TOWN OF CHILHOWIE, VIRGINIA

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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
July 10, 2025

Good evening, Mayor Heninger and Members of the Town Council. I hope you are doing well and have enjoyed a wonderful Independence Day Holiday. As our team of elected officials and staff, this month we undertake our new budget and look forward to continuing our path of improving the town's financial position. 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 and the wiring issue that I reported to you last month is now repaired.

The permanent completion of the three damaged aerial wastewater system crossings over the river has now been approved by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The project has been advertised in local media outlets, online through the Town of Chilhowie webpage as well as on the webpage of our engineering consultants at Hurt & Proffitt and has also been posted in project planning sites throughout the region. A pre-bid conference was held at Chilhowie Town Hall on June 26, where two interested firms were in attendance. The next week, another firm contacted me to express their interest in the project. With this level of interest, I am optimistic that the town will receive good bids. Bids are due no later than 2 PM on July 16th, which is next week.

The town's intention of seeing the destroyed crossings at Chilhowie High/Middle School and just below the Tattle Branch bridge completed first has been conveyed to all interested firms. Ensuring that these two are completed first will facilitate the removal of the temporary wastewater bypass, which will allow the town to eliminate this ongoing risk and reduce the town's expenditures by over $17,000 per month.

I have been working with a handful of property owners to obtain temporary construction easements to allow access for these rebuilds. To date, of the four property requiring easements, two have been obtained and one is awaiting signature at the Smyth County School Board's Central Office. I would like to thank

Councilman Shannon Donnely for his efforts to help the town obtain one of these easements. His work is greatly appreciated.
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.

As Ms. Eller reported to you at our continued meeting in June to adopt the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget, the town has received our first reimbursement from FEMA/VDEM. Per your instruction, $100,000 of this reimbursement is now placed in the town's reserve funds, with the remaining $32,000 being put back in the General Fund.

I would like to again thank Ms. Diana Thompson from FEMA for her outstanding support since she has taken over at the town's FEMA representative.

Sewer Improvement Project Update

The town's contractor, Portland Utilities, continues to wrap up small "punch list" tasks as this project winds down toward completion. Change Order #3 has been planned and will address issues with leaking and unstable manholes in two areas and will replace approximately 700 feet of old sewer pipe along Sunset Drive. This line was not part of the original scope of work, but was identified by Public Works a few months ago and, after assessing the condition of this line, has been deemed a key area of I&I (Inflow and Infiltration).

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

The drainage issues related to the damaged metal grate on Whitetop Road across from McDonalds have not yet been completed. The replacement of the drainage basin and grate were slated to occur before July 1st. I have reached out to VDOT to determine a new timeline for the project.

As a reminder, VDOT has scheduled construction to begin on the Interstate bridges at mile marker 34 in early 2027. Construction is slated to be for 30 months.

The bridge project on Whitetop Road has been completed. The substructure is now completely sanded and refurbished.

I will be attending VDOT's I-81 Solutions Public Meeting in Bristol on July 16th. At this meeting I will again express the town's sincere desire to see a resolution to the safety issues at the Exit 35 interchange. Additionally, if you have other issues you would like me to address with VDOT, please let me know.

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.

The staff continues to take the steps required for permit renewal. Attached is our official notification letter from DEQ. the town's current discharge permit expires May 3, 2026.

Smyth County/Saltville Rich Valley Lions Club Carnival Assistance

Smyth County reached out to Chilhowie requesting the town's assistance with inspection of the amusement rides that will be assembled for the Saltville Rich Valley Lions Club Annual Carnival later this month. As the county currently does not have a certified inspector, I talked with the town's Building Official, David Haynes, who has agreed to take care of this matter. Chilhowie values our relationships with our neighboring localities and I always strive to assist them whenever it is possible.

Water Accountability

I initially reported this to you a couple of months ago. Public Works continues to work towards higher water accountability so that we can have a better handle on expenses and maximize revenues. More importantly to me, it is in our community's best interests to make wise use and wise management of this precious resource. Two weeks ago, Mr. Keen and Mr. Cole covered sections of our water system with representatives from Virginia Rural Water Association to locate and repair four leaks.

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