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Council: Billy L. Clear
Shannon Donnelly
J. Brent Foster
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Clerk/Treasurer: Marlene L. Henderson
Police Chief: Andrew K. Moss
Director-Public Works: Jay Keen
Fire Chief: C. David Haynes
Building Official: C. David Haynes
Director-Recreation/Special Events: Jeff Smarr
Legal: Cassell & Crewe. P.C.

June 8, 2023

Public Hearing on 2023-24 Budget Proposal

You have in your agenda packet the Notice of Public Hearing advertised for the 2023-24 Budget in the amount of $5,853,009. As we have discussed this budget contains no American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Those funds are accounted for in a different account.

The budget was advertised in the Smyth County News on May 24 and May 31, in accordance with the requirements of the Code of Virginia, as amended. The proposed increases in water, sewer and garbage were also noticed in the same ad. Following the Public Hearing, the budget can be adopted no earlier than seven days after the hearing. So, the earliest date for adoption would be June 15. Council could choose that date or any date between June 15 and June 30 for adoption.

County Wide Auto-Aid Agreement for Fire Departments

You have in your agenda package an Auto Aid Agreement between the three Towns and the County for assistance for fire calls throughout Smyth County. It does not involve Emergency Medical Service

(EMS) calls. In basic terms it assigns every department in the County a specific geographic area that it will automatically response to fire calls, as opposed to waiting to be dispatched. Time is off essence during fire incidents and an automatic response helps ensure appropriate / additional resources will be on the scene to fight the fire.

As you can see on the attached maps Chilhowie primary area is the corporate limits to Seven Mile Ford /Preston Hill and in the County to the Konnarock area along the Washington County line. The Department's Auto Aid area is the area covered by the Saltville area, the Nebo area in Rich Valley, and the area covered by Adwolfe Fire Department. Conversely, we are to received Auto Aid from the Saltville fire Department and the Adwolfe Fire Department on calls.

Chief David Haynes has expressed some concern that while we are providing Auto Aid promptly to other departments, one other department is not as prompt in providing Auto Aid. But I suspect this situation may be occurring elsewhere.

The Chilhowie Fire Department has been providing this service unofficially for several years now. If Council approves this agreement, along with Marion, Saltville and Smyth, then the situation will be codified and formalized throughout the County for all Fire Departments.

Accounting on the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funding

You have in your agenda packet a breakdown of the funds that the Federal Government gave the Town through ARPA funding in the amount of $1,765,854. We received that allocation in two equal payments of $882,927 on June 30, 2021 and August 22, 2022.

To briefly recap on the allocations of these funds, on July 28, 2021 I asked each Department Heads to make recommendations for spending this money in all facets of the Town's operations including Building and Grounds, Beatifications, Business, Fire / EMS, Finance, Personnel, Streets, Recreation, Police, Water Sewer, and other. Staff came up with recommendations of $1,413,672. This was presented to Council on February 8, 2022 at a scheduled Public Hearing. Two persons spoke at the Public Hearing. $465,259.55 had already been allocated by Council and with Staff recommendations of $1,413,672 that totaled $1,878,931.55 in spending, leaving an overage (deficit) of $113,077.55. Council took no action at the Public Hearing. Over the following months Council formalized many of staff's requests and perhaps added some of their own.

Fast forward to this month, Clerk Treasurer Marlene Henderson has prepared a sheet in your agenda package entitled ARPA Funds and dated at the bottom May 31, 2023. As you can see the amount earmarked or already spend is $1,720,841.55, leaving an unobligated surplus of $45,012.45. However, we don't have a final price on the Dog Park, and not the structures that will accompany the Splash Pad. So, in practical purposes we think the ARPA money has been spent and obligated in its entirety.

As we understand the regulations, the money has to be obligated by the end of calendar 2024 and spend by the end of calendar year 2026. We will easily meet those goals. At the Council meeting we will ask Council to go ahead and ratify that sheet for the record.

Partnership on Landscaping and Plantings

You have in your agenda package several pictures and other documentation of the partnership between the Town, the Chilhowie Garden Club, the Chilhowie Organization for Arts History and Culture (COACH), and the Chilhowie High School Horticulture Department. A Resolution of appreciation and thanks will be presented to Council for adoption.

As I am sure that you noticed the 16 containers with flowers on Downtown Main Street. I noticed containers like this on a trip to Denver, Colorado last Summer and through they would be a great addition to Downtown. These new additions compliment the five overhanging baskets on the decorative poles on Main (two more baskets were hung at the Lucas Dowd Park) that were purchased. The 16

containers were around $188 a piece and COACH donated $1,500 towards that cause. You can see that May 4 check donated by COACH and letter signed by Ms. Lynn Denny.

The Chilhowie Garden Club planted the assorted flowers the middle of May. They will be maintaining these containers while the Town will be watering them.

You also have pictures of the new raised flower garden in the Recreation Park. The Public Works Department removed the old rotting bed and replaced it with a new one about 75 yards west. The siding materials were on hand and only the framing had to be bought. Public Works did an excellent job. The plants were removed by the Chilhowie Horticulture Department from the old bed and taken to their green house for temporary storage. After the new bed was constructed the plants and bulbs were collected by Public Works and put in the new bed. The Chilhowie Garden Club will maintain the new raised bed and the Town will water it.

Additionally, on May 15 the Garden Club removed all of the weeds and dead plants from the Butterfly Garden located at the northeast corner of the Town Hall / Police Department Lot near the corner of the Community Room. The Public Crew then mulched the area.

We are very appreciative of this partnership between the Town and the organizations listed above. We look forward to continuing this relationship this year.

<u>Request From Berry Home Center on Purchasing Four Town Lots Near the End of Church Avenue.</u>

You have in your agenda packet a May 9 letter from Berry Home Center requesting to purchase four lots that are between Berry's properties on the east and west. The lots are near the end of Church Avenue near the railroad track and are all in the 100 year flood plain.

Attorney Paul Cassell will advise Council on the process, most likely through an advertisement soliciting bids, and then a Public Hearing after the high bid is submitted. That process should culminate in the request being addressed at Council's July 13 meeting. Another option could be to turn the request over to the Smyth County Economic Development Authority (EDA), since the Town has not such organization, but that would involve more time including perhaps deeding the property to the EDA, then deciding administrative fees, proceeds, etc.

Respectfully Submitted,

John E. B. Clark, Jr.

Town Manager