

**REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
April 10, 2018 - Noon**

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, April 10, 2018, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Ron Martin, Director Matt Knowles, Director Robb Williams, City Manager Dane Rideout, City Treasurer Kelly Davis, City Attorney Colin Cline, and City Clerk Bobbi Kersey. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson-Smith and Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer were absent.

Attorney David Kersey invoked divine guidance for the conduct of the meeting.

Mayor Ron Martin 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

Charles Blankenship, Bluefield resident, expressed his gratitude to Fire Chief Rick Cary the Bluefield Fire Department and the Bluefield Police Department for their help and care during a recent health scare. Mr. Blankenship stated that many citizens do not realize how blessed they are to have such caring and knowledgeable departments. He wanted to say "thank you" publically. Director Matt Knowles stated he also wanted to thanked Fire Chief Rick Cary and the Bluefield Fire Department for their actions during a garage fire at his home this past week. The response was quick and the Fire Department was very professional.

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

- When will the vacant director's position on the Board be filled? Mayor Martin stated the Board wanted to wait a respectable time period out of respect for Michael and for his family. City Attorney Colin Cline stated our Code of Ordinances authorizes the Board to fill the unexpired term and there is no set time limit. The Board has not had the opportunity, as a whole, to give input in the decision to fill the position. City Manager Rideout pointed discussed that District III is represented due to Director Robb Williams living in District III, as an at -large member.
- There was an advertisement in the paper regarding proposals for architectural and engineering firms for consulting services for the downtown area. The proposals are to be in by April 30 for the management of the project. There was nothing concerning when the project would be bid out or when the buildings will be demolished. Being a property owner downtown, is there a time frame? City Manager Rideout stated the advertisement was an RFP for a company to come in and manager the entire project. The selected firm will contemplate the safe demolition of the existing structures, preliminary hazard testing and abatements, such as asbestos; obtaining permits, removal of debris, etc. Until all the necessary steps are addressed, a time period is not possible. There will be healthy communication with all the business owners and will be transparent. Mr. Riley requested a published timetable so citizens know what is going on.
- The purchase of the property on Rt. 52 for Public Works is a good move. The City is purchasing a lot of property. Is the City working towards any revenue producing businesses? Citizens need to know what is happening throughout the city. "We do not want the City to own the City". Mayor Martin stated that the City was lucky to have the support of local foundations and it was better for the City to own these building rather than letting them deteriorate. The City can demolish the buildings, if necessary, before they become an emergency like the Matz Hotel. Public Works is a

necessary move and keeps all the equipment out of the weather. City Manager Rideout said all of these issues have and are being discussed. The City is working to improve buildings. Many of these buildings are owned by nonprofit organizations that can no longer maintain. The City must fix the problem or there will not be a downtown. First, the buildings must be stabilized, repaired or demolished. The intent is to get certain buildings back on the market and become tax revenue producing. Many of these properties have been donated or forfeited to the City. Mr. Riley requested a list of properties owned by the City.

- West Virginia Key Club Lieutenant Governor Division 8, Representative Nathan Nichols and Bluefield High School Key Club President Colten Lively requested the City of Bluefield to become part of the new Kiwanis Club developing in the area. Kiwanis Club is an organization dedicated to benefiting the children of the world/community through hands on service. Currently in Mercer County, there are four Key Clubs and one Builders Club. Without the Kiwanis Club, these organizations will not exist in the future. These organizations provide leadership opportunities for high school students and middle school students. Mr. Nichols and Mr. Lively requested the City of Bluefield join the Kiwanis Club. Mr. Lively distributed pamphlets with information and membership in Kiwanis Club. On April 16, there will be an organizational meeting at Bluefield State College in the Student Center. Mayor Martin stated Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer had spoken with the Board of Directors, at an earlier date, and it was decided the City of Bluefield would join the Kiwanis Club.

Action on Accounts

City Treasurer Kelly Davis presented the March financial report. At the close of March 2018, the 9th month of the fiscal year, revenue collected totaled \$9,331,972 (92.35%) of the projected amount of \$10,105,400. Expenditures total \$7,715,571 (63.08%) of the projected budget of \$12,231,272. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the March financial report was unanimously approved and so ordered.

City Manager Report

- The public will see several advertisements for project bids. Thank you to the local foundations for making these projects possible. The projects are not just in the downtown area, but they will take place throughout the city. Citizens will see things happen at Exit 1, the Fitness Center and downtown. The City is not just “making plans” but is “doing things” that will create an environment for citizens to live, work, play, and learn. There are concerns but we want an environment that takes care of our present businesses but attracts new businesses.
- City Engineer Tony Wagner has been working a street bid package and working on the Fitness Recreation building. City Engineer Wagner has been working with the utility companies that are constantly working to improve our area. He has been busy prepping for future events such as the Mountain Festival.
- City wide Cleanup Day was cancelled due to the weather and has been rescheduled for April 16 @ 8:30 a.m. Volunteers can meet at City Hall and the focus will be clean the entrances into our city and other troubled areas. The City will provide transportation to the different sites and all supplies.
- The asphalt plant was open for two days. The pothole in front of Bluefield High School has been filled even though it is a State owned road. As the weather improves, the crews will start “getting after” the potholes.
- The leadership (Parks and Recreation Director Charles Ridlehuber and staff) is doing a great job at providing a variety of activities/program at the Fitness Center and the

Recreation Center. Many of the classes at the Fitness Center are at capacity and the traditional and specialty camps registration is now open. For more information call the Fitness Center or Recreation Center or visit the website. (www.cityofbluefield.com).

