Virginia: **At the regular meeting of the Chilhowie Planning Commission held Tuesday, January 6, 2026, at 5:30 p.m.**

Present: **Donna Blevins, Jim Bonham, Flave Davis, and Shannon Donnelly**

Absent: **David Blevins**

Also Present: **Brian Martin, Town Manager/Zoning Administrator; Mrs. Felicia Eller, CMC, Clerk-Treasurer; Heather Carter, Deputy Clerk; and David Haynes, Building Inspector.**

Election of Chair and Vice Chair:

Motion by Donna Blevins, second by Flave Davis the Planning Commission appoints Mr. Jim Bonham to serve as Chair. The motion was approved with following recorded vote:

David Blevins	Absent	Donna Blevins	Aye
Jim Bonham	Aye	Flave Davis	Aye
Shannon Donnelly	Aye		

Motion by Jim Bonham, second by Shannon Donnelly the Planning Commission appoints David Blevins to serve as Vice Chair. The motion was approved with following recorded vote:

David Blevins	Absent	Donna Blevins	Aye
Jim Bonham	Aye	Flave Davis	Aye
Shannon Donnelly	Aye		

Approval of October 7, 2025, Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Donna Blevins, second by Flave Davis Planning Commission approves the October 7, 2025, meeting minutes. The motion was approved with following recorded vote:

David Blevins	Absent	Donna Blevins	Aye
Jim Bonham	Aye	Flave Davis	Aye
Shannon Donnelly	Aye		

Review of Communications:

Mr. Devin Karritter, owner of Smyth County Barbell located at 1209 East Lee Highway, submitted an application for a Zoning Permit to install a new business sign at the facility. Mr. Karritter was noted to have several years of experience in the fitness and personal training field. The Zoning Permit was approved with no issues found.

Mr. David Haynes, 117 Old Stage Road, applied for an Electrical Permit for the installation of solar panels. It was noted that the proposed installation does not alter the building footprint, setbacks, or zoning classification. Additionally, staff reported that State Code does not prohibit the installation of solar panels on roofs, except in cases involving designated Historic Districts or

Zoning Districts that specifically restrict rooftop solar installations. After review, the application was found to be in compliance. The Electrical Permit was approved with no issues found.
Mr. Brian Williams, who recently purchased the property located at 1010 Old Stage Road, applied for a Zoning Permit to construct a detached wood-beam–style carport. Staff reported that the proposed structure meets all applicable setback requirements. The Zoning Permit was approved with no issues found.

Mr. Arlen Sturgill, 125 Poplar Avenue, applied for a Zoning Permit to construct a detached metal garage for the purpose of housing a recreational vehicle and protecting it from the elements. After review, no issues were identified with the request, and the Zoning Permit was approved.

Mrs. Jenna Prater, 457 Haynes Avenue, applied for an Electrical Permit for the installation of solar panels. The Electrical Permit was approved with no issues found.

Mrs. Heather Davey, owner of HD Skincare Solutions, 316 East Lee Highway, applied for a Zoning Permit for a new neon sign with no changes to the footprint of the building, the Zoning Permit was approved with no issues found.

Motion by Donna Blevins, second by Shannon Donnelly. Planning Commission accepts all Zoning Applications as presented. The motion was approved with the following recorded vote:

David Blevins	Absent	Donna Blevins	Aye
Jim Bonham	Aye	Flave Davis	Aye
Shannon Donnelly	Aye		

Discussion of Pathway Zoning

The Planning Commission discussed the Industrial Park Road lot, a 77-acre parcel jointly owned by Smyth County, Washington County, and Bland County. Mr. Martin expressed a desire to see the property developed in the near future, emphasizing the potential for new job opportunities that would benefit local families and contribute to the economic growth of the area. He also noted the importance of generating additional revenue for the Town through potential Machine and Tools (M&T) Tax contributions. Mr. Davis raised a concern regarding the property's location relative to flood zones. It was clarified that while the lower portion of the property is within a designated flood zone, the majority of the parcel is not subject to floodplain restrictions. The Commission noted that the property is currently zoned Business Industrial (BI), which is consistent with the intended use and potential development goals for the site. To sustain a new large factory the Town will have to grow the water source. There is well water located on the property so they could generate some water if needed. Smyth County is the sole owner of the property surrounding the well.

Any Other Commission Business:

Mr. Martin informed the Planning Commission that the Town's current water system is approaching approximately 80% of its total capacity. He reported that the Town is currently evaluating the possibility of restoring the original Town spring. The Town is working with its Engineering Consultant, Hurt & Proffitt, as well as the Virginia Department of Health, to

determine the steps necessary to bring the spring back online. Mr. Martin noted that Mr. Graham assisted the Town in locating the deed for the 13-acre parcel surrounding the spring. Mr. Martin also explained that the Town is exploring other options to increase water capacity. The Washington County Service Authority currently has a six-inch water line that extends to a point approximately two miles outside the Town limits.

Mr. Martin discussed the upcoming housing development on Hull Avenue, and noted that, according to the original plans, the water meters were to be installed behind each residence. However, after further discussion with the Public Works Director and the Fire Chief, it was determined that relocating the meters to the front of each property would be more beneficial. Mr. Martin explained that placing the meters at the front of the properties would allow the Town to more easily maintain and access the meters for future homeowners. Additionally, this project will provide a valuable opportunity for newer Public Works staff to gain hands-on experience by assisting with the installation of the 18 meters associated with this development.

Mr. Martin reminded the Planning Commission of the value that the Library's Maker Space provides for the community. He reported that students from Emory & Henry have begun assisting with Maker Space by helping members of the community learn how to properly use the equipment and technology available. The library has previously experienced challenges in finding staff and volunteers who felt confident operating the machines due to their complexity and capabilities. The involvement of the Emory & Henry students will help provide instruction and support, allowing more community members to safely and effectively utilize the Maker Space resources.

Mr. Martin informed the Planning Commission that the Town has the opportunity to participate in a study through Virginia Energy at no cost. As part of this initiative, an energy audit will be conducted to evaluate the Town's current energy usage and identify opportunities for improved efficiency. The goal of the audit is to identify potential improvements that could reduce the Town's electricity expenses, with an estimated savings of up to10 percent. The results of the study will help guide future energy efficiency efforts for the Town's facilities.

Mr. Martin introduced Mrs. Heather Carter as Deputy Clerk Treasurer.

Having no further business, upon motion by Flave Davis, second by Donna Blevins unanimously passed, the Commission adjourned at 6:17pm.

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Felicia Eller, Secretary