TOWN OF CHILHOWIE, VIRGINIA

Mayor: Gary L. Heninger
Council: Billy L. Clear
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J. Brent Foster
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Town Manager: Brian Martin
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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
June 12, 2025

Good evening, Mayor Heninger and Members of the Town Council. I would like to thank everyone who helped with and attended the town's celebration luncheon for our retired Public Works Director, Mr. Danny Combs. I truly appreciate his 30 years of dedicated service to the Town of Chilhowie and wish him all the best. It was great to see your town staff, elected officials, and friends and family come out to break bread together and celebrate Danny's service to our community!

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.

The largest remaining repairs to be completed are the reconstruction of the town's three aerial wastewater crossings. As reported for the past two months, the JPA for the project has been submitted to our Federal and state regulatory agencies for review and approval. The final approval, for USACE (United States Army Corps of Engineers) was received last week. Now that we are in receipt of this, the town's engineering consultants, Hurt & Proffitt, have scheduled out the timeline for advertisement of the project and construction dates. As of now, we are hopeful that our project schedule will facilitate contractor selection and project mobilization so that construction can begin on the new piers on or about October 1. The first of the rebuilds will be the crossing just behind Chilhowie High School, the second will be the crossing at Tattle Branch, and the third will be the crossing at Seven Mile Ford. This will allow for the removal of the temporary bypass at the earliest possible date, thereby reducing the town's expenses and minimizing the risk of another leak of wastewater into the river.

Ms. Eller continues to coordinate with FEMA and VDEM (Virginia Department of Emergency Management) to track our outstanding requests for reimbursement. As of now, no reimbursement funds have been received by the town.

I would like to 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. Our latest Progress Meeting was held May 7th, where the details of the Change Order Number 2 were discussed. Change Order Number 2 will address leaking and unstable manholes adjacent to Highway 11 in Seven Mile Ford and along Lyons Gap Road.

After payment is made to the contractor for the work undertaken with this most recent Change Order, we anticipate that enough funding will remain to perform much-needed repairs or replacement of old and failing lines in the West End of town, particularly along Skyview Drive. While this section of the town's wastewater collection system wasn't considered during the planning phase of this project, recent repairs by the Public Works Department brought the poor conditions of these lines to the town's attention. Once I was made aware, conversations were initiated with Hurt & Proffitt, along with the funding agency, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ). DEQ quickly assessed that these new areas fall within the original purpose of the project, reduction of I&I (Inflow and Infiltration), so approval was granted for the town to look into possible courses of action.

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 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.

I represented Chilhowie on May 13th at the VDOT Public Hearing for the Six-Year Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB) in Abingdon.

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.

As you can see, the bridge refurbishment project on the Whitetop Road bridge between McDonalds and the H.L. Bonham House is now underway. The purpose of the project is to sandblast and repaint much of the metal substructure that supports the roadway of the bridge. According to the VDOT contractor for this project, Elite Contractors, Inc., the project is set to be complete within two to three weeks. Lane closures will be kept to an absolute minimum, if needed at all. However, the sidewalk will be closed for the duration of the project.

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. A copy of the town's agreement with Hurt & Proffitt to assist with this process is located in your agenda packet. As a reminder, the town's current discharge permit expires May 3, 2026.

103nd Virginia 4-H State Congress

The Smyth County Office of the Virginia Cooperative Extension reached out to our town regarding the 103rd Virginia 4-H State Conference, which will be held at Virginia Tech on June 24th-27th. Twelve students will be attending this prestigious event from Smyth County, four of which are from Chilhowie. In fact, this is the first year since 2019 that Chilhowie has had more than one (or no) students to attend.

On behalf of Mayor Heninger and the Chilhowie Town Council, I approved a $600 donation from the town to help offset the expenses of these outstanding young Warriors as they represent our community at this statewide congress. I wish them good luck and very happy memories of this experience!

Weeds, Trash, and Clutter

The staff and I have been in contact, or attempted to make contact, with several property owners regarding unmown lawns, trash and other debris around their properties, and other unsightly issues. After receipt of the town's certified letters, several property owners complied and took care of the issues themselves. Others have not complied; therefore the Buildings and Grounds crew have been busy over the past week mowing lawns. The town's expenses for this are being tracked and a lien will be placed on each of these properties at the end of the mowing season.

If you see issues around town, or if you receive complaints from residents, please contact me so that we can work to address the matter.

