

Article 3 - Administrative Mechanisms

Section 16-3.1 Planning Board.

There shall be a Planning Board consisting of nine members. Eight members, appointed by the Town Board of Commissioners, shall reside within the town limits. One member, appointed by the Watauga County Board of Commissioners, shall reside within that portion of the Town's extraterritorial jurisdiction that lies within Watauga County. If, despite good faith efforts, a resident of the extraterritorial jurisdiction cannot be found to fill the seat reserved for residents of such area, then the Watauga County Board of Commissioners may appoint any other resident of the County (including residents of the Town of Blowing Rock) to fill such seat. If the County Board fails to make an appointment within ninety days after receiving a resolution from the Town Board requesting that an appointment be made, the Town Board may make the appointment and terms. All members may participate in and vote on all issues before the Planning Board, regardless of whether the issue affects property within the Town or within the extraterritorial planning area.

16-3.1.1 Terms. Planning Board members shall be appointed for three year staggered terms, but members may continue to serve until their successors have been appointed. Vacancies may be filled for the unexpired terms only. Members may be appointed to successive terms without limitation. Planning Board members may be removed by the Town Board of Commissioners at any time for failure to attend three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings or for failure to attend four or more of the meetings within any twelve-month period or for any other good cause related to performance of duties.

16-3.1.2 Meetings of the Planning Board. The planning board shall establish a regular meeting schedule and shall meet frequently enough so that it can take action in conformity with Section 16-4.19 (Applications to be Processed Expeditiously). Minutes shall be kept of all board proceedings.

16-3.1.2.1 Since the board has only advisory authority, it need not conduct its meetings strictly in accordance with the quasi-judicial procedures set forth in Articles 4, 5, and 6. However, it shall conduct its meetings so as to obtain necessary information and to promote the full and free exchange of ideas.

16-3.1.2.2 All board meetings shall be open to the public, and whenever feasible the agenda for each board meeting shall be made available in advance of the meeting.

16-3.1.2.3 Whenever the board is called upon to make recommendations concerning a conditional use permit request, special use permit request, or a minor zoning amendment proposal, the staff shall post on or near the subject property one or more notices that are sufficiently conspicuous in terms of size, location, and content to

provide reasonably adequate notice to potentially interested persons of the matter that will appear on the board's agenda at a specified date and time. Such notice(s) shall be posted at least seven days prior to the meeting at which the matter is to be considered. The staff shall also send written notice to adjoining property owners if and to the extent required by any regulation or requirement of the planning board adopted under Section 16-3.1.5.7.

16-3.1.3 Quorum and Voting. A quorum for the planning board shall consist of five members. A quorum is necessary for the board to take official action. All actions of the planning board shall be taken by majority vote, a quorum being present. A roll call vote shall be taken upon the request of any member.

16-3.1.4 Planning Board Officers. The Planning Board shall elect the Board Chair and Vice-Chair from among its regular members. Each officer shall serve a one-year term and may be reelected to serve subsequent terms. The Chair and Vice-Chair may take part in all deliberations and vote on all issues.

16-3.1.5 Powers and Duties of Planning Board. The planning board shall have the powers and duties listed herein:

16-3.1.5.1 Make studies and recommend to the Board plans, goals and objectives relating to the growth, development and redevelopment of the town and the surrounding extraterritorial planning area.

16-3.1.5.2 Develop and recommend to the Board policies, ordinances, administrative procedures and other means for carrying out plans in a coordinated and efficient manner.

16-3.1.5.3 Make recommendations to the Board concerning proposed conditional use permits and proposed zoning map changes, as provided by Sections 16-4.12 and 16-23.3.

16-3.1.5.4 To act as the Watershed Review Board on proposed plats of land subdivision and hear major and minor variance requests related to subdivisions within the designated Water Supply Watersheds.

16-3.1.5.5 To hear cases concerning major and minor variances, vested rights, administrative reviews and appeals involving the interpretation or application of the Watershed Protection Ordinance in designated Water Supply Watersheds. Perform any other duties assigned by the Board.

