TOWN OF CHILHOWIE, VIRGINIA

Mayor: Gary L. Heninger
Council: Billy L. Clear
Shannon Donnelly
J. Brent Foster
Bob Jeter
Julie Sturgill
P.J. Wolfe

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Town Manager: Brian Martin
Clerk/Treasurer: Felicia C. Eller
Police Chief: Andrew K. Moss
Director Public Works: Daniel W. Combs
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
April 10, 2024

Good evening, Mayor Heninger and Members of the Town Council. I hope Spring is starting off great for you and I am looking forward to all of the warm weather projects, events, and activities the town has scheduled. 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 are now complete related to the town's water system. There is a door at the Fire Training Center that still needs to be addressed. Chief Haynes is continuing to work with the vendor for the door and related system since it is custom built hardware and can only be repaired by the original manufacturer. The influent pump at the wastewater treatment plant damaged during the storm is now replaced, but on installation it was discovered that some of the wiring was also damaged. This issue could not be seen until the pump was out for replacement. Mr. Lowe is working with the installation contractor to also replace this wiring.

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. In fact, just last week, the town staff worked with FEMA and VDEM representatives to officially request an extension for our project which should carry the town through construction completion later this year.

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. Town staff met with Hurt & Proffitt early last week to discuss other problematic areas of the system to consider in the Change Order. A manhole along Highway 11 in Seven Mile Ford and a manhole near Carlock Creek on Lyons Gap Road have also been identified for consideration.

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. Initial sampling at the wastewater treatment plant shows evidence that our project has been preliminarily successful toward this goal as flow rates have shown to be more steady instead of spiking during high rain events.

As a reminder, this $3.9 million project was funded through pilot program funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, so project reporting to the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) will be ongoing for two years after project completion and closeout.

VDOT Communications

I have attached a copy of the email chain between myself and VDOT representatives in the Abingdon Residency. Additionally, Mayor Heninger and I met with VDOT leaders on Monday, April 7th to discuss status of several projects within the town. They stated that the Bridge Division is still studying feasible options to address the pedestrian safety issues under the Interstate bridge at Exit 35. At the request of the town, they are also studying the possibility of rumble strips on the approach to the bridges to slow vehicular traffic.

The drainage issues related to the damaged metal grate on Whitetop Road across from McDonalds is slated to be repaired before July 1. The new concrete drainage tiles have been delivered to the VDOT shop in Chilhowie and the town will be notified prior to replacement.

On March 17, I emailed Mr. Chris Eggleston, an engineer with VDOT, to inquire about the status of the upcoming bridge replacement project on Interstate 81 near mile marker 34. I have attached his response

to this report. Construction is currently slated to begin sometime in the Spring of 2027 with construction timeline estimated at 30 months. Both the northbound and southbound bridges are scheduled for replacement. In addition to disruptions to travel for members of our community, my primary concern for this period is response times and travel routes for our First Responders.

United Way of Southwest Virginia Impact Awards

I am extremely pleased that our town has once again won the SWVA Impact Award for our contributions to community charities through the Celebrity Bagging Event! I thank all of the elected officials and staff who dedicated time that day for such a good cause. The awards dinner is being held April 30 in Abingdon where the town will receive our award. I invite you to attend if possible so that the town is well represented on the regional stage.

Mount Rogers Planning District Commission Annual Meeting

Councilwoman Sturgill, Councilman Clear, Ms. Eller and I attended the MRPDC Annual Dinner Meeting on April 3rd. It was a good event and we thanked the MRPDC board and staff for their assistance to the town through the Mount Rogers Water/Wastewater Fund, which has provided over $500,000 in project funding to the town over the past few years, $100,000 of which has been in the past year.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Permitting Renewal

The town is currently working with Hurt & Proffitt and the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality to renew our operating permit under the Virginia Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (VPDES). This renewal is required every five years and this is the first renewal since the town moved away from land application of biosolids and also the first since monitoring for PFAS is required.

Town staff met with Hurt & Proffitt staff last week for our "kick off" meeting. Work will continue to work towards our renewal deadline of Spring 2026.

Smyth County Museum and Historical Society

Last month the staff approved an annual sponsorship in the amount of $250 for the Smyth County Museum and Historical Society. The museum and offices are located on Main Street in Marion and in addition to the regular hours of the museum, several informational programs are held each year to highlight the history of Smyth County and our towns. I feel like more involvement from Chilhowie can ensure that our town's story continues to be told.

Student Government Day

On March 27th, the town hosted nine Chilhowie High School seniors for this year's Student Government Day. The students were driven to Town Hall by our staff where they were introduced to the processes that make our town run. They got to see the Town Code, some of the original documents from the town's founding, then toured the Administrative Offices, Chilhowie Police Department, Chilhowie Fire/EMS, Public Works, and the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP).

I would like to thank all of the staff members who helped provide these young Warriors with a glimpse into the workings of their hometown!

Questions

As always, I welcome any questions about the status of the town's busy activities. Thank you as always for all you do for our town!

Respectfully Submitted,

J. Brian Martin
Town Manager

Brian Martin

From: Brian Martin
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 5:21 PM
To: Harrison, Jeff W (VDOT); Heath, Pamela, P.E. (VDOT)
Cc: Dotson, Derick (VDOT)
Subject: RE: Town of Chilhowie Status

I can be available on Monday. Would 10 AM or 11 AM work for you and your team? Thanks!

