

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

**January 23, 2018 - Noon**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, January 23, 2018, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith, Director Matt Knowles, 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. Director Michael Gibson was absent.

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**

**Linda Landreth, Bluefield resident**, spoke in support of the Greater Bluefield Community Center activities, especially the pool programs. Ms. Landreth is handicapped and uses a walker or cane. The warm water program and aerobic programs are supplements used in keeping her active. Mrs. Landreth asked the Board to consider a handicap aquatic entrance in the rear of the center and a drop off area in the front entrance. Mayor Martin stated the City would not officially take over the Community Center until February 1.

**Marsha Platnick, Bluefield resident**, voiced concern that arthritic seniors and handicapped children would have no place to exercise and manage their pain if the water temperature in the pool at the Community Center is turned down. Ms. Platnick was concerned that if a separate therapeutic pool were constructed, similar to the therapeutic pool used in Marion, Va., it would be expensive and would not fulfill the needs or accommodate seniors or special needs citizens. Ms. Platnick suggested leaving the pool as it is for six months to allow time for a study. She discussed a pool membership reciprocity with Bluefield State College.

**Jerry Hickman, Bluefield resident**, asked to Board to keep the pool warm. Under the guidance of Mary Malamisura, patrons were recovering from injuries, receiving necessary therapy, and maintaining good health. For many patrons, this was the only type of exercise in which they can participate. Mr. Hickman stated that approximately forty-members use the heated pool for therapy three to four times a week, including himself.

**Mayor Martin** stated the main concern of the Board was to take over that amenity for the community and making it available to the citizens. Nothing has been decided as to what changes need to be made. Without the City taking over this facility, it was going to close and that would not have been a benefit to anyone in the city. The Board had everyone in mind when they decided to go in this direction. Under the direction of Parks and Recreation Director Charles Ridlehuber and his staff, the Board feels the City will end up with a better facility and resource for all citizens. Mayor Martin thanked all who spoke about the Community Center.

**Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchants Association**, asked the following:

- Due to the cold weather, the City will experience a windfall of additional money collected from tax utilities and B & O tax. Mr. Riley asked there was a way to adjust or a flat fee instead of the tax being based on the bill. Mayor Martin stated some

adjustments have been made with B & O and the City is taking approximately \$700,000 less on utility tax collected. City Manager Rideout said the extra money the City receives offsets the cost for salt, overtime, equipment breakage and extra utility rates to the City. When the city experiences extreme weather, there are unexpected costs. When the City took on the 1% B & O tax, we reduced when other cities did not reduce, the direct pass through that goes to the consumer. Bluefield Gas Company has been working in the area the last two year at a loss. The weather the last two years has been relatively mild. This year they are probably catching up, but have continued to work on the infrastructure. There has not been a windfall coming from all the utilities. Mr. Riley stated the Gas Company has been sold twice in the last ten years. In theory, the rates should have covered repairs and replacement of lines. This was not the case and it is now catching up with the Gas Company.

- The Annual Review on January 30 will inform citizens where we have been and what we have done. Will there be a section on what is going to happen moving forward? City Manager Rideout said a portion of moving forward would be included in the Annual Review. However, some things would not be discussed because we would be creating our own competition. The Comprehensive Plan has been slowed down until we see if plans come to fruition.
- Will the Region I Prioritization list be published on the City website? City Manager Rideout said the list would be published. City Manager Rideout said he would recommend this action item be tabled because he may have additions.

**Marcella Crutchfield** stated she had been in communication with West Virginia American Water Company concerning replacement of a water pump on Media Street. The representative told her the residents will not let the Water Company put in a new pump because of the way it will look. She said she does not have enough water pressure at times to run her washing machine. City Manager Rideout said the residents would not make that decision and the subject has no come before the Board. City Manager Rideout knew the address she was speaking of and it was property owned by the City. The City will approve WV Water to put the pump house in the location.

### **APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES**

Director Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson- Smith moved to approve the minutes of the January 9, 2018 Board of Directors meeting, unanimously approved and so ordered.

### **Action on New Business**

Mayor Martin requested approval for the 2018 Region I Planning and Development Annual Project Prioritization list. City Manager Rideout recommended this item be tabled.

Mayor Martin requested approval to appoint Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer as the Region I PDC committee member. This position was held by Josh Cline who is now at the Chamber. City Manager Rideout recommended Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer to be the proxy for the Board because of his position as Economic Director. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith moved to appoint Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer as the Region I PDC committee member, unanimously approved and so ordered. Mr. Spencer will be a voting member.

