



## A Path Forward for Bull Shoals

Our city is at a turning point. To keep the way of life that we all strive for we need to take an honest look at where we are and plot a path forward to reach our common goals. To do this, we need to look at where we are, what we have to offer and how we would like our city to grow

### Where we are as a city

Currently Bull Shoals is experiencing some problems that have made moving forward much harder than it needs to be. With city finances in disarray, it is hard to know where we stand. We have critical infrastructure issues that need to be addressed, city staffing issues and a less than favorable business climate. These issues can and will be solved, over time, as the new city administration settles into place and begins to work on the first, most important of these issues: getting the city's financial house in order. Without an accurate overview of our financial condition nothing can be done. To that end we need to have an outside audit of the city's books as well as forming a budget committee to ensure that all the city's basic and infrastructure needs are being met and that safeguards are put into place to prevent further issues. I have asked Nancy Jo Pucci to head the budget committee.

Another issue the city needs to address is the "tribal" nature of the citizens. There exists a very pronounced "us against them" mentality while both sides claim they, and they alone, have the best interests of Bull Shoals at heart. Put simply, this atmosphere needs to change, and we all need to start pulling on the same end of the rope. How we get there is the problem. It will take challenging work from both factions to build trust and move forward. As

always, it is much easier to lead from the front and I think the new City Council can play a significant role here. If we, as a city government, can conduct the people's business with professionalism and respect it will go a long way to build trust in this community. Other organizations in the city can do the same. The Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club, VFW and local churches should all be encouraged to join in community building efforts. We can move forward as a community, but we must do it together.

### What we have to offer

First and foremost, what we have to offer is the natural beauty and small town feel of Bull Shoals. That has always been our strongest point and remains that way today. With our prime location in between the lake and White River fishing and recreational boating opportunities abound. In the past fishing tournaments brought hundreds of anglers to both the lake and river. Unfortunately, those tournaments have relocated due to our lack of basic amenities such as hotel rooms, a gas station and laundromat. Another problem we have is appropriate parking. By developing a parking area at Point Return with ample truck and trailer parking along with a low water boat ramp we can make this area usable again. To regain more valuable tourist/vacation dollars, we need to actively recruit businesses to return to Bull Shoals. Another part of this puzzle is to actively promote Bull Shoals using social media. I would propose forming an economic development committee to study the current conditions and formulate a plan to address recruiting new businesses and social media opportunities. Council Member Howell has already done substantial research in this area and is the obvious choice to head this committee.

An added benefit to new, tourist/vacation friendly business would be our ability to develop new attractions. Mountain biking is exploding as a competitive and recreational sport, and we have acres and acres of land that can easily be developed into mountain bike trails. Many local communities have benefited from hosting mountain bike competitions and the dollars they bring.

Other non-fishing related opportunities that we should look at are things like disc golf, archery, pickle ball and hiking. Again, due to our location and access to undeveloped land these activities can be developed at a low cost. Having a solid and realistic economic development plan is the key to this part of a rejuvenation plan.

### How we would like our city to grow

As the recent Bel Arco hearing has shown, the community has definite ideas about how they want to grow. There seems to be this idea that we are either a retirement community or a tourist destination and that both cannot exist simultaneously. That idea is ridiculous. Bull Shoals has always been both and if we genuinely want our community to begin growing again, we need to have citizen input all along the way to make sure both groups are represented. At every step of this revitalization the public needs to be kept informed. This can easily be done by using the city's web site, committee reports at both workshops and council meetings and when needed, special public meetings. If we can show the citizens what we are doing and how it will benefit everyone in the community, they will get behind our plans. An idea that may help this effort to inform citizens might be borrowing from the police department and starting a "coffee with the council" event every month where one of the council members could pick a local restaurant and invite the public to stop by and ask questions and voice their opinions. Another useful thing would be to have a single council member post an open letter each month on the city web site highlighting a specific issue they are working on. As Mayor I will also post monthly updates on the city web site with an overview of the "state of the city." These could be very informal things, but I feel that it would go a long way to keeping our constituents informed and building trust in the City Council.

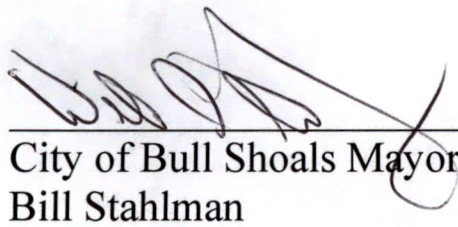
To circle back a bit, retaining and recruiting new businesses is vital to any plan we have moving forward. One thing that will help in those efforts is forming a closer working relationship with the chamber of commerce. Their mission is to support local businesses and the community at large, we, as a city government, should be supporting their efforts. To that end, I have been

attending the monthly chamber meetings along with 4 of our six council members and hope to find new ways to support their efforts

Now, a much trickier issue that will need to be addressed as Bull Shoals begins to grow again is housing. We need to find a logical and sustainable way to develop affordable housing. 300 square foot apartments paid for by HUD are not the answer! The community has made that clear but there are other options and those that need to be explored. As I said, this is a tricky issue, so any proposed projects need to be fully explained, with specific guidelines and goals, with the public so that they can give their input. I know there is a workable solution out there. We, as a community, need to find it.

Another area we need to improve on is the city's general look, and that will come down to code enforcement and community help. Codes need to be enforced, and properties need to be cleaned up. It is hard to instill pride in your city when your neighbor has three abandoned cars, a washer, and an "outdoor" couch in their yard. These are obviously problems that need to be addressed. In recent months, groups of private citizens have volunteered to help those in need of help to bring their properties into compliance. I would like to see a citizens committee formed to work with code enforcement to identify areas that need and find ways to get these properties cleaned up.

So, as you can see, we have a lot of work that needs to be done and the faster we get down to business the better. There are and always will be detractors that would like to derail any efforts to change Bull Shoals but frankly, unless we begin to change things, Bull Shoals are in real danger and may not survive. The time to move forward, together, is here and it is our responsibility to plot that course and get Bull Shoals back on the right path



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City of Bull Shoals Mayor  
Bill Stahlman