

**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
March 27, 2018 - Noon**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, March 27, 2018, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith, Director Matt Knowles, 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 Robb Williams 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.

Public Comments or Public Discussion:

Art Riley, representing the Downtown Merchants Association, thanked the Public Works Department for “digging out” the Downtown area so quickly during the recent snowstorm. Mr. Riley asked if the Comprehensive Plan had progressed. City Manager Rideout stated the Comprehensive Plan is with an organization that is packaging and formatting in a form that will complement the document. It will probably be September before the Comprehensive Plan is brought before the Board for approval. There are economic possibilities that could change the landscape of certain areas. City Manager Rideout said he had briefed the Board and wants to “get it right” and not rush to publication. Mr. Riley stated the Downtown Merchants need guidance as to where the downtown area is going. City Manager Rideout said things are going to happen downtown and there are discussions concerning what is best for this community. The City is on the cusp of some opportunities and we need to be patient.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Vice-Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved to approve the minutes of the March 13, 2018 Board of Directors meeting, unanimously approved and so ordered.

Action on Accounts

City Treasurer Kelly Davis presented sixty - six accounts to be turned over to collections for accounts in city fees totaling \$32,779.68. City Treasurer Davis requested approval to turn these accounts over to the city collection agency. Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the February collections as submitted was unanimously approved.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis requested approval of a Resolution to accept the Letter of Conditions for the \$50,000 USDA-RD grant for the fire truck. Mayor Martin read the Resolution. The fire truck has been purchased. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to approve the Resolution to accept the Letter of Conditions for the \$50,000 USDA-RD grant for the fire truck was unanimously approved. City Ambassador Marie Blackwell was thanked for writing and submitting the grant for the Fire Department.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis requested approval for transfer of \$16,126.72 from the General Fund to the Financial Stabilization Fund (Rainy Day Fund). This amount represents the December, January, February and March equipment lease payments from the Bluefield Sanitary Board. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to approve the transfer of \$16,126.72 from the General Fund to the Financial Stabilization Fund was unanimously approved.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis discussed the General Fund fiscal year 2019-budget summary.

The City of Bluefield revenue projections for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2018 and ending June 30, 2019 are 2 percent more as compared to the FY 2018 budget on December 31, 2017 (the comparison excludes contributions from outside entities).

The revenue budget reflects the transfer of Mitchell Stadium and the loss of the stadium rental, concession and advertising revenue. It includes the various revenue streams associated with the addition of the Fitness Center.

Overall, the anticipated collection is for \$9,357,996 and projects a beginning fund balance of \$2,200,000 giving a total revenue budget of \$11,557,996.

The City of Bluefield expenditure projections are 5 ½ percent less as compared to the FY 2018 budget on December 31, 2017. This is primarily due to several large projects that have received funding in the current year and will be concluded or partially concluded before July 1, 2018.

The expenditure budget for next year includes \$4.1 million for public safety, \$3.2 million for general government, \$1.9 million for streets, \$1 million for sanitation, and \$1 million for culture and recreation.

Some of the highlighted expenditures include: A three percent cost-of-living allowance for all regular, full time General Fund employees. (COLA excludes board employees, part-time and temporary employees and Transit employees). A \$266,500 budget for the new Fitness Center with associated increases for wages in the Parks and Recreation budget. An additional \$8,000 for the city election in June 2019. Funding to correct the water infiltration problem at the entrance to the Police Department. Purchase of two vehicles for the Police Department with assistance from the Coal Severance Fund. Continued funding of the fire truck lease/purchase agreement along with an annual \$21,000 capital equipment replacement plan for the Fire Department. An initial \$10,000 towards the revamp of downtown directional signage as recommended by the Hill Studio plan. An estimated \$300,000 in street paving and \$40,000 contribution to the garbage truck fund.

At this time, contributions to outside agencies (Craft Memorial Library, Alliance for the Arts, Bluefield Area Transit and Bluefield Baseball Association) will remain the same as the prior year.

The proposed FY 2019 General Fund Budget totals \$11,557,996. It is a balanced budget as required by law.

The City of Bluefield Financial Stabilization Fund for the Fiscal Year 2019 is projected to be \$1,423,097. It is anticipated that the carry over fund balance at the end of Fiscal Year 2018 will be \$1,380,340.

The transfers from the General Fund for the Sanitary Board lease payments plus interest are projected to be \$42,757.

