TOWN OF CHILHOWIE

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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
Recreation/Special Events Coordinator: Stephen Fields
Buildings, Streets, & Grounds: Christopher Johnson
Legal: Cassell & Crewe, P.C.

Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council
December 11, 2025

Good evening,

I would like to thank all the staff, elected officials, and volunteers who helped make Chilhowie's Christmas festivities this past weekend so successful. I wish the very best of wishes to you, your families, and our entire community for this Christmas season and into the New Year!

Here's a summary of what's going on in your town:

2026 Virginia General Assembly Session

As you're aware, the 407th Virginia General Assembly session is scheduled to begin on January 14th, 2026. The VML/VACO Local Government Day is set for February 5th. I plan to represent Chilhowie and intend to visit with each of our state legislators and their staff while there. Over the next few weeks, I will be drafting our town's list of priorities to bring to their attention. Please let me know any issues you would like to see addressed so that I can include them.

Hurricane Helene Recovery

With the exception of the three aerial river crossings in the town's wastewater collection system, all major repairs have been completed.

Regarding the repair of the three aerial sewer crossings, the project is now underway. Temporary access roads have been built, materials have been mobilized, and cleanup of debris is complete. Staff, the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), our contractors with Portland Utilities, Hurt & Proffitt, and staff from the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission held our third monthly project progress meeting last week on December 4th.

The alternative design for the support of the crossings has now been approved by Hurt & Proffit and DEQ. This revised design will eliminate the need for support structures in the waterways, therefore drastically minimizing points where debris can accumulate during high water events. This alternative design has all support structures located on the riverbanks, while also providing more resilient support for

the casings over the river, and if the pipes are ever broken again, this design should allow for much quicker and economical repair.

In addition to a small cost savings of approximately $40,000, this revised, more resilient design, will be more likely to be eligible for mitigation reimbursements from FEMA. Ms. Eller has submitted plans for this new design to FEMA, and they are currently under review.

We have initiated work at the crossing behind Chilhowie Middle/High School and then will proceed to the crossing just below the Tattle Branch Bridge. Reconstruction of these two aerials will allow the removal of the temporary wastewater bypass that will result in savings to the town of over $17,000 per month.

I cannot begin to express my gratitude to your staff for helping corral these repairs and itemized expenses over the past year. Finally, I would like to give a special thank you to Ms. Eller who has done a top-notch job of keeping me and the other department heads on point with the requirements that FEMA had set forth. Without her dedication, the town would not be receiving reimbursements anywhere near the level that we are.

Finally, the $2,281,678 funding package from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) that Chilhowie was approved for is now closed with the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA). I signed the closing documents in early November and the town has begun drawing these funds down. Once again, I would like to thank everyone whose efforts contributed in our town's approval for this money through the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund (VCWRLF)!

Sewer Improvement Project Update

This project is now complete, with the exception of a final decision from VDOT on pavement patching along Bonham Avenue, where lateral lines were replaced. Once a determination is received from VDOT, any street repairs deemed necessary can be made and this project will officially be completed.

As a reminder, this project was funding through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law through "pilot project" funding and therefore will require the town and our engineering consultants to monitor collection data at the town's wastewater treatment plant for a period of one year and report to DEQ so that the success of the project can be tracked. I commend Mr. Luke Lowe and the staff at the Wastewater Treatment Plant for their diligent recordkeeping to document our findings.

VDOT Communications

Town staff continue to have regular email or phone communication with both our Chilhowie Residency and the Area Headquarters in Abingdon. We continue to advocate for solutions to address pedestrian safety at the Exit 35 interchange as well as other areas in our community.

As you're aware, the town has been in conversation with the VDOT, the Principals of Chilhowie High School and Chilhowie Middle School, and the Smyth County Superintendent of Schools in our combined efforts to install more visible signage at both of the crosswalks at the schools on Highway 11. At this point, VDOT has agreed to install solar powered lighted pedestrian signage and is currently researching the best options our community. I hope to have further updates for you by next month.

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.

Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA) Communications

On November 18, your administrative staff met virtually with Ms. Hollie Cammarasana, the Director of Communications for VRSA. She provided very insightful perspectives on how our staff can better use social media and other information outlets to refine and enhance the town's messaging and communications to our residents. All staff members involved reported to me that they thought it was a very beneficial interaction.

Additionally, Ms. Eller and I met with Lisa Shenk, the Senior Account Executive for VRSA, on November 24th for our annual insurance coverage review. Based on our meeting, I feel that Chilhowie is currently in "good health" with the town's insurance policies and I am also confident and pleased that your staff is very judicious in the filing of claims, which directly impacts our annual premiums.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Permitting Renewal

The town continues to work 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.

As a reminder, Chilhowie's current permit expires in May 2026. As of now, I see no reason that we won't make that deadline.

Mount Rogers Water/Wastewater Fund & Widener Tank Refurbishment

Chilhowie's funding application for $93,752 was submitted in August for the 2025 funding cycle of the Mount Rogers Water/Wastewater Program. Our request was approved, and the funds will be used for the refurbishment of the Widener Feed Tank. This project is the first extensive servicing of the water tank since at least 1998 and will hopefully help ensure many more years of service.

Mid Atlantic Storage Systems, Inc. has now completed their rehabilitation work and the tank is back online.

Project documentation and invoices have been sent to the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission (MRPDC) and we expect to receive reimbursement funds within the next two weeks.

United Way of Southwest Virginia Celebrity Bagging Event

I extend my appreciation to the elected officials and staff members who were able to give some of their time to help support our town and to help raise much needed funds for use by the United Way of Southwest Virginia for numerous charitable causes in our community! Our event on November 25th raised almost $500 from town staff and elected officials, as well as several hundred more dollars in donations from community members. Good job, Chilhowie!

The Makery

I also extend my thanks and appreciation to all our elected officials, staff, and members of our community that turned out on December 1st for the Grand Opening of the Smyth County Public Library's maker space, now known as "The Makery". It was a very nice turnout to celebrate the location of this unique facility in our town. I feel that its addition will bolster the creativity of our community.

I truly appreciate all the hard work of Ms. Rose Likins, Executive Director of Smyth County Public Library System, Ms. Heather Carter, Chilhowie Branch Librarian, the library staff, and the Friends of the Smyth County Library in helping bring this wonderful addition to Chilhowie!

Department of Conservation and Recreation Stormwater Study Grant Application

Partnering with Hurt & Proffitt, the town submitted a $450,000 grant application to produce an updated town-wide stormwater study. This funding program is from the Virginia Community Flood Preparedness Fund, administered by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). If funded, it would allow the town and its engineering consultants to undertake a study to best address several areas in town that have long dealt with flooding and stormwater drainage issues. As part of our application, I requested that a few key areas be given strong consideration: Church Street, Railroad Avenue, the intersection of Highway 11 and Bonham Avenue, and Whitetop Road in front of McDonalds.

This statewide funding is highly competitive, but I feel that we have drafted a very solid application packet and we will keep our fingers crossed. Funding announcements are expected this coming May or June.

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