

**Town of Bluefield  
Town Council  
Work Session  
Minutes  
May 10, 2016**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a Work Session on Tuesday, May 10, 2016 at 6:30 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

**ABSENT**

Shane Gunter, Police Chief

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Harris opened the Work Session at 6:30 p.m.

Mr. Watson stated that he had been looking at the budget to tighten it up and to have more room at the end. He stated the 599 Funds had a 3.19% increase in funds and that transit transferred less than estimated so there was \$10k to end the general fund budget if council wanted to do something for the Blue Jays. He stated that they had discussed increasing meals tax and that the water rates had gone up \$0.60 minimum and 3% which was already included in the budget. He stated that currently we charged 5% and the state charged 5.3% and to get it to an even 11%, meals tax would increase 7/10 of a percent.

Mr. Jones asked what the Sanitary Board charged.

Mr. Watson stated that he did not know.

Mr. Riffe asked if they would raise the meals tax .7%.

Mr. Watson stated that it was currently 5% and state was 5.3%.

Mr. Riffe stated if it were raised then it would be 5.7%.

Mr. Watson stated that he had not heard back from the school as to what council had asked them for.

Mr. Riffe stated that he was not sure about the Baseball and stated that with the school system being in the hole that they needed to wait before donating money until they found out what the upcoming school budget was going to be.

Mayor Harris stated that there were 300 people at the Little League Fields this weekend for a tournament. He stated that the Blue Jays had made a commitment to fund and supply equipment for handicap kids to allow them to play.

Mr. Watson stated that it was a national program that they wanted to participate in.

Mr. Riffe stated that they needed to get the lights up at the Little League Fields with all the tournaments being held.

Mr. Watson stated that he had contacted Mr. Wimmer and asked him to prioritize his list. He stated that they agreed to give 1/3 towards the lights if the Town gave 1/3 of total cost around \$98k-\$120k.

Mayor Harris stated that the Town's part would be around \$40k.

Mr. Watson stated that they were pushing to get state tournaments and had asked for a press box and storage area behind home plate, bleachers and would be putting in concessions at the Rec Park.

Mr. Linkous stated that he did not remember anyone mentioning meals tax to be increased 7/10 of a percent, he thought it was .25%.

Mr. Danko stated that he mentioned it.

Mr. Linkous stated that he was all for raising revenue and that the meals tax was put in for the Fire Station and that Art Mead changed it to be for capital projects and that he and Todd argued it for years. He stated that putting lights in at the Little League Field would be a capital project. He stated that his thought for the schools was that he did not think anyone would mind the Town putting in money to help offset some of their costs. He stated that he was for increasing meals tax for these things and that they needed to put a number on donations and when they were gone, they were gone.

Mr. Trigg stated that they did not need to get in the business of funding schools but agreed to help them out. He asked if anyone had talked to AEP to see if they would put up the light poles for us. He stated the only bad thing about sports, etc. was that the parents did not help out with concessions, etc.

Mr. Jones stated that there had to be a specific thing for meals tax to be raised.

Mr. Danko stated that by raising meals tax \$0.21 more, no one would complain. He stated that they had talked about raising meals tax for a multi-use facility and if they had some of the money, we could get matching money and he thought that was the way to go.

Mayor Harris stated that he agreed somewhat with all that was being said and that what Mr. Trigg was talking about, it would be refreshing to see parents, etc. helping out by volunteering for their team. He stated that he agreed with Mr. Riffe about if they started giving money, then they would want more and that he hated to see the Town get involved in a large way with the schools.

Mr. Trigg asked Mrs. Roberts if it was the same way in the Little League Football.

Mrs. Roberts stated that they had those volunteers that they could always count on.

Mr. Trigg asked if the other teams did the same thing.

Mrs. Roberts stated that all done the same fundraisers (Sabika Bingo, Little Caesars and went out and asked for donations). She stated that they did a basketball tournament for the Little League Football and that the people she was around was the same ones and they were workers.

Mr. Trigg stated that personally he did not think they should start giving to all.

Mrs. Roberts stated that she did not think a lot of people knew that they Town gave donations but when the word spread, then they would all be asking.

Mr. Linkous stated that they could do the 7/10 of a percent and in 2 years they would have enough money to do all of the projects such as the lights, downtown project, boxes behind home plate, etc.

Mr. Jones stated that someone had said they were cutting middle school sports. He stated that it was not on their agenda and that they did not discuss it. He stated that they did pass a motion for anyone with 5 years or less that their job could possibly be eliminated. He stated that another possibility was to ask the Board of Supervisors to increase a tax to help with the deficit and that they may have to close a school or cut off a lot of teachers.

Mr. Riffe stated that if they increased meals tax then they needed to look at where it would go.

Mr. Watson stated if they tied it to a specific thing then it would be tying council from future decisions on how the money could be used. He stated that if council

approved it each year, then it would not be a problem and that they could divide it however they wanted too.

Mr. Linkous stated that it was put on for the Fire Station then changed to Capital Projects. He stated that he thought they had to have a Public Hearing to do so and that he did not think it was a simple task.

Mayor Harris stated that the meals tax money went into the General Fund and was not specified for anything. He asked council to give all of the discussions some serious thought over the next few weeks.

Mr. Linkous stated that anytime after July 1<sup>st</sup>, they could make a budget amendment by raising taxes and did not have to do anything in the next few meetings. He stated that Mr. Watson already had a balanced budget. He asked if they needed to give \$12k to the Blue Jays or less and asked if they were getting anything in return.

Mr. Trigg stated that he thought they should because there were a lot of people who went to all of the games. He stated that they did not hesitate to donate to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Chance Concert and thought this was a good thing.

Mr. Linkous asked how much.

Mr. Watson stated that there was already \$2,500 in the budget but they were asking for an additional \$12k.

Mr. Trigg stated that they should give it, if they could.

Mr. Riffe asked if the City gave.

Mr. Watson stated that they gave them \$36k per year for 4 years but agreed to continue it the past 2 years. He stated that the City supplied them the facility and the League supplied the team and that all funds made went to the Bluefield Baseball League who managed it. He stated that at the end of the year, they were lucky to break even and that the last 2 years they were in the hole.

Mr. Riffe asked if he felt comfortable giving.

Mr. Watson stated that he sit on the board and knew the money situation.

Mayor Harris stated that he would like to see a motion for \$10k.

Mr. Watson asked if that would be for a total of \$10k or an additional \$10k.

Mayor Harris stated that they should decide and if someone would want to make a motion.

Mr. Linkous suggested just including it in the budget and asked if we made a \$10k donation, was the money there.

Mr. Watson stated that it was not in the current year budget.

Mr. Linkous stated that it would be better to wait until July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Mr. Riffe suggested if they gave a donation to put it towards something specific such as concessions, etc.

Mr. Watson asked how much total they wanted to give.

Mr. Danko stated \$10k.

Council agreed.

**ADJOURN**

Mayor Harris adjourned the Work Session at 7:25 p.m.

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Don Harris, Mayor

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Lesley Catron, Town Clerk