

The Richlands Town Council held a regular monthly meeting in the Richlands Council Chambers on March 11, 2014 at 7:30 pm with the following present:

Mayor: Jannis White

Town Manager: Tim Taylor

Town Clerk: Susan Whitt

Town Attorney: Brad Ratliff

Council Members: Joe McCracken, Rod Cury, Larry Johnson,
Frances Meadows, Doug Ratliff, Mary Ann Strong

Mayor White called the meeting to order, gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor White said there were some changes to be made to the Agenda. Tri-County Health Clinic will not be coming tonight. Under Unscheduled Comments, add Larry Davidson and Danny Addison from Back of the Dragon. Anita Baldwin, Billy Lester, Wendy Shahan, Elsie Justus, Calvin Dowdy asked to be added to the Agenda.

Brad Ratliff asked to add under Attorney Comments-the second reading of the Ordinance relative to Burnett Street.

Rod Cury made the Motion to Approve the Agenda as Amended, seconded by Frances Meadows. Vote 6/0. Motion carried.

Mayor White said there are three sets of Minutes to approve including the Public Hearing Minutes from February 11, 2014, the Council Minutes from February 11, 2014 and the Special Meeting Minutes from February 20, 2014. She asked if there were any deletions or corrections to the Minutes. Hearing none, she asked for a Motion to approve all three sets of Minutes as presented. Rod Cury made the Motion, seconded by Mary Ann Strong. Vote, all in favor. 6/0. Motion carried.

Scheduled Public Comments:

RHS Upward Bound Robotics Team (SWCC) – Rod Cury read the following statement about the Robotics Team: In Richmond, VA this past weekend, the SWCC Upward Bound Richlands High School Robotics team competed for the state title at the *Virginia FIRST* Tech Challenge State Championship.

FIRST Tech Challenge is a world-wide robotics organization where students have the opportunity to get “hands-on” programming and engineering experience while applying real-world math and science concepts. They develop problem-solving, organizational and team-building skills. An emphasis is placed on “gracious professionalism.” It is an avenue to transform the culture by engaging students in mentor-based programs which foster well-rounded life capabilities including self-confidence, communication and leadership. Teams

use a modular robotics platform to conceive, build, and program their robot for competition.

There were a total of 48 teams and hundreds of students from across the state competing at the state championship. The Techie Tornados earned a spot at this event by winning two qualifying events; one at SWCC on January 11 and the other in Norfolk on January 25.

They will move on to the Eastern Super-Regional event held on April 3-5 in York, PA. If they place at this event, they will compete in the World Championship in St. Louis at the end of April.

Team members: David Godbey, Chris Johnson, Brittany Fields, Haley Morrow, Dillon Rose, Jordan Lester, Cameron Cole, Jordan Lloyd, and Makayla Mitchell. Mentors and coaches: Ricky Keen (mentor)- Software Engineer at CGI and Upward Bound Alumnus, Michael Fields (mentor) - SWCC student and Upward Bound Alumnus, Tyler Helton (mentor)- SWCC engineering student, Brandon Honaker (coach) - SWCC Upward Bound Instructor and Upward Bound Alumnus, and April Quesenberry-Director of Upward Bound Program at SWCC.

After the introduction, Coach Brandon Honaker started by telling what our robotics program is. FIRST Tech Challenge is a world-wide organization, where each student is assigned a “game” to design, build and program a robot. This year’s challenge consists of these blocks. They were challenged to build a robot from the ground up. There is no manual or instructions to tell you how to build it. They have to design it and build it on their own. They started in September of last year and have “tweaked” it and made it work better.

The students did a demonstration of how the robot worked.

Lynna Mitchell, Chair of the Section House Restoration Committee-to provide an update to the Section House project. She began by giving a history of the Section House; it is an important historic structure and is prominently located in our historic downtown area. It was built in the 1890’s by Norfolk and Western Railroad and it served as the home of the Railroad Section Foreman who was a key figure that maintained the integrity of the track conditions for about a ten to twenty mile section of the railroad. It’s one of the Town’s oldest structures; it is listed on the Virginia Landmark’s Register and the National Register of Historic Places.

The exterior of the Section House retains many of the original features of historic property; it has the windows, the tin roofing as well as the board and batten siding and you can see on the bottom two pictures the interior is really bare down to the studs and to the rafters. It was a common style to most of the Section Houses that were constructed during this time period of the late 1800’s and it also listed as one of two destinations in Richlands on the Virginia Coal

Heritage Trail. The other site is the State Coal Miners Memorial in front of the Town Hall. The Heritage Trail was developed to highlight the role that southwest Virginia plays in Virginia's economy as well as the national economy. Our Section House is very unique because it is one of only two surviving structures listed on the 325 mile trail.

The Section House Committee was awarded a Board of Transportation Enhancement Grant from the Virginia Department of Transportation to help preserve and restore the property. Our project will include preserving and restoring the structure, extending the sidewalk, installing a crosswalk, landscaping, street lighting, employee and visitor parking, signage and outside event spaces. Plans are underway to utilize it as a welcome cultural center and a venue that will recognize the significance of the area's railroad and coal heritage. It will be a place to remember and honor those who have worked in these industries. Restoration of the house and property will not only insure the preservation of this historic railroad structure but will provide the Town an opportunity to extend an educational venue, to improve the downtown pedestrian connections, to improve parking availability, and additional public community spaces and resources in the downtown area. The Section House Committee has contracted with Hill Studio of Roanoke to provide our architectural and engineering services for the project.