The financial Stabilization Fund report is for informational purposes only, as it becomes a part of the General Fund Budget that is submitted to the State. It does not require separate approval for submission to the state.

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to approve the General Fund Budget for 2018/2019 fiscal year was unanimously approved. City Manager Rideout stated that the City

continues to make efficiencies. He thanked City Treasurer Davis for her great work, her staff and all of the Directors. A special thank you was voiced to Public Works and other departments for doing "more with less" and being good stewards of city funds. The budget as required by law will be published in the local paper and once approved will be available for viewing on the State Auditor's website.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis discussed the Coal Severance Fund Fiscal Year 2019 Budget Summary.

The City of Bluefield Coal Severance Fund Budget for Fiscal Year 2019 is projected to be \$46,010. It is anticipated that the carry over fund balance at the end of this year will be \$21,000 and the Coal Severance Tax receipts and interest will bring the fund to \$46,010.

The Coal Severance fund has historically been dedicated to purchasing police vehicles and it is recommended that this practice continue for Fiscal Year 2019.

Upon approval by the Board, the FY 2019 Coal Severance Fund Budget for \$46,010 will be submitted to the State Auditor for approval. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson – Smith moved to approve the Coal Severance Fund Budget for 2018/2019 fiscal year was unanimously approved.

City Manager Report

- Congratulations to "a great American" Captain Jimmy Perkins on his retirement. George Miller will be replacing Captain Perkins.
- City Engineer Tony Wagner has been evaluating sinkholes, evaluating possible deficiencies in properties the city may acquire and coordinating and providing information for the subdivision of the Kmart/Tractor Supply buildings. City Engineer Wagner worked with the Civil Affairs Team that was practicing in Bluefield. The team will be home at Fort Bragg for a few weeks before leaving for Syria.
- Public Works had an exhausting couple of weeks with continuing snow removal. The Board invested in new equipment, which allowed us to better execute snow removal than we could four years ago. Thank you to the citizens for their patience. Snowplows throw snow and it is not efficient to go past a drive way and stop the plow to go around. Everyone inside the city including the City Manager had a snowplow come by his house and had snow in front of his driveway. Unfortunately that is the way it has to be plowed. City Manager Rideout complemented the safety and professionalism of the drivers during the recent snowstorm. The men were also responsive to areas outside the city assisting where needed. Public Works is working on the Freight Station and has been repairing a sinkhole on Heatherwood Road.
- I T Director Billy Hester has been bringing in new infrastructure to the Arts Center and Fitness Center. I T Director Hester is assessing LED conversions for the Fitness Center to save money. He does not just fix computers!
- Parks and Recreation Department have put together a plan with the help of the Center of Applied Research and Technology to rebrand the Wellness Center. The intent is to close the Wellness Center July 2 for four (4) weeks. The building will be functional, code and ADA compliant, clean and with new equipment. The Center will offer values and programs in the City for families, our aging population and general wellness. Swim lessons are being offered for youth and adults. During the teacher's strike, the center was open. Several programs and events are scheduled such as karate, an Easter egg hunt, indoor cycling, Spartan Classes and more. Parks and Recreation Charles Ridlehuber and his staff are also working on the Mountain Festival and many summer programs. For more information, visit the Bluefield Parks and Recreation website.

- Building Inspector Lori Mills and City Manager Rideout spent three hours driving around town. Many houses are not safe and bringing down property values. Seventeen houses are ready for demolition and Buildings Commission will hear eighteen new cases at the meeting today. Several abandoned vehicles have been identified and citations have been issued.
- The Police Department had a K-9 demonstration this morning. The department now has a K-9 for every shift. The Fire Department responded to calls throughout the city during the snowstorm. Firemen were helping with downed trees/limbs, calls on 460 and helping with downed power lines.
- An RFP (request for proposal) is being advertised for demolition of a various buildings in the Downtown Area. This will provide parking, improve property values and provide a green space that will draw people to the Downtown area. On Thursday, a committee will view proposals from firms to develop Exit 1. A committee will select a firm that will put together a plan and "dirt will begin to move". The old Lin Electric property is now owned by the City. The Federal Government is going to build a state of the art, one million dollar Transit Building. The building will provide a place for people to get out of the weather, restroom facilities, be safe, ride the City Transit and provide services for the Greyhound Busses. Congressman Jenkins has been supportive in helping to get this facility.

