REGULAR MEETING – BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
BLUEFIELD, MERCER COUNTY, WEST VIRGINIA  
September 10, 2019 - Noon

A regular meeting of the Board of Directors of the City of Bluefield, Mercer County, West Virginia was held on Tuesday, September 10, 2019, at noon in the Municipal Building Boardroom. Present were Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith, Director Robb Williams, Director Matt Knowles, City Manager Dane Rideout, City Attorney Colin Cline, City Treasurer Kelly Davis, Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer and City Clerk Bobbi Kersey. Director Peter Taylor 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.

Mayor Ron Martin thanked the Preservation Society, Kelly Knowles, Debra Ammar, Tom Cole, Public Works, the Police and Fire Department and all those that helped to make the Lemonade Festival and Blues Festival a huge success. The Lemonade Festival had a record attendance and the Blues Festival continues to grow each year. The city is lucky to have individuals who are dedicated in making Bluefield a pleasure to live in and provide fun things to do.

Public Comments:  
City Ambassador Marie Blackwell stated she recently received a card from Montgomery Hospice in Maryland notifying her of contributions made by employees of the City in memory of her father. She thanked the employees, City Attorney Colin Cline who attended her dad’s service, and everyone for their thought and prayers, the peace lily and garden dish, the cards, phone calls, and text messages she received.

City Ambassador Marie Blackwell reminded everyone that September was National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. September 8-14 is Suicide Prevention Week and September 10 was National Suicide Day. The Mercer County Out of Darkness Walk, A Walk to Fight Suicide will take place this Saturday, September 14 at Chicory Square. Registration opens at 5:00 p.m. with the walk beginning around 6:30 p.m. The walk is open to anyone who has lost someone to suicide, knows someone that attempted suicide, would like to volunteer, or just be there to lend support. City Ambassador Blackwell thanked the Board and City Departments for their assistance and support. The monies received from the walk are targeted for research. Statistics show 22 veterans per day take their lives. Young people deal daily with issues of bullying, cyberbullying and relationships gone badly. Bluefield State College will host a bonfire in the parking lot of the Student Union building beginning at 8:30 p.m. until 10:00 p.m.

City Ambassador Marie Blackwell reminded everyone of the 9/11 Patriot Day Ceremony on September 11th at noon in Chicory Square. This is a time set aside for the public to come out and honor those who were lost in the World Trade Center attacks, those who served, and those who still serve. She requested that everyone take a minute at some point during the day to remember those individuals.

Mayor Ron Martin thanked City Ambassador Blackwell for all the things she does for the City and that it was an honor to support her in those events.

State Farm Insurance Representative Brandon Disney presented a new banner to the Bluefield Fire Department for “Not every hero wears a cape” from the new educational fire prevention kit. Mr. Disney said State Farm recognizes the important work done by the Fire Department to educate people on fire safety. State Farm is donating fire prevention safety kits to help educate our school age children during Fire Prevention Week in October. Fire Chief Rick Cary thanked State Farm Insurance Agency and Mr. Disney.

Stephanie Pfeifer asked if the ordinance for the board meeting time was changed, when would it go into effect. Mayor Martin stated if the ordinance passed the next meeting would be at 6:00 p.m. on September 24th. Ms. Pfeifer asked how the public would be made aware of the time change. City Manager Dane Rideout said the time change would be
posted on the city website, social media, Bluefield Daily Telegraph, WVVA and word of mouth. Ms. Pfeifer asked when the next city election would be held. Mayor Martin stated the three district positions will be up in 2021 and Director Taylor’s and Director Knowles’ positions would be up for election in 2023. Ms. Pfeifer asked if the Bluefield City Jail generated money for the city or did it operate at a loss. City Treasurer David stated it does bring in revenue but it operates at a financial loss. City Manager Rideout said he has more coverage in the city because his men are not transporting people to Beckley. He would lose half a day from an officer that had to transport a prisoner. That is a police officer that is not protecting the citizens. The jail holds twelve males and four females.

Ms. Dolores French stated the jail is not a money maker but the city was saving because if does not cost as much to house a prisoner here as it is to transport and keep a prisoner in Beckley. Ms. French said she was pleased to find out that Bluefield College President Dr. Olive will allow the elections to be at the Herb Sims recreation center. She was disappointed that the name of the recreation center was not going to be Herb Sims Wellness Center. Mayor Martin said he thought Dr. Olive had misspoken and the name will include Herb Sims. The outside of the facility had no mention of Herb Sims on it. The college is in the process of designing the center. The issue has been addressed and it is in the contract for the name to remain as Herb Sims.

