Virginia: **At the regular meeting of the Council of the Town of Chilhowie held at the Municipal Building, October 10, 2024, at 7:00 p.m.**

Present: **Honorable Gary L. Heninger, Mayor presiding; Councilors Bill Clear, Brent Foster, Bob Jeter, and Julie Sturgill.**

Absent: **Councilors Shannon Donnelly and P.J. Wolfe.**

Also Present: **Mr. Brian Martin, Town Manager; Mrs. Felicia Eller, CMC, Clerk-Treasurer; Andrew Moss, Police Chief; David Haynes, Fire/EMS Chief; Danny Combs, Public Works Director; Luke Lowe, Chief Wastewater Operator; Don Cole, Water Operations Director; Chris Johnson, Foreman Building, Grounds, and Streets, and Stephen Fields; Recreation/Special Events Coordinator.**

Mayor Heninger called the meeting to order. Mrs. Stephanie Porter Nichols gave the Invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Bob Jeter Council approves the regular September 12, 2024, meeting minutes and Continued September 17, 2024, meeting minutes. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

Old Business:

- Update on Removal or Repair of Identifies Unsafe (Burned Out) Structure – Mr. Haynes, Fire and EMS Chief, reported under the Virginia Property Maintenance Code, a Notice of Unsafe Structure for the property at 307 West Avenue was posted. The Notice of Unsafe Structure and the Right of Appeal was certified mailed to the property owner. The property is slated to be demolished on Friday, October 18, 2024, and a lien will be placed on the property.

  It was requested to send Weed, Trash, and Clutter Notice out to a resident on West End of Town.

- Update on Sewer Infiltration and Inflow Project and Approval of Pay Request #4 – Portland Utilities Construction Company is staged on site and has begun work relining sewer lines. Due to Hurricane Helene, Portland Utilities stopped work on the Infiltration and Inflow Project, and began assisting the Town with emergency by passes for the three aerials that

were destroyed in the hurricane. Mr. Martin requested Council to approve Pay Request Number 4 in the amount of $103,341.66.

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Julie Sturgill Council approves Pay Request Number 4 for the Infiltration and Inflow Project in the amount of $103,341.66. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

- Update on Lead Service Line Inventory Project – The due date for completion of the Lead Service Line Inventory portion of the project is October 15, 2024. The Town partnered with Hurt & Proffitt and was able to complete this project prior to the deadline. Mr. Martin sent the Virginia Department of Health a letter to report the Town has no lead service lines within the water system.

- Update on Seven Mile Ford Water Line and Meter Replacement Project – The Town intended to have an orientation meeting regarding the Seven Mile Ford Water Line and Meter Replacement Project with Hurt and Proffitt on October 2, 2024. However, with the overwhelming volume of work following Hurricane Helene, the Town postponed the meeting to November 6, 2024. The Seven Mile Ford Water Line and Meter Replacement Project is still slated to begin in the Spring of 2025.

- Update on Letter to the Virginia Department of Transportation – Mr. Martin sent Mr. Jeff Harrison, Virginia Department of Transportation, an email thanking the Virginia Department of Transportation for sending the sweeper truck to Chilhowie to clean the streets for the Chilhowie Apple Festival.

- Update on Proposed United States Postal Service Slowdown - The United States Postal Service is proposing a new plan that will delay the mail in rural areas by 24-48 hours. The decreased mail speed will affect the Town when mailing utility bills and taxes to customers, along with the time it takes for customers' payments to be mailed back to the Town.

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Bill Clear Council approves Mr. Martin, Town Manager, to write a letter regarding the United States Postal Service slow down to the Town's Senators. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

New Business:

- Update on Hurricane Relief – The Town suffered unprecedented damage to the Wastewater system with the destruction of all three aerial stream crossings. The Town lost one of the two primary pumps at the influent station at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. There was also damage to the security fencing at the Widener Springs and Reid's Pump Station. The Public Works Department has worked tirelessly to ensure that the appropriate regulatory agencies have been notified of the issues with the Sewer System and are updated daily on the progress toward temporary repair. The Town's staff did an outstanding job documenting information to present to the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The Town is working with the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Army Corp of Engineers, and the Department of Environmental Quality to obtain funds to repair the damage resulting from Hurricane Helene.

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Julie Sturgill Council authorizes Mr. Martin, Town Manager, and Mrs. Eller, Clerk/Treasurer, to work with local banks to determine appropriate interim financing options for bridge financing to cover Hurricane Helene Recovery expense. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

- Christmas Celebration – Mrs. Sturgill reviewed the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony that will be held on Thursday, December 5, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. Mr. Fields shared the Christmas Parade will be held on Saturday, December 7, 2024, at 11 a.m. The Christmas Bazaar will be held at the Old High School on Saturday, December 7, 2024, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The first annual Christmas Celebration will be held on Saturday, December 7, 2024, at 7 p.m. at the Old High School with music and food.

- Smyth County Community Hospital Black and White Gala – The Smyth County Community Hospital invited Council Members to attend the Black and White Gala on Saturday, February 15, 2024, at the Holston Hills Community Golf Course.

- Washington County Service Authority Steering Committee – The Town will resume quarterly meetings with the Washington County Service Authority. Mr. Martin requested Council to consider joining the quarterly meetings held with the Washington County Service Authority.