Mayor Martin requested approval of an agreement between the City of Bluefield and Hill Studio, P.C. for professional services in developing a coordinated signage program. City Manager Dane Rideout stated Hill Studio came to Bluefield many years ago to do a complete signage program. Locations have not changed a lot but the appearance of signage has changed. Signage needs to be directional and progressive. Hill Studio has a history with the City, planning at the Recreation Center, the Arts Center and the entrance to the Bluestone. The Board was given a copy of the agreement in their packet. If approved, City Manager Rideout would enter into the agreement and less than fourteen thousand dollars for design has been approved by the Shott Foundation. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the agreement between the City of Bluefield and Hill Studio, P.C. for professional services in developing a coordinated signage program, unanimously approved and so ordered. The City did go through the bid process.

Mayor Martin requested approval by Mark Austin to erect a gate on Welch Street. City Attorney Colin Cline stated Welch Street is a short street off Wheeling Street. For a long time it has served as Mr. Austin's driveway. Mr. Austin has been maintaining the area as it dead ends behind his house. The street serves no purpose except for Mr. Austin to have access to and from him property. The alternative to a gate would be closing the road. This would result in Mr. Austin owning half of Welch Street and adjacent property owner would own the other half. This is consistent with similar actions taken in the past by the City. City Attorney Cline recommended Mr. Austin's request be approved with a notation that the City retains ownership of Welch Street and access to Welch Street, should it be needed for municipal purposes. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the request by Mark Austin to erect a gate on Welch Street.

### **Action on Accounts**

City Treasurer Kelly Davis requested approval of eighty accounts for \$82,083.54 to be turned over to the collection agency. Director Robb Williams moved to approve eighty accounts for \$82,083.54 for the month of January, unanimously approved.

### **City Manager Report**

- The Board of Directors, Administration, and Staff extends special thoughts and prayers to Director Michael Gibson and his family. Director Gibson is having some medical issues and is in the hospital. We all wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to his return home.
- Condolences to the family of Steve Danko. Mr. Danko served on the Virginia Town Council, was a member of the Bluefield Sanitary Board and served as president of Bluefield Hardware Company before retiring. Mr. Danko was dedicated to his family, friends, faith and community.
- The City owns two types of street poles. The cobra head, that line Bland Street, are ordered through AEP. The poles that need replaced have been ordered and should be in the first week of February. The city is going after the insurance companies for payment however; several were destroyed during hit and run accidents. The decorative street poles, with the glass bulb on top, are on order and will be replaced.
- Five points were made concerning the Community Center:
  1. The City approached the Community Center three years ago concerning their programs so the center would not close. After approximately two years, the

Community Center approached the City stating the pool was in danger of closing and being filled, due to cost maintenance. The Board felt the Community Center was an amenity to the neighborhood and community.

2. The City has offered every single employee employment. This was not a hostile takeover as some rumors have stated. Seven employees turned down employment with the City.
  3. Please give time for Parks and Recreation Director Charles Ridlehuber to have a vision, gather information from employees as to what works and what changes need to be made. Give him time to develop a Capital Improvement Plan that works for our citizens and our community.
  4. The building must become compliant with all codes, ADA, and safety regulations.
  5. This is an amenity for this City. College Avenue is the most traveled road in the City. This is a good thing for the City. Applications are available at City Hall. Applicants must pass a drug test and urine analysis to work in the City.
- Soon there will be a K-9 on every shift at the Police Department. The Police Department will do a presentation later thanking the Tierney Foundation for their support with the K-9 program.
  - The Fire Department responded to an electrical fire in an elevator at 401 Federal Street. A man was in the elevator. The Fire Department was also concerned about the Manor and its close proximity. The Fire Department must deal with the event but the "what if" had a fire expanded to other areas. Due to having a professional department, they knew how to control the environment ensuring the fire would not have further repercussions to citizens or other buildings. This could have been a major displacement of people.

### **Action on Recommendations by City Manager**

City Manager Rideout requested approval to change the February 27, 2018 Board of Directors meeting to Monday, February 26, 2018. Mercer County Day, in Charleston, has been scheduled the February 27<sup>th</sup> and several city officials will be attending. City Manager Rideout also requested approval to change the September 11, 2018 Board of Directors meeting to Monday, September 10, 2018. Several city officials will be attending activities scheduled for Patriots' Day on Tuesday, September 11. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the February 27 Board of Directors meeting to Monday, February 26 and the September 11 meeting to September 10, unanimously approved and so ordered.

