TOWN OF CHILHOWIE

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Water Operations: Don Cole, II
Recreation/Special Events Coordinator: Stephen Fields
Buildings, Streets, & Grounds: Christopher Johnson
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Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council
November 13, 2025

Good evening,

I would like to thank all of our elected officials, town staff, community organizations, and local businesses who made our October 30th Halloween Bash at the Farmers Market such a tremendous success! As you know, due to inclement weather, our event was moved to the Old High School. Despite the weather and the last-minute change of venue, the outpouring of support was overwhelming. I hesitate to call this year's event the "First Annual" but based on the response your staff has received over the past week, I can envision this becoming an annual event. While much planning, work, and effort went into our Town of Chilhowie Halloween Bash, I don't regret one ounce of the effort because it yet again highlights our efforts to make our community a wonderful place to live!

This past Tuesday, the town held our annual celebration for Veterans Day. As you know, Memorial Day commemorates the memories of those veterans who gave their lives in defense of our nation, but Veterans Day is set aside to honor ALL veterans.

The origin of Veterans Day begins with the ending of the Great War, today known as World War I. As the Armistice took effect on November 11, 1918, the fighting ended and America's "Doughboys" started the journey of returning home. Over the years, there were local events around the nation to honor the veterans of that "was to end all wars", but there was no organized national effort to establish a national holiday. That changed in 1938 when Congress passed a bill that was signed into law by President Roosevelt establishing November 11th as a national holiday to be named Armistice Day.

After the monumental mobilization efforts, sacrifices of so many families both in uniform and on the homefront, and loss of over 400,000 young Americans that ultimately led to victory in World War II quickly followed by the unexpected Korean War, our nation lobbied for a holiday to continue to honor the veterans of World War I, but also to honor veterans of all wars and also those who serve in peacetime.

In 1954, President Eisenhower signed the law that changed "Armistice Day" to "Veterans Day" and that is how it remains to this day.

With the passage of time, the faces of America's veteran population have changed, but the dedication and devotion to our nation that every single one of us who have raised our right hand and took the oath has

not changed. I am extremely honored to be part of a community like Chilhowie that takes time to show its appreciation for that.

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

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 almost complete. Staff, our contractors with Portland Utilities, Hurt & Proffitt, and staff from the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission held our second monthly project progress meeting last week on November 6th. An alternative design for the support of the crossing has been discussed for several months and is now under review for consideration. If deemed appropriate by the town's engineering consultants, this 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 would have 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.

We plan to begin work at the crossing behind Chilhowie Middle/High School and then 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 in the final phase of closing with the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA) and we expect these forgivable loan proceeds to be available to the town within the next four to six weeks. 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

With the completion of Change Order #4, this project is now complete with the exception of some pavement patching and closeout paperwork.

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.

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.

Currently, the town, VDOT, and the Smyth County School Board are looking into options for an additional crosswalk at Chilhowie High School and Chilhowie Middle School, as well as improved signage or other ways to increase safety for our students.

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.

OSHA Certifications

I would like to again thank our elected officials and residents for their patience and understanding as your staff closed Town Hall for two half-days on October 16th and 17th so that the administrative staff could have the opportunity to take the OSHA 10 training class and become certified. It is of utmost importance to me that all staff members have every tool at their disposal to work in a safe environment.

I also would like to thank Mr. Eddie Shelton, Safety Specialist with the Virginia Risk Sharing Association (VRSA), for taking time to conduct the training. His support of our staff and of our town is yet another testament to the great relationship between Chilhowie and VRSA.

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.

Last month I reported to you that I had signed the application packet and that it had been submitted to DEQ. Since that time, DEQ staff have requested two minor amendments to the packet. Staff has worked with Hurt & Proffitt and the revised packet has been resubmitted.

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.

Smyth County Enterprise Zone

On October 28th, I attended a training session provided by the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) that provided refresher information on the Enterprise Zone Program, how it applies to Smyth County and Chilhowie, as well as updates to the program.

Wellspring Foundation

A ribbon cutting is being held at the Virginia Highlands Small Business Incubator in Abingdon on November 25th to celebrate the opening of the new home for the Wellspring Foundation. I plan to attend to represent Chilhowie. If anyone would like to attend with me, please let me know.

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. is the company completing the refurbishment. They are scheduled to begin within the next few days. The timeline for the project is slated to be three weeks.

I would like to commend the town staff for an absolutely amazing job of preparing our water system for this project. It's extremely rare to take a water tank offline for such a lengthy period of time while still ensuring adequate flows and pressures. The hard work and conscientious planning undertaken by them is very much noticed by me and very much appreciated.

Pathway Park

I continue to work with the Smyth County Administrator and Smyth County Economic Development to push for the location of an industry in Pathway Park. Currently, Pathway Park is the largest available industrial site in Smyth County. As it sits vacant, the town gets no benefit or revenue out of it. I'm hopeful that with our combined efforts, we can help grow our local economy.

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