Ms. French asked for an update on the Grant Street Bridge. Mayor Martin said the report was back but was so large it cannot be digitally transmitted. City Manager Rideout said he would make available a copy of the bridge inspection at City Hall for citizens to review. Lead Engineer Chris Bennett, with Norfolk Southern, and the City Engineer are reviewing the document. City Manager Rideout stated that an analysis will be determined whether the eighty-year old bridge can be repaired or replaced. The next step will be to hire an engineering firm to evaluate how to fix the bridge or what is feasible to do with the bridge and could cost $250,000 or more. Graphic pictures show the salt damage is worse than expected. Cost estimates at initial glance will be in the millions. Ms. French stated fixing the bridge should not be based on money. She felt the residents of the area had paid in taxes over the years and were due to have the bridge replaced. Ms. French requested a condensed summary inspection report for the public be posted so citizens could see the important highlights in the report.

Ms. French requested that the Historical Society look at some of the buildings on the North Side/East End and think about renovating them. Ms. French voiced concern about the excess foliage and conditions of some of the sidewalks on the East End/North Side.

Art Riley stated downtown businesses appreciated and thanked the Preservation Society and Tom Cole for holding events downtown. Mr. Riley asked why the college was no longer taping the board meetings. Mayor Martin stated he thought the college may use the city’s video or to see if our video was compatible with Comcast. Mr. Riley stated the importance in continuing to show the board meetings. Mr. Riley asked if there were plans to pave Princeton Avenue (city limits) to the culvert. City Manager Rideout stated that Princeton Avenue was a state road but he thought the plan was to pave next year. Mr. Riley asked how many roads were going to be paved but City Manager Rideout did not have the list with him, but there were several roads scheduled to be paved. City Manager Rideout stated there were some roads in worse shape than those listed but the city is working with utility companies not to pave roads where they plan to work. We do not want to pave only to have the roads torn up for utility repairs. The City paves twice a year with a budget of $300,000. The name of the streets that are to be paved are in the paper.

Minutes

Mayor Ron Martin requested a motion to approve the minutes for the August 27, 2019 Board of Directors meeting. Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the minutes from the August 27, 2019 Board of Directors meeting was unanimously approved.

Action on New Business

Mayor Martin requested approval of SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE CHANGING TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD. City Attorney Colin Cline stated the first meeting of the month will be held on the second Tuesday at noon. The second meeting of the month will be held on the fourth Tuesday at six o’clock p.m.
This must be done by ordinance. If approved the next meeting would be September 24th at 6:00 p.m. at City Hall. 

**Director Robb Williams moved to approve the SECOND READING OF AN ORDINANCE CHANGING TIMES OF MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE CITY OF BLUEFIELD.** Mayor Ron Martin, Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith and Director Robb Williams voted in favor of the ordinance, Director Matt Knowles voted against and Director Peter Taylor was absent. The motion was approved and so ordered (3 yes votes - 1 no vote).

Mayor Ron Martin requested approval to purchase a snow plow system not to exceed $68,000. City Manager Dane Rideout stated this is part of the capital improvement and the city has not purchased a snow plow since 2015. We have 108 miles of road in the city. We currently have a main line and six other snow plow vehicles. They range in age from 2015 and get older from that point. This system includes the truck, plow, all hydraulics, salt box, and other components. **Vice Mayor Barbara Thompson Smith moved to approve the purchase of a snow plow system not to exceed $68,000 was unanimously approved and so ordered.**