On the mural project, we have contracted with local artist Ellen Elmes to produce a large outdoor mural and it will detail the historic importance of the railroad and the areas coal heritage. We have a large draft design of the mural on display here. It will be about 8 feet tall and 40 feet wide. It will be a prominent feature with our project.

The Committee is also selling Heritage Bricks that will be incorporated either into the brick patio or possibly the walkway outside at the rear of the property. The bricks may be purchased in honor or in memory of someone or just a way to show support for the project. These are available at the Town Hall in the front office.

We are also selling note cards and they are available for purchase at the Town Hall. They were printed from an original watercolor done by artist Sam Reilly who is a native of Richlands. This is the first in a series; we hope to have four seasons of the Section House property.

She complimented the Committee, saying they were very dedicated and have been working diligently on this project and on behalf of the Committee; she thanked Council for their time.

Larry Davidson and Danny Addison from Back of the Dragon-
Danny Addison addressed Council. He said like the Robotics Team that was here earlier, the Back of the Dragon represents Southwest Virginia. The history

of the Back of the Dragon, just almost four years ago, we started out with an idea, we met at Fort Witten and had 200 motorcycles show up to ride the Back of the Dragon. It is Route 16 from Tazewell to Marion. We went before the Governor with the help of our legislative group and we had that road actually named Back of the Dragon. So it is an official tourist by-road. He handed out brochures to council. The first year, the 200 motorcycles that came and rode it, loved it. The next year, on Main Street Tazewell, we had 4,500 people and last year, we had the four-way section of Tazewell with over 8,000 people. We are getting a little help from Tazewell and from the County and we are trying to sell the idea that Back of the Dragon is about Southwest Virginia, it's not just about Tazewell. And what we would like to do is incorporate Tazewell County. What we are featuring this year is not a one day event but a three day event June 13, 14, and 15th. On June 13th we will have the opening ceremonies at 5:30 pm, featuring three different bands. Saturday, we will open up with a parade. We are asking for cooperation from all of the towns in the County. We would like to see each town represented with floats and enter this. We will make this county-wide. On Saturday, we will also have car shows, bike shows, and three more bands to close out that night. On Sunday, we will have the organized ride. We are expecting about 2,000 motorcycles. I would like to see the first bike hit Marion and the last bike leave Tazewell. We will feature that from an aerial view to see a 32 mile chain of motorcycles continuously. This year's ride will feature the Jimmy Ramey Memorial Ride. He was a huge supporter of this event.

This is the first year that we are going to have a charge to come. For six bands, two nights it's \$3 a night or \$5 for two nights. It is very reasonable. Last year, it cost us over \$65,000 to put this show on. This year it will probably be \$100,000 and that is a lot of money. We can't go to the same retailers every year asking for money. I am not here tonight asking for money. We want to incorporate the whole county into what we are doing and we understand that you all had a tragedy recently in Richlands. You had a food pantry that a lot of people depended on, that burnt down. We are willing to give a portion of our gate proceeds to the pantry. If we only donated \$1 per person, and last year we had over 8,000 people, and keep in mind, each year we double the number of people in attendance. If that is the case, then we may be looking at 16,000 or more people. We want to contribute that to Richlands. We want to do something with Graham, Bluefield, Pocahontas, Cedar Bluff, and Tazewell of course. But it is not just a Tazewell event. We went to encourage every board member here to realize the reason that we are here is to unite these towns. We have five rides planned for the near future; you may see 50,000 motorcycles coming into this area.

The Tail of the Dragon, our sister company in Knoxville, has over 500,000 vehicles a year visit that 11 mile stretch of road. We have 32 miles, a state park, and two towns on each end. What we want to build on is infrastructure. When they come to Tazewell, we don't have any place for them to stay. We have

very few restaurants, a few fast food restaurants but we need more. Even the motels at Claypool Hill are booked up; they said they wish they had 30 more rooms. Bluefield, Marion, and even Princeton are full. Tourism development told us last year that they contributed Back of the Dragon for an increase of 12% in tourism. That is a large number and it will get bigger as this grows.

We are asking for your support. We would love to see 100 floats from Richlands. We will start at the Fairgrounds and go through Tazewell. The event this year will be held at the Tazewell High School. We would love to have your support. Mayor White asked him to send more information on the floats for the parade.

He said there needs to be a calendar for the whole county, so when they start planning these events, we would love to see something planned for every weekend in the summer. Let's face it, we have an untapped resource in tourism. We have the most beautiful scenery right here. We just need to learn to market it. He gave their website for more information: www.backofthedragon.com. He thanked council for their time.

Mary Ann Strong thanked them for their generosity in donating to the Food Pantry.

Anita Baldwin-1210 Sunset Drive-has lived there for 14 years. Her concern is for the snow removal. This year is the first year we have an issue with the snow. On February 13th, we had a medical emergency with my husband. We couldn't even get out of our driveway, we had to walk out off our hill, which is supposed to be town maintained to get to our neighbors house in order to get him to the ER. Hobert Lester is our neighbor and he has been a wonderful neighbor the whole time we have lived there. He was able to get us to the ER that night. He worked with a small tractor with a blade on it to clean our hill so that we could get back home Saturday after spending two days in the hospital. We have been concerned.

This is the first year in fourteen years that we have had this issue with the snow removal. Another issue up there is brush that has been cut at the end of the road up there that is on the hillside. I think maybe the Town cut it last fall, but all of the brush is still there. The water flow has been terrible too. My husband paid someone \$100 to try to fix the water flow problem off the hill. This winter that water has been freezing into ice across the road. There is a lot of work that needs to be done on that road up there, Sunset Drive. They come so far up the hill, but they don't come all the way up to the end where some of us live. She said she would appreciate any help the Town could provide.

