A BUDGET WORKSHOP OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BECKLEY CONVENED AT 5:00 PM ON MARCH 13, 2025, IN COUNCIL CHAMBERS AND VIA WEB-X.

PRESENT: Mayor Ryan Neal, Interim City Manager Phillip Jarrell, Interim Recorder-Treasurer Jessica Chandler, City Attorney Bill File, and the Mayor's and CM's Assistant Susan Miller. Council Members: Natalie Coots, Kip Buchanan, Nancy Shoemaker-Dingess, Frank Williams, Janine Bullock, Sherrie Hunter, and Cody Reedy. The following City employees were present: IT Tech Anthony Martin, Director of P&R Leslie Baker, Director of Board of Public Works Pam Frey, Chief Thompson of BFD, Beckley Events Coordinator Jill Moorefield, Chief Dean Bailey of BPD, and Chief Code Enforcement Officer Donald Morgan.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. The public had the option to join the meeting in person, listen by WEB-X from their computer, or listen by phone, using the weblink or phone number provided the day of the meeting on the City's webpage at Beckley.org or the City's Facebook page.

You may view the workshop by logging on to Beckley.org or going to the City's Facebook page. The Mayor reminded everyone that this is a Workshop. No votes will be taken and no decisions will be made. It is open to the public, but there will be no public comments.

The Mayor said that this s a Budget Workshop. Interim City Manager Jarrell said that he, the Department Heads, and Interim Recorder-Treasurer Jessica Chandler have been working on the budget since he started working here and

thanked them for their help and for absorbing some budget cuts. He said that this budget is based upon incremental based budgeting instead of zero based budgeting. He said that Jessica used last year's expenditures and reduced or increased them. He asked her to be very conservative in the future revenues because we have to approximate six months of the City's highest revenues, the B&O Taxes and our Sales Taxes.

He said a draft of the Levy is what has to be turned into the State but also provided Council with a detailed summary of departmental budgets for this year and the past. He told Council and the Mayor to feel free to ask questions now and later once they have taken it home and looked over it again. He said that if the City can exceed its revenue that it can begin working on a rainy day or contingency fund. The Mayor clarified that by asking Mr. Jarrell if the City has any money in a contingency fund. Mr. Jarrell said right now it is zero. He said that he was too conservative in the contribution to the Humane Society and it may need to be adjusted. It was $69K/annually and he took it down to $12K/annually. He requested that Council consider bringing

the amount back up to $69K because that is what they approved in the past. Mr. Jarrell suggested to Council that the City requires two years of financials from any organization requesting a contribution. He said that this is a draft of the budget(s) being presented tonight and changes can be made.

Jessica Chandler reviewed each departments budget with Council, as well as the levy estimate budget, the Building Commission's budget, the Coal Severance Fund Proposed Budget 2025/2026, and the General Fund.

Each member of Council was given a paper copy of each budget. She explained that the Building Commission consists of two buildings, the Police Station and Fire Station.

Next was Economic Development, which was created a few years ago to put all of the rental buildings in. The Fruits of Labor building, the WJLS building, and the Pinecrest building are included in this as well as the utilities. This also includes admission to our facilities such as New River Pool admission, etc. Currently, the only leasing revenue is coming from one tenant in the amount of $4,000.00. It takes $75K from the General Fund

to keep the Economic Development Fund operating.

Jessica summarized the Parks & Recreation Fund. Mr. Jarrell said that this may be the first time Council has seen departmental budgets and it isn't as detailed as what he prefers and he and Jessica are working to put location codes on each location under the Parks & Recreation's (P&R) budget so revenues and expenses can be on one sheet. Jessica said that they will try to start with these location codes in July of this year.

Councilwoman Bullock asked why the salaries and wages are so much for Parks & Rec. She asked how many full-time employees are in this department. Leslie Baker Director of P&R said it has 21 full-time employees 11 of which work at Black Knight. Councilwoman Hunter asked who gives tours of the Wildwood House. Leslie said the historical society may and it is usually done by volunteers. Leslie said four events take place there with the Historical Society.

Councilwoman Hunter asked what the condition of the roof is on the General Alfred Beckley House. Leslie said that roof has been repaired.

