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Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council
March 8, 2017

Funding Requests to Smyth and Washington Counties

You have in your agenda packet two letters to the Smyth County and Washington Administrators. The letter to Smyth County Administrator was sent on February 20 and the letter to Washington County Administrator Jason Berry was sent February 22.

Both letter pointed out many of the points that we have discussed in the past, namely that fire and emergency medical services (EMS) is no longer predominately a volunteer operation and that combination / career departments like the Town of Chilhowie's is and will be the future trend. Additionally, because Chilhowie has been the "cutting edge" of this development because of forward thinking on its part, it is having to shoulder the burden of providing these services and not being properly supported. This is especially the case with over approximately 70% of calls it answered out of the corporate limits.

The letters go on to say that the Fire and EMS Department takes up a significant portion of the Town's budget with expenditures anticipated to be \$599,287 out of a 2017-18 budget of \$4,492,314, or 13.3%. The department is also anticipated to run a \$173,742 deficit.

The letter to Jason Berry went on to say that the Town has asked for assistance from Washington County the past three years and has heard nothing back. Realizing that budget time is very hectic, I also sent the letter to the Emergency Services Director, Chair of the Board of Supervisors and Budget Director (the latter position not specifically listed in the copied persons).

Regarding the letter to Smyth County I requested \$100,000 in County assistance, as is the Town of Marion. While acknowledging this is a substantial increase over this year's contribution of \$54,920, the figure requested is still not a proportional share. That amount is substantially higher. Hopefully, as we and the Town of Marion have requested, the County will substantially increase their support over a five year or so period to beginning meeting their proportional obligation.

East Lee Highway Sidewalk Project (Project) Timetable

The 100% plans for the Project were submitted to the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) on or about February 26 by our consulting engineer Thompson and Litton. I have asked VDOT personnel that I know in the Bristol office to fast track the review as much as they can. I asked that particularly in light that the Project should have been bid out and completed the in late 2017 through no fault of the Town of Chilhowie.

The tentative schedule looks like this now: VDOT authorization to be done the end of March, advertisement in April, bid opening in May, notice of award and notice to proceed in June, substantial completion 90 days after starting in August or September.

As you are aware the total cost of the project, including administration, engineering and construction is projected to be in the \$420,000 range, with the Town picking up a 20% share of approximately \$84,000. The sidewalk will stretch from Pine and Chilhowie Street through the east side of Warrior Park (thereby missing all the utilities along Pine Street) then to Lee Highway near the Farmer's Market and running to Lee's intersection at Church Avenue to the existing sidewalk, encompassing approximately 4,500 feet.

Contract with Customer Air on HVAC / Furnace Maintenance

You have in your agenda packet a contract with Customer Air of Marion for the cooling and heating inspection and maintenance on all seven Town buildings for a cost of \$1,500 annually. The Town has been under contract with Custom Air for several years. The contract does not bind the Town to one company for any major repairs, or replacement of equipment.

One thing that we did eliminate from the earlier contractor was filter replacements. The buildings contain around 28 filters and Customer Air was changing them every month or quarterly. By taking this responsibility on ourselves we will save about \$1,000 per year.

Proposed Habitat Restoration Project at Middle Fork of Holston at Recreation Park

You have in your agenda packet a Habitat Restoration Project narrative along the stretch of the Middle Fork at the Recreation Park. This Project involves the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Upper Tennessee Roundtable. We have had several meetings with some or all of these agencies over the past several years but now it appears that the Project plans are now almost finalized.

I met with Corey Kanuckel of Fish and Wildlife in mid-February and again with Works Director Jay Keen on February 28. Basically, the project will involve placing group of rock structures into the channel to provide cover and better habitat for species that will improve the fishery. The structure will extend from the north bank into the channel about one third across. Cut trees will also be put into the bank on the south side that will extend into the river to both improve the fishery and to stabilize the bank.

Plans are in place for a fishing pier to be constructed if feasible. The Town's match in the project is anticipated to be removal of a cross section of the bank on the north bank as shown on the seventh page of the handout. Our front end loader would take off an "edge" of the bank and we would store that valuable top soil. By removing the edge about six feet and leaving it at a 45 degree angle (except where trees are located) will allow for better access to the river and more room for the water to expand in the channel without going out of its banks.

The Total project is estimated to be in the \$45,000 range. The partners mentioned above in the first paragraph will be bidding the project out, as well as getting all the necessary permits. Project start is estimated to be sometime in late spring or early summer of 2018. Mr. Kanuckel will be at the Council meeting on March 8 to present the Project.

Update on Downtown Revitalization Project

Progress continues to move towards bidding the project out in the very near future. The Downtown committee met on February 26.

Concerning the demolition of the Superior Mills Building, you have in your agenda package the final Phase II Environmental Assessment of the building sent by Greg Whitt of Hurt and Proffitt (HP). In the report it find that all compounds, minerals, etc. were found to be below hazardous standards following numerous boring in the floor of the building and roof tests. As a result the demotion of the building will not be “regulatory” issue and only minimal precautions will need to be taken. These precautions will include not removing the soil from the site, not piling / aggregating the soil on the site in large quantities, and keeping subsurface disturbance to a minimum. However, the contractor will be responsible to for his employees to take all applicable OSHA regulations into account during the demolition, which will be routine as explained to me by H&P.

We met with the owner of the building on March 3 to cover over the report via a conference call from Greg Whitt of HP. The owner was pleased with the results as were. With all this information at hand I will request from you to bid the project and have HP prepare all necessary documentation and bidding schedule. I will also be asking Town Attorney Paul Cassell to prepare all necessary documents between the Town and owner of the building

You also have in your agenda packet an attachment entitled “Chilhowie Downtown Revitalization” that was handed out by Jessica Littlejohn at the February 26 meeting. In that document she broke the project down into three bidding divisions for the facades, streetscape and demolition.

Regarding the Division 1 Streetscape the drainage pipe, including the railroad bore and piping / ditching at the recreation park, patching, sidewalks, curb and gutter, and decorative street lights will all be bid together. The consolidation of overhead utilities will have to be contracted out to CenturyLink separately since they own the wires. They will have to get us a price on that. Everything thing has been approved except the railroad bore from Norfolk Southern (NS). That application was filed on February 9 with the \$2,500 application fee. NS indicated a four week turn around on the application. I will also ask Council authorization to begin the bidding process for this phase, although I don’t expect final approvals until the end of March at the earliest.

Regarding the Division 1 Facades Project, I believe the designs have been approved by the Department of Historic Resources. One other building owner has now indicated their interest and that building is being attempted to work into the program. Project Manager Angela Wolfe is still awaiting tax information and other documentation from property owners so the project can move forward to bid.

Hopefully, that information will be received by the end of the month. When the bid is sent out all of the buildings will be done together and individual bids taken on each building.

Respectfully Submitted,

John E. B. Clark, Jr.
Town Manager

