Virginia: **At the regular meeting of the Council of the Town of Chilhowie held at the Municipal Building, March 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.**

Present: **Brent Foster, Vice Mayor presiding; Councilors Bill Clear, Shannon Donnelly, Julie Sturgill, and P.J. Wolfe.**

Absent: **Honorable Gary L. Heninger, Mayor, and Councilor Bob Jeter**

Also Present: **Mr. Brian Martin, Town Manager; Mrs. Felicia Eller, CMC, Clerk-Treasurer; Messrs. Paul Cassell, Town Attorney; Andrew Moss, Police Chief; Aaron Smith, Deputy Chief; and Tyler Keen, Assistant Public Works Director**

Vice Mayor Foster called the meeting to order Mr. Justin May, Chilhowie Christian Church, gave the Invocation. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Bill Clear, second by Shannon Donnelly Council approves the regular February 13, 2025, Council meeting minutes. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

Special Presentation:

Bob Jeter entered the meeting at 7:04 p.m.

Ms. Bailey King and Ms. Sarah Gillespie, Smyth County Chamber of Commerce, appeared before Council to present Chamber activities. The Smyth County Chamber of Commerce held ten events in 2024 in the Town of Chilhowie. In 2025 the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce will host a new event, Arts on Main. The Chamber will partner with the Art Place in Chilhowie to host an art fair on Main Street. The Vintage in the Valley was cancelled in 2024 due to Hurricane Helene. The Vintage in the Valley will be launched this year in partnership with the Town of Chilhowie and the Chilhowie Community Apple Festival.

The Smyth County Tourism Center now offers numerous *Virginia is for Lovers* merchandise, local honey, and apple butter. In 2024 the H.L. Bonham Regional Tourism Center was awarded Tourism Center of the year by The Friends of Southwest Virginia. The Carriage House received a new brochure rack allowing the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce to share upcoming events in Smyth County.

The Five Over Five Thousand Challenge boasts the five highest peaks in the state of Viginia-Mount Rogers, Whitetop Mountain, Pine Mountain/Wilburn Ridge, Buzard Rock, and Haw Orchard Mountain. Citizens are challenged to hike each summit while conquering the challenge and enjoying a wide variety of scenery from wild ponies to wildflowers. After completing the Five

over Five Thousand Challenge, citizens are given free swag items from the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce and a shout-out on social media. The Challenge has brought attention to Chilhowie from Ohio, North Carolina, and Northern Virginia.

The H.L. Bonham Regional Tourism Center will receive a new light-emitting diode sign in April 2025. The new sign will allow the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce to advertise events that are occurring within the County. The H.L. Bonham Regional Tourism Center requires several projects to be completed, and the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce offered to help pay for the remaining windows that need to be replaced.

The Health Care and Manufacturing Excellence program is for High School age participants. The Manufacturing Excellence Program is for high school students that want to go straight from graduation to the work force. The students will tour each manufacturing company within the County with some hands-on experience and time to talk with management concerning the positions. The Health Care Excellence Program is for 10th grade students. Once the students complete the Health Care Excellence Program the students will begin looking at a hospital setting, psychiatry setting, or pharmacy setting to determine what type of setting they would like to go into. The Smyth Promise allows high school graduates to attend Virginia Highlands Community College for five semesters for free.

There are a lot of changes happening every day with the Legislature Bills. Every Tuesday the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce sends out a Legislature email to alert their members of the new Bill changes. During Hurricane Helene, the Chamber went door to door delivering food and cleaning supplies to citizens in need. The Smyth County Chamber of Commerce now has a long-term recovery team that is assisting in rebuilding houses due to Hurricane Helene.

Citizen Time:

Arlen Vernon Sturgill, Jr., 125 Popular Avenue, appeared before Council to discuss a potential abandoned mobile home at 201 Popular Avenue. Mr. Sturgill stated someone is sneaking into the property and sleeping as he can see lights from his backyard. The property has not been maintained, and no work has been done on the property in numerous years causing a rat and groundhog issue for Mr. Sturgill. Mr. Sturgill expressed his frustration that he had to bring this matter to the Town, as this property is in the middle of Town and the Town should be on top of the issue. Mr. Sturgill has attempted to buy the piece of property for the past four years but is always told the property is not for sale. Mr. Sturgill requests the Town to condemn the property at 201 Popular Avenue.

Mr. Clear inquired who is paying the electric bill since the lights can be seen. Mr. Sturgill stated the light is dim and looks more like candlelight. Mr. Foster stated he has seen the property, and the Town needs to take action to clean the property up. Mr. Martin stated the Town has a process for blighted houses. Mr. Martin will send a letter to the property owner starting a thirty-day process for a blighted house.

Old Business:

- Update on Removal or Repair of Identifies Unsafe (Burned Out) Structures - Under the Virginia Property Maintenance Code, a Notice of Unsafe Structure for the property at 1404 West Lee Highway and 307 West Lee Highway was posted and the Notice of Unsafe Structure and the Right of Appeal was certified mailed to the property owners. The house at 307 West Lee Highway was demolished in the Fall of 2024 and the house at 1404 West Lee Highway was recently demolished. The Town is working with Mr. Paul Cassell, Town Attorney, to place a lein on both properties. A notice of Unsafe Structure and the Right of Appeal will be mailed to 1487 Old Stage Road and 201 Popular Avenue.