Tim Taylor said we have had our small truck out of service and couldn't get the big truck up there. Mrs. Baldwin said she had to park her vehicle at work and walk home a few times. She said she saw the truck come up there one time and

turn but that was the only time they came. The small truck is back on the road now. Mr. Taylor said anytime she had a medical emergency, the Town would get to them. She said there had been days she has had to call her co-workers to come to the end of Sunset Drive, she had to put boots on (and almost chains on her feet) to get down the hill to catch a ride to work. Mr. Taylor said we have had an unusual winter and that has compounded the problem. We have not had to move this much snow or ice as we have this year. He said he was sure that other people in Town have suffered as well this winter. We do apologize for that situation with your husband and we hope to get it like it used to be with this small truck back in service. Probably what has happened with the brush that has been cut is they have cut the brush away from the power lines and there are some drainage issues on that hill. Mrs. Baldwin said they had put gravel on the hill and she almost has to hit the gas to get up the hill.

Mayor White had some photos another resident of Sunset Drive had given her about their concerns such as broken pavement, water, ditches and so forth. She said there were also a couple of issues there that she would address later in the meeting.

Billy Lester-528 Hill Creek Road-He spoke about the high wall mining that is going on up in Hill Creek and there is a lot of dangerous traffic. He has discussed it with Joe McCracken and Larry Johnson He said there were ditches on this road that have not been cleaned in the last 3-4 years. There is a lot of coal sediment in these ditches and when it rains it runs into people's yards. They had to replace the floor at his mom's house just last year. It went underneath the house and rotted it out. He is friends with the owners of the coal company and he has property there, so he feels pulled in the middle. There is a major problem with dust. We have older people that like to sit out on their porches but there is a half inch of dust on people's houses. They can't even enjoy sitting on the front porch anymore because of the dust. I know that there are coal trucks coming out of there and that is the way that it is when you have a coal mine. But some way, we need to meet in the middle to keep the dust down.

There is also another problem me and Larry talked about, we need to slow these vehicles down. We have kids on bicycles. I have even talked to some of the workers myself and it doesn't do any good. He suggested a police car sitting at Lilly Horton's address in the wide spot. They could radar the tractor-trailers and the workers coming in and out. There are a lot of places on that road that are very dangerous. One of them is the curve in front of my cousin Adrienne Lester's house. He said the Town needs to act on these issues. He suggested to Larry that they could bring a water truck down from the mines and the Town could send a street sweeper once a week to keep the dust down off the road. This week Bobby sent some workers down to come and wash down some of the houses. What other coal operator would do that? The mine owners are trying to be friendly. The Church above the curve, he graveled their whole parking lot. I

am not saying the mines are bad people, they are not. The Town of Richlands, the State, the County or whoever needs to work on this problem of the dust and the speeding.

Joe McCracken said that when he and Larry Johnson went up there, there was drainage running across the road, underneath some houses. Joe McCracken said he though there is some work scheduled for addressing the curve and new pavement.

Larry Johnson said a lot of the problem is due to people parking on the side of the road and the trucks have to ride over in the ditch until there is no ditch left.

Billy Lester went on to say how bad the pavement is. The Town limits ends right before the Baptist Church. Tim Taylor said the Town had done extensive cleanup in the area. There is a lot of sediment that comes from Tackett's Trailer Park and we had to deal with that. It is a high maintenance area. As far as the dust, the coal company will have to try to do something. We had a similar problem in West Fork. They actually washed the road down so many times a week and they paid the Town to sweep it so many times a week. It is hard to allocate some responsibility.

Billy Lester said this evening the coal company was washing down the road but they only come to corporation limits. That is where they stop. The problem with washing the road is, then you have all of that sediment going into the ditches.

Doug Ratliff suggested that the mine owner could rent a street sweeper and maybe use it twice a week. Mr. Lester said he would talk to him about it. Larry Johnson suggested having the mine owner call Mr. Taylor so they can discuss the situation.

Frances Meadows commented that she understood Mr. Lester's concerns and said that he should not be the one to discuss that with the coal operator.

Billy Lester also added his concerns about the speeding that goes on in this area. He said in certain areas, he believes vehicles are running 50-55 mph. He said the worst time seems to be from 4:00 am to 7:00 am because it's dark and no one can see them. Then when they hit the bridge with so many potholes, it wakes everyone up in the neighborhood.

Frances Meadows said she appreciated him bringing these concerns to council and they can look at them further. She asked about the parking situation in that area. Tim Taylor said you have a very narrow street and limited off street parking so it creates a problem.

Wendy Shahan- 117 Peregrine Court, Lot #4-she had some harassment issues with a resident of Crestview Mobile Home Park. Mayor White advised this would be a matter for the Police Department to address. Ms. Shahan continued to explain her concerns over Crestview Mobile Home Park issuing a no-trespassing warrant against her.

Brad Ratliff advised this was not a matter that Council can address. It is a legal matter and criminal in nature.

Elsie Justus- 128 Pinecrest Lane, Lot #37, Crestview Mobile Home Park- Said she had the same concerns as Wendy Shahan. She said that her house was broken into about two weeks ago, her dog went after them, the police were called and they gave her a ticket because her dog was running loose. They would not even look at her back door, she has to tie it together now. She said there is no patrol up there. Mayor White stated that again this is a police matter. She said they would discuss it with Chief Dorton and see if they can get some extra patrol in that area. Ms. Justus stated she had lived there for 17 years and there had never been any patrol up there. Chief Dorton said they were in Crestview Mobile Home Park a lot. She said the individual that Ms. Shahan referred to calls the police on everyone for no reason. She said once he even called the police on her and she was in Bristol having heart surgery. The Mayor said the Town would have Chief Dorton look into it.

