

Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission

Minutes

January 5, 2021

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

Staff Present: Jennifer Brown, Cory Cathcart, & Shane Fox

Guests: Brenda Council

Begin: 9:04 a.m.

End: 10:46 a.m.

**December Minutes Approval** – Mr. Henderson made a motion to approve the June minutes. Mr. Andrews seconded, and the vote was unanimous to approve.

**Budget Update** – Mrs. Brown reported that revenue collected to date is \$36,151, which leaves approximately \$900 to be collected to meet budget projections. She stated that she had another deposit to be made of approximately \$2,000, which would exceed budget and that we are only into 50% of our budget year. Expenditures to date are \$5,979.02 which include the cost of mailing the donation appeal letters, the Post Office Box rental, contracted labor to decorate the blue spruce in front of Town Hall for Christmas, and a small water truck repair.

Mrs. Pickett asked how much money was in BRAAC's fund balance and Mrs. Brown stated that she would consult the Finance Director and report back in February.

Mrs. Pickett asked Mr. Cathcart if he felt confident in the vendor that he had chosen for the flowers this year. Mr. Andrews inquired if the vendor that he chose was receptive to the feedback that was given about quality concerns two years ago when it last had the contract. Mr. Cathcart expressed optimism that the quality of the flowers would be better than they were last year as well as two years ago because he will actively oversee the progress of the flowers and will be better able to do so due to being in closer proximity to this year's chosen nursery.

Mr. Cathcart stated that communication is a major factor in choosing a vendor for ensuring the integrity of our flowers. There was a struggle last year to get that vendor to communicate. There were unauthorized substitutions and most of the deliveries were late. He stated that anytime he contracts projects, it is his job to oversee the job and to make sure we are receiving the quality of product and work that the Town expects.

**Tree City USA Follow-up** – Mrs. Pickett reported that the Town's application was submitted last week. Tree City has already replied asking for a couple additional items.

**Public Art Request 2021-1** – Mrs. Council stated that many unspecified and unquantified people have approached her asking for the current sculpture on the west side of North Main Street near the Chetola Resort to remain permanently. She reported that she is raising the money to purchase the sculpture so that no tax dollars would be used. Mr. Wetmore asked what the long-term cost (*e.g.*, maintenance, insurance, liability) would be to the Town. Mrs. Council replied that maintenance would be minimal and if there were any issues, she would contact the sculptor, with whom she is friends, for his

recommendation. She informed the board that the insurance and liability would more than likely belong to Chetola.

Mr. Henderson stated that while he personally likes the sculpture, he was reminded that the original application for this sculpture at this site was for a one-year term and that there would be annual applications for other sculptures to be placed in synch with a then-planned annual Sculpture Walk. He said that as much as many may appreciate this sculpture, they and others might like other installations as much if not more. He further expressed his concern for Mrs. Council's lack of certainty regarding insurance and liability. He requested that she receive and share written confirmation that Chetola would indeed be responsible in perpetuity before he could consider supporting the sculpture permanently remaining where it is.

Mr. Henderson expressed to Mrs. Council his appreciation for the work that she has done for the Town. He noted, however, that she has more than once omitted at least one key advisory commission to the Town Council, BRAAC, that was in place to help facilitate her initiatives. For instance, he noticed that she has already granted statements to the media regarding raising funds to make the sculpture permanent before receiving approval from the Town. Mrs. Council replied that back in 2015 she had worked with NCDOT and the Town Manager, then Scott Fogleman, to create an Art Policy for the Town and that she did not feel she was out of line. Mr. Henderson stated that BRAAC was not consulted during that time. Mrs. Council apologized for the oversight, but she was under the impression that Mr. Fogleman and his successors were passing information to interested parties and to boards and commissions. Mr. Andrews agreed that it appeared that there had indeed been a breakdown of communication, including that the first Art Policy draft was rewritten to codify BRAAC's leadership role. He further reminded everyone of NCDOT's assignment to the Town of Blowing Rock that approvals for art installations along NCDOT properties that pass through or are otherwise adjacent to properties under the jurisdiction of the Town of Blowing Rock will rest the Town of Blowing Rock.

Mr. Henderson requested that the Public Art request 2021-1 be tabled until further documentation is presented to BRAAC that clarifies responsibilities for insurance, liability, and maintenance. There was a unanimous vote to approve.

**History Walk** – Mrs. Brown updated the board on the History Walk proposal. During the December Town Council meeting, Tom O'Brien, the president of the Blowing Rock Historical Society, with Jim Pitts and John Aldridge from the Village Foundation, presented a concept for consideration to install pods from Mayview Plaza through Broyhill Park that would incorporate markers telling the history of Blowing Rock. Town Council asked them to work with the new Parks Strategy Committee as well as BRRAC to ascertain if this concept would fit into a larger parks master plan.

After the Council meeting, Tom O'Brien reached out to Mr. Fox to request a follow-up meeting with him and Mrs. Brown. Mr. Fox reported that Mr. O'Brien expressed his wish for a good relationship and mutual cooperation with the Town Manager, the Town Council, the Parks Strategy Committee, BRAAC, and the Village Foundation. He expected agreement on the materials, layout etc. and that nothing would be done that would be contrary to these agreements.

Mr. Henderson suggested that they have all the money needed for the project before they begin. He further expressed the importance of timely and seasonal planning as well as sensitivity to scheduled/contracted events. Everyone agreed that in order to avoid having the project look unfinished or patch-worked, all monies and materials, such as stone, should be accounted for prior to the project's commencement. Mr. Fox concluded that he was encouraging Mr. O'Brien to actively work with BRAAC on the development of all design elements before they present a final proposed.