A WORKSHOP OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BECKLEY CONVENED AT 5:00 PM ON APRIL 29, 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, Captain Ed Wills with the BFD, Supervisor of Board of Public Works (BPW) Mike Bolen, and Beckley Events Coordinator Jill Moorefield.

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.

First on the agenda was Property Management. Mr. Brian Brown was the guest speaker. His business partners Justin and Ashley Boyce attended. Nick Akers with Centec attended. Kyle Hopkins attended telephonically.

Interim City Manager Jarrell provided several documents to Council members prior to the Workshop. The Quitclaim Deed for the Rails To Trails was the first document. The deed is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Mr. Jarrell read the highlighted portion at the bottom of page one which deals with constructing, installing, maintaining, or operating utilities on the premises. Next was the email from CSX stating that the City can request consent from CSX for the installation of utilities by submitting a utility permit online. The email from CSX is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Mr. Jarrell said that once he receives the utility line drawings from Mr. Brown, he would be glad to submit a request for a utility permit to CSX. The Mayor asked Mr. Brown if this would be the next step. Mr. Brown said the Outdoor Economic Development Plan (OEDP) that the City hired Destination By Design to prepare includes the City covering some of the costs of the exterior landscape in this area and asked the City if they still plan on following the OEDP. Parks and Recreation Director Leslie Baker said that the projects in the OEDP are costly, and the City does not own a lot of the property included in the OEDP.

The OEDP was accepted but has not been implemented. She said that the OEDP requires a lot of money. Mr. Akers said that he had initial discussions with various utility companies, and they were positive conversations. Mr. Brown said that the City owns the property leading right up to the buildings in the area that he wants to develop. Exterior things such as sidewalks and curbing, and utilities such as water and sewer are costly, as well as obtaining easements for ingress to his property.

If the City is not planning on focusing on this area as outlined in the OEDP then Mr. Brown will need to reassess what is involved including the cost. Mr. Akers said that he had conversations with the Beckley Sanitary Board regarding stormwater and additional conversations are necessary. Councilwoman Coots asked Mr. Brown if he and his partners have the necessary funding for this. Mr. Brown said that he needs more clarity from the City on what they are willing to do. Mr. Brown said the roof on the Lawson Building collapsed and the building needs to be condemned. Mr. File said that he and Code Enforcement Officer Morgan will have a discussion regarding this building and Mr. File will get back to Mr. Brown. Mr. Hopkins, who is an architect working with Mr. Brown, joined the meeting by phone and said that a smaller version of the outdoor lighting, sidewalks, etc. is possible, which would help with reducing the cost.

Next was the sheet that Mr. Jarrell said lists seven properties and the costs for the City to maintain. Most of these buildings are vacant. This sheet is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Black Knight was included on this list and there are three separate spreadsheets breaking down how much money Black Knight is losing. Councilwoman Bullock asked what the total losses are including the purchase price for Black Knight. Mr. Jarrell said it is approximately $5.3M since it was purchased. He said the other spreadsheets include a breakdown of the cost of offering golf and for the restaurant. These three spreadsheets are hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Mr. Jarrell said the lease agreement for the Multi-Cultural Center is the next document. The lease agreement is hereby incorporated into these minutes. Mr. Jarrell said that he can make a recommendation for property that the City owns, and Council members can vote on it at a Council meeting. Councilwoman Hunter asked what would happen to the bicycles inside the Multicultural Center. Leslie Baker, Parks and Recreation Director said that she thinks Active Southern WV would use them.

Mr. Jarrell said that the Council may want to decide if the lessee shall be responsible for the payment of all utilities at the Multi-Cultural Center as required by the lease, or if the Council wants to consider changing the lease so that the lessor pays the utilities. Mr. Jarrell said Council members may want to think about this and consider it as an agenda item for a Council meeting. Councilman Williams said that it does not matter to him what the City decides to do with the Multi-Cultural Center building. He asked Mr. File if he received a phone call regarding an investigation that was filed on him and if his name was cleared. Mr. File said he received a phone call from an investigator advising the investigation was closed and no evidence of wrong doing was found. Councilman Williams asked Mr. File if his name was cleared. Mr. File said yes.

Next was the ordinance establishing the City of Beckley as a Home Rule City. The ordinance is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next was the MOU from the State of WV regarding the terms and definitions for the use of the opioid funds the State gave the City. The MOU is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Councilwoman Bullock asked how much opioid money the City of Beckley received. Interim Recorder-Treasurer Jessica Chandler said $3.4M and it continues to come in disbursements. However, the State may consider taking some of it back if it isn't being used. Mr. Jarrell said that this money is earning 5% interest, and the interest earned is also to be used as authorized in the MOU from the State. Councilwoman Hunter asked if opioid money could be used to purchase police cruisers. Mr. Jarrell said that it can be used for things such as a trailer and vehicles for the D.A.R.E. Program. Councilwoman Hunter asked if it could be used to help the Beckley Fire Department because they respond to overdose calls. Jessica said yes, if there is an accurate way to track this.

Next, was a list titled, “Potential Opioid Fund Uses – Compiled by City Departments”. The list is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Next was a six-page letter from Raleigh County Schools (RCS) requesting help from the City (along with help from the County and RCS contributing) outlining suggested uses for the opioid money. The letter is hereby incorporated into these minutes. Mr. Jarrell said that he would like to see the City use the opioid money to help the City first.

Last was a list of organizations requesting donations/contributions from the City. The list is hereby incorporated into these minutes.

Jessica said that Raleigh County Teen Court will be removed from the list. Mr. Jarrell said the program is being discontinued. Jessica said that the Beckley Raleigh County Health Department requested $56,400 but the City's previous contribution was $47K. Just For Kids requested $50K but the previous donation from the City was $25K. The Raleigh County Humane Society requested $120K but the previous donation was $63K. Mr. Jarrell said that the City is not required to donate/contribute to all the organizations that are on this list. He said that the second column on the spreadsheet specifies this information. Councilwoman Hunter said Huntington, WV is using some of its opioid money to help the homeless shelter. Jessica said the $60K+ that the City offered the homeless shelter in Beckley has not been requested from the homeless shelter and it is closing on May 30, 2025. This will be another building to add to the list of the City's vacant buildings once the homeless shelter closes.

Mr. Jarrell asked Council members to take the information home this evening and think about it. He invited Council members to contact him with any questions they may have. The Mayor asked if there were any other questions. With there being no further business to discuss the Mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:00 p.m.

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Mayor
City Manager