

**Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council
January 8, 2015**

Mill Creek Water Treatment Plant Upgrade

Preliminary work continues on the Plant Upgrade. In November our staff of Works Director Jay Keen and Water Treatment Plant Superintendent Bill Rutledge, along with staff of the Washington County Service Authority (WCSA) and the Lane Group toured several facilities with membrane filtration. Those facilities were in Rural Retreat, Sparta, North Carolina (Virginia – Carolina Water Authority), Sugar Grove (Rye Valley Water Authority) and Hutton Branch (Smyth County Water Department).

The Lane Group set this tour up in order for us and the WCSA to become more familiar with the two main membrane filter providers, Memcorp and Paul. The plant currently has Koch filters but they are not to be considered because lack of service and non-availability of replacement parts. The Lane Group seems to be leaning towards securing the Paul membranes. As I understand it the Memcorp group was the first providers of this type of membrane filtration, but when Paul came into the business later their membrane filters became the cutting edge in both effectiveness and maintenance. According to the staff the tour bore out the direction the Lane Group seems to be heading. The operators at the Rye Valley Water Authority and Virginia – Carolina, with Paul membrane filters, were very high on their equipment.

We had a progress our monthly progress meeting on December 16. The design of the project was summarized in a power point presentation. The soil scientist who was supposed to meet with the staffs at the plant in November never showed up, so another resource will have to be found. The possibility of two interconnections of the Town and WCSA was discussed at the plant and along lee Highway. For the short term this could be beneficial in getting water back to the Chilhowie system in case of partial failures at the plant. Funding may be unfrozen from the Southwest Virginia Water and Wastewater Grant that could allow a Spring application for the funding.

The timing getting at least one of the new banks up and running was discussed in light of the aging of the existing Koch filters and their five to seven year life span. It was my understanding from the meeting that it would take six months for the new filters to be built and delivered (the upgrade will have two banks, the existing system has three). This lead to a discussion of ordering the filters upfront before the construction bid is awarded in the interest of timing, implications of procurement requirements of Rural Development, ways to style the bid package with allowances if the filters are procured beforehand, etc. etc. At the next progress meeting to be held on January 12 the main topic will be discussion of the pros and cons of purchasing the filters upfront.

Meeting on E-911 Joint Central Dispatching

On December 16 all the towns had a meeting with the county on the Joint E-911 Agreement. The existing ten year agreement will expire in March of 2015. At the meeting with me were Fire Chief David Haynes and Police Chief Steven price.

County Administrator Michael Carter and E-911 Coordinator Todd Williams lead the meeting. They emphasized that the agreement would remain in effect after the present one expires even if a new one not been completed. The main things I came away at the meeting was that that each locality wanted to renew the central dispatch agreement (a no brainer), the need to utilize new technologies like reverse 911, and state revenue stream not funding the E-911 system now and in the future as it had in the past.

Concerning the new technologies, it was my understanding the Reverse E-911 could be implemented at a fairly low cost, a figure I heard but will not relay now because the person estimating was unsure of his numbers. Reverse E-911 would be very beneficial by sending out a set message on phones to designated area(s) concerning water outages, weather warnings, other emergencies, etc. that would allow the public to know what was happening, when the situation will be abated, etc. It also keeps the 911 Center from being inundated (it would have been very helpful to have had it when the boil water notice went into effect in Chilhowie in 2014 because of problems at the Mill Creek Plant).

You have in your packet the invitation letter and breakdowns of calls, revenue and expenses for fiscal year 2012-13 and 2013-14. As I read the sheets it shows that the county is getting approximately \$309,000 in revenue and expending around \$620,000 each of the two fiscal years and making the deficit up through the General Fund.

Another meeting has been set for January. As you can see by Michael Carter's letter of November 13 he hopes to have a three to five year new agreement by July1, 2015.

Proposed Festival Agreement

You have in your agenda packet a proposed agreement between the Town and Apple Festival Committee entitled the "The Chilhowie Community Apple Festival Master Plan". This is basically the same format as the 2013 signed by the Chair of the Apple Festival with a couple of exceptions.

Town Attorney Paul Cassell and staff spoke about the contract on December 23. You can see these proposed changes / deletions in red ink. That dealt with the revenue sharing in Section XVIII., an added section giving the school the rights and responsibilities of the band competition, left the dates open in Sections III. and XVI., and added a signatory page including the Town as a designated partner.

Council can approve, reject or amend this proposed agreement. Following that action it would need to go to the Apple Festival Committee for their review.

Downtown Planning Grant Meeting with Property Owners

You have in your agenda packet a letter signed by me, prepared by Michael Armbrister of Mt. Rogers Planning District Commission (PDC), inviting property owners to a meeting on January 5, 2015. This letter was sent to 13 property owners in the designated Downtown Area.

The meeting is being held for the property owners “to learn more about the project from the consultants hired to develop the downtown revitalization master plan. The consultants will report on unique economic data and will have concept drawings for potential façade improvements. It will be the perfect time to ask questions about how you can utilize grant funding to improve the facades at your property.”

At the meeting the consultants will also be asking for agreements of matching money for property owners to participate in a façade improvement program. The program is a 50 / 50 percent match if the town is funded for the construction grant. If a majority / significant number of property owners agree to participation it will give the construction application a much greater chance to be funded.

As stated above the full construction application to the Department of Housing and Community Development will be submitted in late March. There will be one more meeting of the “visioning group” in February. The Town Council will hold two public hearings on the project -one at the February Meeting and one at the March Meeting.

Surplus Weight Equipment at the Wellness Center

Councilwoman Donna Blevins, Councilman Bill Clear, Assistant Director of Public Works Billy Testerman and I visited the Wellness Center on December 23 to look at the surplus equipment that they are wanting to dispose. There are approximately 21 pieces of strength training units weighing in at approximately 400 to 600 pounds apiece and three free weight pieces of similar weight.

We met with Kevin Vernon, the Assistant Director, and his assistant. He emphasized that the Director wanted the equipment removed in a day or two because they did not want to pay for storage when the new equipment came in the first of February. Some of the equipment will have to be taken apart in order to get it out the back door and would have to be transferred by some type of trolley / push truck. Bill Testerman said we would have to secure a lift truck once the equipment is taken from the Center. Maybe a fork lift could be used. Billy thought we have the manpower to get the equipment out if we could get the lift truck.

I asked Mr. Vernon why they were giving the equipment away. He stated that they could trade it in when the new machines came in but they would get very little for it. I asked him why they were not selling it. He replied it would take too long to sell in light of the new equipment coming in February and then they might have to pay to store it.

If Council decides to take the equipment, we obviously are going to have to find someplace to take it. Someone mentioned a room at the library, which is a possibility, but as was pointed out at the last Council meeting an analysis would have to be done on the load bearing. If any building is secured for

storage it would have to be a secure location so the equipment would not be stolen. Additionally, I don't know how practical renting storage spaces would be because you I don't think you could just box the equipment up, stack it, and store it for a variety of practical reasons. If we went that route we would have to rent numerous storage spaces.

Jay Keen mentioned buying or renting a cargo / shipping trailer. That might be the only practical short term solution, in my opinion.

Finally, if Council decides to take the equipment, in the long term we would have to come up with some plan for the equipment to be utilized in a supervised setting with a trained individual(s) and at a suitable location.

Happy New Year!

Respectfully Submitted,

John E. B. Clark, Jr.
Interim Town Manager