

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
September 26, 2017**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a regularly scheduled Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, September 26, 2017 at 7:40 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Don Harris, Mayor
Jimmy Jones, Councilmember
Ron Holt, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Lee Riffe, Vice-Mayor

ALSO PRESENT

Mike Watson, Town Manager
Matt Freedman, Town Attorney
Shane Gunter, Police Chief
Lesley Catron, Town Clerk
8 Members of Public

ABSENT

Steve Danko, Councilmember
Kim Hernandez, Executive Assistant
Billie Roberts, Comm. Dev. Coordinator

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Harris called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Steve Branch, Destiny Outreach Ministries led the Invocation. Mayor Harris led the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Councilmember Holt made a motion to approve the agenda. Councilmember Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

CONSENT AGENDA

Councilmember Jones made a motion to approve the consent agenda. Councilmember Holt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

CITIZEN REQUESTS & SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

Citizen Request: Naming of Depot Street Park

Mayor Harris stated that the citizens of North Side have asked to rename the Depot Street Park. He stated that the Town of Bluefield has supported the annual Pig Roast. He stated that he did not know but that it was also a homecoming and brought in hundreds of people. He stated that he was astounded by the number of people.

Jana Gray, 117 Wilson Street stated that it would be nice to rename the Depot Street Park to Warhawk Park. She stated that 2 years ago some of them were talking and found out some North Side histories. She stated that someone mentioned renaming the Depot Street Park to Warhawk Park. She stated that she brought it to Mr. Presley's attention and that Mayor Harris asked what the symbolism of the Warhawk was during the Pig Roast. She stated that Tazewell County High School was located on the North Side of Bluefield, VA and was founded in the fall of 1925. She stated that it was a one room school located behind the home of the Bradshaw's and began with 10 students before being moved to the new site on Thayer Street. She stated that the building was rebuilt in 1935 and it was still standing. She stated the new building graduated 4 of the original 10 students and in 1948 had 148 students and 5 teachers. She stated that their school colors were blue and white and their mascot was the Warhawk. She stated that the last class to graduate was in 1965 with 33 students before Tazewell County was forced to consolidate schools with that being one of them. She named some of the graduates: Eva & George Saunders, her mother, Maggie Hamilton who was the valedictorian of her class of 1944, Nellie Saunders class of 1948, Evelyn Crawley class of 1936 and the last graduating class included George Saunders, III. She stated that they had some wonderful educator's at the Tazewell County High School and some had put Tazewell County High School on the map such as Catherine Gold Johnson who was a Math Teacher and went on to work for NASA. She stated that she was still alive today and had just celebrated her birthday. She stated with the legacy in their neighborhood that they would like the Town to consider naming the park Warhawk Park.

Mayor Harris told her she done a wonderful job and that she came up to him during the pig roast to ask if it would be possible. He stated that he asked her who was in favor of it and how many people she thought was in attendance that day.

Mrs. Gray stated that the ages ranged from 94 years old to 6 weeks old and there was around 400 in attendance which was a smaller group than they usually had. She stated that it had its own Facebook page.

Mayor Harris stated that Mrs. Gray got on the microphone and told them the Mayor was there and asked how many was in favor of renaming Depot Park Street to Warhawk Park by clapping their hands. He stated that everyone started clapping. He stated that he had dinner with them and sat across the table from a young man who rode his motorcycle in from North Dakota for the homecoming and ballgame. He stated that he asked him why he was in North Dakota and the young man told him he was working

on the pipeline. He stated that he was the son of Cecile Latimer and that it showed dedication by him coming in every year.

Mr. Riffe asked if the Catherine Johnson was the movie.

Mrs. Gray stated yes, she lived on Vencil Street.

Mr. Presley made a motion to rename the Depot Street Park to Warhawk Park. Mr. Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Mr. Watson asked if they could get some information put together so that in the future people would know why.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS & REPORTS

None.

NEW BUSINESS & REPORTS

None.