City Manager Rideout requested approval of a proposal for the roof replacement for the Bluefield Area Arts Center. City Manager Rideout stated money from a foundation has been given for the roof replacement. A local business, Frye Roofing was the accepted bid at \$167,000. The Alliance for the Arts put out the bids. In the future, any City owned building bids would go through the City. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith moved to approve the proposal for the roof replacement for the Bluefield Area Arts Center, unanimously approved and so ordered.

**Enactment of Ordinances**

Mayor Martin read the SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE PROHIBITION OF PARKING ON DEARBORN AVENUE BETWEEN COLLEGE AVENUE AND ALBEMARLE STREET.

**AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE PROHIBITION OF PARKING ON DEARBORN STREET BETWEEN COLLEGE AVENUE AND ALBEMARLE STREETS**

**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 parking on Dearborn Street; and

**WHEREAS**, the City manager recommends that parking be prohibited on Dearborn Street between College Avenue and Albemarle Street, 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 business 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 of the City of Bluefield, West Virginia hereby amends the traffic control map of the City of Bluefield by prohibiting parking on Dearborn Street from College Avenue to Albemarle Street, as described on the attached map. (Map available in City Clerk’s office)

Mayor Martin stated there was a Public Hearing at 11:30 am today for public comments. City Manager Rideout recommended the street be closed because it is a safety concern. City Manager Rideout said he would like to work with Mr. Walker and City Engineer Tony Wagner to find a solution to his parking problems. Mr. Walker is a businessperson and the owner of an apartment building on Dearborn and had expressed some concerns at the Public Hearing. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith moved to approve the SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE PROHIBITION OF PARKING ON DEARBORN AVENUE BETWEEN COLLEGE AVENUE AND ALBEMARLE STREET, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Martin requested approval of the FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE PURCHASE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ERECTING A PUBLIC TRANSIT TRANSFER STATION. City Manager Rideout said this goes along with plans that will be unveiled at the Annual Review. This property is on Bluefield Avenue. This project will be a collaboration between the City of Bluefield and the Federal Government. The City received money from a foundation and a million dollar transit transfer station will be built. This building will provide a place for citizens to get out of the weather, use the facilities and enhance the safety for riders while waiting between connecting routes. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE PURCHASE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY FOR THE PURPOSE OF ERECTING A PUBLIC TRANSIT TRANSFER STATION, unanimously approved and so ordered. Mayor Martin stated this was another example of a foundation working to support our community.

**Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer**

- All plans for the Commercialization Station have been submitted to the EDA. We are waiting for the EDA to approve the plans bids. Once approved the plans can be advertised for bids.
- The City will unveil the digital brochure at the Annual Meeting. This is another tool to market the city.
- The City is now managing the Research and Development Building. This is a work in progress.
- Landscape Architecture Assistant Professor C.L. Bohannon at Virginia Tech would like to do a class project in Bluefield. Forty students would participate in a design charrette. Students will travel to Bluefield on January 17. The class looked at the exterior of the Commercialization Station and the downtown area. This would be a “new set of eyes” that could offer suggestions and ideas. A sneak peak of a design conceptual proposal drawing was shown. Mayor Martin said it was good to get fresh ideas and looks forward to seeing the other designs.

**Miscellaneous and Unfinished Business**

Mayor Martin reminded citizens the City of Bluefield’s Annual Review is scheduled for Tuesday, January 30, 2018 @ 6:00 p.m. at the Bluefield Area Arts Center, 500 Bland Street. The public is invited to attend.

City Manager Dane Rideout stated that he would be attending the Mercer County Board of Education meeting. City Manager Rideout stated there have been talks for over two years concerning transferring Mitchell Stadium to the school system. The stadium transfer would include all assets that go with the field, including turf machinery, all equipment and anything used to maintain the field. The parking lot would continue to be owned by the city. If at some point the Board of Education decides they are unable to care for the stadium, the city would have the first right of refusal. The property cannot be transferred to any out-of-state entity.

**Presentation**

Art District Representative Karen Harvey presented an overview of the revitalization efforts and outreach to provide cultural opportunities. Ms. Harvey stated the Alliance for the Arts and the City of Bluefield are collaborating to create a downtown Arts District. Ms. Harvey discussed street lighting, signage, a walking tour, murals, multi-site activities and fundraisers.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Martin requested a motion to adjourn. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith moved to adjourn the meeting, unanimously approved and so ordered.

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Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

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Ron Martin, Mayor