

**STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, COUNTY OF UPSHUR, CITY OF BUCKHANNON, TO WIT:**

A special joint working session of the Buckhannon City Council and Buckhannon Planning Commission was held on Wednesday, February 23, 2022 at 7:00 pm in City Hall. The following were in attendance (GTM – GoToMeeting):

Mayor	Robbie Skinner	Present
City Recorder	Randy Sanders	Present
Council Member	Pam Bucklew	Present
Council Member	Shelia Lewis-Sines	Present
Council Member	Jack Reger	Present-Virtual
Council Member	CJ Rylands	Present
Council Member	David Thomas	Present
Assistant Recorder & Director of Finance	Amberle Jenkins	Present
City Attorney	Tom O'Neill	Absent
Director of Public Works	Jerry Arnold	Present
Planning Commission President	Susan Aloï	Present
Planning Commission Member	Curtis Wilkerson	Present
Planning Commission Member	Mike Sharpolisky	Present
Planning Commission Member	Sarah St. Clair	Present
Code Enforcement Officer	Vincent Smith	Present
Record Delta	Kristen Harvey	Present
Channel 3	Dennis Cortes	Present
MyBuckhannon	Katie Kuba	Present

Also in attendance: Carl Weaver (previous year Park Attendant); Robyn Simons; Don Nestor; Dr. Joseph Reed; Joshua Hinchman; David McCauley; Dale Shannon. Attending virtually were; Richard Clemens and John Boskovic.

**To Participate in the meeting virtually,**  
Please join the meeting from your computer, tablet or smartphone:

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/887760181>

You can also dial in using your phone: United States: [+1 \(646\) 749-3122](tel:+16467493122) Access Code: 887-760-181

*Special Joint Working Session of City Council of Buckhannon & Planning Commission  
7:00 pm in Council Chambers  
Meeting Agenda for Wednesday, February 23, 2022*

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- A. **Call to Order**
  - A.1 **Moment of Silence**
  - A.2 **Pledge to the Flag of the United States of America**
- B. **Working Session & Discussion**
  - B.1 **Parks and Recreation Operations in the City of Buckhannon**
- C. **Board Members Comments and Announcements**
- D. **Adjournment**

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**A. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order with a moment of silence and pledge to the flag.

**B. Working Session & Discussion:**

**B.1 Parks and Recreation Operations in the City of Buckhannon**

**City Parks & Recreation - Discussion Outline**

- **Intro/Explanation of purpose of meeting led by Mayor Robbie Skinner**
- **Where we are: Findings of the Parks & Recreation Subcommittee (of Planning Commission) and photos of current state of the parks led by Subcommittee Chair and Planning Commission Member, Curtis Wilkerson**

- **Where we might go: Recreation section of 2025 Comprehensive Plan and photos of other parks led by Planning Commission President Susan Aloï**
- **Planning Commission recommendation to City Council led by Council Member/Commission Member CJ Rylands**
- **Recap of City Council's thinking/discussions about Parks & Recreation Board and Director led by Mayor Skinner**
- **Job description of possible Parks & Recreation Director**
  - **Duties & Responsibilities**
  - **Knowledge & Skills**
  - **Education & Experience**
- **Budget projection for Director and Operations**
- **Structure**
  - **Director reports to whom?**
  - **Director coordinates with which other units?**
  - **Parks & Recreation Board (modeled after the Colonial Arts Center board)?**
- **Other suggestions and concerns led by Mayor Skinner**
- **Questions?**

Mayor Skinner opened the meeting with a brief overview of the purpose of this meeting which is to see what is expected of our parks and if there is the need to hire a Parks and Recreation Director to oversee and develop programming for the parks.

Skinner turned the meeting over to Planning Commission President Dr. Susan Aloï.

Dr. Aloï explained the purpose of the Planning Commission. "The Planning Commission is charged with a development of a comprehensive plan that was then submitted to City Council who approved. There is a section in the plan required by state code regarding recreation. We also completed a survey in the community and received over 750 responses of what people would like to see in Buckhannon."

Aloï noted that many of the responses mentioned recreation and therefore, a Parks and Recreation Subcommittee was developed. Curtis Wilkerson is the chairman of the subcommittee and a member of the Planning Commission. Wilkerson verbalized, "One of the things we did was to assess the facilities and take pictures. The next thing we looked at was the utilization. We started to come to the conclusion that we have all these really great assets but a lack of focus and planning across multiple generations and activities. We wanted to take a look at long term plans of what the City of Buckhannon could be. The parks fall under the streets department, which is already overworked, and our parks are not at the top of the list and there are a lot of street and other city infrastructure that need attention. We haven't had a constant set of eyes on our parks. There are picnic tables with tree limbs falling down on them, unusable horseshoe pits and roofs that need repair." Pictures were also available of our local parks and the areas that need addressed.









Council member CJ Rylands noted when referring to our parks, “This has been a reactive rather than a proactive approach. We want to diminish the load on the street department so they can accomplish their mission and at the same time enhance our parks to improve the quality of life for our citizens. We also want to increase the utilization.”

### C. Comments:

Comments were made by many of the participants of the meeting including but not limited to the following:

- Aloï- Central Planning will improve use of parks. Example pictures of other communities were displayed.
- Wilkerson- Parks are a quality of life and help keep a community vibrant. Activities go in and out of fashion. Constant planning is important.
- Rylands- If a Director would be hired the framework to develop that position should be thought out.
- Sines- Questioned if the position should be a director or a worker. What would a director do during the winter? There is a lot to consider.

- Thomas- Wants to be proactive. More things are possible with the help of sales tax revenue. This needs to be looked at in total, along with Stockert, Colonial, the Madison/Jawbone, Dog Park and trails. Maybe we need less parks. This should be reviewed comprehensively. Maybe one person to look at all these facilities every day.
- Reger- Suggests forming a committee to develop a plan over the next year.
- Skinner- Some of the parks are used in different ways. Madison/Jawbone is more for events, city parks are combination of youth and adult activities. Some parks are more aesthetical.
- Clemens- Lives next to the City Park on Park St and observes it. It is maintained and well mowed during the spring and summer season and a little less during off season. It is well used. There doesn't need to be a formal program every week.
- Jerry Arnold- Cautioned that if a Director were to be hired, not to set them up for failure. Directors working for the city do more than just organize and manage, they must help with the daily tasks as well. A few part time personnel will not be beneficial to help a director that has been described.
- Mr. Carl Weaver was present and acknowledged for his hard work the past year in working as a park attendant. Weaver spoke of issues, including homeless people and drug issues in parks as well. Additionally, Weaver noted it is not an easy task and would require a team of people to effectively run and improve our present parks.
- Dr. Reed expressed his own observations, stating that West Virginia Wesleyan College is Buckhannon's largest attraction. In addition, he made request to council to consider remodeling Jawbone Park and having adequate restrooms available.
- Former Mayor David McCauley spoke on the issue, stating, "We need to focus on accessibility and inclusivity." He also noted that he would recommend a full-time director to promote planning and work on funding. Furthermore, McCauley said working on "inter-connectedness" of our parks and recreation system would be beneficial.
- Comments in favor of a park director came from a few guests that were present virtually and in-person. Others would like to see more volunteerism to help. There was much discussion on what would be most beneficial to all departments and individuals when developing a plan to improve our parks. All in attendance discussed pros and cons of various options. Initially it was discussed to have only a part-time director to oversee our parks, however it was pointed out by others in attendance that in the off-season would be the time that would be spent to plan for the next open season, make significant repairs and perform grant writing to provide funding to improve the recreational areas in Buckhannon. Parks are generally in-season starting in May and closing for off-season in October. Discussion also explored increasing volunteerism to address repairs such as group painting projects.

Overall, it was noted that the City of Buckhannon is highly ambitious to develop and implement a plan to improve our recreational areas. Multiple ideas were also considered including exploring opportunities to fund creating a skate park, splash pad, pickle ball, ice rink and sled riding areas.

City Council mentioned possibly using sales tax to cover costs of projects but other funding would still be required. It was also reported that grants may be available to the city for recreational projects. What’s more is that the consensus was that more utilization in our parks improves quality of life for our citizens and will also deter drug use and vandalism.

Upon the end of discussion, Mayor Skinner noted that he would recommend that City Council create a Parks and Recreation Board, appoint members and move forward. “I think this is a great first step. We will explore the quick tangibles that we can achieve, then mid-range line items we want to tackle and then long-range end of the road planning of what we want to see happen with the parks,” Mayor Skinner concluded.

**D. Adjournment:** There being no further discussions, the meeting adjourned at 8:54 pm.

**Mayor Robert N. Skinner III** \_\_\_\_\_

**City Recorder Randall H. Sanders** \_\_\_\_\_

(Portions of these minutes are from Record Delta newspaper.)