Virginia: **At the Joint Council meeting of the Chilhowie Planning Commission held Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.**

Present: **David Blevins, Donna Blevins, Jim Bonham, and Flave Davis**

Council: **Honorable Gary L. Heninger, Mayor presiding; Councilors Bill Clear, Shannon Donnelly, Brent Foster, Bob Jeter, Julie Sturgill, and P.J. Wolfe.**

Absent: **None.**

Also Present: Mr. Brian Martin, Town Manager; Mrs. Felicia Eller, CMC, Clerk-Treasurer; Messrs. Paul Cassell, Town Attorney; Andrew Moss, Police Chief; David Haynes, Fire/EMS Chief; Tyler Keen, Assistant Public Works Director, and Chris Johnson, Foreman Building, Grounds, and Streets.

Public Hearing:

- Joint Public Hearing with Town Council – 2025 Comprehensive Plan – Mrs. Eller presented the following:

Notice of Joint Public Hearing
2025 Comprehensive Plan
Town of Chilhowie, Virginia

The Chilhowie Town Council and Chilhowie Planning Commission will be holding a Joint Public Hearing to consider adoption of a new Comprehensive Plan for the Town that has been formulated in conjunction with the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission and Chilhowie Planning Commission. The proposed Plan is slated to replace the 2018 document. The Plan focuses on key community features including population / demographics, housing, land use, community facilities, transportation, economy and government, etc., and makes recommendations thereon. The Joint Public Hearing will be held on Thursday, January 9, 2025 at 7:00 p.m. at the Chilhowie Town Hall. Any Citizen of the Town or other interest citizen is invited to appear and speak thereon. Following the Public Hearing the Planning Commission may make a recommendation on its adoption, with or without amendments, to the Town Council. Signed written comments will also accepted and read aloud. A copy of the proposed Comprehensive Plan is available for review at the Town Hall at 325 East Lee Highway and on-line at www.chilhowie.org.

By Authority of the Mayor and Town Council,
J. Brian Martin, Town Manager

By Authority of the Chilhowie Planning Commission,
James B. Bonham, III, Chairman

Published in Smyth County News December 21, 2024 and December 28, 2024 Editions

Mayor Heninger opened the Public Hearing at 7:05 p.m.

Jordan Powers: I am Jordan Powers, with the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission. The Mount Rogers Planning District Commission was tasked with assisting the Town with rewriting the Comprehensive Plan. It is important for us to understand what the Comprehensive Plan is. The Comprehensive Plan is the Town's principal guidance or visioning document. It is used to maintain and enhance the managed growth and viability of the Town. Every five years you must update or adopt a Comprehensive Plan that is required by the state. Throughout the past twelve months we have held meetings with the Planning Commission to discuss the updated information that the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission provided.

I have a few key pieces I would like to touch on. The second chapter in this document is, "The Goals and Objectives" those are updated and developed into an implementation matrix that identifies the funding required for each task. The potential timeline for responsible parties for each strategy. Next up in the Population Chapter we updated the demographics with the most up to date information. I just wanted to touch on each chapter to provide a general idea of the things that were discussed. The next chapter is, Housing, we discussed occupancy and needs were outlined and addressed. The lack of new construction, elderly housing options, and housing affordability are becoming a real issue within the Town and the region as a whole. For the Land Use Chapter, the Mount Rogers Planning District Commission conducted a street-by-street land use survey. The land use survey identified property and acreage of each usage and produced a map of the existing land use, zoning, enterprise zone, flood plains, and watersheds for the Town. Next, we have Community Facilities. The total students enrolled in Chilhowie has dropped from 1,411 in 2010 to 1,240 in 2023. There has been a consistent drop in attendance at the Chilhowie Public Schools. Also, in the Community Facilities chapter included a lot of information about infrastructure upgrades that have either been completed or currently being worked through by the Town. Mr. Clark provided a lot of the information. Next, is the Recreational Opportunities inside and near the Town of Chilhowie. This section houses the information for the new recreational facilities that the Town has built since the last Comprehensive Plan. The new recreational facilities include the Splash Pad, Dog Park, and new equipment and facilities at the Town Park. Last is the employment and unemployment labor force industry sector, major employers, and income figures have been outlined in the Economic Chapter. Additionally, the economic development opportunities are outlined in the development sites. Potential incentives businesses could have if they were to locate to Pathway Park and Deer Valley Park are also listed in the Economic Chapter.

I did not have anything too in depth planned for the Public Hearing. I think primarily we are looking for public comments. I will open the floor to anyone that may want to comment on the new Comprehensive Plan.

John Clark: The Town Manager and Clerk asked me to sit in on some of this endeavor since I was here when this started. I have some background information I'm going to be very brief. First, I would like to thank the Planning Commission, staff, and Mr. Jordan Powers, Mount Rogers Planning District Commission, for all the time they have put into the rewrite of the Comprehensive Plan. I think we ended up with a very good product here probably better than the one we had in 2018. I want to draw your attention to page 19 of the Comprehensive Plan. On page 19 under section 1.4 and 2.4 wholesale sales to Smyth County that is the biggest water customer. We take in $4000-$5000 a month from Smyth County. For some reason approximately two years ago, when we were finishing the water tanks at the Water Treatment Plant, we curtailed Smyth County water usage. We went from $4000-$5000 a month to $1000 a month. The Town discovered what happened and reached out to Smyth County. Smyth County had been buying their water from Marion, but our water is a little bit cheaper. Smyth County feeds Greenwood, Cleghorn Valley, and Ebenezer. We placed a new meter on Green Springs and the meter went from 400-500 gallons of usage a month to 4,000-5,000 gallons a month.

On page 25, Transportation, this came up a good bit prior to my retirement. We have mentioned the lighting and pedestrian problem at Exit 35 on Interstate 81. Also, the drainage at Berry's on Whitetop Road. On Streets on page 64 there is an asterisk stick on Skyview Drive, Clairmont Heights, and Echo Lane and the rest of the streets the Town maintains throughout the Winter. Before you do anything major on the roads with an asterisk stick, there needs to be more research on those roads due to questions about private right-aways or if it is a Town street. On page 82, under Industrial Sites there is a well on Pathway Park that is capable of 400,000 gallons a day. We did not put per day, but the figure is per day. Following immediately on page 81 under Meals Tax this fiscal year Meals Tax became the second highest revenue source for the Town right behind water. The Meals Tax has steadily gone up each year with only one raise in 2016 and 2017. We do not have the figures for this year yet, but think we are on track to hit $1,000,000. Thank you for allowing me to the opportunity to work on the Comprehensive Plan.

Mayor Heninger closed the Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m.

Motion by Donna Blevins, second by David Blevins Planning Commission recommends to Council to adopt the rewrite of the Comprehensive plan for the next five years. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

David Blevins	Aye	Donna Blevins	Aye
Jim Bonham	Aye	Flave Davis	Aye

Having no further business, upon motion by Flave Davis, second by David Blevins unanimously passed, the Commission adjourned the meeting at 7:16 p.m.

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Felicia Eller, CMC, Secretary