# TOWN OF CHILHOWIE, VIRGINIA

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Fire /EMS Chief: C. David Haynes
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Wastewater Operations: Luke A. Lowe
Water Operations: Don Cole, II
Special Events/Recreation: Stephen Fields
Legal: Cassell & Crewe, P.C.

**Town Manager's Report to Mayor and Town Council**
**August 8, 2024**

Good Evening, Mayor Heninger and Members of the Town Council. I take this opportunity to present the first report of my time as your Town Manager. I thank you again for giving me the opportunity to serve my hometown and I look forward to working for you, and with you, as we strive to keep our wonderful town moving in the right direction. If you would like me to revise the content or format of my report, please let me know and we can absolutely revise as needed.

*Splash Pad Dedication*

The town held a dedication ceremony for our new Splash Pad on July 16th, which was attended by town staff and former staff members, elected officials, representatives of the Smyth County Chamber of Commerce, representatives from the local press, and members of the community at large. I would like to thank everyone who attended and helped kick off this outstanding new asset to our community.

*Chilhowie Branch of Smyth County Public Library*

On July 10th, I met with Rose Likins, Director of the Smyth County Public Library System, and Chilhowie's Branch Manager, Heather Carter. We discussed several subjects, what we're doing well, and what we can improve on. I expressed to them how much the town appreciates all they bring to our community and we bounced around ideas that can bring even more to our residents.

*Upcoming Waterline and Meter Replacement Project*

As we prepare for the upcoming waterline and meter replacement project, I have had several discussions with our engineering consultants and with the Virginia Department of Health (VDH). On July 24th, town staff met with Dennis Amos from Hurt & Proffitt and Brad Humpries with VDH. We discussed initial planning steps and also loan closing procedures for the town's loan through the Virginia Resources Authority (VRA).

Noting that the town is still one year behind on our audits (due to no fault whatsoever of the current town staff), I reached out to Joe Bergeron at VRA to get an official answer on what audit requirements they will require to close this loan projected for March 2025. I have attached my original letter along with the VRA response. The Clerk/Treasurer and I will be meeting with the town's auditors soon to share the VRA response with them so that they are solidly informed on these requirements. Being very frank, I have concerns that not one, but two annual audits, which will bring us completely up to date, can be accomplished in that timeframe. This would push back the start date for this project.

On August 7th, Dennis Amos and I met with VDH representatives at town hall to initiate the preliminary steps of the Environmental Review process for this project.

*Sewer Rehabilitation Project*

Work continues to progress on this project in a timely manner. One issue that arose was a disagreement over right-of-way on Norfolk & Southern's property at the trestle in Seven Mile Ford. Town and Hurt& Proffit staff met virtually with the consultant handling the railroad's rights-of-way to discuss the request to access their property for the purpose of installing a temporary bypass from one manhole to another. With an agreement being unable to be reached in a timely manner, Hurt & Proffit opted to just move on with the project, leaving out the approximately 40 foot section of sewer line under railroad property. The impacted line was deemed to be in good shape as is currently exists and a work stoppage due to this issue would have put the already underway project on hold indefinitely.

I have reached out to Norfolk & Southern to arrange a meeting so that we can discuss this issue and ensure better coordination and cooperation moving forward.

The monthly progress meeting was held on August 7th.

*Lead Line Inventory*

The town continues to work with Hurt & Proffit and their contractor, Badger, to work toward completing this inventory. As a reminder, the deadline to submit completed inventory to VDH is October 15th.

Several Public Works Supervisors approached me with their concerns that the contractor may not be able to complete this work at their current rate of work and that their equipment may be excessively large for some of our smaller backroads in our water system. That being said, I have worked with your Public Works team and Hurt & Proffit to quickly put together a plan for much of the remainder of this work to be done "in house" by our staff and utilizing the new Vactor truck. I requested through VDH that our incurred overtime due to this be allowed to be paid by re-allocating a small portion of the grant funds tied to this project. At this time we do not have an answer back, but I anticipate from initial conversations that our request will be denied since this change was not part of the original scope of work. However, I feel that a handful of hours of overtime is worth ensuring that we do not miss this critical deadline. (I represented the town at the Mount Rogers Regional Manager's Meeting on July 31st and it appears that many surrounding localities have taken the same approach as the deadline rapidly approaches.)

At our new rate of work, we are shooting for a September 15th completion date. I hold a personal goal for Chilhowie to be the first, or one of the very first, localities to get our results in!

*Town HVAC Services*

The Clerk/Treasurer and I met last week with Mr. Brian Reynolds, owner of Custom Air, Inc., which provides HVAC maintenance and repair services to the town's facilities. Our contract was due to be renewed and the Clerk/Treasurer and previous Town Manager had informed me of a couple of past concerns relative to previous service provided. Custom Air has provided HVAC services to the town for at least the past eight years, which we voiced to Mr. Reynolds during our meeting. He stated that he was not aware of those issues and thanked us for bringing them to his attention. I feel that it was a very productive meeting.

The proposed contractual documents that would renew our agreement with Custom Air is enclosed as an attachment in your agenda packet. You may note that this agreement is being revised, at the town staff's request, to add maintenance services to two town facilities: the new Fire/EMS Training Facility and the town's Water/Sewer Offices. It also changes the filter maintenance at the old high school (OHS) to quarterly instead of twice per year.

*VRSA/VML Training*

The town's Clerk/Treasurer, staff member Heather Carter, and I are scheduled to attend VRSA/VML training in Clifton Forge on August 14th. The one-day session deals with the most up-to-date information on marijuana and other evolving issues in the workplace. It also will provide a snapshot of expected proposed legislation for the 2025 General Assembly session. Staff will provide you details of the session at next month's council meeting.

I invite all elected officials to attend some of the training/informational sessions provided by VRSA and VML. They are very educational and are free to the dues paying members of these organizations.

Other Issues/Future Opportunities

As I have stepped into this position, I've been made aware of two issues related to the town's water and wastewater systems that could have serious consequences if not addressed soon. Unfortunately, both issues have arisen relatively recently and, therefore, are not included in our current adopted budget.

One is the AquaGuard filtering system at the wastewater treatment plant. The system is the primary filtering system at the plant's entrance. The system currently will not operate in automatic mode and must be ran in manual mode. This is adding extra pressure on an already aging system that is critical to the effective operation of the plant.

The other issue is much needed tank inspection, cleaning, and routine maintenance at the Shuler Hollow Tank. Failure to address this at this time would result in a delay at least into the next budget year, which could result in possible system problems and/or VDH regulatory violations.

The town's consultant is currently drafting two applications for submission to the Mount Rogers Water/ Wastewater Fund for consideration for these projects. Should we be approved for funding, the town can undertake quick action to address both of these issues.

If you are not aware, this water/wastewater funding is only available in the three westernmost planning districts. In other words, this money allocated by the General Assembly is only available from Wythe County westward. We are very lucky to have access to this program and I intend to let Chilhowie's delegation to the General Assembly know how much we appreciate them fighting to keep this money flowing!

*Questions*

As always, I welcome any questions about the status of the town's busy activities.

Respectfully Submitted,

J. Brian Martin
Town Manager