TOWN OF CHILHOWIE

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Council: Billy L. Clear
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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
October 9, 2025

Good evening, Mayor Heninger and Members of the Town Council. I hope this report finds you well. I would like to thank all of the elected officials, staff members, and dedicated volunteers that made last month's Chilhowie Apple Festival such a successful event. While the festival has been part of our community for over 70 years, this year felt fresh and full of renewed energy after having such a disappointing event last year due to the devastation caused by Hurricane Helene. While impossible to calculate exact numbers, everyone involved in this year's Apple Festival that I've talked with feels that this was one of the bigger crowds our town has seen in several years!

While the Apple Festival is one piece of the rich fabric that makes up Chilhowie's heritage, another, much older piece that has direct ties to the founding of our nation took place in October of 245 years ago. On October 7, 1780, the Battle of King's Mountain was fought in northern South Carolina. This unexpected American victory quite literally changed the course of the American Revolution in favor of the Patriots fighting for independence from the British Empire. The Americans fighting that day were made up entirely of militia units from East Tennessee, North Carolina, and Southwestern Virginia. In command of these men, the Overmountain Men, was Colonel William Campbell, whose home and farm was right here in our community in between "the Town House and the Seven Mile Ford". Without going into the history of how the battle came to be and the Overmountain Men's journey from our Virginia Highlands to South Carolina, it can simply be stated that this unexpected victory against the British at a time when they were winning victory after victory against the Patriots shocked leaders on both sides of the struggle and put in motion a reinvigorated effort by the Americans to challenge the British Army in a push that ended a year later with the British surrender at Yorktown, effectively securing America's independence.

Colonel (later promoted to General) Campbell is buried in his family's cemetery at Aspenvale, near his wife Elizabeth, sister of Patrick Henry. Campbell's servant, John Broady, also fought bravely at Kings Mountain and is now buried in Saltville in the Broady Cemetery. And right here in our town is buried Phillip Greever, who reportedly fired the first shot at Kings Mountain. He lies in the Greever Cemetery on the west end of town, near the homes of current Town Council members Shannon Donnelly, Bob Jeter, and Julie Sturgill.

I feel that highlighting this part of Chilhowie's October history is very relevant as our nation prepares for our 250th anniversary of independence next summer. Leading up this anniversary there are many events honoring our founding fathers and mothers. Chilhowie is a member of the Smyth County Committee of

Virginia 250 (VA250) and will be more involved in promoting our ties to this history in the coming months.

Here's a summary of what's going on in your 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 park benches you were informed of last month were delivered and have been installed by the Buildings and Grounds staff. Additionally, Chief Haynes has received the final components to complete the last repairs at the Fire Training Center.

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 ongoing. Staff, our contractors with Portland Utilities, Hurt & Proffitt, and staff from the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission held our first monthly project progress meeting on October 2nd. At this time, the project is on schedule.

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

The town's contractor, Portland Utilities, continues to wrap up small "punch list" tasks as this project winds down toward completion. Change Order #3, which you approved two months ago, is now complete. Change Order #4 is drafted and work is ready to proceed upon Town Council's approval of it.

As a reminder, Change Order #4 will address a problematic manhole in the Seven Mile Ford section of our wastewater collection system.

Upon completion of the work specified in Change Order #4, this project will substantially be complete. Once the project work is finalized, you will be provided a summary of the project from start to completion. 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.

Seven Mile Ford Waterline Replacement and Sytemwide Meter Replacement Project

After inactivity on this project for several months due to audits, other projects, etc. I can report that this project is still moving forward. The town has worked with the Virginia Health Department to complete all environmental review requirements, and a Categorical Exclusion has been approved for the project.

Town staff have met several times over the past month to review project plans and have met with Hurt & Proffitt to determine changes necessary to make final preparations.

Ms. Eller, myself, and several others continue to work through the parity process required by VRA and USDA/Rural Development to close the funding package.

I'm hopeful for Spring 2026 closing on this project.

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.

I have also requested that VDOT look into possible options for improved signage for our business community located on the west side of Main Street, as well as on the east side in the town's Historic District.

I plan to attend the I-81 Corridor Improvement Session at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center on October 27th. Please provide me any inputs or recommendations that you would like me to present.

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.

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.

Mount Rogers Regional Cigarette Tax Board

I will be representing Chilhowie at the quarterly board meeting on October 22nd. I along with some other local administrators are collaborating on a proposal to submit for consideration by the Virginia General Assembly to expand the current legislation to allow for taxation of non-tobacco products such as vape and vaping accessories.

Improved Water Capacity/WCSA

Town staff, Washington County Service Authority staff, Hurt & Proffitt, and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) continue with sampling at the town spring that was taken offline in the 1990s, are planning a required flow metering system, along with other steps to determine if the spring can be brought back online as an additional input into the town's water system. I will update you further once initial results are tabulated.

Mount Rogers Water/Wastewater Fund

Annual funding applications for this $586,000 pool of funding were posted in late July. This year, our staff has applied for funding to refurbish the water tank at the Widener Spring. While the staff has not received official notification of approval yet, town staff are busy preparing the water tank and re-routing plans so that we can initiate work quickly should funding be approved.

Capital Improvement Plan

Several of the town's funding and regulatory agencies are now requiring that all localities have a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). I've worked with all Department Heads and have compiled a document to satisfy this requirement. However, we as your staff have agreed that all of the work put into this document should not go to a vain effort, so I am now creating a document from the inputs of your department heads that we can use as a "living document" that we can use internally to target and track progress on the town's short-term, intermediate, and long-term goals.

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