Ms. Justus said she had another problem. She bought another mobile home in the park and she can't get the title because she can't get up with the people. She went to Town Hall to get water and electricity turned on. They won't turn it on unless she pays the old bill in the previous customer's name. Tim Taylor said there were a lot of details he didn't have so he couldn't speak to the situation. He asked her if she had the title to the property, if you don't own it they may not cut it on because you don't have ownership. She said she had to buy a mobile home decal. She said she can't get up with the people to get a title but she lives in it. Mr. Taylor asked if it was the deposit they are asking her to pay. She said no it is the previous owner's bill. Mr. Taylor said he would have to review the paper work before he could discuss it. She said she lives in this trailer now but there is no electricity or water connected. She said she was told since she didn't have a title, they could not turn it on unless she paid the old bill. She said she had a Bill of Sale. Sue Wade stated it was Town policy to have a title due to the number of people that switch trailers. Mayor White asked Ms. Justus to stop by Town Hall tomorrow to discuss this after the staff reviews it.

Calvin Dowdy-754 Hill Creek Road-has the same concerns as Billy Lester over the dust, road conditions and speeding on Hill Creek Road. The state maintains the upper end of Hill Creek from the Baptist Church on up to the end of the hard surface road. The coal company has been running a water truck at times watering the road to keep the dust down. They have really shown that they want to be friendly with neighbors and take care of things but

sometimes the dust gets terrible. Anything that the Town or the coal company can do to help us folks up there with the problem would be appreciated.

Council Member Reports:

Rod Cury-

1-The next Planning Commission meeting is Tuesday, April 1st at 7:30 at Town Hall.

2-The County has partnered with us on our study for the Scenic River Designation.

3-Two Students from Virginia Tech that came to work with CDAC for the River Walk have chosen to do their senior thesis on the Town of Richlands. That is a huge compliment for the Town.

Joe McCracken

He would like to thank the Town Crew for sweeping and cleaning the streets.

Frances Meadows

1-She inquired about the status of VDOT. Mr. Taylor said he had not heard back from them. He did receive an email from the gentlemen that he met with recently and he has referred it to Traffic Control. He said he will give them a little time and then will inquire again.

2-She said she did see the water standing in the road again close to the entrance of the hospital. Mr. Taylor said they had discussed that the entire four-lane needs cleaning from one end to the other. He hopes that they schedule it this year; they don't do it very often. That is the responsibility of VDOT.

Doug Ratliff

1-Inquired about the status of the sign for the Claypool Hill Fire Station. Mr. Taylor said they had not responded on that sign, they did on the other one. He will send another email.

Larry Johnson

1-He had the road conditions of Hill Creek on his list but that has already been addressed.

2-He asked about the mowing contract. Mr. Taylor said it is out for bids. He said he thought it was due March 20th.

3-He said recently there was a 5K that was in Cedar Bluff, they initially wanted to have it in Richlands and they couldn't because of the costs associated with it, such as police and things like that. It was for a non-profit organization. There were actually people as far away as Greeneville, TN that came to this event and it is the first one they have had. Is there anything we can do to change it to where charitable organizations can have small scale events without being charged? Mr. Taylor said it is a Council call. Anytime you have an event

in the streets, it is at the discretion of Council, if they want to allocate funds for it. Mayor White asked if it could be discussed during the budget sessions.

3-As far as the contract with Community Planning Partners, I would like to make a Motion we enter into the amended contract as discussed earlier in closed session. Mr. Taylor said he needs authorization to execute the contract, the one that was presented as a joint contract for both phases. Mary Ann Strong seconded the Motion. Vote 5/1 with Frances Meadows voting no. Motion carried.

Mary Ann Strong

1-Tri County Health Clinic had contacted me and asked to come tonight but there were some key board members that were not able to come so they had to reschedule. I did tell them I would bring it up tonight with Chief Dorton to see if there is anything we can do. Their main concern is security and they are in the process of putting in a security system but they say that when they have a problem and they have it quite often because they are not in our boundaries, that we can't help them so they call the County and the State, she claims they argue and while this is going on, they are unprotected and they are very afraid. They are going to come next month, hopefully and speak in more detail. Is there anything that we can do? Chief Dorton responded that it is an area that is outside of the Town boundaries. It is in the County but the County says it belongs to us, but it is completely out of our jurisdiction.

Doug Ratliff asked if they could have a mutual agreement. Mary Ann Strong said that is what they asked for is a mutual agreement. Chief Dorton said mutual aid agreements are to assist, not to be the lead. We have gone down there on occasions and watched them get into their car, etc. If the County said can you go help us with this, then a Mutual-Aid Agreement would allow us to do that. But they are saying that it is not theirs, it belongs to us so that doesn't give us what we need. That area fought against being in Town. Chief Dorton said if they had an emergency we would go as a good faith effort. Joe McCracken asked if they could decide to be in Town. Chief Dorton said he wasn't sure how that worked. Tim Taylor said they would have to petition the Board of Supervisors and us to request it. Chief Dorton said they would be happy to resolve any issue they had if they were in town limits. Mr. Taylor said we need to resolve the issue with 911 so they know who is responsible.