- Update on Sewer Infiltration and Inflow Project and Approval of Pay Request Number 9 – Mr. Dennis Amos, Hurt and Proffitt, stated approximately 14,000 feet of the sanitation sewer collection system has been rehabilitated along with approximately 50 manholes. Portland Utilities will conduct a post construction camera run on the rehabilitation of the sewer collection system and send it to Hurt and Proffitt. Portland Utilities will give their drawings of the markups to Hurt and Proffitt and Hurt and Proffitt will take those drawings and convert them to CADS and provide the Town with digital and paper copies. The Infiltration and Inflow Project came in under the anticipated budget. The Town staff is working with Hurt and Proffitt to identify additional areas within the Town to utilize the remaining funds to further improve the sewer collection system. Mr. Martin respectfully requested Council to approve Pay Request Number Nine in the amount of $264,907.79

Motion by P.J. Wolfe, second by Bill Clear Council approves Pay Request Number Nine in the amount of $264,907.79. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

- Update on Hurricane Recovery – Mr. Dennis Amos, Hurt and Proffitt, stated Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) accepted the design of the Areial Crossings. The Town is now waiting for permits from the Army Corp of Engineers and Inland Fish and Wildlife to enter the water ways to construct for the Areial Crossings. The Department of Environmental Quality has declared the Aerial Crossings as an emergency repair and waived all permits. Once Hurt and Proffit has permits in hand, they will seek approval from the Town to put the project out to bid.

  Mr. Mike Sturgill expressed appreciation to Mr. Brian Martin for removing the bypass off the foot bridge at the Chilhowie High School. A discussion ensued on the new design of the Aerial Crossings. The new design will be able to withstand the 100-year flood.

- General Board of Appeals Vacancy - The General Board of Appeals has a vacancy due to a Board Member relocating outside the Town limits. The General Board of Appeals serves as a board for Citizens the Planning Commission has denied a Zoning Application. Council recommended asking Mr. Randy Sturgill to serve on the General Board of Appeals.

New Business:

- Board of Zoning Appeals Vacancy - The Board of Zoning Appeals has a vacancy due to a Board Member relocating outside the Town limits. The Board of Zoning Appeals addresses things such as varices requests. Mr. Paul Cassell, Town Attorney, stated a Council member cannot serve on the Board of Zoning Appeals. Mrs. Eller sought recommendations from Council for suggestions as to who would want to serve on the Board of Zoning Appeals.

- Save Local Pharmacies Act – Mr. Martin wrote a support letter requesting Governor Youngkin to sign the Save Local Pharmacies Act. In Chilhowie two of the three pharmacies are independent local pharmacies. Signing the Save Local Pharmacies Act into law will ensure their ability to continue to serve the residents of Chilhowie and surrounding Counties. Deadline for signature is Monday, March 24, 2025.

- Appalachian Regional Commission Grant Opportunity for Mount Rogers PDC – Mr. Martin provided a support letter on the behalf of the Town of Chilhowie and their support for the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission applying for funding to increase its capacity to provide necessary services within the planning district. Mount Rogers Planning District Commission will utilize the funds to update the Geographic Information System.

- 2025 Meter Replacement Project – Mr. Keen worked with Mrs. Eller to compile a list of meters that used the most water for the past five years. All the meters on the list are approximately twenty-five years old. Water meters generally last twenty years. Once a water meter begins to go bad, the meter will begin to read low.

  The Town is billing customers for 10 million gallons of water and treating 30 million gallons of water. A new water meter was installed at Chilhowie High School. The average gallons on the old meter was 20,772 gallons and the new meter's average gallons is 213,892 gallons. Two water meters have been changed at Valley Health Care and one meter at Motel 6.

  The Public Works Department will pull ten business meters within Town limits and replace them. They will also pull ten random meters throughout the water system and replace them. All meters removed will be sent to the Washington County Service Authority and a flow test will be conducted to ensure they are reading correctly. The estimated cost to replace the top fifteen water meters is $18,000.00.

Motion by Bill Clear, second by Julie Sturgill Council approves to continue with the meter replacement project in the amount of $18,000. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

- 2025 Emory & Henry Citation Award Nomination Mr. Stephen Fields – Mr. Stephen Fields, Special Events/Recreation Coordinator, has been recognized as one of the recipients of the 2025 Citation Award presented by Emory and Henry College in recognition of outstanding contributions in the community and region.

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Bill Clear Council signifies certificate for Stephen Field. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

- Potential Surplus Equipment - Mr. Keen is working towards cleaning up the Public Works Department and has compiled a list of items the Town no longer uses. The list consists of a Stone Compactor, Water Pump, Dewalt Air Compressor, Generator, Three Inch Water Pump, Sthil Chain Saw, and Lincoln Arc Welder. Mr. Keen requested to list these items as surplus and place on GovDeals to sell.

