being reviewed concerning policy, procedures, and hopes the next two items can be codified before next year. City Manager Rideout requested City Hall be closed on December 22 as a paid holiday for city employees. City Manager Rideout recommended the December 26 Board Meeting be cancelled. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to close City Hall on December 22 as a paid holiday for city employees, unanimously approved and so ordered. Director Matt Knowles moved to cancel the December 26 Board of Directors meeting, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer

- The brochure for the Holiday of Lights was done in-house by City Ambassador Marie Blackwell and Marketing Specialist Rebecca Kasey. There will be two ads this year: Christmas in My Bluefield and CREATE Opportunity Initiatives for entrepreneurs. Twenty-eight business will be participating this year.
- Small Business Saturday will be Nov. 25. contests running to highlight local small businesses:
 1. How well do you know my Bluefield – testing local knowledge (trivia) that pertains to Bluefield’s history. New Peoples Bank will sponsor this contest.

2. Caption This Contest – starting November 14- participants will have 24 hours from the time a photo is posted to comment about it. The funniest or wittiest caption will win. First Community Bank will sponsor this contest. An example was given concerning the caption contest: Patty Joe’s Restaurant has developed a new dessert, posted a photo, and the best caption will name the dessert.
 3. Facebook contest.
 4. A final contest may take place for those who are shopping and spend money in one of the businesses. Your name will be entered into a drawing. Still waiting to hear from a potential sponsor.
- A QR Code will be listed beside the My Bluefield App. will be available and free for each business. Businesses can use the QR Code for business cards or however they wish to promote their business. However, businesses still need to work together in marketing.
 - The Small Business Administration (SBA) is seeking 2018 Small Business Week nominations for national and district level awards, due January 9. Local businesses will be nominated and for some of these statewide competitions.

Reports from Committees

Director Michael Gibson stated the Alliance of the Arts, which is responsible for maintaining the Bluefield Arts Building, had a Veterans Ball last Saturday. It was very well attended. Director Gibson said the food was excellent and invited citizens to visit the Arts Building. Mayor Ron Martin said there were over 250 people at the ball and the decorations were beautiful. Hal Brainerd has photos on his website. The Arts building is busy and has never looked better. Citizens are encouraged to use this economical venue.

Miscellaneous and Unfinished Business

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of Mike Collins (Chamber of Commerce Representative) and Sgt. Major Baylor (Fraternal Order of Police Representative) to the Policemen’s Civil Service Commission for a three-year term. Director Robb Williams moved to approve Mike Collins (Chamber of Commerce Representative) and Sgt. Major Baylor (Fraternal Order of Police Representative) to the Policemen’s Civil Service Commission for a three-year term, unanimously approved and so ordered.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Martin requested a motion to adjourn. Director Matt Knowles moved to adjourn the meeting, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Ron Martin, Mayor