



**Mayor:** Gary L. Heninger  
**Council:** Donna S. Blevins  
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Brent Foster  
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## **TOWN OF CHILHOWIE**

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**Town Manager:** John E. B. Clark, Jr.  
**Clerk/Treasurer:** Marlene L. Henderson  
**Police Chief:** Andrew K. Moss  
**Director-Public Works:** Jay Keen  
**Fire Chief:** C. David Haynes  
**Building Official:** Randy Sturgill  
**Director-Recreation/Special Events:** Jeff Smarr  
**Legal:** Cassell & Crewe. P.C.

### **Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council July 8, 2021**

#### **American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA)**

As you know localities throughout the Commonwealth and nation will be receiving funds from the federal through the ARPA. As it is scheduled now the Town of Chilhowie is to receive \$882,927 as a first payment in a couple of weeks. I believe the second payment will come in about a year afterwards.

As I read the regulations almost any plan is eligible for funding including utility infrastructure, streets, personnel, community development, broadband, revenue replacement as a result of loss during the pandemic, etc. etc. I have not seen any mention of the eligibility for Fire and Emergency Services expenditures, but I would be surprised if that use of funds would not be eligible. About the only think I see that the funds cannot be used for is to pay off an existing debt to the federal government.

We have signed all the necessary paperwork to begin receiving the funding. It is my understanding the funding has to be spent by December 31, 2024. In order to get a sense of the Council on what they would like to see the funds spend on, we will be preparing a sheet that will show every town department and/or activity that has a funding demand and ask you as the elected officials to list where the ARPA funds should be allocated. I will also be supplying that document to department heads who will also make these recommendations.

Since there is no rush on how to spend the money, I think we can take some time to earmark the expenditure. My plan is to have the money allocated, at least the first phase, by this Fall.

#### **Sewer System Evaluation Study (SSES) Construction Grant Application**

On June 23 I had a Zoom meeting with the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and our engineer Hurt and Proffitt (HP). As you recall the SSES study identified approximately \$2.1 Million in

improvements as a result of the first phase of the SSES completed earlier this spring. You have in your agenda packet a copy of the syllabus for the meeting.

DEQ is accepting eight applications from select localities that completed their SSES. As you further recall we received \$90,000 in funding from DEQ and Mt. Rogers Planning District Commission for HP to complete the first phase of the evaluation. The grant application will be submitted between July 1 and July 31. It will involve 50% principal forgiveness (grant); but it was not disclosed at the meeting how much a locality can apply for.

I asked HP to go ahead and apply for the full \$2.1 million. I know that things are up in the air right now on the amount of the grant. We did ask DEQ if we are indeed awarded a grant and if the maximum grant amount in dollars is less than we hoped we could scale the project back. Another caveat to this situation is the ARPA potential funding that could be put against this project.

As discussed above, the first phase of the SSES planning only did part of the system, albeit a substantial part. Planning is being done for a second study to encompass the entire sewer system. The grant application will only incorporate the second phase.

#### **Old High School (OHS) Roof Replacement Bidding**

You have in your agenda packet an advertisement for bids on the OHS roof. As you recall we have had leaking problems there for over a year and have been doing periodic patching. This past Fall we had a comprehensive patching done by a contractor but were advised that work would last until the hot summer months and we would begin have leaking issues again. We budgeted money for 2021-22 for the roof and amortized that number for this fiscal year.

As you can see by the advertisement, bids are due on the project at the Town Hall at 4:00 on July 29, 2021. A pre bid conference will be held July 20 at 9:00 at the OHS. Bidders are strongly encouraged to attend at that date and time, but if not Building Official Randy Sturgill may be contacted independently. The project will be advertised twice on July 10 and July 17. I have presented the low bid and all bids to Council at its August 12 meeting for consideration.

#### **Transition of the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce (Chamber) into the Bonham House**

All sorts of activities have been going on in regard to the Chamber moving into the Bonham House. We had a meeting on June 23 to go over the transition that was attended by Chamber Executive Director Sarah Gillespie, Amanda Livingston of the Tourism Authority and several members of our staff. Many, many details have to be worked out and some are listed below. We left the meeting with August 1 as our goal to reopen the house permanently.

We helped the Chamber move from their old office in Marion to the Bonham House on June 29. A deep cleaning of the building was done in late June. The Authority has a service during the cleaning for \$300,

a month, I believe, but Amanda says she had not been able to get ahold of them. The building has not been cleaned un about a year. For now the Town and Chamber will be doing general cleaning and we will see how that works out. It will be the Chamber's responsibility to hire inside cleaning, if indeed that is needed. The utility bill is being transferred from the Authority to the Chamber to be effective July 15. The building was pressured washed on July 1.

During the deep cleaning the bathrooms were opened and cleaned. We will decide in the near future on how to proceed with the bathroom cleaning. It is our understanding that the Authority hired a service to do the cleaning in the past and picked up the bill, but the company that did it is unknown. When the bathrooms are opened August 1 the Town will stock the bathrooms with the Town opening in the morning and the Chamber locking up in the evening.

We are working to replace two doors at the back and basement, and attempting to get two new locks on the bigger doors at the front and side. We have no idea how many of the existing keys are floating around now. The Chamber is also working with the Town on a security system and may try to integrate it into the company we use for the Old High School.

Attorney Paul Cassell is preparing a draft lease. The final lease will be presented to the Town Council at the July 8 meeting and Chamber Board in the near future.

#### **Transition of New Recreation/Special Events Coordinator Jeff Smarr**

As I report at the June 10 Council meeting, I hired Jeff Smarr as our new Coordinator after consultation with the Parks and Recreation Committee. As you know Jeff is a former teacher, coach and principal in the Smyth County school system. His employment started on June 14 when he could begin accumulating hours.

As you know this position has many responsibilities including coordinating existing football, basketball and cheerleading programs, being over the Farmer's Market, coordinating special events, maintaining Town presence on Facebook and social media, etc. I have been very impressed with Jeff's initiative and he has already run many ideas by me and staff on how he would like the program to develop. We are very fortunate to be able to attract someone with Jeff's credentials and he will be a fine addition to our staff and to the Town.

Respectfully Submitted,

John E.B. Clark, Jr.  
Town Manager