

**MINUTES**  
**Town of Blowing Rock**  
**Town Council Meeting**  
**December 15, 2020**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, December 15, 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 Aaron Miller, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes. Others in attendance via Zoom virtual/phone session were Fire Chief Kent Graham, 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**

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to approve the regular session minutes from the November 10, 2020, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Matheson made a motion to approve the closed session minutes from the November 10, 2020 meeting, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved.

**EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS**

Mayor Sellers presented awards for years of service to the following employees; Tammy Bentley (10 years), Barry Ford (30 years), Jennifer Brown (15 years), Matt McGuire (15 years), Kent Graham (20 years) and Hilari Hubner (10 years).

**REGULAR AGENDA ADOPTION**

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

**CONSENT AGENDA**

**1. Budget Amendment - #2020-12**

To account for various items. **Budget Amendment #2020-12**

**2. Tax Releases- #2020-02, #2020-03, #2020-04, #2020-05**

Various tax adjustments over time become apparent and present themselves in the form of requests for release (adjustments). **Tax Releases - #2020-02, #2020-03, #2020-04 and #2020-05**

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

### **SPEAKERS FROM THE FLOOR**

None

### **PRESENTATIONS**

#### **1. Blowing Rock Historical Society**

Mr. Tom O'Brien, president of the Blowing Rock Historical Society presented via Zoom PowerPoint on behalf of the Historical Society and the Village Foundation of Blowing Rock a proposed history walk, asking the Council for conceptual approval.

Following the presentation Council agreed to allow them to move forward, work in conjunction with the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (if approved) and bring back to Council with a firm plan endorsed by the Parks and Recreation committee.

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

#### **1. Tree City USA**

Planning Director Kevin Rothrock advised BRAAC is requesting review and approval of a Public Tree Ordinance to be eligible to apply on behalf of the Town of Blowing Rock as a Tree City USA member. The draft ordinance attached is proposed to be included in Chapter 16 – Article 22 – Screening and Trees. The additional language would be inserted at the end of the Landscape and Screening Ordinance of the Town Code.

Although the Town has a landscape ordinance, the Tree City USA standards require that the local government have an ordinance for the protection and management of public trees.

Council Member Powell stated for clarification this ordinance is only for trees on Public property. At the November 19<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Planning Board recommended approval of the draft ordinance.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting asked Mr. Rothrock if he could update section 16-22.22.22 03 (b) and (c) to add a public works representative for the limb removal authorization. Mr. Rothrock advised he would make that change. He further stated he would remove the Building Inspector from the authorized list.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to close the public hearing, seconded by Council Member Harwood. Unanimously approved.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to approve the ordinance to protect and manage public trees and to set up Tree City USA, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

Council Member Yount asked if there would be signage stating the Town is a Tree City USA Town. Manager Fox advised there would be. **Tree City USA Ordinance #2020-02**

## **BUSINESS MATTERS**

### **1. CUP Thirtle Building – Minor Amendment**

Mr. Rothrock advised Mr. and Mrs. Iris Thirtle are requesting a minor amendment to their CUP for the Thirtle Building at 110 Sunset Drive to allow their satellite parking spaces to be allowed within 900 feet of the building.

In May of 2003, Town Council approved an amendment to the CUP which changed the allowable use of the second floor from restaurant to retail, office, and residential use. In allowing residential use, the Council required that satellite parking be required for that use within 400 feet of the property in downtown to be within 600 feet of the property.

The Thirtles have had a residential use on the second floor for over 15 years and have utilized an agreement with First Citizens Bank for satellite parking. The Thirtles are trying to sell the commercial building at 110 Sunset Drive and are able to provide up to three (3) satellite parking spaces on their property at 284 Sunset Drive. The Thirtles request this minor amendment to secure satellite parking withing 900 feet for the second-floor residential use.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting asked what the current use of 110 Sunset is. Mr. Rothrock advised the lower level is retail space and the upstairs is residential.

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting asked if someone purchased the building and wanted to divide up into apartments could they do so. Mr. Rothrock advised they could. She further asked if the apartments were to be short term rental how many parking spaces would they need. Mr. Rothrock advised one (1) parking space per bedroom.

Council discussed satellite parking.

Council Member Matheson asked if there would be designated parking signage if this were passed. Mr. Rothrock advised if Council decided to approve then it would have designated signage.

Council Member Yount asked if this would work as an easement if the Thirtles were to sale. Mr. Rothrock advised it would.

Ms. Sue Glenn, realtor for the Thirtles asked if she could address this issue.

Mayor Sellers advised not at this time.

Council Member Yount asked for further clarification if there were going to be an easement if Council approves this now for parking.

Mr. Rothrock advised Ms. Glenn's knowledge may help answer this. He explained she's selling the property and has more knowledge, but if it were him, he would say there would be an easement or an agreement. Council discussed the easement further with Town Attorney Allen Moseley.

Council Member Powell advised in her opinion, it seemed as though the Thirtles are currently in violation of their parking agreement. Mr. Rothrock advised there is nobody currently living at the property, but they would be in compliance even if there were.

Council Member Harwood advised he is not a fan of satellite parking and never has been. He explained this just highlights the problems it can cause, it creates and undo record keeping problems for our Zoning Administrator as well as a very good memory. He thanked Mr. Rothrock for his work.

Council further discussed the parking. Council Member Matheson asked for clarification about the parking fund and why they wouldn't be allowed to pay into the parking fund. Mr. Rothrock advised in the years that the Town has had the parking fund, there hasn't been one instances where Council has allowed it for residential use.

