

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Work Session
February 26, 2019**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a Work Session on Tuesday, February 26, 2019 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

TOWN COUNCIL PRESENT

Don Harris, Mayor
Ron Holt, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Jimmy Jones, Councilmember
Jarrod Bailey, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Mike Watson, Town Manager
Matt Freedman, Town Attorney
Billie Roberts, Comm. Dev. Coordinator
Lesley Catron, Town Clerk
10 Members of Public

ABSENT

Anglis Trigg, Jr., Vice-Mayor

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Harris opened the Work Session at 6:00 p.m.

Citizen Presentation: Proposed Art/Makers Center – Barbara Bates

Mayor Harris asked Mrs. Bates if she would like to speak first.

She stated no.

Committee Member stated that Barbara was who came up with the idea of promoting the downtown and having this at the location across from the Visitor's Center would help bring more people to the downtown.

David Hite, Bluefield College stated that it was a group of individuals that came together to do hands on activities. He stated that there was a place in Johnson City that was similar to the Makers Space who created and built and was hands on. He stated that it was very successful for their downtown and that they had classes, parties, etc. He stated that he taught business at Bluefield College and they would like to partner with the Town, Community, and students and that he had pitched the idea informally to the High School Instructors. He stated that they were trying to have a collaboration space and co working space which would be where entrepreneurs came to get mentored. He stated that what they were trying to do at Bluefield College was a social entrepreneurship mentoring function so

they would need a place where they could mentor entrepreneurs on projects, mentor them on basic start up activities, etc. while engaging their students and the community. He stated that another advantage to having this would be to allow a space where students could take the ACT, SAT's, stem projects, LEGO Team, etc. He stated that there were several ways to partner up and use the space. He stated that the theaters in our area could volunteer and do some mentoring as well. He stated that he knew of several students being mentored by business leaders and this would be a centralized place for this to happen that was not on the campus and in the community that engaged students to go down and do things outside of their comfort zone. He stated that the Skill Bill did classes and was very sustainable. He stated that they charged a fee of \$10-\$20 day to have access to the equipment and did private workshops. He stated that volunteers would be paid a small fee to help with these hands on workshops.

Mr. Presley asked if he had talked to the Tazewell County Career & Technical Center and getting those teachers to help out with trade classes here. He stated that he liked the idea and was the President of the Wade Center and had talked to people about offering classes there and would like to get up with him because he had some ideas as well. He stated that this was more skill based and that college was not for everybody.

Mr. Hite stated that they were currently mentoring 2 African American gentleman who wanted to start a fruit orchard with organic fruits. He stated that they were working with them on their business plan and they were not college bound but this allowed them to engage with them. He stated that this could be a feeder system and he could see partnering with Community Colleges.

Mr. Presley stated that masonry was huge.

Mr. Hite stated that he envisioned those people with skills offering classes. He stated that the cost was on the back page of the handout and they would develop a model where volunteers would serve the operational side of it.

Committee Member stated that they received a budget from the other place and they ran on donations and selling work. He stated that they were a non-profit with an \$80k year budget and \$78k going out.

Mr. Hite stated that one of the benefits was that it was downtown. He stated that just having one or two pieces of basic equipment would be the vision that the group had, having an art studio/story telling area and a gift shop where local artist could sell the things they have made.

Barbara Bates stated that she was very aware of the talent that could use this facility and it was something special.

Mr. Hite stated that the academic community really supported this.

Mr. Presley asked if he had talked to anyone in Abingdon about how they did it.

Committee Member stated that they rented spaces for individual artists and that he and his wife did a show there. He stated that the Town owned it but did not know if it was leased or not. He stated that they would like for it to be sustainable.

Bill Dudley stated that the big thing was flexibility, the proctorship as well as serving as a meeting space.

Mr. Hite stated that they could do festivals, ATV workshops, coal camp creations, etc.

Mr. Watson stated that it had changed some from when it first came up from an Arts Space to a Makers Space. He stated that there would be a cost of the building and expenses and that generally 501c3 operated those things. He stated that the first step would be to see if there was money.

Committee Member stated that they could raise money until they were 501c3 and they had a building.

Mr. Watson stated at the last meeting they talked about using the Town's tax status.

Mr. Jones stated that if they could get a legal document then they may be able to apply for grants for the building.

Mr. Presley asked if they were talking about Craig Nash's building.

Mr. Dudley stated that they had talked with Craig and he was flexible with it. He stated that they were not asking the Town to buy the building that they just wanted to open a partnership and look at grants

Mr. Jones suggested they get someone to get the 501c3 then purchase it when they had enough.

Mayor Harris asked if they had a business plan.

Mr. Hite stated that they had a rough draft.

Mayor Harris suggested that they look into some corporations/foundations that were generous in our area. He stated that they donated to a lot of different causes.

Mr. Presley asked how far they were on the business plan.

Mr. Hite stated 70%.

Mr. Presley stated that there were a lot of people willing to give money if they could see it all in person.

Mr. Holt asked them to talk to our tourism folks (David Woodard). He stated that traveling exhibits was a way to get more people into the area and thought it was a good idea.

Mr. Hite stated that he saw people from Nashville traveling 4 hours to Johnson City, TN for the Makers Space. He stated that it targeted more than one age group. He thanked them for listening.

Committee Member stated that they would like to get the Town's help and support.

Mr. Jones stated regarding the timbering that they could do some trails over there.

Mr. Presley asked if that was where Billie showed them.

Mr. Jones stated that he had reached out to a few people and they all seemed interested.

Mr. Holt stated that he would like to talk to the committee.

Mr. Dudley stated if they had a good location and owned it that it would be stable and that the building was divided up well already. He stated that they could always rent out part of it.

Mayor Harris asked that one of them meet with our staff and that we could give them some names of possible donors.

Mr. Jones suggested they talk to Charlie Stacy, Board of Supervisors.

Mayor Harris stated that he appreciated their presentation and he would like to see it succeed.

Barbara Bates asked if they could come back and see them again as it progressed.

Council said yes.

ADJOURN

Mayor Harris adjourned the Work Session at 6:44 p.m.

Don Harris, Mayor

Lesley Catron, Town Clerk