A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, August 27, 2019, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith, Director Robb Williams, Director Matt Knowles, 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:

Patty Peebles requested painted cross walks and walk / don’t walk signs on the College Avenue - Maryland Avenue intersection. City Manager Dane Rideout said three crosswalks will be laid out due to its structure. Maryland Avenue is a state highway.

Carol Wade said there were three boulders at the top of Hardy Street and she was very concerned the boulders were not stable. She felt the boulders could be a threat to people and cars. She was also concerned that the side of the hill, near the guard rail, is crumbling. Mayor Martin stated the city was in the process of purchasing or condemnation of a property on Hardy Street. The city owns one piece of property and once the other property, owned by a person who lives out of state, is acquired the curve will be taken away. Basically a new road will be constructed. Ms. Wade stated the mirror that was erected is not helping. Mayor Martin stated the mirror was a temporary fix and may need adjusted.

Mildred Hoskey asked what was a congressional and why was it submitted. City Manager Rideout stated a congressional is a formal document request that goes to our elected federal officials (Shelley Capito and Joe Manchin) and puts it on their docket. Capito and Manchin sit on powerful committees and we will receive an answer concerning the Grant Street Bridge. Governor Justice and his office had also been contacted. Everyone was waiting for the results from the bridge inspection. Ms. Hoskey asked what the standards are for issuing speed humps. City Manager Rideout said the humps cannot be more than three inches in height. City Manager Rideout said that area was often used as a cut through. Ms. Hoskey had an issue with there being three speed humps on Ferndale and noted that ambulances also use the street as a cut through. She suggested a traffic control study be conducted. Ms. Hoskey asked if the land bank was the same as the property acquisition. City Attorney Colin Cline stated the land bank is a separate board of the City. The city land bank deals with all of the property the city has acquired over the years. State code has authorized these land reuse agencies. The idea is to take properties and move them into the hands of people who live next door to them rather than put them up for public auction. Often the people next to the vacant lots are already maintaining the lots. The goal is to get theses lots back into community hands. There is a list on the city GIS site and the list is available at City Hall.

Carolyn Wilkes thanked the City for helping with the clearing of her lot. Her lot backs up beside a lot owned by Bluefield State College. Ms. Wilkes said the college is not maintaining the property. She felt if she was expected to keep her property maintained the college should also be held accountable. Ms. Wilkes voiced concern over the speed humps in her area. The traffic on Rt. 52 is increasing. Her neighbor had dug out a place to park his car but was told he could no longer park there. She is having a difficult time backing out of her driveway. City Manager Rideout said the speed humps will be taken up for the winter in about three weeks. We will send some more patrols as a temporary fix. Ms. Wilkes requested her neighbor be allowed to park in his dug out space so her view is not affected. Building Inspector /Code Enforcement Director Lori Mills will visit the area.
Art Riley asked if there was a policy on speed humps. City Manager Rideout stated there was no written policy. Several residents, like on Ferndale, get together and purchase the speed humps. The city marks, installs, and stores the speed humps. The speed humps are approximately $1,500 and are not in the budget. That is why multiple individuals and neighborhoods are purchasing rubber speed humps. They cannot be placed on state highways without special permission. This is an example of neighbors taking care of neighbors.

Minutes

Mayor Ron Martin requested a motion to approve the minutes for the August 13, 2019 Board of Directors meeting. Director Robb Williams moved to approve the minutes from the August 13, 2019 Board of Directors meeting was unanimously approved.

Action on New Business

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of Second Reading of an Ordinance Changing the name of Stewart Street. Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved to approve the Second Reading of an Ordinance Changing the name of Stewart Street was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Martin request approval of FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE CHANGING TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD. City Attorney Colin Cline said based on public input he drafted an ordinance for the Board of Directors Meeting to be held at noon and the second meeting held at six o’clock (6:00 pm) in the evening. A time change is required by ordinance. Director Peter Taylor stated the Board had been given a lot of “anecdotal” information based on past experience of changing the times and there was no difference in attendance in the two meeting. Director Taylor asked City Treasurer Kelly Davis what it would cost in overtime to have one meeting a month in the evening. City Treasurer Davis reported evening meetings once a month for 12 months would mean 819 hours in comp time for the city employees, or 63 hours of comp time earned in addition to normal vacation hours for each one. There would be an additional use of electricity and water both which are not measurable. Other concerns included the missing of family time activities and the weather. Mayor Martin stated he would cancel or reschedule if there were weather issues. Director Robb Williams suggested employees could use comp time by coming in later or leaving early on routine days to make up the difference. He felt it was important to give people the opportunity to come to the meeting.

Treyvon Simmons suggested using Facebook and college students to get out information. City Manager Rideout said he needed to go to the various departments for certain information. He suggested using Fix It Bluefield to report issues. City Manager Rideout wants responses to be factual and go through the chain of command. Facebook responses are not often always factual. Mr. Simmons said he wanted to be part of the community and be appreciated. Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer said we welcomed input from young people and encouraged him and others to become involved in the millennial ambassador program. We want to use millennials to attract millennials. Digital ambassadors can help get the word out about the work force and opportunities for our young people. Mr. Simmons said he wanted to be a voice for his community. City Manager Rideout said the city has tried several times in getting citizens more involved. The city did a study concerning parks and recreation (sports activities) and asked for input. The event was published in the paper and social media, no young person showed. People tend to not come if the topic does not affect them. The city held town hall meetings in the evening for five years with very low attendance. The city is excited about the events happening and would like everyone involved.