Council Member Harwood made a motion to not allow the amendment to the CUP, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

Ms. Glenn asked why she wasn't allowed to speak on behalf of the Thirtles. Mayor Sellers advised because Mr. Rothrock was presenting on behalf of the Town and Council was getting guidance from the Town Attorney. She stated she was sorry because she was led to believe she would be able to make a presentation. Mayor Sellers apologized for the misunderstanding.

## **2. Chetola Art Request**

Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown advised Chetola Resort and Spa hosted a Sculpture Walk in 2019. During that event, a sculpture was approved by Town Council to install on Main Street near Chetola for a year until the next Sculpture Walk event. Due to COVID, Chetola canceled their 2020 Sculpture Walk.

Chetola is requesting to leave the current sculpture up on Main Street until their next Sculpture Walk, which will hopefully be in 2021. At their December 8, 2020 meeting, BRAAC recommended that the sculpture remain until the next Sculpture Walk.

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

Council Member Powell thanked the artist for allowing the sculpture to stay for another year, it's a beautiful sculpture and very generous.

### **3. Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee**

Council Member Harwood advised Blowing Rock is recognized for our public spaces, the quality of our landscaping, our park facilities and now wonderful, new playground. In recent years, Town Council has considered many improvements to the parks and implemented some of them. There are many competing users that want new amenities, or our existing ones improved. The users and supporters include BRAAC, tourists, Village Foundation, BRCA, parents, athletes, hikers, citizens, music groups and pickleball players. Council Member Harwood stated he is of the opinion that a solid, multi-year strategy for our parks, with an action plan is needed so that the Town can plan accordingly for continued maintenance, but also for improvements and new amenities. Such a strategy will allow the Town and Council to make informed decisions when opportunities are presented for partnerships and potential land acquisition. Additionally, there are North Carolina Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant (PARTF Grant) funds available which can significantly help offset the costs of such improvements. These grant funds would be administered through the High County Council of Governments (HCCOG) and they would also assist with the grant writing and application process.

Mr. Harwood advised he would like to request Council to authorize the information of a Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee. The committee will include the following individuals:

- Council Representative                                                         David Harwood
- Town Representative                                                             Shane Fox
- Parks and Recreation Representative                                         Jennifer Brown
- BRAAC Representative                                                             Melissa Pickett
- Planning Board Representative                                                 Pete Gherini

Mr. Harwood reviewed the timeline and advised the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee will present the feasibility for PARTF application and seek endorsement for proceeding with the Parks Strategy Plan to Council at the Winter Retreat. The committee will seek guidance for next steps from Council at that time.

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

Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting advised she thought it would be good to have a younger resident with children on the committee. Council Member Harwood agreed, but stated he would like to wait until after retreat when/if the committee is expanded. He further thanked Council for their endorsement of the committee.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

- Mayor Sellers – thanked staff for their continued hard work, the Council and to the citizens their hard work to make it through a difficult year.
- Council Member Yount – Would like Council to consider coming up with a sign identifying the New River. He advised he has a friend that could make a template of what the sign could look like for Council to review. The General consensus among Council review once the template was available.
- Council Member Harwood – thanked Manager Fox for his work, thanked Parks and Recreation for their hard work for creating a wonderful creative alternative to the normal Christmas party. Celebrating his first year on Council, it's been the greatest honor of his life to serve on Council and he thanked Council Members for welcoming him to the team and for their collaborative work.
- Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting – thanked Manager Fox and staff for their continued hard work through all. She further thanked the citizens for their support of all the changes and difficulties COVID has caused.
- Council Member Matheson – reviewed some items discussed at the NC League Board of Directors Meeting.
- Council Member Powell – None
- Manager Fox – thanked Parks and Recreation for a wonderful Christmas party and to Thomas Steele for his hard work on making all the Zoom technology happen. Thanks to Public Works for their hard work on Thanksgiving fixing a water leak that took approximately 13 to 14 hours. There have been 60 something ordinance changes. Town decided to move forward with having Blowing Rock Law enforcement do foot patrol on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays to enforce mask wearing. Update on Bass Lake sidewalk project, Green's Construction and Padco Excavating have been subcontracted out to finish out the project.

Council took a ten-minute recess at 8:00 p.m. before going into closed session.

### **EXECUTIVE SESSION**

At 8:10 p.m. Council Member Harwood made a motion to go into executive session *NCGS 143-3 18.11. (6) – to consider the qualifications, competence, character, fitness, conditions of appointment, or conditions of initial public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee and NCGS 143-318.11. (a)(5) Discussion of potential property acquisition*, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting. Unanimously approved.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9:58 p.m. Council Member Harwood made a motion for Manager Fox to begin the process of purchasing the property across from Food Lion on HWY 321 from DOT for the appraised price of \$442,250, seconded by Council Member Powell. Unanimously approved. Council Member Matheson made a motion to increase Manager Fox's salary from \$106,000 to \$115,000 effective January 1, 2021, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting.

With no further business Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to adjourn at 10:03 p.m., seconded by Council Member Yount. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR \_\_\_\_\_  
Charlie Sellers

ATTEST \_\_\_\_\_  
Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk

**Attachments**

**Budget Amendment #2020-11 – Attachment A**

**Tax Releases - #2020-02, #2020-03, #2020-04 and #2020-05**

**Tree City USA Ordinance #2020-02**