Mary Ann Strong asked about the proper steps to take if the Clinic was interested in coming into the Town boundaries. Mr. Taylor said they should ask us first and then we would take that to the County. He mentioned that they are a non-profit organization and they pay no taxes and get services for that and that is probably a factor. It is pretty expensive just to take one little piece in. There is advertisement, legal fees; there is quite a lot involved for even a little piece as well as a fairly large piece. Mr. Taylor said it is expensive and it is a big process. If you are looking at that, then you should look at more than just that one area. The more support you have, the more favorable the Board of

Supervisors will look on it. Doug Ratliff suggested Tri County Health Clinic write a letter to Food City to explain the problem and try to get their support as well.

2-She had received a phone call from a gentleman that was concerned about the road going to the Recreation Dept. This gentleman was thinking it is not wide enough. I remember it from many years ago and it has greatly improved since then. He was also concerned that when there is a lot of traffic with cars speeding. Jim Taylor said there is a speed limit sign of 25 mph posted at the bottom of the hill and at the top. He also said to widen the road would take several thousand dollars and would be a major undertaking. It is not wide enough for lines to be painted. It is not a very wide right of way, it would require land acquisition and probably utilities too. Tim Taylor said there is a desperate need for guardrails up at the top. That would help some and eventually we could do a little more on lighting. Mr. Taylor said they would get a cost on both.

3-Joe McCracken and I attended the Chamber Banquet and they did mention our meeting that we had together and how they are looking forward to working with us. It seems like things are moving in a positive manner with the Chamber and the Town.

4-She wanted to thank the Town Fire, Rescue, Police and the Street Departments with all of the help with the fire at the Food Pantry. I know everyone at the Food Pantry is extremely appreciative of everything the Town has done and continues to assist.

Doug Ratliff asked for a consensus that Mary Ann Strong be the liaison between the Town and the Chamber. After some discussion, Mr. Ratliff made a Motion to appoint Mary Ann Strong as the Council Representative for the Chamber, seconded by Larry Johnson. Vote 6/0, all in favor. Motion carried.

Department Heads

Fred Phillips- as Fred gave out the monthly report to Council, Frances Meadows recognized Fred and Jody Fuller's basketball team for playing in a huge tournament this past weekend in Boone, NC. Fred said that there were 147 teams, they went 5/0 and won the gold medal. It was a 9th grade team competing against all 9th graders. Council congratulated Fred and the team.

Frances Meadows asked if there was any talk about getting more equipment in the future as far as the weights. Fred said he had talked to Shawn Durham and he is getting new equipment and he said we were more than welcome to the old equipment if we need it.

Mary Ann Strong asked how close they are to reaching the goal on the new gym floor. Fred said that the Thompson Foundation said that if he could raise

\$25,000 then they will donate an additional \$25,000. We just raised \$26,000 and Adrienne Cordle is writing a letter for me to the Thompson Foundation to show them that we have raised the funds, so we are right at \$76,000. The floor will cost \$82,000. We need to raise a little more money for extras too but we are shooting for July 1st for having it completed. As you know, raising money for the field over there, it is very time consuming. Setting up meetings and basically begging for money.

Larry Johnson asked if there had been any Volleyball/Basketball Tournaments this winter. Fred said they had the Rec League over there this winter. That is one of the main reasons for raising money so that they will be able to have tournaments. We have discussed how much we have to pay to use the High School and the Middle School. Mary Ann and Frances and some of you know what youth sports are all about, it helps the economy. We talked to the Boone director this weekend and they brought in at least \$2 million to just Boone, NC. Boone is a lot bigger than Richlands, they have 1,200 kids in their high school. We have 700, it's not that much bigger than Richlands. As soon as we get that floor in, we will have tournaments.

Larry Johnson asked about tennis tournaments. Mary Ann Strong said there is one in the summer that Bob Nassif organizes. Unfortunately, tennis is down. We have about 20 participants per year. It doesn't seem to be a sport that is popular here at this time. Fred said the new floor would be marked for basketball, volleyball and tennis.

Joe McCracken asked about the roof at the Rec Park. Fred said it was in the process. Mr. Taylor said before the new floor is put down, there will have to be more work done to the roof. Fred said he had a cost estimate from Jim Taylor and as soon as he got the money needed for the floor, he would start raising money to repair the roof. It will not be as much as the floor. The estimate for the roof repair is \$24,000.

Chief Dorton

1-February, it was cold, the main thing we had was the weather and then the Food Pantry fire. We probably had about 60 man hours with the pantry.

2-We have had 1,592 calls so far this year. That is down a little from last year. We had 870 in the month of February; that is more than last year.

3-We have issued some citations for the failure to yield sign there at the old SW Supply location.

4-As far as Tri-County Health Clinic I would suggest that someone from the Board of Directors call the Sheriff. We have had back and forth discussions with 911 and haven't had any luck. Maybe a call to the Sheriff will help. Our maps show that it is definitely out in the County. However, in an emergency, we are not going to leave them with no help.

Mayor White asked Chief Dorton if he had some sections on Spratt Road on the list. There is an abandoned house, an abandoned trailer. She had photos of those two and also had photos of a “bunch of stuff” that is actually up behind Spratt Road near Tank Hill. Mr. Taylor said that was part of the drainage issue with the Baldwins on Sunset.

Joe McCracken asked about the house on Vickey Drive that is ready to fall down. Chief Dorton said there was one on Vickey Drive they had served notice on and we are obtaining warrants for the guy. He has not made contact with us. We just need a little time to track him down. We are going to issue a summons for him for the structure. The other house on Dot Street is in the process of being cleaned up. It has been sold and the new owner has made a gallant effort to take care of it. Larry Johnson asked about East Second Street. Chief Dorton said a letter had been sent to Stevenson Land and Cattle. He said he really didn't know of anything that needed to be done with that house except for cutting the brush. As far as being a public nuisance, we cited him before for that and he came and boarded up the windows. It doesn't look the best in the world but it is secure now.

