

**Town of Bluefield
Town Council
Minutes
March 2, 2023**

The Bluefield, Virginia Town Council held a Special Called Meeting on Saturday, March 2, 2023 at 5:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall located at 112 Huffard Drive, Bluefield, Virginia.

PRESENT

Donnie Linkous, Mayor
Cathy Payne, Councilmember
Chuck Presley, Councilmember
Lee Riffe, Councilmember
Anglis Trigg, Councilmember
Rick Holman, Vice-Mayor
Ron Holt, Councilmember

ALSO PRESENT

Alan McGraw, Interim Attorney

ABSENT

James Hampton, Co Interim Town Mgr/Treasurer
Kim Hernandez, Co Interim Town Mgr/Town Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Linkous reconvened the February 28th meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. McGraw asked that they first make a motion to temporarily delegate to him the duties of Town Clerk to terminate upon adjournment of this meeting.

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

Mr. Presley made a motion to amend the agenda for the Executive Session. Mr. Riffe seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Linkous asked the attorney to read the Executive Session.

MOTION FOR CLOSED MEETING

It is hereby moved that the Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia enter into a closed meeting pursuant to Section 2.2-3711 (A) (1) of the Code of Virginia as amended, The specific purpose for this motion is to discuss the following matter(s):

Discussion, consideration, or interviews of prospective candidates for employment with such closed meeting being confined to that topic.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to enter into Executive Session.

Councilmember Holt made a motion to enter into Executive Session as described above. Councilmember Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous did roll call.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Riffe:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holman:	Yes
Councilmember Holt:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

6-0 in favor of going into Executive Session.

Mayor Linkous asked for a motion to resume open meeting.

Councilmember Holt made a motion to enter back into regular session. Councilmember Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous asked Mr. McGraw to read the certification.

CERTIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE SESSION

WHEREAS, the Town Council of Bluefield, Virginia convened a closed meeting on February 23, 2023, pursuant to a duly adopted motion, attached hereto, and such closed meeting was convened in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of Bluefield, Virginia returned to its open meeting held on February 23, 2023.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF BLUEFIELD, VIRGINIA HEREBY CERTIFIES that to the best of each member's knowledge (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements under the Virginia Freedom of Information Act were discussed in the closed meeting held on February 23, 2023, to which this certification applies and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening such closed meeting were heard, discussed, or considered by the Council of the Town of Bluefield, Virginia in such closed meeting.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Riffe:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holman:	Yes
Councilmember Holt:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	Yes

Motion carried 7-0 approving the certification.

Mr. Holt made a motion that council provide direction to the employees of the Town that no employee should have any contact with prospective candidates for employer and only the Town Attorney should have any communications with prospective employers at this time. Mr. Holman seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Riffe:	Yes
Vice-Mayor Holman:	Yes
Councilmember Holt:	Yes
Councilmember Presley:	Yes
Councilmember Payne:	Yes
Councilmember Trigg:	Yes
Mayor Linkous:	No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 approving the motion.

Mayor Linkous stated that they had received an email this week regarding Recreation.

Mr. Presley asked if Jeff was staying in the interim.

Mr. Riffe stated that the email said he would be doing a walkthrough on the pool.

Mr. Holt stated in the absence of a manager that it would be good for someone to do in the interim. He stated that they asked a lot of the employees already and all were wearing a lot of different hats. He stated not having a manager it would be ok for the board to run and ad for Recreation Director, interview and hire. He suggested giving it a 2 week period.

Mrs. Payne stated that Heather knew the pool.

Mr. Holman stated if we were just now starting to line up and get the pool open that we were 6 months behind.

Mr. Holt stated that it was essential to hire soon. He stated that they could offer to interview Heather and that it needed to be posted.

Mr. Riffe asked if they were going to set any boundaries.

Mr. Holt stated that they needed to look at the job description.

Mr. Holman asked that they review it before running the ad.

Mayor Linkous asked if council would like for him to go and talk to Jeff and report back to them.

Mr. Holman stated that it would be good for him to fulfill until they hired.

Mr. Trigg asked what the salary would be.

Mr. Holman stated it was in the figures that James had sent out.

Mr. Holt stated that the two managers reached out for guidance. He stated that they had the ability to assign duties to other employees to take on duties so we did not get behind.

Mayor Linkous stated that he did not know that was true for the managers that they told them they would interim and would only be taking care of day to day and anything else went to him to take care of. He stated that was told to them in the back and that obviously was not happening.

Mr. Holt stated that he did not want to get into the day to day operations but they had the authority to appoint duties to other employees.

Mr. Trigg stated that from what he read Jeff will do it until someone is hired.

Mr. Riffe suggested giving him the ability to ask for help and not put it on the two interims. He stated that it was their position to step in and it needed to the advertised now.

Mrs. Payne stated that she had a voice now and suggested putting a freeze on hiring that it should all come to council even though it was not their job and to also put a freeze on spending after looking at the checks just written that things were being bought that they did not know about.