B

J. Brian Martin
Town Manager
Town of Chilhowie
P.O. Box 5012
325 East Lee Highway
Chilhowie VA 24319
276.646.3232
276.646.3012 fax

From: Harrison, Jeff W (VDOT) <JeffW.Harrison@vdot.virginia.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 4:02 PM
To: Brian Martin <bmartin@chilhowieva.gov>; Heath, Pamela, P.E. (VDOT) <Pamela.Heath@VDOT.Virginia.gov>
Cc: Dotson, Derick (VDOT) <derick.dotson@vdot.virginia.gov>
Subject: RE: Town of Chilhowie Status

Mr. Martin,

Thanks for the email and I hope this response finds well. We have been in talks with Bridge division since our last conversation as to what our options are for the safe passage of pedestrians at the exit 35 bridge. We have been provided options that we are prepared to come and discuss with you regarding an under-bridge sidewalk.
The drain on Whitetop Road across from McDonalds is planned and we have the structure at the Chilhowie shop to install. We have been awaiting the weather to cooperate as well as having the ability to get plant mix asphalt, which is now available.
Regarding the request for rumble strips, we will need to talk to Traffic division to receive guidance for this request.
If you are available Monday, April 7, we can arrange to meet you on-site at the bridge and discuss the options we have, as well as talk about the schedule as to when the new drain structure can be installed. Just let me know your availability.

Thanks,

Jeff Harrison

Residency Administrator / Abingdon
Virginia Department of Transportation
276-525-6461 ofc
276-623-7177 cell
jeffw.harrison@VDOT.Virginia.gov

From: Brian Martin <bmartin@chilhowieva.gov>
Sent: Thursday, April 3, 2025 3:31 PM
To: Harrison, Jeff W (VDOT) <JeffW.Harrison@vdot.virginia.gov>; Heath, Pamela, P.E. (VDOT) <Pamela.Heath@VDOT.Virginia.gov>
Subject: Town of Chilhowie Status

Mr. Harrison/Ms. Heath:

Members of the Chilhowie Town Council have requested that I reach out to you to inquire about the status of a couple of projects in our town.

First, who in the Bridge Division should I contact about the status of the study determining the feasibility of a sidewalk under the interstate bridges at the intersection of I-81 and Whitetop Road at Exit 35?

Second, can you provide a status/timeline for the proposed drain replacement project on Whitetop Road across from McDonalds?

Finally, some members of Town Council wanted me to inquire about the feasibility of rumble strips near the intersection mentioned above to help slow traffic since VDOT's recent traffic study determined that traffic lights at the intersection are not warranted.

I appreciate any information you can provide and, as always, thank you for all you do for Chilhowie and our surrounding community!

B

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Brian Martin

From: Eggleston, Christopher (VDOT Contractor) <chris2.eggleston@vdot.virginia.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, March 18, 2025 1:28 PM
To: Brian Martin
Cc: Felicia Eller
Subject: RE: Project 0081-086-854, P103, B671, B672

Mr. Martin,

Below are responses to your questions:

- The proposed advertisement date for this project is currently 10/13/26, but construction activities will not start on the project for several months with spring of 2027 being the most likely time equipment will show up on the project. The current estimated duration of the project is approximately 30 months. It should be noted that the project is still early in development and both the advertisement date and construction duration may shift out due to ongoing coordination with endangered species and other project development activities.
- Yes, plans are available for review at the Bristol District Office (2111 Bonham Road, Bristol, VA 24201), the Abington Residency Office (700 E. Main St., Abingdon, VA 24210), and I am providing a link to the electronic version.
    - Public Hearing Plans

As an FYI, we intend to maintain 2 lanes of traffic on I-81 throughout the project via multiple phases and median crossovers. There will be some single lane closures and potentially *slow roll* operations to deliver materials, but these will be overnight, intermittent, and will be scheduled during the construction.

Please feel free to reach out with any further questions.

Thanks,

Chris

Christopher Eggleston, P.E., PMP, DBIA
Project Manager

Office: 540.278.2405
Cell: 757.981.8973
Chris2.eggleston@vdot.virginia.gov

From: Brian Martin <bmartin@chilhowieva.gov>
Sent: Monday, March 17, 2025 4:36 PM
To: Eggleston, Christopher (VDOT Contractor) <chris2.eggleston@vdot.virginia.gov>
Cc: Felicia Eller <feller@chilhowieva.gov>
Subject: Project 0081-086-854, P103, B671, B672

Mr. Eggleston/Sir:

Per the letter I received from VDOT dated March 6, 2025 regarding this bridge replacement project on Interstate 81, I am writing you to inquire about specifics of the project. As the project (while absolutely needed) will impact traffic including work commutes and EMS response for our locality, I would like to be able to share details of the project with Chilhowie's elected officials and first responders.

In particular:

- What is the proposed timeline for this project?
  *Proposed construction start date and anticipated timeline for completion?
- Are plans available to be shared publicly?

Thank you for any input you can provide and, as always, thank you for everything VDOT does for our town and our Commonwealth.

Brian

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impact awards 2025

Shining a light on the best in Southwest Virginia

United Way of Southwest Virginia

save the date

04.30.2025

5-8 pm

RSVP by 4.18.2025
by contacting Cristie Lester at:
(276) 628-2160
clester@unitedwayswva.org

Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center
1 Partnership Circle Abingdon, VA, 24210
An evening of networking, dinner, and awards!