- Approval of Bid for Mount Rogers Planning District Commission Funded Wastewater Treatment Plant Repair – The Town received one bid for the Mechanical Bar Screen Replacement Project. The bid came from Parkson in the amount of $73,250.00

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Julie Sturgill Council, approves the bid from Parkson for the Mechanical Bar Screen Replacement Project in the amount of $73,250.00. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

Committee Reports:

- Finance and Personnel Committee – On Monday, October 7, 2024, the Finance and Personnel Committee met to discuss increasing the starting salary for Police Officers. At the time of the last Police Officer hire for the Chilhowie Police Department the starting pay was $32,000. Several Local Police Agencies in the area are hiring and all Agencies are offering $40,000 and up as starting salary. Chief Moss expressed his concern that if the Chilhowie Police Department leaves the hiring salary at $32,000, they will not receive any applicants. The Finance and Personnel Committee recommended to Council to change the starting salary to $43,000 with no pay increase once the Police Officer completes the Police Academy. The Police Officer will also be required to sign a two-year contract with the Town with the understanding if the Police Officer leaves, they must reimburse the Town for the training expense.

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Julie Sturgill Council accepts the Recommendation from the Finance and Personnel Committee to increase the starting salary for new hires within the Police Department to $43,000 with a two-year contract. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

- Mr. Martin and Mrs. Eller met with Mr. Chris Snodgrass, Chief Executive Officer, and Mr. Greg Griffin, Chief Financial Officer, of the Bank of Marion to discuss restructuring existing debt. The Bank of Marion provided an amortization schedule for restructuring the existing debt at 10, 12, and 15 years. The Finance and Personnel Committee discussed the interest rates and the Town's savings if the existing debt was restructured to either the 10-, 12-, and 15-year loan. At the request of the Finance and Personnel Committee, Mr. Martin and Mrs. Eller reached out to Mr. Griffin to discuss absorbing the Vactor Truck into the restructuring debt. Mr. Griffin provided an amortization schedule to include restructuring existing debt and the Vactor Truck for 15 years. The Finance and Personnel Committee

recommends Council to approve the 15-year loan option. The refinancing of existing debt and consolidating the Vactor Truck will provide the Town with $226,815 savings and allows the Town to increase reserves.

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Julie Sturgill Council accepts the recommendation from the Finance and Personnel Committee and authorizes the Mayor and Town Manager to execute documents required to refinance existing debt and consolidate the Vactor Truck debt with The Bank of Marion for a 15-year term. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

Department Reports:

Mr. Brian Martin, Town Manager, expressed his gratitude and appreciation to the Public Works Department, Fire Department, and Police Department for working together and executing the Chilhowie Apple Festival.

Mrs. Felicia Eller, Clerk/Treasurer, discussed the account balances with Council. Mrs. Eller stated there is an increase in the Cap Fee Account and the Fire Hydrant Fund Account due to moving the funds collected from Utility Bills to the prospective accounts. The Real Estate and Personal Property Taxes were mailed on Friday, September 27, 2024.

Mr. David Haynes, Fire and EMS Chief, attended the Virginia Fire Services Board meeting regarding a grant the Fire and EMS Department applied for. The grant was awarded to the Fire and EMS Department. The grant is a fifty-fifty match, and Smyth County has agreed to provide fifty percent of the match. Chief Haynes thanked Council for allowing the Fire and EMS Department to receive updated equipment and training.

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Bob Jeter Council approves the grant's required match of fifty percent and split with Smyth County. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

Mr. Brandon Moore, Assistant Fire and EMS Chief, thanked Council for the training they have allowed the Fire and EMS Department to attend. The swift water training and boats were a huge asset to the Town and neighboring localities during Hurricane Helene. The Fire and EMS Department rescued 13 citizens and 4 dogs during the Hurricane.

Mr. Andrew Moss, Police Chief, reported the Chilhowie Police Department conducted traffic control for flooded roads and assisted several citizens. On October 31, 2024, the Police Department will be handing out candy at the Chilhowie Elementary School as well as the Boo Bash on Main Street.

Mr. Chris Johnson, Foreman Building, Grounds, and Streets reported the walking trail is now usable. The Building and Grounds Department is still working towards cleaning up the Town Park from Hurricane Helene.

Mr. Stephen Fields, Recreation/Special Events Coordinator, reported on Friday, October 18, 2024, he will be honoring an eighty-eight-year-old lady that volunteered at the distribution center at the Old High School. This special lady showed up every day and worked all day long without any breaks to ensure the citizens of the community had what they needed after Hurricane Helene.

The Veteran's Day Tribute will be held on Tuesday, November 11, 2024. Mr. Phillip Blevins will be the keynote speaker. The oldest veteran in attendance along with the Mayor will raise the flag on the newly restored flag pole dedicated to the class of 1941.

Motion by Julie Sturgill, second by Brent Foster Council adjourns this meeting at 7:55 p.m. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

Bill Clear	Aye	Shannon Donnelly	Absent
Brent Foster	Aye	Bob Jeter	Aye
Julie Sturgill	Aye	P.J. Wolfe	Absent

_____Mayor
Gary L. Heninger

_____Clerk
Felicia Eller, CMC