

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
February 9, 2016**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a Work Session on Tuesday, February 9, 2016 at 7:00 P.M. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

TOWN COUNCIL PRESENT

Don Harris, Mayor
Lee Riffe, Councilmember
Donnie Linkous, Councilmember
Jimmy Jones, Vice Mayor
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember
Steve Danko, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Mike Watson, Town Manager
Matt Freedman, Town Attorney
Lesley Catron, Town Clerk
Kim Hernandez, Executive Assistant
Billie Roberts, Comm. Dev. Coordinator
Chad Lambert, Building Inspector
2 Members of Public
1 Member of Media

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Harris opened the Work Session at 7:06 p.m.

Mr. Watson stated that he had contacted AEP and had received a quote on the lights for downtown. He stated that staff had not spoken to everyone yet and that he would like to purchase the lights out of this year's budget. He stated that he and Mrs. Roberts had met with David and Charlie regarding the Welcome Center and had looked at different locations. He stated that on the left side of the Memorial would be better for parking and that later on the Welcome Center would like to put in something related to the Spearhead Trail to sell tickets, etc. He stated that if this location was good with council that staff would look at grading out that area. He stated that it would go back 30 ft and would include a 10ft porch.

Mr. Linkous stated that in his traveling that he had never had to hunt where a visitor's center was located because they were where everyone could see them and not on a back street. He stated that if they were going to do something, then he would like to see it done right and that he thought the building where Clay's was, would be the best place to put it.

Mayor Harris stated that the Wytheville Visitor's Center was remote and 3 blocks away from the downtown area. He stated that anywhere you went in downtown; you would be able to see the building.

Mr. Watson asked if council was ok with staff moving forward with it.

Council stated yes.

Mr. Watson stated within the next few weeks, that he would be scheduling a Budget Work Session. He went over the items on the budget. He stated that the Resolution Supporting Limited Access had one change that was made. He stated that Mrs. Roberts would be going over the Community Garden; council would be discussing questions concerning gas rates and charges. VHDA Letter of Support for Harman Heights was a letter to receive a tax credit to update and remodel Crescent View.

Mayor Harris asked Mr. Watson to contact the new owners and ask them to put in additional cameras.

Mr. Watson stated that he would. He stated that in council's packet was an article concerning the ATV Trails that he thought they would like to read, an upcoming events list, VDOT ROW for Bullet Bill Drive. He stated that staff had sent a deed to acquire this property and that this is where one of our new wells was dug. He stated that the last thing on the agenda was to adopt the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

Mayor Harris stated that he had passed out a copy of his gas bill and that he had been approached by Jack Gullion who lives on the 1600 block of Tazewell Avenue. He stated that there were some items of concern and that he would like Mr. Gullion to talk to council about.

Mr. Gullion stated that first of all he was ecstatic the way the Town handle the snow removal and suggested they be nominated for Hometown Heroes. He stated that he had noticed on his gas bill a charge for bad debt fee and that when he asked them what the charge was for, he was told that everyone had to pay it and it was a way to re-cooperate for anyone moving out of the area that did not pay their gas bill. He stated that if the gas company could apply this charge, then what would stop other utility companies from doing the same thing.

Mayor Harris stated that there was a \$30 flat fee commercial charge that they charged just to run their gas line to your meter per month whether you used the gas or not and that residential was being charged \$11.50 per month for this. He stated that the Town had problems with the gas company over the years and when APCO applied for any rate increase, we were notified but that we have never been notified when the gas company applied for a rate increase. He stated that the SCC was supposed to be neutral and look at the Town's interest. He stated that this flat fee was being charged whether you were using gas or not.

Mr. Linkous asked if WV was paying it.

Mayor Harris stated that he did not know and that they should not be able to pass these charges on to their customers because it was not right. He stated that he just wanted to let council know of this situation.

Mr. Gullion stated that the last 2 months, the fee for bad debt and inventory carrying had gone up. He asked will it continue to go up.

Mr. Linkous stated that it was probably based off of the current bill for the month. He stated that our current administration had shut us down in coal and railroad. He agreed that the same fees would happen with other utilities.

ADJOURN

Mayor Harris adjourned the Work Session at 7:34 p.m.

Don Harris, Mayor

Lesley Catron, Town Clerk