

**MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
May 12, 2020**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met via Zoom virtual/phone session for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 2020, at 6:00 p.m. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting and Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Others in attendance were Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Fire Chief Kent Graham, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sellers called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Mayor verified attendance via roll call.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGINANCE

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

MINUTE APPROVAL

Council Member Harwood made a motion to approve the minutes from the April 14, 2020, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved.

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

Mayor Sellers read three letters from citizens; Lee Rocamora, Tim Gupton and Greg Tarbutton. **Citizens Letters – Attachment(s) A – 1, 2 & 3**

PUBLIC HEARING

1. Speckled Trout – CUP 2018-01

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to go into Public Hearing, seconded by Council Member Yount. Unanimously approved.

Planning and Zoning Director Kevin Rothock advised the Speckled Trout, LLC is requesting an amendment to their conditional use permit to renovate and expand the covered deck and the outdoor seating area. The property is located at 922 Main Street at the intersection of Hwy 221.

Speckled Trout made some significant modifications to the restaurant building and property the past few years including the addition of an antique wine cask displayed at

the front entrance door. The wine cask was approved through the issuance of a conditional use permit in January 2019.

The new owners of the restaurant also purchased the adjoining parking lot to secure parking for their restaurant to offset the loss of parking in front of the building.

The restaurant is limited to forty (40) outdoor seats and no additional outdoor seating is being proposed, just some of it relocated to the proposed expanded decking.

At the April 23, 2020 remote electronic meeting, the Planning Board recommended approval of the CUP amendment application with the following conditions: the roof pitch on the deck roof must not be less than what is shown on the plans submitted and as close to 6:12 as possible.

Mr. Rothrock advised he was able to meet onsite with Council Members individually to explain specifics of the proposal. He further advised he had been asked by a few Council Members if DOT had any issues with the project which they do not.

Council Member Yount asked if the wine cask would stay or be moved. Mr. Rothrock advised it would stay in the same location.

Council Member Harwood asked for a timeline of the Bass Lake sidewalk in conjunction with this project and if the two would overlap. Mr. Rothrock stated he hoped the Bass Lake sidewalk will start soon and there shouldn't be any issues with the two projects interfering with one another.

Town Manager Shane Fox advised the contracts had been signed for the Bass Lake sidewalk and one piece is still left to be sign off on between McGill and DOT. He further advised work should begin within the next few weeks, but the COVID-19 pandemic has put work behind on the project.

Council Member Matheson asked Mr. Rothrock to elaborate on the roof. Mr. Rothrock advised it's going to be a gable roof; the awning will be removed and a full roof covering will be built over the deck and tied back into the roof pitch.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting asked Mr. Rothrock if he had received any public comments. Mr. Rothrock advised he had not for this meeting or for Planning Board.

Council Member Harwood asked if since the signage is depicted on the elevations if that would be a separate application. Mr. Rothrock advised that would be.

The applicant Eric Brinker stated the sign will be the same one that is currently on the building, they will just be moving it to the roof.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting advised the seating with their new recommendations comes to forty-seven (47) seats (with the stools). She further advised she wanted to make sure

they were limited to the limit of forty (40) seats. Mr. Rothrock advised the CUP addresses that and he would make sure that is enforced.

With no further questions or comments, Council Member Matheson made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Matheson made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved. **Attachment B – Speckled Trout CUP #2018-01**

BUSINESS MATTERS:

1. BRAHM Sculpture Request

The Blowing Rock Art and History Museum has selected an artist to exhibit their outdoor sculpture through the 34th Outdoor Rosen Sculpture Exhibition. BRAHM will carry insurance and it will be bolted down to the existing pad outside of BRAHM.