Councilwoman Hunter asked for an update on a sign for Black Knight. Leslie said she will work on it. Councilman Reedy asked for clarification on what brings in revenue for Black Knight. Councilman Reedy asked if the revenue from Golf Admissions, Catering Sales, Pro Shops Sales, Alcohol Sales, and Restaurant Sales is added up and subtracted from the Black Knight expenses, would it give an accurate idea of what the only revenue is there. Jessica said yes. Leslie said more information can be obtained through the software used at Black Knight if more specific data is requested. Councilwoman Hunter asked if Theater WV is a revenue source for Black Knight. Leslie said yes. The Remote Worker Program (Ascend) has one more contract that expires June 30, 2025, then this program will end. The Rotary Club does not pay a room fee but orders food for their meetings as does about twenty other organizations when they have their meetings there. Councilman Buchanan asked if there are 11 full-time employees at Black Knight and if the figures listed are correct for salary and wages. Leslie said yes and that includes their health care, dental, and

vision coverage. Mr. Jarrell said that the City is working to increase the participation of golfers golfing there and possibly charging membership fees. Councilman Reedy said it has to be promoted and improved if it's going to make money. Councilman Williams asked if the budget discussed tonight for Black Knight includes the growth and the hiring of more people at Black Knight. Leslie said no. Councilman Williams asked if the budget presented tonight makes Black Knight break even or not. Leslie said the Black Knight was initially purchased with the understanding that it was not in it to make a profit, that it was more about increasing the quality of life for citizens by providing something for them to do while saving this historic structure. Councilman Williams said improvements and new ideas are needed at Black Knight. It has to make money. Councilwoman Hunter said the leaves at Black Knight need to be taken care of. Mr. Jarrell said that he and Leslie have discussed increasing participation of golfers at Black Knight but need to work on finding workers.

He asked Leslie to work with the local high schools to see if juniors and seniors

might be interested in helping at the pools. Councilman Williams said that he thinks New River Pool should become a splash park. Leslie said the pool is old and Council may need to decide if they want to keep the pool. She said the survey that the community participated in provided data that the community wants the pool. Councilwoman Coots said that if the City could secure the funding, the existing pool could be left open while a new one is being built. Leslie said there isn't enough room. Leslie said that a lot of what it took to open New River Pool last year had to be taken from the pool at Black Knight. Leslie said the pool at Black Knight is not ADA compliant. Councilman Williams said the City needs to decide if it is going to have a Welcome Center and if so, where it will be. Councilwoman Hunter inquired about the bicycles getting rented and maintained. Leslie said that is something that needs to be discussed. Mr. Jarrell said that there needs to be more parking at Black Knight and if the plan is to increase participation from the community there, additional parking will be needed.

The next item discussed was the Parking Fund. Jessica said the General Fund is

subsidizing the Parking Fund by approximately $80K/annually. Jessica said the second page of the three capital outlay items listed were not included in the budget because the City does not have the funds to cover them. The capital outlays are: A Parking Meter System, Sewer, Stormwater, and the paving of the Earwood Street Lot, and the wall repair, stormwater, grading, and paving of the Prince Street Lot. Since the Federal employees are back in the offices, Earwood Street parking is being worked on to provide twenty additional parking spaces. Jessica said a universal parking pass that is easily recognized is being worked on.

Next was the Coal Severance Budget. Jessica said the State mandates that a separate fund be kept for this. She said this has decreased drastically over the years and it can be used for parks and for public works for the streets. Jessica said that she allocated all of the money in this fund towards getting streets paved this year. Councilwoman Hunter said that the City became a Home Rule City in 2017 and asked if every penny on every dollar goes to the General Fund. Jessica said yes. She said this is under Consumer

Sales Tax which really helped the City in 2017 because it's operating funds were depleted. She said the penny on every dollar goes into the General Revenue. She said that if any of that revenue was allocated to a department at this point, it would be detrimental to the General Fund. She said right now, the General Revenue total is $31,724,606.00.

Next, Mr. Jarrell suggested that all of the City's leases, MOU's, and contracts be updated. Councilwoman Bullock asked what positions make up the Recorder-Treasurer's office. Jessica said it is three accounts payable clerks, one accounts receivable clerk, one payroll clerk, a staff accountant, a grant administrator, a grant writer, the recorder-treasurer, and one human resources director.

Councilman Reedy asked what the salaries for the municipal court are for. Jessica said it's for the judge and for one full-time clerk.