- The inspection department is backlogged. The contractor has been working at Flowers Bakery on Bluefield Avenue. Demolitions will begin again shortly.
- Over 2,000 people have some type of warrants. The Bluefield Police Department is posting the warrant information and pictures on Facebook. More than four hundred folks have turned themselves into the department. The Facebook post is having a positive effect.
- Thought and prayers with are with Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer and his family as his daughter is having surgery.

Action on New Business

Mayor Martin read and requested approval on a recommendation from the Planning Commission of an application by Bluefield Limited Partnership (Plaza Associates) to subdivide formerly approved Kendall Plaza PUD into two parcels, one parcel would be for the Tractor Supply Company PUD, and the other parcel would be for the existing Kmart property PUD. Attorney David Kersey, representing Plaza Associates and Bluefield Limited Partnership, stated Plaza Associates is the property manager for Bluefield Limited Partnership, which owns as the Kmart Shopping Plaza on Cumberland Road. The property was developed as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) with the understanding that the use of the property would be for a retail merchandizer and a grocery store (Kmart and Food Lion). Food Lion closed and Tractor Supply moved into the space as a retail store leaving the PUD unchanged. Kmart has been closed for several years. The owner of the Kmart Shopping Center would like to outparcel the Tractor Supply portion of the property, so that portion of the property can be sold to a third party. They would like to divide the parcel so it can become an income producing property. Appalachian Engineering provided a map showing the division of the properties. The parcel is split into two separate tracts, divided between the buildings, with a slight curve in the back that contains the loading docks. The owner and the property manager request the City approve dividing the property. The use of the property will not change. Should the use of the property change, they would come back before the commission. The only change would be that new leases with new tenants can be pursued and then that empty building will be occupied by tax paying tenants. Attorney Ellis Payne stated several retailers had shown interest in the property but when they approached the lender, which holds the deed of trust, they refused to approve any changes to the empty Kmart building. The hope is by subdividing, Tractor Supply can be sold and extinguish the debt allowing them to move forward without the lender approval. Unfortunately, there is not a large demand for such a large space in this economy. The Tractor Supply parcel will be owned by someone else and the Kmart parcel will be owned by the present owners. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the recommendation from the Planning Commission on an application by Bluefield Limited Partnership (Plaza Associates) to subdivide formerly approved Kendall Plaza PUD into two parcels, one parcel would be for the Tractor Supply Company PUD, and the other parcel would be for the existing Kmart property PUD was unanimously approved and so ordered. Attorney Kersey thanked City Engineer Tony Wagner and City Clerk Bobbi Kersey for their help in expeditiously moving this process forward.

Mayor Martin requested approval for West Virginia Water Company to utilize the City right-of-way at the intersection of Groveland Drive and Media Street for placement of an approximately 10 x10 building with an 8 ft. high fence. Representatives from West Virginia American Water Company stated they wanted to replace an existing booster station. The

present booster station is underground and they would like to bring it above ground. City Manager Rideout said citizens have reported pressure problems in this area and the water company has done a great job replacing other stations. City Manager Rideout recommended this action be approved by the Board. Director Robb Williams moved for approval of the West Virginia Water Company to utilize the City right-of-way at the intersection of Groveland Drive and Media Street for placement of an approximately 10 x 10 building with an 8 ft. high fence was unanimously approved and so ordered. The building will probably be 8 x 8 and have a black fence.

Mayor Martin request approval of the FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE PURCHASE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY NEAR BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA. City Attorney Colin Cline stated the present location for the Public Works Department is not optimal for a number of reasons. Cole Properties, LLC and Cole Truck Parts, Inc. are the respective owners of two parcels of property located in Beaver Pond District, on U. S. Route 52. The parcels consist of approximately 10.43 acres and 8.45 acres. The parcels contain structures designed for the housing and maintenance of large mobile equipment, office space and adequate space for the storage of salt and other bulk commodities used in the operations of the Public Works Department. Cole Properties, LLC and Cole Truck Parts, Inc. have jointly proposed to sell such parcels to the City of Bluefield for a total price of \$350,000. Mercer County Assessor's Office appraised the parcels substantially above the proposed purchase price. The City of Bluefield has obtained funding from a charitable foundation for the purpose of the acquisition of these parcels, so they can be acquired without drawing upon the general revenue. City Attorney Cline recommended approval. Director Robb Williams moved for approval of the FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE PROVIDING FOR THE PURCHASE OF CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY NEAR BLUEFIELD, WEST VIRGINIA was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer

- Three engineering firms were interviewed for the Exit 1 project concept plan: Hurt and Profit Engineering, Thrasher Engineering and E L Robinson Engineering. Based on the criteria and presentations, the interviewing board recommends E.L. Robinson Engineering for the concept plan for exit one. Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the recommendation for E.L. Robinson Engineering to conduct the Exit 1 concept plan was unanimously approved and so ordered. City Manager Rideout said the area has been annexed but not zoned. Some areas have not been zoned because of the uncertainty as to what type of business will locate in the area.

Miscellaneous and Unfinished Business

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Martin requested a motion to adjourn. Director Matt Knowles moved the meeting be adjourned. Unanimously approved and so ordered.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk

Ron Martin, Mayor