Washington County Service Authority

On June 4th, Don Cole, Tyler Keen, Felicia Eller, and I attended a meeting at the main offices of the Washington County Service Authority (WCSA). We met with their leadership team to discuss the status of the VDH FCAP funding application that, if approved, will facilitate needed pump repairs/improvements at the Mill Creek Water Treatment Plant as well as a possible interconnect between the Town of Chilhowie water system and the WCSA system along Highway 11 just west of town. This interconnect has been discussed and debated since at least 2015. If ever able to be constructed, it would provide a critical backup source of water for the town, as well as increased capacity for Pathway Park, which could offer an incentive for industry location.

In addition to this grant application, we discussed tree removal at the Mill Creek Plant, updated each other on the status of projects in our service areas, compared notes on our interactions with FEMA, and looked at some of the meter types that WCSA uses in their system as we prepare for our upcoming water meter replacement project.

I feel that the meeting was very productive and we intend to continue having these meetings on a semi-annual basis.

National Flood Insurance Program Training

On June 11th, I attended a class at the Higher Education Center in Abingdon to learn more about recent changes to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). The class is being hosted by the Floodplain Management Division of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and addressed benefits and responsibilities of participating in the NFIP, basic regulations and permitting, along with a walk-through of using Crisis Track. This database proved crucial in collecting and documenting the damage caused by last year's hurricane.

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

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May 14, 2025

Mr. Bailey Robertson
Smyth County 4-H Agent
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Smyth County Office
121 Bagley Circle, Suite 434
Marion, VA 24354

RE: 103rd Virginia 4-H State Congress

Dear Mr. Robertson:

This letter is in response to your letter requesting assistance with funding the 12 Smyth students attending this year's State Congress. I was pleased to hear during our conversation, and in your letter, that four Chilhowie Warriors will be attending this year, the first year since 2019 that Chilhowie students have attended.

I personally think that this is a great opportunity for these young members of our community and the town will provide $600 to help offset their costs for this event. The check is available to be picked up at Chilhowie Town Hall at your convenience.

On behalf of Mayor Heninger and the members of the Chilhowie Town Council, I wish best wishes for a good event. Thank you for all you do for our community.

Sincerely,

J. Brian Martin
Town Manager

Virginia Cooperative Extension
Smyth County Office
121 Bagley Circle, Ste 434
Marion, Virginia 24354
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Dear Members of the Chilhowie Town Council,

On behalf of Virginia Cooperative Extension and the Smyth County 4-H Program, I am writing to respectfully request your support for the 103rd Virginia 4-H State Congress, which will be held June 24–27, 2025, at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. This year, we are proud to share that four outstanding youth from Chilhowie—Jaiden H., Ryan H., Cadence H., and Lucas H.—will be representing their community at this prestigious statewide event.

Virginia 4-H State Congress is the premier youth leadership and development experience for teens across the Commonwealth. It provides both competitive and non-competitive educational opportunities that empower participants with essential life skills, foster civic responsibility, and promote academic and career readiness.

This year, Smyth County 4-H has grown its delegation to 12 youth delegates, with a total cost of approximately $3,500 ($295 per participant). We are seeking community support to help offset these costs, as many of our youth would not be able to attend without local assistance.

Here's why Virginia 4-H State Congress matters so deeply for the youth of Smyth County and the Town of Chilhowie:

- **Life Skill Development:** Youth participate in hands-on leadership and communication activities such as public speaking, presentations, table setting, and radio commentary. These experiences teach teens how to articulate ideas, manage time, and work collaborative skills they bring back to their homes, schools, and communities.

- **Exposure to Higher Education:** By living on the Virginia Tech campus and engaging in academic workshops, participants are inspired to pursue higher education and explore potential career paths. Congress often ignites the spark that helps youth discover their true passions.

- **Civic Engagement:** Delegates take part in state-level elections and gain firsthand experience with governance and decision-making. They return home motivated to lead, serve on boards, and contribute to local solutions.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, genetic information, ethnicity or national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, or military status, or any other basis protected by law.

- **Peer Networking & Recognition:** With youth from nearly all 95 counties attending, Congress offers unique opportunities for cultural exchange, perspective-building, and self-discovery. Recognition for accomplishments throughout the week fosters confidence and continued engagement.

We are incredibly proud of the four 4-H members from Chilhowie attending this year's event. Your investment in their experience would not only support them directly, but also positively impact on the future of our community. Thank you for considering our request.

With sincere appreciation,

Bailey Robertson

Bailey Robertson
Smyth County 4-H Agent
Virginia Cooperative Extension