The Contributions to Commissions was next. Among those which are requesting an increase or the City is recommending a decrease in the annual contribution are as follows the Raleigh County Health Board, which received $47K and is requesting

$56,400.00; Crime Stoppers which received $20K in the past and the City is recommending a reduction in this amount. The City has requested financials from Crime Stoppers and hasn't received the information requested. The City is also requesting a reduction in the amount it contributes to the Piney Creek Watershed which is currently $20K. The City has requested financials from this organization also. Councilwoman Hunter said that she will reach out to Piney Creek Watershed. An increase for Just For Kids is requested. They currently receive $25K from the City and are requesting an additional $25K for a total of $50K. Mr. Jarrell said the $500K that is budgeted for Contributions and Commissions would be covered but it would not cover the increases.

Councilman Williams said that the Code Enforcement Office needs more certified employees.

Councilwoman Hunter asked Director of IT Bill Kelly if IT could downsize the number of employees in the department. He said no and explained what all the department is responsible for. Councilman Reedy and the Mayor said

further discussion needs to take place regarding the City's IT Department providing services to New River Transit and the Beckley Sanitary Board. Jessica said that the MOU's and lease agreements need to be revisited.

The Contingency Fund does not have any money. Jessica said the budget has been stretched as much as it can be and the City cannot afford to put anything in this fund. This fund should be a "back up" fund for unexpected occurrences such as a road collapse, if COVID would reoccur, or the inability to collect B&O taxes. This fund will be focused on this year. It needs to increase.

Next was the Police Department Fund. Jessica said the City's contribution amount budgeted for this pension is $883,209.00 and the amount the City contributes to the Fire Department Fund for its pension is $1,157,247.00. Both contribution amounts will increase by 7% over the previous year's contributions. Jessica said the current funding method for these will eventually be all that the City can afford to do. The bond rate was not at a certain rate for it to be beneficial for the City, but when it decreases, the

City will revisit this. Councilman Reedy asked if it has to go through the approval process again. Jessica said yes. Jessica said this money comes out of the General Fund. Mr. Jarrell said the cost of health insurance increased tremendously. Councilman Reedy said the health insurance needs to be put out for bid. Mr. Jarrell said that he has been looking at various property and liability insurance carriers to help save the City money. Chief Bailey said that the BPD is currently down by six officers. Chief Thompson said that the BFD is down by two positions, one of which is in Code Enforcement. Chief Thompson said that the City's contribution to the fire department 's pension is based on the amount that is in the pension fund. He said the City's contribution remains the same regardless of the number of pensioners and the amount increases seven percent annually. Jessica said that is correct.

The Dog Warden Budget includes contributions. The contribution to The Raleigh County Animal Shelter was $69K but it has been decreased to $12K. Jessica asked Council for their input on how to proceed with this contribution.

Councilwoman Shoemaker-Dingess said that she asked the Vice President of the Board for The Raleigh County Humane Society for data and a financial statement but has not received it. She said that she thinks the City should halt contributions to this organization until it can be assessed.

Councilwoman Hunter said it is a problem if the City continues contributing $69K to an organization that the City can't walk in and see what is going on and if an organization will not give their financials to the City. Mr. Jarrell said that he and Jessica Chandler visited The Humane Society today and it had only two empty spaces for dogs. Mr. Jarrell said that he did not enter the cat room so he doesn't know if it was at capacity but they let them in the facility and let them tour the back. They were told that The Humane Society strives to minimize anxiety for the animals by decreasing the number of people they allow to walk back to see the animals because it causes the animals stress and it becomes chaos.

Councilwoman Bullock said that the Humane Society did not respond to her when she reached out regarding

aggressive dogs on G Street, but SOARING HOPE helped her get a husky adopted. She said that if the City isn't getting the response and cooperation from the humane society then the funds should be decreased.

Mr. Jarrell said he recommends getting two years worth of financials and ultimately it is Council's decision on where the money goes.

Councilman Buchanan asked Jessica if the City pays $50K for a dog catcher. Jessica said yes. Councilwoman Bullock said Officer Daniel, the Dog Warden has been outstanding in providing help.

Councilwoman Hunter encouraged the Board of Public Works to apply for the Recycling Curbside Grant from the State. She said that it has to be submitted before the third Wednesday in May of 2025.

Councilwoman Shoemaker-Dingess said that she would like to see SHARP's contribution by the City increased from $24K to $30K and help with the cost of extra kennels. She also requested that a $10K contribution be made to Layla's Cat Rescue. Mr. Jarrell said that he is requesting financials from any organization requesting contributions.

Jessica said the approval of this budget will be on the March 25, 2025, Council Meeting Agenda. It can be revised after that. For more detailed information, the recording of this meeting is available on beckley.org. With there being no further business to discuss the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

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Mayor

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Interim City Manager