Motion by P.J. Wolfe, second by Bob Jeter Council deems the Stone Compactor, Water Pump, Dewalt Air Compressor, Generator, Three Inch Water Pump, Sthil Chain Saw, and Lincoln Arc Welder as surplus and list on GovDeals. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

- Notice of Youth Government Day – The annual Youth Government Day will be held on Thursday, March 27, 2025, from 9:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The students will begin their day in the Council room and move through the Town's facilities, learning what each department does. The Town will return the Youth Government Day students, and they will attend the Opportunity Day Fair at the Chilhowie Christian Church at 12:30 p.m.

- Water Capital Expense Change to Surveillance Cameras – The Water Department Fiscal Year 2024-2025 budget includes $30,000 in Capital Expenses earmarked for the Widener Tank Refurbishment. The Water Department is requesting to reallocate $4,634 of the

Capital Expenses to purchase and install surveillance cameras at the Widener and Reid's Pump Station. Installing the surveillance cameras enhances security at both locations with intrusion and voice alarms. There would also be a WI-FI communication capabilities at these sites, that would allow staff to communicate with other staff members without driving back to Town.

Motion by Bob Jeter, second by P.J. Wolfe Council approves to reallocate Water Capital Outlay funds in the amount of $4,634 to purchase and install surveillance cameras at Widener and Reid's Pump Station. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

Department Reports:

Mr. Brian Martin, Town Manager, stated he emailed Mr. Jeff Harrison and Ms. Pam Heath, Virginia Department of Transportation, to inquire about the status of the replacement of the drain tile on Whitetop Road across from McDonalds and traffic lights at the Interstate 81 intersections.

Mrs. Felica Eller, Clerk/Treasurer, discussed account balances with Council. During the February 13, 2025, Council meeting Council deemed 2 JVC 32-inch televisions, 1 Emerson DVD Player, 8 antique student desks, 1 antique teacher work desk, 2 Rolls Microphone/Line Mixers, and miscellaneous electronic equipment cables as surplus and listed on GovDeals to sell as an aggregated lot. The aggregated lot closed on Wednesday, March 12, 2025, with no bids. The Town disposed of the surplus items.

Mr. Andrew Moss, Police Chief, reported the Police Department is fully now staffed. Officer Chance Sessor graduates from the Southwest Virginia Criminal Justice Training Academy on May 30, 2025.

Mr. Tyler Keen, Assistant Public Works Director, worked with Meade Tractor to reconstruct the lease agreement the Town holds for two John Deere zero turn lawn mowers. Mr. Keen was able to save the Town $1,267.20 per year with the reconstructed lease agreement. In the past month the Public Works Department had forty hours of snow removal, one new sewer line install, repaired six service line water leaks, unstopped four sewer lines, used a GPS system to mark all new sewer lines, and demolished the house located at 1404 East Lee Highway.

Mr. Tyler Keen, Assistant Public Works Director, reported on behalf of the Building and Grounds Department. Mr. Keen stated during the month of February the Building and Grounds Department worked on cleaning up debris from the February 15th flooding event, rehabbed the mowing trailer, and completed day to day tasks.

Mr. Stephen Fields, Special Events/Recreation Coordinator, reported the Beyond the Note piano classes begin Monday, March 17, 2025, at the Old High School.

Closed Session:

- Discussion of a Personnel Matter within Public Works Department – Justification 2.2-3711 (A)(1), and Discussion of Public Contract – Justification 2.2-3711(A) (6), as Amended

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Shannon Donnelly and unanimously passed Council hereby enters into Closed Session under Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) and Section 2.2-3711(A)(6) of the Code of Virginia as amended, to discuss Personnel Matter within Public Works Department and Discussion of Public Contract. The motion was approved with following recorded vote:

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

Motion by P.J. Wolfe, second by Julie Sturgill and unanimously passed Council hereby enters into Open Session. The motion was approved with following recorded vote:

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

Certification of Closed Session

The Town of Chilhowie has convened a closed meeting on this date pursuant to an affirmative recorded vote and in accordance with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act; and Section 2.2-3711(A)(1) and Section 2.2-3711(A)(6) of the Code of Virginia requires a certificate by the Council that such closed meeting was conducted in conformity with Virginia law.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the Town of Chilhowie hereby certified that, to the best of each member's knowledge, (i) only public business matters lawfully exempted from open meeting requirements by Virginia law were discussed in the closed meeting to which this certificate applies, and (ii) only such public business matters as were identified in the motion convening the closed meeting were heard, discussed or considered by the Town Council.

Approved with the following roll call vote:

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

Motion by P.J. Wolfe, second by Julie Sturgill Council directs Town Manager to proceed with promotion of two Public Works staff members with conditions and increase of pay as directed by Council. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

Motion by Brent Foster, second by Bob Jeter Council approves Town Attorney to work with the Town Manager and Clerk/Treasurer to include new amendments in Master Plan and present in April. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

Motion by P.J. Wolfe, second by Julie Sturgill Council adjourns this meeting at 8:40 p.m. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

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

_____Vice -Mayor
Brent Foster

_____Clerk
Felicia Eller, CMC