Chief Dorton added that he could assure that the police spend a great deal of time in Crestview Mobile Home Park. As far as the no trespassing issue, that is park owner designated, we don't have control over who comes and goes.

Joe McCracken asked about the police cars being painted. They have one back and one is due to be back. We are waiting on state pricing for vehicles. We have money approved for two vehicles as soon as the state contracts come out. We had all of our people fitted for new bullet proof vests last week. They should be here within the next 40 days.

Gordon Russ

1-February has been a slow month. We did have a lot of DOA's for the month, sadly. Our numbers fell. Low numbers are good that people are not getting sick.

2-We got our laptops in yesterday, it was on that 100% Grant that we received for \$23,869.00

3-We have another grant that we have to have in by the 15th for another truck in the amount of \$106,675.00. Our part would be \$21,395 and I am going to try to sell one of the box units to cover it. If we get approved, probably won't know until the end of March or first part of April before we go before the review board in Bristol.

4-Mary Ann Strong had asked about the calls in certain areas at the last meeting. He gave her a last year's sheet.

5-Since coming into Town in 2007, we have applied for and received \$566,636.00 in Grants for rescue. The state paid out \$408,067.00, our part was \$135,00.00.

6-So far for the month of March, we have had over 90 calls.

7-Had a meeting with the hospital last week and we are close to getting our drug boxes. That is something we have been working on for five years.

8-Tim Taylor said they had met with the billing contractor and have made the application to change the address to forward the payments to us now. That corrects the issue that the auditor mentioned in his report at the last meeting.

Keith Reynolds

1-Handed out his monthly report.

2-There were two big fires in town last month. The Food Pantry and a house fire in Hill Creek. The house was a total loss, they have started tearing it down. No injuries. We were fortunate at the Food Pantry, there were electrical shocks and a lot of smoke. Mr. Taylor said he spent the biggest part of the night over there with them and didn't want to diminish anyone's role, but wanted to brag on Keith. He was in charge and took charge and did a fantastic job. His people are to be commended as well as all departments that helped. Keith said Town of Tazewell's ladder truck came and assisted, Town of Cedar Bluff sent 4 men that we asked for, because our guys had already been in with two bottles and after two bottles you have to come out and rehab for so long. Belfast Fire Dept. brought a tanker. We had a water shuttle there at the end, we weren't getting enough water supply. We think we flowed around 200,000 gallons of water. He said the electrical department was with them for several hours, the water plant came out and opened up the water plant for several hours. The Police Dept. closed the whole intersection to keep traffic from running over our hoses.

Joe McCracken asked about some fire hydrants that have plastic bags over them. Hobert Lester said they were out of service and needed to be replaced.

Doug Ratliff asked about the fire call on Claypool Hill Mall Road, wanted to know if Richlands was the only Fire Dept there and Keith responded that they were. Larry Johnson commented that there had been 23 out of town fire calls and 11 in Town.

Jim Taylor

1-We have had six occasions for snow. We put in 655 man hours, 455 equipment hours. We have 135 tons of salt, 120 tons of #9 stone to take care of some of these problems. We have had extended two 12-hour shifts, it has been an unusual season. We have not had any accidents the whole winter. The snow would come in waves and just keep coming. When it does that, the main roads get the most attention and the outlying areas we catch up as we can. We do the best we can with what we have. We have another spreader that should be here in the very near future. We are going to fix the smaller truck to take care of the outlying steep parts, etc. During the last snow, a gentleman had called and was very upset, so we went to the address and measured the road and it was only 8.5 feet wide and the blade is 11 feet wide with 6 feet of overhang on the snowplow.

2-We patched potholes on Front Street, Second Street, Suffolk, Allegheny and Virginia Avenue. We used about 21 bags of the blacktop patch. We have plans

(the asphalt plant will be opening up in a few weeks) to take care of the winter potholes.

3- We helped the Police Dept with some storage trailers. Got them set up and got shelves built in them so that they can have some storage space for their program.

4-We worked signs; stop signs, street signs, the posts are state specified and some of them are rather expensive. You have to use the high intensity sign rather than just a reflective sign.

3- We have cut and chipped brush on the right of way on Big Creek, Purcell Road and Farmer Street.

4-We assisted the Food Pantry with the cleanup after the fire using the backhoe, dump truck, garbage truck, grapple truck.

5-We have swept and cleaned Front Street along with all of the cross streets. We will have a couple of night shifts to come out and do some flushing as soon as we are sure we are done with the snow.

6-We have plans for Clinch River Road to put down some base stone and then re-stone it. We have to get some equipment and then catch the weather where it can be done.

7-Mowing contract is out for bids. Mowing will begin around the 1st of April. The deadline for bids is March 20th.

Joe McCracken suggested the Departments Heads do a quarterly report and then if they have any questions to ask them in order to shorten the time of the council meetings. Rod Cury said he thought it would be valuable to have them do a quarterly report. Mary Ann Strong suggested having the report monthly printed out as they are doing now, just give them out in the packet or pass them out at council meeting and if council had any questions they could ask them then.

Tim Taylor asked if the Dept. Heads could get their reports to Town Hall by noon on the Wednesday before Council so that they could be included in the Council packages. That way Council would have them by Thursday evening. Larry Johnson said he would still like for them to attend. Council had a consensus.