Mayor Ron Martin requested approve of the Exit 1 contract with RK & K, subject to legal review. City Attorney Colin Cline stated the city had received a one million dollar grant from the EDA (Federal Economic and Development Administration) and one million dollars in matching funds from local foundations to begin the development process at I-77 Exit One. The first step is to procure engineering services to do a site plan and analysis of the area. After interviewing several firms, the committee has selected RK & K, a Baltimore based engineering company. RK & K will be subcontracting with Draper Aden and Associates to do the geotechnical studies to make sure any possible underground issues are pinpointed and mitigated. City Attorney Cline said he had a few things he wanted to review concerning the contract, but this firm was so “head and shoulders above the rest” he would have no problem with the contract being signed as is. **Director Matt Knowles moved to approve the Exit 1 contract with RK & K, subject to legal review was unanimously approved and so ordered.** Mr. Riley asked if the two billboards located on Exit 1 could be used to advertise Bluefield. City Manager Rideout said one bill board is rented by Bluefield State College and the other, he thought, was rented by Rev. Palmer. The city owns the property but does not have the rights to the bill boards. We are going to develop Exit 1 and we need a hotel to help spur economic development. Exit 1 may be the most underutilized exit on I-77. Hopefully by April 2020 dirt will be flying and there will be a flat space that says, “Will build to suit”. Site preparation will be completed as well as all the utilities in place. The area will be prime for a developer to come in and go vertical. This will be a mixed use space.

**Action on Accounts**

City Treasurer Kelly Davis reported at the close of August 2019, the 2nd month of the fiscal year, revenue collected totaled $2,445,487 (26.04%) of the projected amount of $9,390,746. Expenditures totaled $1,873,804 (13.09%) of the projected budget of $14,313,935. B & O Tax revenue, though overall, is actually ahead in collection at the close of August at almost 28% collected. The IRP fees appear to be way ahead of schedule; however, this is due to a missing check from the state from April 2019 that was received in August. All three Mitchell Stadium lessors have been contacted about their annual payment. Fit Rec is up compared to August of last year. Receipt of $150,000 from the Storm Water Board was received in August. The final payout should occur sometime in December or January as they wrap up the closure of that organization.

All departments are continuing to closely watch their spending. The largest expense in August, other than personnel costs, was the Princeton Avenue renovation. The Bluefield Baseball Club had a large expenditure in August of $32,365 for repairs to the grandstand roof. All expenditures for the baseball property run through the general fund budget since the city owns the facilities; however, these expenses have donations of funds to off-set all expense. No additional
funds come from the city for their renovations. Three payrolls plus clothing allowance were processed in August totaling $697,753. **Director Robb Williams moved to approve the August Financial Report was unanimously approved and so ordered.**

**Report of City Manager Dane Rideout:**
- The City updates are posted on the city website (www.cityofbluefield.com) under the City Manager.
- Thank you to the Bluefield Preservation Society and Tommy Cole for Lemonade Festival and Blues Festival. Shout out to Code Enforcement, Police and Fire Department and Public Works. They had the Beaver Graham game, Mitchell Stadium cleanup until 4:00 am due to another scheduled game the next day, and then help with the two festivals. This was on top of their normal regular duties.
- October 1st city park will be closed to vehicular traffic. It is time to start putting together the Holiday of Lights.
- Please bag your leaves. The leaf truck is not running yet. Trucks are picking up organic waste and taking the material to a location other than the landfill on a daily basis.
- The fastest way to report an issue is to use Fix It Bluefield.
- The scoreboard is up and is awesome. We cannot do instant replay for a high school game. Videos can be shown on the scoreboard.
- Tomorrow is the 9/11 ceremony. US Navy, FMF Corpsman Mike “Doc” Atwell stationed with the 1st Tank Battalion USMC, Afghanistan will be the Keynote Speaker. Do not forget we still have men in arms way.

**Report of Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer**

Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer stated U. S. Small Business Administration, Robert C. Byrd Institute, America’s SBDC W.V. and Bluefield State College will host an entrepreneurship summit on Wednesday, September 18th from 11:00 am -2:00 pm at Bluefield State College. This is for those who are seeking employment or looking to start their own business. For more information, contact the Economic and Development Department.

Mr. Riley asked if someone was manning the Commercialization Station. Community and Economic Development Director Jim Spencer stated someone is there as needed.

**OTHER**

Carol Wade stated she attended the last meeting and discussed several issues. She thanked the Board of Directors and city crews for removing the boulders on Hardy Street and thank you for rearranging the mirror.

City Attorney Cline said he has sent Ms. James a certified letter concerning the proposed purchase of Hardy Street property. City Attorney Colin Cline stated the City owns property at the northwest corner of the Hardy Street/Orange Street intersection. There is an engineering solution that would enable us to move that corner back from the bank. The assessed value of the property is $2,700. If the offer is rejected or he has not heard by September 24th, he will file a condemnation order in Circuit Court.

**Adjournment**

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

Bobbi Kersey, City Clerk
Mayor Ron Martin