

Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission

Minutes

October 8, 2020

Members Present: Melissa Pickett, Curt Andrews, & Carol Knapp, & Chris Wetmore

Staff Present: Jennifer Brown, Cory Cathcart, Shane Fox

Begin: 2:05 p.m.

End: 4:08 p.m.

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

Budget Update – Jennifer stated that \$500 was collected since the donation letters were mailed out. Revenue collected since the first of October is \$1,310. A total of \$89.99 has been spent on water truck repairs and mailing thank you notes.

Fundraising Letters – Jennifer stated that all the donation letters were mailed about two weeks ago. She also stated that she had several letters returned because some of the addresses were missing a line. Staff has been resending the returned mailings with the full addresses. Melissa asked if it was worth BRAAC sending out the mailings themselves instead of using an outsourced company. Jennifer stated that approximately 4,000 letters are sent out and it would be a large feat to print, stuff, and address that amount as a group. Melissa asked if there is another company we could use instead, and Jennifer stated that she would get pricing on other companies and try a new company next year.

Tree City USA Follow-up – Melissa stated that there are four criteria that need to be met to become a Tree City USA town. There needs to be a tree board or department, a tree care ordinance for the town, a community forestry budget, and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation. Melissa stated that she was certain the town had an ordinance already in place, that, as chartered, BRAAC would be appropriate to fill the role as the tree board, and a budgeted line item for trees could easily be established from what have been general funds. Jennifer committed to reach out to Planning Director Kevin Rothrock about the tree ordinance and to Finance Director Nicole Norman about the tree budget. Melissa noted that these as well as a proclamation from Town Council would need to be completed before an official Arbor Day observance event on April 30, 2021.

Curt asked if there was a cost to be a Tree City USA member and Melissa did not believe there was a cost. Curt made the motion to move forward with the process to become a Tree City USA town as long as there is not a cost associated with being a member. Carol seconded the motion, and it was a unanimous vote to approve.

Broyhill Steps – Melissa stated that the stairs beside of the American Legion that lead to Broyhill Park are very dangerous. Carol and Curt agreed. She stated that before COVID the Village Foundation had received approval for Town Council to raise money to replace those steps and to and to install an ADA accessible ramp and an amphitheater pending completion of the final plan approval process. Since COVID, the Village Foundation reportedly has not been able to recruit donors committed to the project.

Jennifer reminded BRAAC that Blowing Rock Parks and Recreation and Landscaping developed and won the grant and then worked with BRAAC and with Town Council on what is the Virginia Tech Plan. This plan includes, among other elements, conceptual designs for steps and an ADA accessible ramp. Funding and Implementation plans have been on hold pending the development of the Village Foundation objectives to fund a similar but not identical project. Jennifer reported that there is almost \$500,000 in bond money that will be issued in the Spring of 2021 and that her department plans to apply for a Parks and Recreation Trust Fund Grant for the in Spring of 2021 to match the bond money. This would include improvements from Memorial Park to Davant field, include replacing the stairs next to the American Legion to Broyhill Park.

Village Foundation Liaison – Melissa stated that John Aldridge, a member of the Village Foundation, asked her if BRAAC would designate a liaison to the Village Foundation for a new project they are calling “The Historical Walk,” which would run from Main Street, down Laurel Lane, and end on 221. She stated that the Village Foundation had already discussed this with the Historical Society. After further discussion, it was decided that since there are five members on BRAAC, one of whom sits on the Village Foundation board and one of whom serves on the Historical Society, and if a liaison, independent of these two individuals, were to be appointed to this project, the BRAAC board would be left without a quorum to render a decision.

Sculpture on Main Street – Melissa observed that the sculpture on the north end of Main Street that was approved for last year’s Sculpture Walk at Chetola has remained past the one year agreement period due to the cancellation of Sculpture Walk this year due to COVID. She asked the board for their thoughts regarding its status. It was agreed that Melissa would reach out to Brenda Council, who was in charge of the Sculpture Walk, to reach an understanding that both benefits the town and is fair to the organizers.

Moratorium on Projects – Melissa stated that she was concerned with organizations lobbying Town Council to implement projects on Town property that are not a part of the Town’s Master Plan. Curt agreed and suggested that civic organizations should first refer to this well-researched document that has identified and prioritized tangible needs. As such, it would be advisable to raise funds to support the implementation of projects that townspeople have already deemed to be necessary rather than projects inconsistent with the Master Plan.