

MINUTES
Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council Meeting
November 10, 2020

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street Blowing Rock, NC. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting and Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson, Virginia Powell, Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Planning and Inspections Director Kevin Rothrock, Police Chief Kent Graham and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes. Others in attendance via Zoom virtual/phone session were Fire Chief Kent Graham, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown and Finance Officer Nicole Norman.

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

MINUTE APPROVAL

Council Member Matheson made a motion to approve the minutes from the October 13, 2020 regular and closed session minutes, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved.

REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION

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

CONSENT AGENDA

None

SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR

None

PRESENTATIONS

1. Tree City USA

BRAAC Chair Melissa Pickett gave a PowerPoint presentation on Tree City USA.

Following the presentation, Council Member Yount made a motion to send to Planning Board for their review and recommendation, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved. **Tree City USA PowerPoint – Attachment A**

2. Tourism Management Plan

TDA Executive Director Tracy Brown did a power point presentation via zoom for the upcoming tourism management plan recently voted on by the TDA Board. **Tourism Management Plan PowerPoint – Attachment B**

BUSINESS MATTERS

1. Water Treatment Plant Bulk Tanks - Bid Award and Budget

Town Engineer Doug Chapman advised at the August meeting Council granted approval to Town staff to move forward with the bid process to replace the chemical bulk tanks at the Water Treatment Plant. The initial bid process began and ended during September 2020 and resulted in one bid being received from Gilbert Engineering. At the October 2020 Council meeting, the Council granted staff the approval to rebid the project, in hopes of obtaining multiple bids. This process began and ended during the month of October 2020. The second bid process did not result in additional bids received. The Town has received one bid for the proposed project, from Gilbert Engineering.

Mr. Chapman advised based on the urgency of the need for this replacement and available funding to accomplish the replacements, McGill recommends that Council approve awarding the project to Gilbert Engineering in the amount of \$208,650 and establish a 5% construction contingency in the amount of \$10,450.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting asked for Manager Fox to explain the funding. Manager Fox explained \$100,000 was set in the budget as a place holder anticipating the potential repair/cleanup. He explained the remaining funds will come from the water/sewer fund balance which will be approximately 4% to 5% from that fund.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to approve the bid of \$208,650 with a 5% contingency, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

2. Retreat Location and Date

Manager Fox advised Council needed to discuss a location and date for the Winter Retreat. After brief discussion, Council Member Powell made a motion to hold Retreat at BRAHM on January 25, 26 and 27, 2021, seconded by Council Member Yount. Unanimously approved.

3. 2020-2021 Salary Update

Manager Fox advised each year as part of the Annual Budget process the Town Council considers implementing a COLA for each full-time employee, effective July 1st. For the Annual Budget 2020-2021, no COLA was recommended due to the uncertainty at the time given COVID-19 restrictions. During the annual budget presentation to the public in June 2020 it was agreed upon to revisit the potential for a COLA at mid-year. Manager Fox advised his recommendation for Council's consideration was implementing a 2.5% COLA for all full-time employees effective January 1, 2021. Also

approval of a one-time bonus/back pay, equivalent to the salary that would have been received during the timeframe of July 1st, 2020 to December 31, 2020, equaling 1.25% of the full-time-time employees' annual amount. Cost of both the 2.5% COLA and the 1.25% payout are \$99,370 for all Salaries and Benefits. The increase in Salaries and Benefits are to be covered by the increase in Sales Tax Revenue received over budget thus far for the 2020-2021 budget year.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting advised she was an advocated for the salary increases, however had never believed in using the sales tax revenue for salaries because of the change/fluctuation that can occur. She asked how that looked for next year with continuing the salary increases.

Manager Fox advised he didn't note but the sales tax is net of the Watauga County fee that the Town currently pays back. He explained that for at least the last seven years the Town has used the excessive amount for one-time purchases. He further explained the Town is on pace and has no reason to believe any different that the 11-12% increase in exceeding budget is going to change going into 2021.

Council Member Matheson made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Council Member Yount. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Yount thanked Manager Fox for his work.

4. Budget Amendment - #2020-11

Manager Fox advised the Budget Amendment was for the Bulk Tank replacement and the Salary increase just approved during the meeting.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Powell. Unanimously approved. **Budget Amendment - #2020-11 – Attachment C**

OTHER BUSINESS

- Mayor Sellers – thanked staff for their continued hard work and recommended everyone adhere to the Governors orders for social distancing during the holidays. Thanked our Veteran's for their service.
- Council Member Yount –thanked Mr. Tracy Brown and the TDA Board on starting the Tourism Management Plan and stated he felt it was one of the more important things to happen in a while.
- Council Member Harwood – thanked Moretz paving for going above and beyond during the paving and drainage work on Chestnut Drive. He thanked Mr. Yount for his service and wished him a happy Veteran's Day. He further congratulated Ray Pickett on his House seat win.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting – thanked Manager Fox and staff for their continued hard work through all. She gave a few updates on the policy goals management committee; broad band, medium income housing and working with DOT on transparency with DOT.

- Council Member Matheson – just finishing up with the League policy goals updates. He advised currently there have been 455 ideas come from 150 municipalities and they will start narrowing those down to soon to start getting ready for session to start in the spring. November 17th is the next call to get the latest updates on the COVID relief funds.
- Council Member Powell – recently met a visitor in Town that bragged on how friendly, caring and how many wear masks in Town. Congratulated all and stated their work is paying off.
- Manager Fox – thanked Council for their partnership in working to pull together some great projects despite the COVID situation. Highlighted some of the projects accomplished: crosswalks, paving, drainage, playground. Paving update – 2 streets left to pave, were delayed because of the rain, Pine Street and the intersection of Wallingford/Laurel Lane. Thanked staff for their ongoing work despite all going on.

Council took a ten-minute recess at 7:20 p.m. before going into closed session.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

At 7:30 p.m. Council Member Harwood made a motion to go into executive session *NCGS 143-3 18.11. (a)(3) – Attorney/Client update on current litigation*, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:35 p.m. Council returned to open session, Council Member Yount made a motion to allow Manager Fox to hand the lease agreement for the Ice House, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

With no further business Council Member Powell made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____
Charlie Sellers

ATTEST _____
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

Attachments

- Tree City USA PowerPoint – Attachment – A**
- Tourism Management Plan PowerPoint - Attachment - B**
- Budget Amendment #2020-11 – Attachment C**