TOWN OF CHILHOWIE, VIRGINIA

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Fire /EMS Chief: C. David Haynes
Building Official: C. David Haynes
Wastewater Operations: Luke A. Lowe
Water Operations: Don Cole, II
Special Events/Recreation: Stephen Fields
Legal: Cassell & Crewe, P.C.

Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council
March 13, 2024

Good evening, Mayor Heninger and Members of the Town Council. I hope you're well as the we set our clocks forward this week and keep our fingers crossed for Spring to come…and stay!

Here's a brief look at what's going on in our town:

Hurricane Helene Recovery

The town staff continues to work with FEMA, our engineering partners, wastewater project contractors, and appropriate regulatory agencies to work towards full restoration of infrastructure impacted by Hurricane Helene last Fall. All repairs to the fencing at the town springs and Reid's Store pump station are complete. The damaged culvert at the Widener Spring is now replaced and full vehicular access to the spring and pump house has been restored. Most damage to our facilities in town has been addressed by either cleaning operations or other restoration/mitigation steps. However, there are still some issues to be addressed to resolve damages at the Fire Training Center, the wastewater treatment plant, Town Hall, the town park, and a few other small items.

The biggest and most extensive repair to the town's infrastructure is still not complete, but progress continues forward. The design of the replacement crossings for the three aerial river crossings in the wastewater collection system is now complete and has been reviewed by the town staff. The plans have been submitted to FEMA for review and approval and, additionally, the JPA (Joint Permit Application) has been signed by me and submitted by the town's engineering consultants with Hurt & Proffitt to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and other pertinent Federal and state regulatory agencies. Their review process can take between 60-90 days and, assuming they approve the plans as submitted, our reconstruction process can be placed out for bid immediately after their approval.

The staff continues to work diligently with FEMA to track our reimbursement requests that have already been submitted as well as coordinate with FEMA staff on a weekly, and sometimes daily, basis to craft all pending and future reimbursement requests in keen detail and ensuring the town provides all documentation required by FEMA for their process.

I cannot thank Ms. Eller and ALL Department Heads enough for all of their diligence, persistence, patience, and downright hard work as we have coordinated to pull together the laborious volume of information and documentation requested by FEMA.

Sewer Improvement Project Update

The relining of the planned sewer pipes is now complete, with the exception of a few small areas. The staff, engineers, and contractor have all thought we were very close to completion on more than one occasion, but as the project has progressed, areas have been identified that were not in need of repair, while other areas have been shown to be in need of repair. Obviously, every section that is found to not need relined results in a reduction in project costs. However, as the town is committed to the original project funding package, we are taking the opportunity to locate and address as many areas of the system as we possibly can to maximize these funds and reduce the I&I (inflow and infiltration) as much as possible.

The first Change Order resulting from these changes to the scope of the project allowed the town to address a very problematic section of the system along Bonham Avenue. Resulting from discussions at last week's project progress meeting, I foresee a Change Order 2 very soon to address two sections of the system on the west end of town in the industrial park and near the intersection of Highway 11 and Sulphur Springs Road running toward the town shop.

Manhole refurbishment continues to be underway. I had the pleasure of spending time with one of the rehabilitation crews who took time to explain the process to me, which I found very interesting. Attached to this report are pictures of the process.

The end result of this project should see a considerable reduction of the inflow and infiltration (I&I) entering our wastewater system. This reduction should correlate to reduced operating costs for our wastewater treatment plant, including reduced electricity consumption.

VDOT Communications

I have emailed Mr. Jeff Harrison and Ms. Pam Heath to inquire about the status of the replacement of the drain tile on Whitetop Road across from McDonalds. I will update you when I receive a response.

Blighted Structures in Our Town

This matter is addressed as an item of business on this month's Town Council meeting agenda, but I wanted to let you know again how seriously I take this issue. Since you hired me as your Town Manager, I have worked diligently with property owners to find reasonable resolutions to these problematic properties. Over the past six months, your town staff has taken down two blighted houses which had been eyesores and public safety hazards for over two years. We additionally have worked with a property owner to demolish a blighted structure at their expense and there is now a new home in its place.

There are currently two other properties the staff is working to clean up. If you know of others or hear complaints from residents, please contact me so that we can begin to address them.

Updates from 2025 General Assembly Session

The 2025 General Assembly session adjourned on February 22nd. There were several bills introduced which may impact smaller towns like Chilhowie. One of the most important of these was the "Save Virginia Pharmacies Act. I submitted a letter of support to Governor Youngkin's office in support of this legislation signed by Mayor Heninger and myself. Governor Youngkin has until March 24th to act on this and other legislation passed by both Houses. The General Assembly will reconvene on April 2nd to address any other business or vote to override any vetoes by the Governor.

Appalachian Regional Commission Letter of Support

The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission has applied for a grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission to upgrade their GIS capabilities. I have submitted a letter of support for this effort. The town has relied on Mount Rogers for decades to assist with economic development projects and there are several times annually that I rely on their GIS expertise for town projects. A copy of this letter is attached for your review.

Questions

As always, I welcome any questions about the status of the town's busy activities. Merry Christmas!

Respectfully Submitted,

J. Brian Martin
Town Manager