The future of the City also means addressing our failing Stormwater system across the City. The City of Bluefield owns the Stormwater Department and it is the City's job to design a long-term plan. To help offset our failing system the city must review stormwater rates. This city has the lowest rates in the state. We do not have money to repair catastrophic failures and have other stormwater issues.

Action on New Business

Mayor Martin read and requested approval of a Resolution for a HUD Community Development Grant (CDBG) –Citizens Participation Plan. This was formerly known as Region I Small City's Block Grant. If this grant is received, it will be used to fix sewer/stormwater issues on the other side of the Midway Tunnel. Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the Resolution for a HUD Community Development Grant (CDBG) –Citizens Participation Plan was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Martin requested approval to renew the Police Judge contract. City Attorney Colin Cline stated Attorney David Kersey is currently the Police Judge and holds court twice a month. His contract rate (\$25,000) will not change. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved to renew the Police Municipal Judge contract for one year was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Martin read and requested approval of a RESOLUTION DECLARING THAT THE UNLAWFUL DISTRIBUTION OF PRESCRIPTION CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES HAS CREATED A PUBLIC NUISANCE FOR THE CITIZENS OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD. City Attorney Colin Cline stated the Board was taking two actions with respect to the opioid crisis. The Board had previously approved, in May, to join a national litigation against drug manufacturers and distributors. The Law Office of Brewster, Morhous Cameron has the complaint complete and ready to be filed. Attorney Brian Cochran presented the complaint and discussed with the Board, during the work session today. The lawsuit would be filed in the United States District Court for the Southern District of West Virginia, and would likely be consolidated into multi-district litigation being heard in Federal Court in Ohio. If there were a national settlement, the City would not be allowed to participate without this filing. City Attorney Cline request the Board approve the Resolution and authorize our outside council (Brewster, Morhous, Cameron, Attorneys at Law) to file the complaint and allow them to associate in

their discretion with other outside council to help defray the cost. This is a contingency fee action. Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the Resolution and authorize outside council to file the complaint and associate with outside council to defray the cost was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer.

- Three engineering firms will be interviewed on Thursday for the Exit 1 project: Hurt and Profit Engineering, Thrasher Engineering and E L Robinson Engineering.
- The Mayor and Community and Economic Development Director Spencer attended an Economic and Development Authority meeting earlier. Robert C. Byrd Institute is now a tenant in the Research and Development Building.
- Community and Economic Development Director Spencer has the Commercialization Station plans. The plans are now out to bid and if a contractor wishes to review the plans, they are available in his office or a copy can be obtained through EL Robinson. Bids are due May 2, 2018.
- Community and Economic Development Director Spencer introduced Kristina Joyce. Ms. Joyce is the Program Administrator for Southern WV Community and Technical College. She has over 30 years of business expertise and is the former Director of the West Virginia Small Business Development Center. Ms. Joyce will connect entrepreneurs, identify their needs, develop a business plan, find financial assistance, offer business coaching and offer a variety of workshops. Several brochures, pamphlets and flyers are available at City Hall. There will be a Google analytics in action workshop Tuesday, April 3 from 3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. at the Corner Shop Diner in Bramwell. The workshop is free but registration is required. The Entrepreneurship and Business Coaching Center is funded through the ARC Power Initiative.

Fire Chief Rick Cary presented Captain Jimmy Perkins with a recognition plaque for thirty years of service. Fire Chief Cary thanked his family for their support during the past thirty years. Fire Chief Cary stated Captain Perkins had saved lives, saved houses and property, was a leader, mentor and a friend. He wished Captain Perkins the best in his next adventure and requested he stop at the station to swap stories and a cup of coffee. The City appreciates Captain Perkins' dedication and wishes him the best in his retirement.

Miscellaneous and Unfinished Business

Police Chief Dennis Dillow announced that retired Lieutenant James F. Bailey passed away Monday, March 26. Lt. Bailey joined the Bluefield City Police Department in 1958 and retired in August 1984. The celebration of Jim's life will be Thursday, March 29, at Mercer Funeral Home at 5:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Martin requested a motion to recess. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved the March 27, 2018 meeting be recessed until Tuesday, April 17, 2018 @ 8:00 a.m. At that time , the Board of Directors will reconvene to Lay the Levy.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Ron Martin, Mayor