

Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission

Minutes

March 5, 2020

Members Present: Melissa Pickett, Curt Andrews, Bo Henderson, & Chris Wetmore

Members Absent: Carol Knapp

Staff Present: Shane Fox, Chris Pate, & Jennifer Brown

Begin: 9:07 a.m.

End: 11:45 a.m.

Minutes Approval – Bo made a motion to approve the December minutes, Melissa seconded, and there was a unanimous vote to approve.

Chair & Vice-Chair – Bo made a motion to have Melissa Pickett remain as the Chair of the BRAAC Board and nominated Chris Wetmore as the Vice-Chair of the BRAAC board. Curt seconded, and there was a unanimous vote to approve.

Budget Update – Jennifer stated that to date BRAAC has collected \$32,835 in revenue and expenditures total \$9,143.98. She shared that the flowers have been ordered and baskets have been delivered for planting so there is another pending billing.

Giving Tree – Jennifer explained that current policy requires a \$2,000 minimum contribution for donor recognition on the Giving Tree. She reported that she has had several inquiries about the Giving Tree; however, interest waned when informed about the financial threshold. Jennifer recounted that \$2,000 had been recommended by BRAAC as it compared expected Giving Tree contributions to those for park benches with plaques. At the time BRAAC had no measure of demand and didn't want to overwhelm the display. Jennifer suggested that consideration be given to lower the donation amount so as to allow for greater recognition of more donations. After discussion, Bo made a motion to lower the donation amount for recognition to \$500, Curt seconded, and there was a unanimous vote to approve.

Broyhill Presentation Update – Mr. Fox gave an update on the proposed American Legion/Broyhill project for which the Blowing Rock Village Foundation had received approval from Town Council to raise funds. Mr. Fox reported that Foundation leaders had approached the Broyhill Family Foundation seeking support for the project, however it was not deemed to be of their current interest. Mr. Fox mentioned that he had met with John Aldridge and Jim Clabough and that they may now be redirecting their focus.

Chris Wetmore stated that while BRAAC has been very sensitive to the Town and its various organizations, he is disappointed that there is insufficient coordination among like-minded groups with overlapping relationships, such as in this case with the Village Foundation and BRAAC. He further expressed his concern for imparting the perception that our town is disorganized and not unified. Bo agreed and Curt suggested that it would behoove interested parties to better cross-pollinate, to generally broaden their networks, and to present a more cohesive front. He opined that well-intended parties too often replace community needs with narrower wants.

After further discussion, it was agreed that BRAAC will now schedule its previously planned presentation, with Town staff support, to the Broyhill Family Foundation. This will fulfill the commitment that had been made to the foundation when it had granted \$60,000 to the Town. This will be our outcomes report to the Foundation, complete with a status review of commitments and our vision for incremental improvements.

Memorial Park Playground – Mr. Fox explained that during the January 2020 Retreat, the topic of a new playground was discussed at length. During the prioritization phase, the replacement of the playground was ranked 2nd for the Town for 2020. He added that during the most recent Tourism Development Authority (TDA) board meeting, it was approved to split the cost of the playground with the Town. Mr. Fox explained TDA funding, how they obtain revenues, how they are distributed, and that their overall goal is to help the Town complete needed projects and infrastructure improvements. Jennifer presented the three designs that had been developed, their pros and cons, and went into great detail about the design that the playground committee had chosen. After discussion, there was unanimous agreement with the playground committee regarding design, quality, and the overall look of the proposed playground.

Other – Chris Wetmore reported that he had been researching the details of what it takes for our Town to be recognized as a “Tree City USA” town. He stated that from he could gather; it appears to fit BRAAC’s mission and that it seems to be a recognition that is awarded for meeting specific environmental criteria. He also opined that being recognized by “Tree City USA,” while not necessary, could be beneficial for our Town. Chris mentioned that Seven Devils, Beech Mountain, and Boone, were among several cities and towns in North Carolina that are members. He recommended that BRAAC should reach out to a couple of them to get their opinion of “Tree City USA” membership.

Other – Chris Pate stated that he has often been asked to landscape the Mayview Plaza area to match what is done in front of Town Hall. He noted that he did not have monies in the budget. He asked if BRAAC would be in favor of redirecting community raised funds from those designated for hanging baskets, street-side flowerpots, and historically supported established public gardens. After further discussion, Bo made a motion for BRAAC to not divert any money for plants or maintenance of Mayview Plaza. Curt seconded, and it was a unanimous vote to approve.