The County Commission of Upshur County, West Virginia, and the Buckhannon City Council held a joint meeting at the Upshur County Circuit Courtroom on Thursday, October 29, 2015, at 6:00 p.m. There were present Troy A. Brady, Commissioner; Terry Cutright, Commissioner; City Council Members, Mayor Rick Edwards; Mary Albaugh, Robin Riggs-Simons, Ron Pugh and David Thomas and City Administrator, Mike Doss, County Administrator, Carrie L. Wallace, Assistant County Administrator, Tabatha R. Perry and Jacqueline Dinklocker, Secretary. Mayor Edwards called the meeting to order. The meeting began with a moment of silent meditation and prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

West Virginia Wesleyan students from the Community and Alumni Relations Committee of the Student Senate presented a proposal for public transportation to service Buckhannon and Upshur County with a focus on marketing and student transportation needs. The students anticipated that their proposal would not only service college students who do not have access to transportation, but would benefit the community at large. The students reviewed data and statistics concerning start-up, maintenance and upkeep of a designated bus route and flexible service throughout Upshur County. The proposal was for 2 busses to operate 9 am to 9 pm daily and weekends from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. City Council and Commission members commented that although they recognized a need for public transportation, Country Roads Transit already services the county with designated and flexible transportation options and the City and County both make financial contributions to the CRT. Carrie Wallace advised the students to get in touch with CRT to explore internship possibilities. Commission and City Council members commended the students for their community spirit and encouraged them to continue to remain active in community service. Mary Albaugh pointed to volunteer opportunities such as the “backpack” programs in the schools.

Mayor Edwards reviewed the discussion points from the previous joint meeting in July, concerning the joint hiring of a grant writer for the City and County. Terry Cutright commented that Region VII was available for grant writing and even though the County already provides financial support for the agency, their services are seldom utilized.

Shane Whitehair, Region VII Planning and Development Council Executive Director provided a review of the services the agency provides. Mr. Whitehair advised that Region VII serves seven counties and has been instrumental in obtaining financial assistance for participating counties for needed projects at no additional cost. If a grant is awarded, then, the County would pay Region VII to administer the grant. After review, the consensus of opinions was that the joint hiring of a full time grant writer was impractical and not a good use of revenues. Michael Doss, City Administrator, conceded that a full time grant writer may not make sense at this time, however, advised that the City should still consider the option to use a grant writer on a contractual basis. Dave Thomas and Buddy Brady commented on the decrease in the availability of grants and funding opportunities and Mr. Thomas recognized that if citizens want the services, the may have to pay more for them via increased taxes, levies, bonds etc.

Mayor Edwards provided a review of a proposal for the City of Buckhannon to increase its’ support of the Lewis-Upshur Animal Control Facility. Mayor Edwards commended the facility’s Director, Jan Cochran, for her outstanding accomplishment in the operations of the facility. Ms. Cochran reported on some of the challenges that she faces due to inadequate space, small staff, shortages of medicine and/or food and dealing with under-educated, irresponsible pet owners and adopters. Commissioners and Council members discussed expanding the space of the facility, (septic system not sufficient to handle add-on), and how the City of Buckhannon could help to facilitate improvements. Carrie Wallace advised that any financial donation would be welcome but that adding another entity to the administration of the facility could cause some problems—“It is hard enough to get the two counties to agree on policy, without adding a third entity”.

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Edwards advised that the City would not be interested in becoming involved in Administration. Ms. Wallace stated that the City would be recognized for its financial contribution. In addition, Mayor Edwards stated that the City might be able to help with personnel by assisting the Animal Control Officer—perhaps with an additional officer.

Dave Thomas stated that he doesn’t have a problem with providing funding assistance, however, he expressed concerns about the personal responsibility of pet owners to follow the laws, and to spay/neuter their animals and suggested adding pet owner education to school curriculums. Meeting participants discussed increasing fees for dog licenses and possibly adding fees for licensing/registering cats as well. Audience feedback acknowledged enforcement challenges.

At 7:55 p.m., with no further business, Mayor Edwards adjourned the meeting of the Buckhannon City Council. With no further business, on motion by Terry Cutright, seconded by Troy A. Brady, the meeting of the Upshur County Commission was adjourned.