Mr. Riffe stated that after looking at Fincastle his eyes blew up.

Mr. Linkous stated that he had found out about the \$57k and \$6,500 after asking John that it would be put back in from a grant that council did not know about.

Mrs. Payne agreed they should know about these things.

Mayor Linkous stated not having a full time manager that this happened a lot and they found out after it happened.

Mr. Holman suggested limiting the expenses outside of everyday and budgeted items.

Mr. Holt stated that he was good with freezing ARPA but not all spending.

Mrs. Payne stated that they were going out buying hats and gloves.

Mr. Holman asked if they were within their bounds to set a threshold awaiting a new manager.

Mr. Holt asked that Alan check and make sure they were not overstepping their boundaries.

Mr. McGraw asked if they were talking about non-essential.

Mr. Holt stated unbudgeted that anything within the budget was fine but to freeze any ARPA because there would be nothing left for the new Town Manager.

Mr. Presley asked that anything unbudgeted council approve.

Mrs. Payne suggested setting a \$500 limit besides the normal bills.

Mayor Linkous stated that they found a place in the budget and that was the problem. He stated that money was moved which was ok but it would be nice for them to know before. He stated that this was not their fault and had been the normal for the past 3 years.

Mr. Holt suggested taking out the word approve because he did not want to hamstring day to day business and that any expenditure over "x" amount should be reported to council. He stated that they needed to curve spending but were in good financial shape.

Mayor Linkous stated that they did not want to put a scare out to the public that we were going broke.

Mr. Holt stated that they had to be mindful and did not want frivolous spending.

Mayor Linkous stated just like buying a vehicle...."here we are buying a vehicle do y'all wanna know about it".

Mr. Trigg stated that he mentioned during the last meeting about donations and agreeing right away that they should let James look at finding the money before they agreed. He stated that it could get out of hand.

Mayor Linkous stated that we have had plenty of money for ever but things were tight. He stated giving away say \$50k a year caused them to have to raise rates. He stated that some agencies were cutting them out completely, that we would still like to help but it would not be as much.

Mr. Holt stated as Mr. Trigg had said let's not set a dollar figure and put out that any request had to be in so that it could be built into the budget by a certain date for them to approve or not. He stated that they could also build a pot of money for if something came up such as winning a state championship to help with a bus and once that money was gone then there was no more.

Mayor Linkous stated that once the budget was set there would be no more donations.

Mr. Riffe stated that they always extended the limit.

Mr. Holt asked that Alan look into setting a spending cap and following the charter to discuss at the next meeting.

Mr. Holman asked if all agreed that at the first meeting or closest to the first that an agenda item be placed to review the Town's financials from what was received in the emails.

Mrs. Payne stated that it was something they never discussed.

Mr. Holman asked that they be provided with a balance sheet, profit and loss statement, cash flow and transactional information of checks, etc. to be reviewed and approved subject to an audit of council.

Mr. Riffe stated that they were only ever questioned individually and all should know.

Mr. Trigg stated that he always looked at them and if something were questionable then he would look into it further.

Mr. Holman stated that it would be good to address in council and would be a short piece of the meeting having reviewed the information before they got there and would contact staff prior if something were a big issue. He stated that this would allow them a checks and balances on the budget and they would be made aware of the different line items being moved around.

Mayor Linkous stated that we did 50 more budget amendments than anyone else.

Mr. Holman stated that he understood they had to do budget amendments for grants, etc. that he was talking about the regular business transactions of the town.

Mayor Linkous stated the reports were given after the fact and they could not do anything about them then. He stated that Ray Froy always told him that they should have all bills needing to be paid before so that council could approve then they were paid.

Mr. Holt stated that he was not opposed to that but did not want to hamstring management.

Mr. Trigg stated that was too much micromanagement.

Mr. Holt stated that he did not want to get into the day to day but bills that could be approved prior to being paid should be approved.

Mr. Holman stated that he was not saying they should interject themselves into the day to day but as a council should be reviewing information they had received in the public, not someone calling asking for approval to pay a bill but the financials that council would take a vote and approve.

Mr. Holt made a motion for the next special called meeting on March 11th @ 5 p.m. for an Executive Session to interview prospective candidates and would be held at Fincastle. Mr. Presley seconded the motion.

Mayor Linkous stated that the spouses were also invited.

ROLL CALL VOTE

Councilmember Riffe: Yes
Vice-Mayor Holman: Yes

Councilmember Holt: Yes
Councilmember Presley: Yes
Councilmember Payne: Yes
Councilmember Trigg: Yes
Mayor Linkous: No Vote Permitted

Motion carried 6-0 approving the motion.

Mr. Holt made a motion for another special called meeting on March 13th @ 7:30 p.m. Mr. Presley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

ADJOURN

Mr. Holt made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mrs. Payne seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 p.m.

D.S. Linkous, Mayor

Kim Hernandez, Town Clerk