TOWN MANAGER'S REPORT

Playground Equipment Update

Mr. Watson stated that the playground equipment for the 3 parks had been received. He stated that staff started at Pinehill Park because it was the easiest location. He stated that they had a call in to the manufacturer hoping to get diagrams of how it should be built. He stated that they would probably go to Depot Street next and that staff would contact Susie Green because she was wanting some of the wood to build flower beds so they would like to get her involved with it as well. He stated that they were looking at some all-inclusive play equipment which included equipment for handicap children and that staff was looking for more money.

Mayor Harris stated that there will be a sign or plaque put up designating it as Warhawk Park.

Mr. Presley stated that it would be good if they had an emblem or symbol.

Mrs. Gray stated that they did and would get it to them.

Blue Lights Discussion

Mr. Watson stated that a few council meetings ago, a gentleman come in and brought up the idea of blue lights. He stated that he talked to him after the meeting and expressed that in his opinion it should be a citizen's group to take the lead on it and not the Town. He stated that he thought it would mean more and he would like to see what the citizens thought about it by putting something in the newsletter asking them if they would like to support it.

Bowen Field Project Update

Mr. Watson stated that George and Rocky were asking for in-kind labor at Bowen Field. He stated that they were wanting to work on fixing some of the roofing, work on the press box, making it handicap accessible, painting, etc. He stated that we would not be giving money but would be supplying labor in-house.

Blessings in a Backpack

Mr. Watson stated that Blessings in a Backpack has been postponed until a later time.

Tour du Parc

Mr. Watson stated that Tour du Parc was tomorrow at Graham Rec Park starting at 9:30 a.m.

Joyce Buchanan Recognition Ceremony

Mr. Watson stated that the Recognition Ceremony for Joyce Buchanan would also be tomorrow at 2 p.m. at the Hockman Pike Bridge and invited everyone to attend.

VML Conference

Mr. Watson stated that VML would be held in Williamsburg on October 1st – 3rd.

Fall Leaf Pickup

Mr. Watson stated that the Fall Leaf Pickup will begin the week of October 23rd.

Red Cross Blood Drive

Mr. Watson stated that the Red Cross would be set up on Wednesday, October 25th in the Council Chambers.

Student Government Day

Mr. Watson stated that Student Government Day would be on Wednesday, October 25th.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

George Leedy complimented staff on all the work they have been doing in Town and stated that they had done a tremendous job on cutting the trees back.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mr. Jones had none.

Mr. Holt asked what the Pig Roast Facebook page was.

Mrs. Gray stated Community Pig Roast.

Mr. Holt asked where they were on paving.

Mr. Watson stated that he would find out and let council know.

Mr. Presley asked that they get some of the Tazewell County High School information to the Sanders House and Eva Saunders to put in the black history room. He stated that he saw some new police cars which was good and that Mr. Watson was right on the water leak when he called him.

Mr. Riffe asked them to talk to Eva Saunders about getting a plaque put up for Catherine Johnson or a historical public marker.

Mr. Presley asked how old she was.

Mrs. Gray stated 99.

Mr. Riffe asked that they move forward on the PIC Awards and start with Cotton Smith.

Mr. Watson asked that they put it on the next agenda for discussion and a vote.

Mr. Riffe asked the audience if the volume was better in the back.

George Leedy stated yes.

Mayor Harris stated that the VML Conference was coming up and was a learning process and a good time for everyone to learn about what was going on. He encouraged them to drop their business cards into the bowls for giveaways.

ATTORNEY REPORT

Cable Franchise Internet Discussion

Mr. Freedman stated that internet would be provided but that it was not part of the cable franchise. He stated that as far as offering it as complimentary services to the Town, Comcast was not willing to do so. He stated that a Public Hearing was scheduled for October 10th and that the 1st advertisement had been done and the 2nd one would be advertised later in the week.

Donnie Linkous stated that the newspaper and local media were always looking for Hometown Heroes and we just learned of one tonight that might put Bluefield, VA on the map.

Mayor Harris stated that was a wonderful suggestion.

Mr. Presley stated that he would work with Mrs. Gray on it.

Mr. Riffe stated that was a great idea.

Mayor Harris stated that they had to be careful naming people and that he had talked to Eva Saunders who was in favor of the name change.

ADJOURN

Mr. Holt made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m. Mr. Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Don Harris, Mayor

Lesley Catron, Town Clerk