Mayor's Comments

Mayor White said she gave Mr. Cury and the street dept. a road she would like for them to look at, Sunset Drive. Mr. Cury said he had looked at this one before. She said she had also given Chief Dorton photos of an abandoned house and trailer on Spratt Road and also some clean-up that is needed up on top there.

There is a gentleman that lives over on East First Street that says when the train blocks the highway or the street, people come up in his yard and turn in his yard and tear his yard up. He wanted to know if the Town would help him fix his grass back. She explained to him that was personal property and that he

would need to put out a sign. It is the second house on the right, Dwight Jones.

Attorney's Comments-Brad Ratliff

This is the second reading of the Ordinance (No. O-2014-01-03) relative to the property located on Burnett Street. This conveyance is to clean up the title and eliminate encroachment so that the property can be sold. He then read the Ordinance in its entirety and submitted it for consideration. Larry Johnson made the Motion to adopt this Ordinance No. O-2014-01-03, seconded by Doug Ratliff. Vote, all in favor, 6/0. Motion carried.

Brad Ratliff said he had extensive dialogue with the County as there are past due taxes owing on this property. I discussed this property with Shelia Wymer who is the assistant to Eric Young and there are no impediments to the sale of this property. He said they can take sealed bids on the property with the Town setting the minimum bid that would also cover the expenses incurred.

Town Manager's Comments-Tim Taylor

1-Mr. Taylor went over the check register which included bills for the month totaling \$1,543,426.70 including AMP Power Bill \$1,210,613.30, Anthem \$72,093.00 and VRS \$51,271.51.

Rod Cury made a Motion to authorize the Town Manager to pay the bills, seconded by Mary Ann Strong. Vote, all in favor, 6/0. Motion carried.

2-Explain instances that occurred during January and February. I gave Council a letter that is a little lengthy, I just gave it to you today, so you can take it home and review it. It will probably make more sense to explain it now and read it later. The weather related occurrences in February this year had major impact on power supply costs, especially in the Northeastern part of the country.

Summary:

The weather related events in January and February this year drove power supply costs for Richlands to historic highs. The attached article from **Electric Power and Light** provides a lot of information to why this occurred. The brutal cold set a demand requirement of 24,414 Kilowatts with a energy usage of 10,081,032 Kilowatt-hrs for the month of January for Richlands.

Background:

The town power supply plan calls for a portfolio approach allowing a diversified approach including contracts with various suppliers both short and long term as well as assets owned in part from coal, gas, and hydro. The remaining needs are met through PJM, a regional transmission organization (RTO) that coordinates the movement of wholesale electricity in all or parts of 13 states and the District of Columbia. All electricity whether produced with owned assets, provided by contract, or purchased through PJM markets are all

subject to a regulated transmission grid. The use of the transmission system comes with a cost in addition to market purchases and that component is where a major portion of the increase costs is realized.

All of the cost components related to transmission and market purchases were extremely volatile with prices for market power reaching above the \$1000 per megawatt-hr price limit in PJM. Supply to meet demand became a major problem with outages and recorded cold temperature. According to reports one of the main problems for PJM was that they relied on natural gas-fired power plants to provide the peak capacity needed. Most of these power plants are seldom used peaking units and, therefore, do not have firm natural gas supply contracts. They instead rely on interruptible gas supplies. Natural gas suppliers met their firm customers' demand, but with heating demands for gas soaring, they could not meet demands of their interruptible supply agreements. In addition, natural gas prices hit record highs, which drove up electricity rates. On Jan. 21, prices hit an all-time high of \$140 per million Btu on the Transco pipeline that runs through the mid-Atlantic, several days after the polar vortex exited the country. The cost attributed to rerouting of owned assets power and purchased power across the transmission system was escalated. The congestion costs are an adder to all supply components as a part of the transmission again regulated by PJM. The costs are different for each utility based on location, both supply and utility, as well as time sensitive based on the event date.

The monthly bill for January was \$1,210,313.30 for 10,081,032 kilowatt-hrs this equates to over \$0.12 per kilowatt-hr. To illustrate this month's impact are current rates charged to a residential customer for 1000 kilowatt-hrs which is \$96.78 and we paid \$121.10 for the power supply (this does not include operation cost which adds to the total cost of service). The total financial impact will not be totally understood until we get February's invoice.

Recommendation

Once the February invoice is received from AMP and we get through our billing cycles that will overlap the bills from AMP (which is due to timing of meter reading and bill process), we will provide Members of Council a plan of action to adjust a time specific Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) to recover all or part of the loss of revenue for the electrical department based on short term and long term departmental budgetary planning. The revenue loss would be expected to be in hundreds of thousands of dollars if not addressed through the PCA.

Recommend the writing of letters to Federal Governmental representatives both Senatorial, Congressional, as well as members of Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Doug Ratliff asked to have an Electrical Committee Meeting Monday, April 7th at 8:00 a.m.

The full impact will not be known until we receive the February bill. Mr. Taylor said we have already helped ourselves by signing that load following piece that will be in effect in 2015. If this had happened then, we would be covered partially, it would lessen our risk. Once we get that in place, we will have some money.

We did keep the lights on for most everyone. We did have a few outages but the employees did a good job in restoring power.

