REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA
February 11, 2020 – Noon

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, February 11, 2020, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith, Director Matt Knowles, Director Robb Williams, Director Peter Taylor, City Manager Dane Rideout, City Attorney Colin Cline, City Treasurer Kelly Davis, 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:
Fred Martin voiced his concern about bullying in the schools and the treatment of black students. He stated the community needed to come together and focus on working for the betterment of our children. Mayor Martin reminded Mr. Martin that the City Board of Directors did not have oversight of the Mercer County Board of Education. He suggested Mr. Martin contact the Mercer County Board of Education.

Rev. Charles Collins stated he had heard conflicting stories and requested clarification regarding the Grant Street Bridge. Mayor Martin informed Rev Collins of the new Grant Street Task Force and reviewed the outcome of their first meeting. Mayor Martin discussed the need for a feasibility study that would help determine if the bridge should be replaced, repaired or demolished. Ms. French, a representative on the task force, added the RFQ requested professional services for the activity funded include; (1) Review of existing engineering and relevant data; (2) Development of an Engineering Report with identified alternatives; (3) Development of a project budget for each alternative; (4) Identification of potential funding sources; (5) Preparation and delivery of Engineering Report in .pdf format.

Ms. French suggested Mr. Fred Martin contact CASE for programs that address bullying in the schools. Mayor Martin stated Craft Memorial Library offers several programs. Police Chief Dennis Dillow stated the police department does an Explorers Program for students ages five to twelve. Ms. French requested that temporary shelter be made available for people waiting on for the Greyhound Bus. The old Gulf Station will temporarily be used as a bus stop and there is a canopy.

Oath of Office
City Clerk Bobbi Kersey administered the Oath of Office to Sergeant Devon Williams.

Presentation
City Manager Dane Rideout stated Bluefield Area Transit Station is the second largest federal funded public transportation system in West Virginia. Tammy Bennett started at Bluefield Area Public Transit in 2003 and has worked her way to General Manager. She was responsible for non-medical transport and supervised many other jobs. The City of Bluefield thanks Ms. Bennett for all her hard work and dedication and service. Happy retirement and best wishes.

Mayor Ron Martin read a RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PLACEMENT OF SIGNS COMMEMORATING AMERICA'S BEST HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL STADIUM.

WHEREAS, Mitchell Stadium serves as the home football stadium for the Bluefield High School Beavers, Graham High School G-Men, Bluefield Middle School Buccaneers and Bluefield College Rams football teams; and
WHEREAS, Mitchell Stadium was rightly and justly selected as “America’s Best High School Football
Stadium” by USA Today; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors desires to place signs commemorating this honor at entrances to the
City, in cooperation with the West Virginia Division of Highways.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, AS FOLLOWS:

That the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield authorizes the West Virginia Division of Highways, in
cooperation and consultation with the City Manager and City Engineer, to design and place signs at entrances
to the City commemorating the designation of Mitchell Stadium as “America’s Best High School Football
Stadium.”.

Mayor Martin requested a motion to approve the RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE
PLACEMENT OF SIGNS COMMEMORATING AMERICA’S BEST HIGH SCHOOL
FOOTBALL STADIUM. City Attorney Colin Cline said the resolution was required by the Department of
Highways to allow us to place the signs at city entrances. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the
RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE PLACEMENT OF SIGNS COMMEMORATING
AMERICA’S BEST HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL STADIUM was unanimously approved and so
ordered.

Mayor Martin read a RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE BLUEFIELD BLUE JAYS AND
OF MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL.

WHEREAS, for more than 100 years, Minor League Baseball teams, including the Bluefield Blue
Jays, have promoted America’s pastime in communities throughout the nation while working with Major
League Baseball to coordinate talent development and ensure a high quality of play at all levels; and

WHEREAS, the Professional Baseball Agreement, the document that governs the relationship
between Major League Baseball and the various levels of Minor League Baseball teams, expires in 2020; and

WHEREAS, as part of a renegotiated Professional Baseball Agreement, Major League Baseball has
proposed severing ties with forty-two minor league teams, most of which are at the Rookie and Class A Short
Season levels, including the Bluefield Blue Jays and other teams in the Appalachian League; and

WHEREAS, the proposed change would have severe consequences for the Appalachian League and
other short-season leagues, and essentially consolidate the affiliated minor leagues into only four levels; and

WHEREAS, eliminating the Major League Baseball ties for these teams would likely result in their
closure and in the loss of professional baseball in Bluefield and over forty other towns and cities throughout
the country.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY that we urge Major League Baseball to maintain
affiliation with all current Minor League Baseball teams in the 2020 Professional Baseball Agreement and to
preserve our national pastime in Bluefield, Princeton and towns and cities throughout the country.

Mayor Ron Martin requested a motion to approve the RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE
BLUEFIELD BLUE JAYS AND OF MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL. City Attorney Colin Cline stated
there is a proposal to eliminate 42 minor baseball league teams. Most of the teams in the Appalachian League
will be eliminated. Senator Joe Manchin, Senator Shelley Moore Capito and Representative Miller are working
to keep the teams. Mayor Martin is on a task force composed of mayors who are affected. General Manager
Rocky Malamisura requested the resolution in support of the Bluefield Blue Jays. Director Matt Knowles
moved to approve the RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE BLUEFIELD BLUE JAYS AND OF MINOR LEAGUE BASEBALL was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Ron Martin read a PROCLAMATION proclaiming February 2020 to be Black History Month.