Stephanie Pfeifer asked what would be the purpose of requiring salaried employees to stay from 4:40 pm till 6:00 p.m. City Treasurer Davis stated she lived 30 minutes away and it would not make sense for her to go home.

Director Robb Williams moved to approve the FIRST READING OF AN ORDINANCE CHANGING TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD. The vote was three yes votes (Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith and Director Robb Williams) and two no votes (Director Peter Taylor and Director Matt Knowles). The second reading of the ordinance will be on September 10th. Director Williams stated he felt it was important the citizens understood this Board does not always “rubber stamp things” and agree with each other. This Board does listen and
tries to compromise. He said he did not believe more people would show up for an evening meeting, but felt it was right to have the opportunity to attend in the evening available for citizens.

Ms. Hoskey said there used to be Town Hall meetings in the different districts to hear what the people had to say. They would listen to comments and go back to meetings to find resolutions. Mayor Martin stated this board had scheduled two Town Hall / Annual Reviews, one cancelled due to weather. City Manager Rideout said all of the Annual Reviews are online. The meetings require a huge amount of organizational energy to have the same four or five people attend when there are ten thousand residents. We want to move this city forward through economic development. We are bringing in outside agencies to brief us in making strategic decisions as to where this city is moving. City Manager Rideout said he meets during the day when organizations, federal officials and agencies that are working during the day. This does not prohibit any citizen from coming in or setting up an office call to discuss issues. We cannot keep doing things the same way but must move forward. City Manager Rideout would like to see the issue of the meeting times put on the ballot for a public vote.

Mary Frances Brammer stated the Board would come out better if they did what the community asked.

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of FIRST READING AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND RESTATING SUBSECTION 44-206(i)(5) OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, AND ADDING SUB-SECTIONS 44-205(d), 44-205(e), 44-206(m), 44-206(n) and 44-206(o) OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, ALL PERTAINING TO SIDEWALK DINING. City Attorney Colin Cline stated this issue has been resolved and requested this item be tabled. Director Robb Williams moved to table the FIRST READING AN ORDINANCE AMENDING AND RESTATING SUBSECTION 44-206(i)(5) OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, AND ADDING SUB-SECTIONS 44-205(d), 44-205(e), 44-206(m), 44-206(n) and 44-206(o) OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD, ALL PERTAINING TO SIDEWALK DINING was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval of Recommendation of City Manager to Change Certain Sections of Raleigh and Scott Streets from Two Way Traffic to One Way Traffic. City Manager Dan Rideout stated this was in compliance with the parking plan he briefed the Board on several weeks ago. A letter has been sent to all businesses and they will be contacted. Raleigh Street and Scott Street will go in the opposite direction of Commerce Street. Angle parking will be utilized to provide more parking spaces on both streets. The change will not take place until new signage is ordered and installed. There will be a grace period with code enforcement and police. They will be issuing warnings until the public becomes familiar with the change.

Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved to approve the Recommendation of City Manager to Change Certain Sections of Raleigh and Scott Streets from Two Way Traffic to One Way Traffic was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Action on Accounts
City Treasurer Kelly Davis presented one hundred eight accounts to be turned over to collections for accounts in city fees totaling $57,225.00. Director Robb Williams moved to approve one hundred eight accounts for $57,225.00 to be turned over to collections was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Report of City Manager Dane Rideout:
• A major foundation donated a new score board at Mitchell Stadium for the June Shott Field. After the last scoreboard was installed, AEP installed a high powered eighteen-thousand-watt power line. The installer for the new scoreboard did not feel comfortable due to safety concerns. The power line powers Bluefield Middle School and most of Bluefield, Virginia. The scoreboard is operational and
the lower section is temporarily installed. It will clearly show the score. After the game the scoreboard will be fully installed.

- The two Virginia’s 5K challenge was a success. Bluefield, West Virginia beat Bluefield, Virginia for the fourth year in a row. Parks and Recreation Director Charles Ridlehuber and his staff did an awesome job organizing the event. Kudos to the fire and police department for their help and participation.
- City Wide updates are now posted every two weeks telling what each department has been involved with as well as day to day duties.
- The next report on the Grant Street bridge will be in September. The final report has not been received by the city.

Report of Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer

Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer presented a power point on the Opportunity Zone Prospectus. Opportunity Zones are community investment tools established in the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. The Opportunity Zones are low income census tracts in which investors can put capital to work financing new projects and enterprises in exchange for certain federal capital gains tax advantages. The CED submitted an application for three census tracts and tract 23 and 24 were chosen. Community and Economic Development Director Spencer discussed Community Investment Opportunities (Former Wisdom Media Building, Cumberland Industrial Park and various city owned properties), Intuit and Alorica, and a Conceptual Mixed-Use Plan at Exit 1. Our goal is to get the message out by telling our story. There is a small business survey https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/C7CZMCB. The more information we gather the better we can serve the community. Community and Economic Development Director Spencer discussed the Innovation Lab and showed slides and discussed the Innovation Lab in Charlottesville. We are looking at what ideas would be a good fit for Bluefield. Jim Flowers stated entrepreneurs want to solve people’s problems for profit and fun. Intuit is working with Saverlife in California who provides incentives and digital financial coaching to help low income Americans develop a savings habit. There will be a Saverlife booth and representatives at the Beaver/Graham football and at the Lemonade Festival.

Adjournment

Mayor Ron Martin requested a motion to adjourn. Director Robb Williams moved to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved and so ordered.

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk
Mayor Ron Martin