3-Project Updates

a-Website is up and running. www.town.richlands.va.us

There are still a lot of things that we would like to add. We want it to be a functional page.

b-Credit Card Implementation-There are a couple of areas of concern. We don't have to decide anything tonight. When we start the budgetary process for things that cost money, we need to talk about. In order to take Credit Cards face to face or even on-line, there are different types of costs associated with that. We have done analysis with every bank in town that would submit something; we have analyzed their costs and fees. It is pretty convoluted the way they do it. It depends on if it's a Visa, MasterCard, Discover, whatever you decide to do, there are things you have to deal with the credit card company if you try to institute fees. There are quite a bit of legalities with that. It will really be hard to charge fees per usage. You can't do it for a debit card. We found that out today. It would really be hard to do a convenience fee or a credit card fee and actually be equitable about it. Some parties, utilities especially, have chosen to do on-line payments but do it through a third party and that takes care of that. So that is a little easier. But the face to face, swipe the card or calling it in, those types of activities will cost money. We are looking at between 3% up to 4%, some down around 2% but they have other fees that go with it. You have to rent the equipment. Sue Wade she used \$300 with four different banks, it ran from \$5.52 to \$6.70 for a \$300 charge. We have a \$15 million budget, so it could get expensive. Let's just say people use it for \$5 million, at 3% you are looking at \$150,000, at 4% \$200,000. That has to come out of something. That will have budgetary impacts that we have to look at. It is something everyone wants to do, there are just some things you can and cannot do. Obviously, stores like Wal-mart and Lowe's, they just absorb it. Debit cards cannot be charged. So if you try to just charge the folks that use it, it would be very, very difficult.

Joe McCracken said it would affect a person paying cash for those who pay with credit cards, they will still have to pay the 3%-4% and that is not fair to those who don't use them.

Mary Ann Strong asked how other municipalities like Tazewell handle this. Mr. Taylor said that the PSA uses a third party, they still pay the fee. In other words, if you come into their office, they won't swipe your card, they will let you go to a computer, log-on and they will provide internet service. I just wanted everyone to know that there will be costs, we will get into the nuts and bolts during the budgetary process. Mr. Taylor said he would check with other towns to see how they handle it.

Mr. Taylor said there are pros and cons to taking credit cards. We will get our money faster, there will be fewer cut-offs. Discussion among council members of how it helped their respective businesses.

c-We have a Request for Proposals for Software. We have had legal review, we are clear there. Hopefully it will go out this week or next. That will be a fairly long process. It will probably take us until mid-fall. It is a major ordeal. We want to build in on-line payments and other features.

d-National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Service Project. We have been working on this for about 18 months. It is becoming a reality now. We verbally received authorization to put the tower at a place in Claypool Hill to mount our EMS Radio on to help with coverage for the Public Safety side. We have acquired the antenna at no cost. We have the radios already in place from the National Weather Service. They are waiting for us to get it done. They are ready to put those radios on the tower. Frank is doing some things with the FAA. We have to make sure we have all of those bases covered. We have met with the PSA, they have no trouble with us putting the tower and the building up there. We need a MOU for some type of long term relationship between PSA and the Town only. The challenge is getting electricity to the site. We have talked to Darrell Addison, he is very cooperative and ready to help us. Harry Long has actually found a company that will give us the block to build a 12 X 16 building for free. So if we can get a little help on the concrete, that is our biggest cost. Right now, I am not asking for any money, we just need to figure out a way to get the concrete paid for. That is the next biggest cost. I know you are behind it, once that is in place, what that will do for the public is provide a National Broadcasting Radio service in Richlands. It will be on the map for the country. We are in kind of a dead spot now. If you had one of those weather radios for a pre-warning for a weather event, you can't hear it here. You can't pick up that traffic. Once those towers are in there, the tornados, all of the flood events and weather related events will be broadcast, if you buy the radio. The good thing about it is, it provides us a place for our radio for our EMS side. It also helps the Drug Task Force with some problems they have with getting broadband service. It is a win/win with everybody. They wanted a specific date, so we gave them June 1st. If we have to have a little money for concrete, I may have to come back to see what you might do to help us.

We have a recommended Budget Work Session that I handed out. I would hope that you can meet a couple of those dates for sure. We need at least two. Most optimum would be Tuesday and then the following Tuesday. If you can't make it, then we will talk about moving them around. Mary Ann Strong said she wouldn't be able to meet on the 25th. Discussion followed. They decided on Tuesday, March 18th at 7:00 pm and Thursday, March 27th at 8:00 pm.

Billy Lester approached Council again about the situation in Hill Creek. He feels like he didn't get an answer on the ditches and the leaves. Mr. Taylor said they will get to the ditches as they can.

Joe McCracken made a Motion to adopt the Fire and EMS Agreement with Tazewell County and authorize Mr. Taylor to execute the agreement, Seconded by Rod Cury. Vote, all in favor. 6/0. Motion carried.

Tim Taylor requested council go into closed session for a brief meeting.

Rod Cury made the Motion to go into closed session pursuant to Chapter 2.23711 a (7) existing litigation and potential litigation. Consultation with legal counsel and briefings by staff members or consultants pertaining to actual or probable litigation, where such consultation or briefing in open meeting would adversely affect the negotiating or litigating posture of the public body more specifically the AMPGS electrical power project.

Motion was seconded by Larry Johnson. Vote 6/0. Motion carried.

Council went into closed session at 10:35 pm and returned at 10:56 pm.

Mayor White said the agenda needed to be amended to add

c.) Chapter 2.23711 a (7)-existing litigation.

Rod Cury made the Motion to return from closed session, seconded by Mary Ann Strong. All in favor, 6/0. Motion carried.

All members affirmed that the only business discussed was that pursuant Chapter 2.23711 a (7) existing litigation and potential litigation.

Rod Cury made the Motion to adjourn, seconded by Joe McCracken. Vote, all in favor. 6/0. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 10:58 pm until April 11, 2014 at 7:30 pm.

Jannis White, Mayor

Susan Whitt, Clerk