16-3.1.5.6 The planning board shall, in conjunction with its annual budget request, submit to the board of commissioners a progress report of its activities during the current fiscal year. In addition, not later than thirty days after the close of the fiscal year, the planning board shall submit to the board of commissioners a report on its activities during the entire fiscal year just completed.

16-3.1.5.7 The planning board may adopt rules and regulations governing its procedures and operations not inconsistent with the provisions of the chapter.

Section 16-3.2 Board of Adjustment. There shall be a Board of Adjustment consisting of six regular members and three alternates. The Town Board of Commissioners shall appoint five regular members and three alternates, each of whom shall be residents of the Town. The Watauga County Board of Commissioners shall be entitled to appoint one regular member in the manner prescribed for appointments to the Planning Board in Section 16-3.1, above.

16-3.2.1. Members. Each alternate member, while serving in any regular or special meeting of the Board of Adjustment, shall have and may exercise all the powers and duties of a regular member. Members may be reappointed to successive terms without limitation. Board of Adjustment members may be removed by the Town Board of Commissioners at any time for failure to attend three consecutive regularly scheduled meetings or for failure to attend four or more of the meetings within any twelve-month period or for any other good cause related to performance of duties.

16-3.2.1.1 Board of Adjustment members, as well as alternates, shall be appointed for three year staggered terms. Vacancies may be filled for the unexpired terms only.

16-3.2.1.2 The member appointed to represent the area of extraterritorial jurisdiction may vote only on matters pertaining to the area of extraterritorial jurisdiction.

16-3.2.2 Meetings of the Board of Adjustment. Meetings of the board of adjustment shall be held at the call of the chairman or vice chairman and at such other times as the board may determine; however, the board shall meet frequently enough so that it can take action in conformity with Section 16-4.19 (Applications to be Processed Exeditiously).

16-3.2.2.1 The Board shall conduct its hearings in accordance with the quasi-judicial procedures set forth in Articles 4, 5, and 6.

16-3.2.2.2 All meetings of the board shall be open to the public, and whenever feasible the agenda for each board meeting shall be made available in advance of the meeting.

16-3.2.3 Quorum A quorum for the Board of Adjustment shall consist of four members

(including any alternates) with respect to matters involving properties within the town and five members (including alternates) with respect to matters involving properties within the extraterritorial planning jurisdiction.

16-3.2.3.1 A quorum is necessary for the Board to take official action. A member who has withdrawn from the meeting without being excused as provided in Section 16-3.2.4 shall be counted as present for purposes of determining whether a quorum is present.

16-3.2.4 Voting. With respect to properties located within the Town, the concurring vote of four members of the Board of Adjustment (including alternates sitting in lieu of regular members) shall be necessary to reverse any order, requirement, decision, or determination of the Administrator or to decide in favor of the applicant any matter upon which the board is required to pass under any ordinance or to grant any variance. With respect to properties located within the extraterritorial planning jurisdiction, the concurring vote of five members

(including alternates sitting in lieu of regular members) shall be necessary to take any of the foregoing actions. All other actions of the board shall be taken by majority vote, a quorum being present.

16-3.2.5. Board of Adjustment Officers. The Board of Adjustment shall elect the Board Chair and Vice-Chair from among the regular in-town members appointed by the Town Board of Commissioners. Each officer shall serve a one-year term and may be reelected to serve subsequent terms. The Chair and Vice-Chair may take part in all deliberations and vote on all issues.

16-3.2.6 Powers and Duties of Board of Adjustment. The Board of Adjustment shall hear and decide the following matters:

16-3.2.6.1 Appeals from any order, decision, requirement, or interpretation made by the Administrator, as provided in Section 16-5.1.

16-3.2.6.2 Applications for variances, as provided in Section 16-5.2.

16-3.2.6.3 Questions involving interpretations of the zoning map, including disputed district boundary lines and lot lines, as provided in Section 16-5.3.

16-3.2.6.4 Any other matter the Board is required to act upon by any other Town ordinance.

16-3.2.6.5 The Board may adopt rules and regulations governing its procedures and operations not inconsistent with the provisions of this chapter.

Section 16-3.3 Land Use Administrator. Except as other specifically provided, primary responsibility for administering and enforcing this chapter may be assigned to one or more individuals by the board of commissioners or Land Use Administrator as appropriate. The person or persons to whom these functions are assigned shall be referred to in this chapter as the "land use administrator", "administrator", or Planning Director. The term "staff" is sometimes used interchangeably with the term "administrator".

Section 16-3.4 Board of Commissioners. The board of commissioners, in considering conditional use permit applications, acts in a quasi-judicial capacity and, accordingly, is required to observe the procedural requirements set forth in Articles 4 and 5 of this chapter. In considering proposed changes in the text of this chapter or in the zoning map, the Board acts in its legislative capacity and must proceed in accordance with the requirements of Article 23. Unless otherwise specifically provided in this chapter, in acting upon conditional use permit requests or in considering amendments to this chapter or the zoning map, the Board shall follow the regular voting and other requirements as set forth in other provisions of the town code, the town charter, or general law.

Section 16-3.5 Conflicts of Interest. Service on a council, a board, or a commission of the Town of Blowing Rock is a public trust. Members of governmental boards have a duty to represent the public interest fairly and honestly. To protect the integrity of governmental decisions and to promote public confidence in the decisions, no board member shall use his or her position for private gain. Further, board members shall refrain from actions that might reasonably call into question the impartiality and the fairness of those decisions. To that end, this section establishes minimum standards that board members shall follow to avoid conflicts of interest in governmental decision making. It is the intention of the governing board that this ordinance be liberally construed so as to accomplish its purpose of protecting the public against governmental decisions affected by undue conflicts of interest.

16-3.5.1 Applicability. This section shall apply to the citizen members of all "boards" of the Town of Blowing Rock. For purposes of this section, "boards" includes the Town Council/Board of Commissioners, the Planning Board, the Board of Adjustment. This section shall apply to all board members serving on or after July 13, 1999.

16-3.5.2 Participation in Decisions. In order to preserve public confidence in the integrity of the governmental process, it shall be the duty of the member of every board covered by this section to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. Therefore no such member shall vote on, discuss, debate, advocate, influence, or otherwise participate before the board on which he or she is a member in any matter that would substantially affect, directly or indirectly, his or her personal financial interests or the financial interests of a member of his or her household. This prohibition includes formal and informal consideration of the matter by the board, whether conducted in public or in private. This provision does not prohibit participation in legislative and advisory decisions that will have a similar effect on all citizens of Blowing Rock or in which the financial interest is so

insignificant or remote that it is unlikely to affect the member's official actions in any way. Regardless of whether a financial interest exists, no member may represent any other party as an advocate or agent on any matter being considered by the board on which he or she is a member.

16-3.5.3 Quasi-Judicial Decisions. Members of boards making quasi-judicial decisions shall disqualify themselves from any matter in which their impartiality might reasonably be questioned. Members shall therefore refrain from all participation in any matter in which they have any financial interest (direct or indirect), a personal bias or prejudice, or a personal or financial relationship with any of the parties or the parties' representatives. In order to ensure a fair and unbiased hearing on the record of all quasi-judicial matters, board members making quasi-judicial decisions shall refrain from discussion of such matters with the parties thereto other than through the formal hearing process.

16-3.5.4 Legal Opinions and Disqualification. Any official covered by this section may seek an opinion from the Town Attorney as to the applicability of this section to a particular decision or set of facts. The response to such a request shall be made to the member making the request, and a copy shall be provided to the chair of the body to which the member belongs. By majority vote, any Town board may seek the opinion of the Town Attorney as to the applicability of this section to a particular decision or set of facts. If an opinion is received from the Town Attorney that a member has an impermissible conflict of interest pursuant to this section and the member does not recuse himself or herself, the board may by majority vote disqualify that member from all participation in the matter involved.

16-3.5.5 Enforcement. If a member participates in a decision in violation of this section, the decision of the board shall be void, and the matter shall be reheard without that member's participation. If no objection to the member's participation has been filed with the board making the decision within ten days of the decision, this section shall be deemed to have been complied with. Any member who intentionally participates in a decision for which this section requires disqualification shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable as provided in General Statutes Section 14-4."