

**DRAFT**  
**Town of Blowing Rock**  
**Town Council 2016 Annual Retreat**  
**January 17-19, 2016**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their annual retreat on Sunday, January 17, 2017 at 1:00 p.m. at the Doubletree Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Council Members Albert Yount, Jim Steele, Sue Sweeting, Doug Matheson and Ray Pickett. Also present were Town Manager Scott Fogleman, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

**CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**MAIN STREET RECYCLING**

Town Manager Fogleman began by reviewing the 2015 accomplishments.

Mr. Fogleman discussed the pilot recycling program on Main Street with Council. They asked that Mr. Fogleman investigate the cost and pros and cons of building vs. buying a recycling trash container with a wood enclosure and flower planter on top to test out in Memorial Park possibly near the Rotary Gazebo.

**NOVEMBER COUNCIL MEETING**

Town Manager Fogleman advised that the November 2016 Council meeting conflicted with the election to be held on the same date at Town Hall and asked Council if they wished to relocate the meeting. Council consensus was to move their regular meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 8, 2016 to Wednesday, November 9, 2016 at 6:00 p.m.

Council members decided the Fire Department on Valley Boulevard should be approved as the back-up location for the election and asked that Mr. Fogleman notify Watauga County of their decision.

**VOLUNTEER BOARD APPOINTMENTS**

Council discussed Volunteer Board appointments and decided on the following appointments/reappointments:

**Planning Board** – Genie Starnes, Mike Page, & George Ellis (to fill Steele’s unexpired term)

**Board of Adjustment** – Suzanne Wilson, Tom Dixon, Eli Springs (alternate)

**ABC Board** – Bob Miller

**TDA** – Rob Dyer, Lorry Mulhern, Dean Bullis (appointed as Chair)

**BRAAC** – Bo Henderson, Jennifer Chic

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock entered the meeting at 1:45 p.m.

## **PLANNING TOPICS**

**Newspaper Rack Update** – Planning Director Rothrock updated Council regarding the newspaper racks located at the 1889 Museum and at Gossip Park. He discussed the fee schedule and the disadvantages of the Town maintaining the racks.

Council directed staff to explore options; first, see if there is a vendor who would purchase and take over the maintenance of the racks; or offer each publication the option to take over maintenance on their own in exchange for no fee. If these options do not work, give the publications a 3-month notice that the Town will no longer be providing the news racks.

**Parking Lot Evaluation and Areas for Future Parking** – Planning Director Rothrock stated that currently there is a total of 899 parking spaces in Town. Council discussed potential areas where more parking could be achieved. Council directed staff to investigate parking requirements at Davant Field that would disallow overnight parking in the public spaces.

Council requested that staff continue to work with the Gossip Park land owner in regards to transferring ownership to the Town in order to maintain it better and relocate the former Memorial Park kiosk to that location. Also, inform the land owner that the Town would be interested in partnering with them regarding increased parking availability options in the future.

Council directed staff to research the long term feasibility of a parking deck in the pool parking lot area in reference to costs, appearance, etc. Also, communicate to the public the current high costs of parking space development.

Planning Director Rothrock reviewed the requirements associated with the NC Main Street programs with Council.

**Ice House** – After discussing several options for use of the Ice House located on Morris Street, Council requested that a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) be issued to include building maintenance expected, along with photos of the current building. All uses must conform to the existing zoning in that area.

**Former Fire House Building** - Council discussed options for the former Fire House building located on Park Avenue and decided that a formal Request for Proposals (RFP) be issued to include building improvements. Acceptable uses would be identified to include retail, restaurant, office residential, mixed use, theater. If a proposal is accepted, rezoning may be required and alternative locations would need to be secured for items that are currently stored in the building.

Council agreed that the second floor of the building would need work in order to help make it sturdier and more secure if it is to remain.

**Conditional Use Permits and Conditional Zoning Process** – Vagn Hansen of Benchmark Planning joined the meeting at this time to review the processes in which applicants must follow with Conditional Use Permits and Conditional Zoning requests. After their discussion, Council directed staff to develop a statement for Council to share with constituents regarding ex parte communication concerning a pending CUP.

The meeting was recessed at 5:00 p.m.

On Monday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 p.m., the meeting was reconvened. Those present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Mayor Pro tem Albert Yount, Council Members Sue Sweeting, Jim Steele, Doug Matheson and Ray Pickett. Staff present were Town Manager Scott Fogleman, Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

### **HOLIDAY/WINTER LIGHTING**

Town Manager Fogleman stated that currently there are 41 light poles located on Main Street, 49 light poles from Tanger to Southern Comforts, and 8 lights poles in Memorial Park for a total of 98 light poles that are decorated with wreathes, bows, red ribbon and garland during the holiday season.

Town Manager Fogleman continued to say that 16 lights poles are located on Sunset Drive, 7 on Morris Street and 5 on Laurel Lane that are decorated with wreathes and bows only. After further discussion, Council directed staff to install winter light strands on coach light poles from the upper end of Chestnut Drive to the furniture gallery to include an upgrade to 5 poles in order to add outlets.

Determine costs to upgrade Sunset Drive to the full complement of wreathes, bows, garland and lights to be included in the FY 2016/2017 budget process. In the following budget determine the costs to upgrade decorations on South Main Street from Chestnut Drive to the furniture gallery.

Council also directed staff to proceed with installation of conduit and outlets in Memorial Park. Once completed, install small signs at the entrance advertising free Wi-Fi and outlet-charging capability. In the FY 2016-2017 budget, identify options and pricing for light spheres.

### **PARADE TIME REVIEW**

Council members decided on the following parade times; July 4<sup>th</sup> Parade -2:00 p.m., Christmas Parade – 2:00 p.m., Shriner's Parade – 2:00 p.m. Halloween Monster March 5:45 p.m., Winterfest (2017) 3:00 p.m.

### **BRAAC ROLES AND LEGACY GARDEN APPROACH**

Town Manager Fogleman advised this past year, BRAAC had funded maintenance of the Legacy Garden and they were requesting that homeowners adjacent to the garden be contacted regarding funding for future maintenance of their proportionate share of property in the area.

Council agreed that official easements for the legacy trail and garden were needed from adjacent residents to recognize long-standing Town maintenance of the trail and future maintenance.

Council asked that new legacy garden maintenance estimates be pursued and if needed, fund spring 2016 garden service from existing resources if possible.

Town Manager Fogleman presented Council with a fund raising presentation concept from BRAAC for park related improvements beginning with Broyhill Park. He also mentioned that BRAAC had requested a joint work session with Council.

After reviewing the BRAAC presentation, Council approved the concept. Council Members Jim Steele and Albert Yount agreed to attend the meeting with Broyhill Foundation representatives.

Council felt that a joint work session was not necessary at this time and expressed that BRAAC was doing a great job.

Investigation of a catch basin/sediment pond at the Public Works site to catch horse show run-off was also needed.

### **GLEN BURNEY TRAIL GRANT**

Council asked that during their February Council meeting, recognition of \$1,500 of revenue to fund a match for the Blue Ridge Conservancy grant award of \$6,000 and to challenge private fund raising of \$7,500 needed for trail improvement.

### **AMERICAN LEGION BOOKING SUMMARY & FEES**

Town Manager Fogleman reviewed the booking summary and fees for the American Legion building with Council. During their discussion, Council asked staff to check zero rental fees shown for those who were not non-profit organizations. They suggested that high quality portable/rolling coat racks be purchased and to look at ways to adjust lighting levels.

Council also suggested the half-day rental of the American Legion building option be kept and more stringent enforcement of cut-off times be kept, as well as a proportionate amount of security deposits if the times were exceeded.

Council asked that staff ensure cleaning supplies were kept stocked and to also create a user agreement documenting all expectations for rental of the facility.

### **OTHER**

Council asked Mr. Fogleman to create a cohesive statement as to why organizations go off-site and out of Town for annual retreats.

Educate citizens regarding contractor responsibilities regarding leaf and brush pick up. Look at adjusting in the fall of 2016 the window of time for leaf pick up for citizens.

Evaluate the need for a greenhouse and related costs and possible locations and pursue Village Foundation and Community Foundation Grants if warranted.

Contact High Country Host to determine their official status and timeframe regarding their proposed relocation to the Appalachian Ski Mountain Welcome Center.

The meeting was recessed at 11:45 am for lunch.

The meeting reconvened at 1:00 p.m.

### **INTRODUCTION OF APPLICATIONS TO ASSIST WITH CEMETERY AND TOWN ATTRIBUTES**

Finance Officer Norman demonstrated the newly created Woodlawn Cemetery and Town G.I.S. applications to Council.

## **AUTOMATED METER INFRASTRUCTURE**

Judy Seamone, Chip Ferguson, Michael Posner and Heather Wallorif Verizon Wireless joined the meeting to assist with the Automated Meter Infrastructure presentation.

Finance Officer Norman explained that currently there are 2,367 meters from which readings are taken every two months, 1,975 residential and 392 commercial. Several years ago, a pilot program was installed with 150 residential meters where readings could be gathered while driving slowly by each meter. The other 2,217 meters are read by six staff members, which normally takes 3 full days to initially read the meters. Once the initial readings are gathered, staff then spends several days gathering rereads, etc.

With fiber optic LTE technology recently installed by Ridge Link and Verizon in Blowing Rock, the potential exists to transition to an automated meter infrastructure that may reduce, if not eliminate the need to manually take meter readings once fully implemented.

Representatives from Virtual Network were present to give a presentation to Council regarding an automated meter pilot program.

After the presentation and discussion, Council directed staff to move forward with the pilot program with 100% Town funding. Staff is to select pilot locations based on geography, customer type (residential/commercial) customers with previously known issues and Council members.

Financial scenarios would need to be developed for the full project during the FY 2016-2017 budget process that would spread the full project cost over the life of the meters.

Once installed and running, informational meetings would be needed for customers to learn about the system and its benefits.

## **WEBSITE REDESIGN INTRODUCTION WITH VENDOR PRESENTATION**

Finance Officer Norman advised that following Council's direction at their 2015 departmental meetings held in March, the search for a web design vendor and editing software began. Mrs. Norman introduced Tricia Lease with Vision Internet who gave a product presentation to Council. Ms. Lease began by saying that for the past 8 years she has worked with local governments in developing websites based on unique research into functions needed and most used by individual communities.

Ms. Lease stated the timeline for creating the site and full implementation with training would take approximately six months at a preliminary cost of \$35,000, and a \$6,000 annual cost thereafter.

Council was in favor of moving forward with Vision Internet to develop a new website for the Town and agreed to hire an intern/student support during the migration/setup period and possibly in the long-term to hire part-time staff to assist with the upkeep of the website.

## **PARKING ENFORCEMENT**

Town Manager Fogleman advised that between January 1, 2013 and November 30, 2015, there were 746 parking citations issued. Of those citations, 175 were issued to 41 repeat offenders and 75 of the 175 repeat offender citations were issued to 5 people, three of which were teachers at Blowing Rock School.

Council directed staff to contact Patrick Sukow at the school regarding teachers who continue to park on Sunset Drive. They also asked that Town Manager Fogleman speak with the Town Attorney and D.A. regarding enforcement of ticket payment options and check on towing liability with the Town's insurance company. Mr. Fogleman was also to investigate the Town's ability to keep an administrative percentage, and to research and communicate/enforce dedicated residentially allocated spaces for Main Street and Sunset residences. Also, research enforcement of overnight parking in public spaces and instituting same day ticket fines that are substantially higher than the first offense.

### **REVIEW OF FOUR HIGHEST DOLLAR VALUE CONTRACTS CURRENTLY IN PLACE**

In response to a request from Council to review the four highest paid vendors, Finance Officer Norman reviewed a list of the Town of Blowing Rock's highest dollar amount vendors for 2015. She explained that some high dollar vendors were due to capital projects taking place in the year.

### **REVIEW OF LAST FOUR YEARS OF PROJECT BUDGETS & BIDS RECEIVED**

Finance Officer Norman reviewed the four highest dollar value contracts that were bid out in calendar years 2012-2015. Council consensus was to bid out the Town's full service engineering contracts since this had last been done in 2004. They also asked that the Town pursue bids on auditing services as well following the FY 2015-2016 audit.

Town Manager Fogleman was asked to survey other area jurisdictions regarding how they approach engineering services.