WHEREAS: During Black History Month, we celebrate the many achievements and contributions made by African Americans to our economic, cultural, spiritual, and political development; and

WHEREAS: In 1926, Negro History Week was established as Black History Month by Carter G. Woodson and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History; and

WHEREAS: The 2020 national theme for the observance is “African Americans and the Vote”. The year 2020 marks the sesquicentennial of the Fifteenth Amendment (1870) and the right of black men to the ballot after the Civil War; and

WHEREAS: The observance of Black History Month calls our attention to the continued need to battle racism and build a society that lives up to its democratic ideals; and

WHEREAS: The City of Bluefield continues to work towards becoming an inclusive community in which all citizens – past, present, and future – are respected and recognized for their contributions and potential contributions to our community, the state, the country, and the world; and,

WHEREAS: The City of Bluefield is proud to honor the history and contributions of African Americans in our community, throughout our state, and nation.

Now, therefore, in recognition of African Americans – past and present – in our community, we, the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mayor of the City of Bluefield, do hereby proclaim February 2020 to be Black History Month

We encourage all citizens to celebrate our diverse heritage and culture, and continue our efforts to create a world that is more just, peaceful, and prosperous for all.

Mayor Martin requested approval of the PROCLAMATION proclaiming February 2020 to be Black History Month. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the PROCLAMATION proclaiming February 2020 to be Black History Month was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Minutes
Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of minutes from the January 28, 2020 Board of Directors meeting. Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the minutes from the January 28, 2020 Board of Directors meeting was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Action on New Business

Mayor Martin requested approval of a Stadium Usage Agreement with Tazewell County Board of Education. City Attorney Colin Cline stated the stadium agreement is the same with an exception concerning concessions. The change reflects that the school will make the concession agreement with the school band. There is no price increase. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the Stadium Usage Agreement with Tazewell County Board of Education was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of the Bluefield Economic Development Authority By Laws. Community and Economic Development stated the bylaws were drafted by Diane Lupke and approved by the Bluefield Economic Development Authority in January. The bylaws must now be passed by the City Board.
Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved to approve the Bluefield Economic Development Authority By Laws was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Martin requested approval of a contract with T and T Fireworks. City Attorney Colin Cline stated this was renewal contact. Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the contract with T and T Fireworks was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Martin opened a discussion concerning the Comcast Franchise Renewal. City Attorney Cline stated Comcast had requested a modification on their franchise agreement. Comcast would like to close the customer service office. The agreement is good until August 2030 and counsel recommended no action be taken in this matter.

Action on Accounts

City Treasurer Kelly Davis stated at the close of January 2020, the 7th month of the fiscal year, revenue collected totaled $8,164,227 (78.41%) of the projected amount of $10,411,947. Expenditures total $6,997,020 (44.52%) of the projected budget of $15,717,140.

The sales tax distribution totaling $271,518 and a portion of the 4th quarter 2019 B&O tax ($33,675) were received in January. The final distribution from the EDA Grant ad a distribution from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant also arrived in January.

The 4th payment to RK&K for Exit 1 in the amount of $16,459 has been encumbered. The second half of the annual requirement to Region I Planning and Development was issued ($5,224). The quarterly contributions to Bluefield Area Transit, Craft Memorial Library and the monthly contributions to the Alliance for the Arts and Bluefield Baseball Association were all processed in January – totaling ($63,131). Three payrolls were processed in January totaling $665,022. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the January Financial report was unanimously approved and so ordered.

City Treasurer Kelly Davis presented twenty-three accounts to be turned over to collections for accounts in city fees totaling $69,715.46. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved to approve twenty-three accounts to be turned over to collections was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Report of City Manager

- Director updates are posted on the city website for public viewing. Citizens are encouraged to see what is happening in the city.
- A draft copy has been sent to the Task Force member concerning the Grant Street Bridge. There will be a legal ad that will be placed in the Bluefield Daily Telegraph seeking Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) from consulting architectural and engineering firms interested in providing advice and services for a feasibility study. Bids are to be submitted by March 27th and will be reviewed by the next Task Force meeting members on April 9th. The Task Force will recommend to the Board of Directors the firm they feel best qualifies for the project. The feasibility study will give us information to better communicate with the railroad.
- Dr. Patrice Harris had a conversation with administrators and stated her concerns regarding the Grant Street Bridge. Dr. Harris has pledged to help the city in engaging with the railroad and we gave her another organization that may help with funding. We are lucky to have someone with her contacts and position working with us.

Report of Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer

- We continue to have training classes. Please check the Economic Development website for more information on upcoming classes. All classes are held at the Bluefield Area Arts Center Third Floor.
An economic newsletter is now available. Contact Economic Development Director Spencer or Marketing Specialist Rebecca Casey or visit the Economic Development website if you want to receive a digital copy.

Marketing Specialist Rebecca Casey had applied for the HGTV mini hometown takeover. Ms. Casey presented a video highlighting aspects of our city showing what makes it special and unique. She also showed the downsides of our city and why our city was deserving of to be featured in the special series with Ben and Erin Napier, from the Home Town show. The contest was open until February 4th, any small town with a population under 40,000 could enter. Citizens can expect the rehab of multiple individual family homes as well as the revitalization of public space. We hope to see Ben and Erin in our city soon. Thank you to Ms. Casey for all of her hard work and dedication on this project.

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

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Mayor Ron Martin                                                              Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk