



2016 Year in Review

Board Members:

2016 has come to a close. It is challenging to think how fast time moves. It is also difficult to recall the various projects that county staff worked on this year. Therefore, I asked staff to give me some items to share with you. This list does not include the various regional projects and initiatives that the county staff worked on in 2016. This list is also not all inclusive. I am sure there are plenty of accomplishments that have been overlooked. As county administrator, enough cannot be said about the dedication and effort of the employees and departments of the county.

Eric Workman, Ed.D.
County Administrator

In no particular order:

General Events

- Adam Kidd joins as a new supervisor
- Bland County Library Branch renamed the Harry and Lois Shupe Library
- The Hollybrook and Little Creek Polling Places were changed
- Secretary of Health and Human Resources, William Hazel visited Bland County
- Secretary of Commerce and Trade, Todd Haymore visited with county administration
- Staff coordinated with Ag Agent to hold Gypsy Moth informational at farm management meeting
- Purchased new voting machines and equipment
- Library expansion study completed. Library purchases adjacent property
- Purchased three new vehicles for Sheriff's Office
- 2% increase in lodging tax implemented, with additional funds required to be used for tourism marketing
- 2% across the board salary increase for all county, school, and constitutional officer employees

Office of Public Works

- Completion of High Chaparral and Fairview Street Water Pump Stations
- Tire Collection – 2,953 tires
- Water Plant and Line Replacement Funding
 - Rural Development: \$1,000,000 Grant
 - Rural Development: \$1,400,000 Loan
 - PDC SWVAW/WW: \$100,000 Grant

- Southwest Regional Water/Wastewater PDC Grant for upgrades at the Wastewater Plant \$57,335
 - Replaced Grinder at Southbound Rest Area
 - Repaired Belt Press at Plant
 - Other small repairs at the plant
 - Currently ordered two generators for Rocky Gap and South Gap Water Pump Stations
 - Working with ABB on water study of their system
- Received SWVA W/WW Grant PDC for I&I on wastewater systems: \$17,000
- Received Litter Grant in the amount of \$6,192 from DEQ
- There were 203 water/sewer customers for the month of December 2016. The breakdown is as follows:
 - 53 customers that have water only
 - 75 customers that have water and sewer and are billed residential or non-residential (businesses) for sewer
 - 75 customers that have water and sewer and are billed a flat rate for sewer
 - In 2016, 53 new customers were added; 1 new customer in December 2016.
- Completed Crab Orchard Park and Basketball Pavement
- Completed Front/Back of the Courthouse with Concrete Pads and Side of Courthouse Handicap Ramp
- Completed Engineering Term Contracts with CHA, Pillar Eng., and Thrasher Eng.
- Currently advertised for new Solid Waste Contracts
- Repaired several water leaks and fire hydrants
- Worked with regional jail on several projects

Personnel / Comprehensive Services Act (CPMT/FAPT)

- New County Personnel Policy Implemented in January with all Constitutional Officers participating via MOUs
- Implemented drug screening program January 1, 2016 of all new and existing employees
- Jaime Williams named the new General Manager of the WCIV
- Jenna Dunn named Emergency Services / E911 Coordinator
- Denise Wingate retires as Water Plant Operator, these duties are assigned to part-time employees
- Travis Pauley and Dennis Wingate working as part time Water Plant Operators
- Kathy Harner retires as the Circuit Court Deputy Clerk
- Lesa Berry named Circuit Court Deputy Clerk
- Lori Miller resigns as Treasurer's Clerk
- Michelle Willard resign as Dispatcher
- Michelle Willard named Treasurer's Clerk
- Judy Cassell retires as Victim Witness Coordinator
- Pam Gibson named Victim Witness Coordinator.
- Tom Roseberry elected High Sheriff
- New Deputies hired in 2016 – Robert Stover, Mark Readnour, Jason Ramsey
- Jerry Turpin named Chief Deputy.

- New full and part time dispatchers hired – Brandon Blevins, Lisa Taylor, Amanda Shelton and Brittany Groud.
- Denny Clevinger joins the Public Works Maintenance Staff
- The Tourism Coordinator position become vacant and we have not rehired that position
- The part-time library custodian position became vacant and was not rehired. Instead, those duties were added to existing staff.
- Underwent our first state audit of the County Comprehensive Services Act program. Unlike many other localities that faced chargebacks, the County’s audit was clean and very positive.

Project Coordinator / Wireless Authority / Tourism

- Tourism hosted the Crooked Road Concert
- Hosted business workshop regarding doing business associated with the Appalachian Trail
- Hosted business workshop regarding using Social Media for Marketing your Business
- Using \$50,000 in DHCD grant funds, a county wide telecommunication plan was developed
- Application was made to DHCD for grant funding in 2017 for the Hollybrook Broadband Expansion Project
- Rocky Gap Greenway groundbreaking
- County Administration Staff participates in Trunk or Treat
- Bland County Tourism Marketing Materials created and placed in Virginia Rest Areas
- Some of the grant funding awarded to the various departments Bland County in 2016:
 - Rocky Gap Greenway VDOT Transportation Alternatives \$600,000
 - Rocky Gap Greenway VEDA/DEQ Brownfield Program \$50,000
 - Wythe-Bland Farmers’ Market \$4,500
 - Emergency Management VDEM Grant \$7,500
 - Emergency Management VDEM Training Grant \$2,000
 - PDC SWVAW/WW Grant \$100,000
 - SWVA W/WW Grant PDC for I&I on wastewater systems \$17,000
 - DEQ Litter Grant \$6,192
 - Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) Grant \$102,597

Finance / Economic Development

- The Finance Department stays busy throughout the year. It would be difficult to measure the amount of reports, transactions, and duties conducted by this office.
- The EDA held their Business and Industry picnic in June with a great turnout
- EDA recognizes Dollar General as the Bland County Business of the Year
- EDA recognizes Grants as the Community Impact Business of Year
- EDA members participate in Rocky Gap & Bland Parades
- EDA hosted the Love’s Groundbreaking

Office of Building Official / Zoning & Planning Commission / Buildings, Grounds, & Maintenance / Canneries

Building Official

- There were 183 various building permits issued, with numerous inspections performed throughout the year.

Planning Commission

- Staff and Planning Commission member attend Planning Commission Training through Virginia Tech
- The Planning Commission met a total of ten times for the year. Nine regular meetings as well as one work session.
- The bulk of the work performed by the Commission dealt with the re-writing of the Comprehensive Plan. This plan re-write is being written with the assistance of the Mount Rogers Planning District. After attending a Planning Commissioner Class, taught by Virginia Tech, the County has become more focused on the Comprehensive Plan and the direction in which we want it to take. This has come at a cost in terms of time, as nearly all prior work is to be sacrificed, but the result will be a workable, living document, that will serve Bland County well into the future.
- There were four (4) Conditional Use Permits (CUP) applications that went before the Commission in the past year. Three of the four were recommend for approval, with the BOS denying two and approving two.

Buildings, Grounds, and Maintenance

- There were numerous repairs made in the day to day operation of county buildings, from heat pumps to bulb replacements. The Staff do a lot of behind the scenes work, to keep the operations of the county going.
- In addition to the normal duties that fall to staff, there were several projects that stand out and deserve recognition:
 - New cinderblock building constructed on top of the ridge in Bland that houses radio equipment for 911 and internet
 - New bridge installed over Crab Orchard Creek at the Bland Park (in time for the Fair)
 - Construction on the Palisade Wall around the WCIV
 - Repair of Sheetrock Ceiling in WCIV Museum
 - Bracing and painting of the Football bleachers
 - Paved basketball court Crab Orchard Park
 - Repaired walking track Crab Orchard Park
 - Replaced outside courthouse lighting with new electronics to improve performance and reduce operational costs
 - Additional courthouse cameras added for security

Canneries

- The year was completed with minimal maintenance having to be made, (always a good thing). The patron count was approximately the same as last year, however the revenue was down compared to numbers from 2015.

Office of Emergency Management / E911

- Applied for and received the Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) Grant (\$102,597.59) to replace outdated and nonvendor supported radio equipment in the 911 Center.
- Applied for VITA CAD grant and Educational PEP grant
- Applied to Wythe-Bland foundation to replace non-vendor supported Sheriff's Office radios and to replace used fire hose for Ceres Volunteer Fire Department
- Began the review of emergency tower equipment and sites. The battery backup system for the Big Walker Mountain site has been replaced with assistance from the maintenance department. Review of tower sites will continue in 2017.
- In cooperation with other departments, a new tower shelter for internet and radio equipment was built and the equipment was moved over at the Bland site using \$7,500 VDEM grant
- Funding was acquired to add part-time Communications Operators to help with shift coverage and training needs
- Applied for and received the Local Emergency Management Performance Grant
- Using a regional VITA Educational PEP grant, a Communications Operator went through training to be certified as an APCO (Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials) In-House Trainer. That individual will be able to train the remaining staff.
- Attended an Active Shooter-Train the Trainer course provided by Roanoke also using a VITA Educational PEP grant
- Attended the APCO/NENA Fall conference for training and networking using the PEP grant.
- Implemented an Emergency Notification System (CodeRED) through a regional VDEM grant for the County
- Attended and participated in the ABB and Henry Schein Safety Day to encourage preparedness for disasters and to increase sign up for the emergency notification system-CodeRED
- Applied for and was granted access to the IPAWS (FEMA's Integrated Public Alert and Warning System) system to send out emergency notifications
- Participated in the Fire Prevention program at the school to inform the children about 911
- Began writing Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the 911 Center
- Participated in the East River Communications Tunnel Exercise in coordination with VDEM, VSP, VDOT, TOM, Inc, Bland Sheriff's Office, County Fire Departments, and mutual aid departments
- Participated as an Exercise Co-Director for the Region 4 EOC (Emergency Operations Center) exercise- funding provided by VDEM (Virginia Department of Emergency Management)
- Prepared for and passed state VCIN/NCIC (Virginia Criminal Information Network/National Crime Information Center) audit
- Received level 300 ICS certification
- Encouraged County fire departments to register for NIMS/ICS training
- Responded to incidents involving emergency services
- The 911 Center handled a total of 3,005 wireless calls and 1,061 landline 911 calls

- Attended Fire and Rescue Association meetings and met with departments

Wolf Creek Indian Village and Museum

- Wolf Creek celebrated its 20th year in 2016
- The village hosted four events in 2016:
 - The Wolf 5K in April
 - Family Day in June
 - Pow Wow in July
 - 20th Anniversary Event in September
- Wolf Creek participated in several local events:
 - Mercer County Heritage Festival
 - Festival of Leaves
 - Trunk or Treat
- Wolf Creek hosted 52 different groups (including pre-school, public school, home school, church, college, and boy scout groups) from April to December
- Ticket Sales were as follows (does not reflect visitors who visited the gift shop only):
 - There were 4,760 paid school group child admissions and 876 paid school group parents in 2016.
 - There were 3,791 paid adult tours, 720 paid child tours, and 75 paid family tours (Family Tours are 2 adults with 3 or more children).
 - There were 417 visits to the indoor conventional museum only.
- Palisade poles were purchased, and these replacements were set.
- Construction has begun on one of the two guard houses.
- All roundhouses were painted with natural looking sealant to improve the look of the weathered bamboo siding.
- Several improvements were made to some of the displays and shelving inside the roundhouses in the village.
- Hosted informational plant series on Facebook throughout the year that gave information on plants found in the area and their uses.