BRAAC approved the sculpture during their April BRAAC meeting.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

2. Ad Hoc 321 Committee Update

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock gave a brief update on the Ad Hoc meeting. Mr. Rothrock stated he had sent the study to the Planning Board members and had received some comments and/or recommendations back. He further stated the Planning Board will have a remote meeting to discuss the recommendations from the study and will bring that information back to Council. Mr. Rothrock advised he will update Council on the progress monthly.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Mayor Sellers – Thanked Council Members, staff and everyone who had gone above and beyond. He stated the Blue Ridge Parkway will be re-opening on May 15th. The restrooms won't be opened at Bass Lake yet, but instead will on the 18th will bring in Porta John's and portable handwashing stations.
- Council Member Yount – stated he felt all would start looking to the next epidemic and inventory gloves, facemasks, hand sanitizer, signage, additional rules/regulations.
- Council Member Harwood – stated he was extremely appreciative of Manager Fox and staff. He applauded Department Heads, our Town has come through this without any of the services being interrupted or having to furlough any employees. He stated that is amazing and he really wanted to compliment the leadership of Manager Fox. He thanked the Public for all the comments via phone and email, he stated he had spent a lot of time talking to people the past week and he respects everyone's opinion. He stated he felt the Council is on the best path currently for

the Town and until he sees data that changes that opinion, he felt it was best to continue with the current path. He further stated once the county meeting takes place on May 19th then Council can revisit the plan.

- Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting – thanked Manager Fox as well as all the employees for their professionalism and approach to COVID-19. She advised she had done a walk through and drive through Town over the weekend and saw twenty (20) masks on individuals, very limited social distancing, Tanger Outlet bathrooms were open, only saw once mask on someone there, the store Unwound had their bathrooms locked and one of them had an out of order sign. Felt this was a violation since the bathrooms are stated in their CUP. She advised David Barker at the Market was so slammed with people wanting to use his bathroom that he finally put a sign up stating their bathrooms were closed. Chamber wasn't open for bathrooms and they were closed on Sunday.
- Council Member Matheson – thanked staff for all their hard work and continued services. He advised he suggested adding a couple of hand sanitizing stations in Town. He further advised he looked to the Governor and his health officials to what they are recommending and move forward depending on what is advised after the May 19th meeting.
- Council Member Powell – Applauds everyone and thanked them for their work. She advised nobody would have predicted this pandemic and wants everyone to remember we are fighting a virus, not each other and we need to all work together. She further advised she felt the county and the health officials have worked beautifully with all the Town Managers and communicated very well to all. She stated something she wanted to plant a seed about with other Council Members is businesses are having to change the way they are doing business now and have had a few reached out to her about having food trucks and one a flower truck. She stated she hoped Council keep an open mind to that possibility.
- Manager Fox – Thanked staff for all their hard work, he hadn't had any complaints from anyone and all sixty-seven (67) employees have been working from day one and have been able to contribute the whole time. He advised he had been able to be a part of the county task force meetings and be kept up to date with the progress, be a voice for the Town and share all the information with Council. The County will review the current restrictions at the county meeting on May 19th at 5:30 p.m. He updated the following projects: Bass Lake project is still moving forward, just a little delay. Paving will start around May 18th in Town and staff has asked for a detailed work plan. The old playground has been removed, drainage and foundation work has been started. The playground company will be onsite May 18th to start prepping and the equipment will be delivered the week of May 25th. Hanging baskets will be going up the week of Memorial Day. Manager Fox advised he and Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown have discussed several options regarding the bathrooms; Porta Johns or opening the bathrooms in Memorial Park to start with. After discussing the consensus among Council was to start with opening the restrooms at Memorial Park with a shortened schedule (10 am – 6 pm or 11 am – 6pm) and have a cleaning company cleaning them approximately three (3) times a day.

Council discussed options for holding a special meeting to moving forward with the restrictions based on the county's recommendations. Council Member Matheson made a motion to hold the special meeting on May 21st at 3:00 p.m., seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

None

ADJOURNMENT

At 7:30 p.m. Council Member Yount made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

ATTACHMENTS

Citizens Letters – Attachment(s) A – 1, 2 & 3
Speckled Trout CUP #2018-01 – Attachment B