### **OTHER**

Council Member Matheson updated everyone on Blowing Rock's request for an additional ambulance bay, stating it would be another year before the Cove Creek ambulance base facility is built and he had been told that Blowing Rock will receive funding for a 6-month ambulance base in the near future.

The meeting recessed at 6:10 p.m.

The meeting reconvened on Tuesday, January 19<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 a.m. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Mayor Pro Tem Albert Yount, and Council Members Sue Sweeting, Jim Steele, Doug Matheson and Ray Pickett. Staff present were Town Manager Scott Fogleman, Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

### **REVIEW OF OLD FIREHOUSE BUILDING MURAL RESEARCH**

Town Manager Fogleman presented Council with an idea from David Harwood for a mural on the western side of the former firehouse building. He stated the project would be a collaboration between the Town and the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum to create a work of public art that reflects the historic and tourism qualities of the community in a nostalgic format.

Council agreed to move forward with the project, to include that it be placed on a removable structure. Council also suggested that staff pursue other suitable areas for a public art display.

## **BOND PROJECT EXECUTION DISCUSSION**

Town Manager Fogleman reviewed the Bond Issuance schedule with Council. Council agreed to the general approach and asked that a design firm be selected to present options for Sunset Drive regarding the look, feel, trees, street treatments, parking spaces, etc. including integration with the Gateway Project design.

## **MEMORIAL PARK IMPROVEMENTS**

Town Manager Fogleman presented several identified opportunities for improvement in Memorial Park for Council consideration. Improvements mentioned were the installation of small ground level signs letting people know that free Wi-Fi is available, installation of steps near the front of the park near Town Hall as well as the back corner of Town Hall, installation of pavers in the picnic shelter area, sodding the area behind Town Hall, etc. After discussion, Council decided to move forward with all improvements as presented.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Town Manager Fogleman stated the Blowing Rock Country Club has requested the Town assist with providing increased pressure to supply the fire sprinkler system in their new Fitness Center currently being constructed. The Country Club's plan is to tie into the 4 inch water line in that area, however, pressure tests on the 4 inch line revealed it is not sufficient to feed a sprinkler system. One way to provide adequate pressure would be to replace that section of the 4-inch line with a new 6-inch line at an estimated cost of \$30,000. According to Mr. Fogleman, the Country Club has asked the Town to contribute 75% of the cost which equates to \$22,500. It was the consensus of Council to offer to pay 50% of the costs or \$15,000, whichever is lower.

Town Manager Fogleman then discussed the Town Gateway Program with Council stating the next steps in the process would be to determine a rough cost estimate of Sunset Gateway signs and Median/Parkway Gateway sign.

He said staff is planning for the NCDOT funded median improvement project under the Parkway and determining final design of both rock work and signage. Mr. Fogleman showed Council three different signage options for their consideration. Council decided a mockup of the signage design was needed if agreeable with stakeholders, and also publicizing what it is and the purpose for it.

## **OTHER**

- Planning Board to review the pros and cons and possible applicability for Blowing Rock's use of Planned Unit Development, Zero Lot Line Residential Development, and cluster subdivisions.
- Staff approved to relocate the kitchen to back corner of Town Hall after Public Works and Utility staff members move to the new Public Works Facility.
- Staff approved to move forward with the project to install tile in the men's and women's restroom at the entrance to Town Hall along with the two entry areas that are currently vinyl.

**ACTION PLAN FOR 2016**

The following list of action plan items were reviewed:

- General Obligation Bond Referendum borrowing
- Streetscape on Main Street
- Initiate other bond referendum projects (key focus on sequencing)
- Continue to pursue Gateway Projects
- Continue to pursue NCDOT median improvement project (summer planting)
- Complete workstation implementation
- Complete Chestnut Ridge water and sewer connection project
- Complete Public Works renovation project
- Hopefully, be notified of grant award for sidewalk to Bass Lake and begin the associated work scope
- Expand Christmas and winter lighting program

Mr. Fogleman advised the list was not intended to be all-encompassing as other areas are determined by Council will be integrated as well.

**ADJOURN**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

**MAYOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**J.B. Lawrence**

**ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_

**Sharon Greene, Town Clerk**