

**Town of Blowing Rock
Town Council 2020 Annual Retreat
January 25, 26 & 27, 2021**

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their annual retreat on Monday, January 25, 2021 at 8:00 a.m. at Town Hall, Blowing Rock, North Carolina. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting, Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Also present were Town Manager Shane Fox, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, who recorded the minutes. Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Kent Graham were also present via Zoom.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sellers called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. on Monday, January 25th and welcomed everyone. Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to open the meeting, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

Review of January 2020 Retreat Topics:

Manager Fox gave a review of the 2020 Council Retreat goals and what has been accomplished as well as still an ongoing process.

Financial Items:

Phase 4 Bond Update, 2020-2021 Mid-Year Financial Update and Fund Balance Update – Ms. Norman reviewed current year financials and advised water and sewer revenues are down. She explained the need for consideration of water/sewer rate increases for FY 21-22. Ms. Norman reviewed current fund balance. She also reviewed the Phase 4 Bond update remaining funds are \$1,695,000. She explained typically would have to use the final amount this year, but this year due to the circumstances her and Manager Fox have discussed waiting to borrow the remaining funds so there isn't a rush to use the funds this year.

Down Town Municipal District Discussion – Manager Fox reviewed with Council the uses and benefits to having a Down Town District tax. Manager Fox reviewed what the tax revenue could be used for as well as reviewed some of the areas in North Carolina that are currently charging this type of tax.

Public Works Items:

Cemetery Discussion – Public Works Director Matt Blackburn reviewed the number plots sold within the last few years, the number of plots still available and some ideas for

possible expansion of the cemetery to a section. A few options discussed were columbarium's and mausoleums.

Council recessed from 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. for lunch.

PRV's Update Hydraulic Study – Town Engineer Doug Chapman reviewed the Hydraulic study that was done throughout Town. Mr. Chapman advised the most critically in need of areas to replace PRV's for Phase 1 is an estimated total cost of \$500,000. These areas are the currently causing the biggest issues in Town with water breaks etc.

Water Sewer Plant – Mr. Chapman reviewed items that need to be addressed and fixed at the water and wastewater plant. Mr. Chapman explained various areas have been fixed over time, but there are still many areas in need of repair. Mr. Chapman further discussed what needs to be decided how to prioritize the time line to fix the issues.

Water/Sewer – Mr. Chapman reviewed the proposed Main Street water and sewer replacement. He explained this is probably one of the highest priority lines to replace as it's one of the oldest water lines in Town. He further advised in conjunction with DOT scheduled to repave Main Street in the near future as well as the cross walks makes perfect sense to replace. Public Works Director Blackburn advised there are a lot of water leaks on Main Street due to the age of this line and is in much need of replacement. Estimated cost for the water replacement is \$3,400,00 and Sewer replacement is \$600,000. Ms. Norman reviewed project the projects which will total around \$5 million in water/sewer projects. She further reviewed various options for funding. Ms. Norman reviewed possible water/sewer rate increase options.

N. Main Street Sidewalk – Mr. Chapman and Manager Fox reviewed options for the potential addition for sidewalk on N. Main Street. Due to the increased foot traffic in this area and the addition if the Bass Lake Sidewalk this warranted and felt it may be worth exploring options.

Crosswalk Update – Mr. Chapman reviewed the crosswalk plan drawing and advised the purpose was to review with Council prior to going out for bid.

Police Department – Chief Miller gave an update of his department and stated the dispatch system and how well that is currently working. Chief Miller explained one of the biggest issue for retention of officers is the pay. He further explained really good officers are leaving to go to other areas that pay more. Council asked Manger Fox and Chief Miller to come up with some options for further discussion. Chief Miller discussed some parking options as well.

At 5:45 p.m. Council recessed for the evening.

On Tuesday, January 26th at 8:30 a.m., the meeting was reconvened. Those present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting, Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Staff present were Town

Manager Shane Fox, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Town Engineer Doug Chapman from McGill, TDA Executive Director Tracy Brown, Chamber Director Charles Hardin and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, whom recorded the minutes. Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Fire Chief Graham attended via Zoom.

Blowing Rock TDA and Chamber Update – TDA Executive Director Tracy Brown reviewed the last year with tourism. He noted the surprise increase in tourism to the area despite the pandemic. Mr. Brown reviewed the substantiable tourism management plan with Roger Brooks the TDA will be having conducted.

Executive Director Charles Hardin gave an update of the past year with the Chamber and reviewed the options for going forward with caution for events in 2021.

Blowing Rock Ambulance – Fire Chief Kent Graham discussed at length with Council the ambulance service with Council. Council agreed a need to have a special in February to discuss in detail and at length with the correct parties.

The meeting recessed from 12:00 p.m. until 1:00 p.m. for lunch.

Parks and Recreation:

Park and Rec Advisor Committee, PARTF and Strategic Plan – Council Member Harwood reviewed some of the ideas the committee has come up with for enhancements for Memorial Park. Council Member Harwood reviewed the time-line as well as next steps. Council Member Harwood briefly explained once the PARTF is off their plate the committee will dive deeper into the strategic plan.

321 Landscaping – Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown reviewed needs for maintaining Valley Boulevard and contract estimates were also reviewed for the landscaping of Valley Boulevard.

Davant Field – Manager Fox and Ms. Brown reviewed the current uses of Davant field and felt this may be another area to add to the Parks and Rec committee for the Parks Strategic Plan.

Planning and Inspections:

Stormwater Ordinances – Mr. Chapman reviewed some options for Council to consider changing Stormwater Ordinances for developers and new construction.

2020 Year in review, 160D NCGS Ad Hoc Update, ST Rentals/Enforcement – Mr. Rothrock reviewed construction projects and permits for 2020. He noted it was the second highest year ever for construction in Blowing Rock. Mr. Rothrock advised Planning Board Member Bill McCarter had provided updates to Chapter 16 of the Land Use Ordinance as well as provided updates to Chapter 17, the Town's minimum housing

standards. Mr. Rothrock reviewed the Ad Hoc committee actions over the last year and the proposal submitted and reviewed by Planning Board at their December 2020 meeting. Short Term Rentals and ideas for enforcement were also discussed.

The meeting was recessed at 5:30 p.m.

On Wednesday, January 27th at 8:30 a.m., the meeting was reconvened. Those present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting, Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson and Virginia Powell. Staff present were Town Manager Shane Fox, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Public Works and Utilities Director Matt Blackburn, Police Chief Aaron Miller, and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner, who recorded the minutes. Finance Officer Nicole Norman joined via Zoom.

Board Appointments -Council reviewed and briefly discussed the applicants for the Volunteer Board appointments. The Board appointments will be discussed further, voted on and appointed at the February Council Meeting.

Blowing Rock Historical Society 1888 Museum Requests – Mr. Tom O’Brien reviewed areas needing to be addressed for repair to both the 188 Museum and the Edgewood Cottage.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations – Council discussed at length the need for charging stations and town and discussed some possible areas to include these.

Solar Power – Council reviewed some options to start implementing solar panels on some of the Town buildings to help with energy efficacy.

CUP Discussion – Council discussed at length with staff the CUP process as well as some potential changes proposed by Board of Adjustment Chairman EB Springs.

The meeting recessed from 12:00 p.m. until 1:00 p.m. for lunch.

Council, Manager and staff worked on developing a priority summary of items in which they wish to accomplish in the next year and beyond. Council determined the top sixteen priority items to start working on the highest priority items.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

NONE

ADJOURN

At 2:40 p.m. with no further business to discuss Mayor Pro-Tem Sweeting made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

MAYOR _____

Charlie Sellers, Mayor

ATTEST _____

Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk