

MINUTES

2008 COUNCIL RETREAT

The Board of Commissioners for the Town of Blowing Rock met in special session on Sunday, January 13, 2007 at 7:00 p.m. at the Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina. Present were Mayor J. B. Lawrence, Commissioners Barbara Ball, Albert Yount, Keith Tester, Phillip Pickett, and Tommy Klutz. Also present were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Clerk Sharon Greene and Finance Officer Nicole Norman. At this time, Council reviewed the Retreat process and received an update on the 2007 accomplishments. At 8:30 p.m., Mayor Lawrence recessed the meeting for the evening.

On Monday, January 14, 2008, Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:30 a.m. On January 14, 2008 the meeting recessed at 5:45 p.m. On Tuesday, January 15, 2008 Mayor Lawrence reconvened the meeting at 8:45 am.

(Note: McGill Associates Representative Doug Chapman attended on Monday, January 14 from 2:00 p.m. to 5:45 p.m.)

The purpose of the meeting was to hold a retreat to discuss key issues, initiatives and long-term planning. An issue-based process was used to help update the Town's FY 2008-09 goals and initiatives. The following major issues and topics were discussed during the sessions and the action plan below resulted:

2008 – RETREAT PRIORITIES & ACTION PLAN

Board Appointments

Place appointments on February Agenda for consideration

- Planning Board
- Board of Adjustment
- ABC Board
- TDA
- Watauga County Recreation Commission

Fiscal Management (Administration/Budgetary) Issues

Administration

- Consider Telephone System Upgrade utilizing savings from switch to the State of N.C. Telecommunication Services System.
- Consider Computer Hardware/Software Upgrades during FY 2008-09 budget process.
- Consider Town Hall Improvements/Council Chamber Audio/Visual Upgrade as funding permits.
- Continue to work on improving communication with citizens (utilizing the Town Website and weblinks, the bi-monthly town newsletter "*Around the Rock*", water-billing inserts and media outlets).

Budgetary

- Continue to monitor competitiveness of salaries and consider during FY 2008-09 budget process, including salary, insurance, benefits, etc.
- Continue implementation of 5% 401K for general employees with 2% contribution beginning July 1.
- Evaluate health insurance via the State Health Plan and, if cost effective, pursue town enrollment.
- Consider "green building" initiatives in town facilities where appropriate – water conservation, energy efficiency, waste recycling, fuel conservation, etc.
- Continue to monitor utility rates to insure sufficiency and with an emphasis on conservation.
- Continue to set aside 1/3 of TDA monies for Town infrastructure (and related infrastructure debt-service).
- Continue to maintain and fund Debt Service Schedule.
- Continue to maintain and fund Fleet Capital Replacement Schedule.
- Continue to maintain and fund Town 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan.

Planning Issues

- Consider land use code amendment to allow banner/temporary signs with guidelines covering appearance, location/placement, time limits and enforcement provisions with penalties. (No flag signs, etc.)
- Consider permitting banner placement at Memorial Park for Tour of Homes, Winterfest, Blowing Rock Horse Show and Blowing Rock Community Day with uniform guidelines on appearance and size.
- Request Planning Board to review Central Business District 40-foot maximum height limit in relation to preservation and economic factors with consideration to allowing a maximum of three stories and defining the area of emphasis for preservation.
- Consider land use code amendment requiring a conceptual model, computer simulation model, or similar technique for new building projects that shows proposed buildings in relation to surrounding area.
- Investigate the possibility of Town developing a 3-D baseline data model of building heights for use by applicants.
- Schedule joint Town Council/Planning Board meeting to discuss issues of common interest.
- Continue Town Land Use Code Review/Revision Project.
- Implement customer satisfaction surveys to improve customer service.
- Consider part-time inspections staffing during FY 2008-09 budget process.
- Place planning/zoning information in "*Around the Rock*" to improve communication with the public.
- Continue to monitor impacts of recent Landscape/Tree Ordinance revisions – and consider elimination of hemlocks as an allowable screening tree to due woolly adelgid concerns.
- Continue to review and maintain Town Comprehensive Plan.
- Continue code enforcement of dilapidated structures/lots.
- Proceed with CUP Tracking Database Software (include landscaping component & parking lot maintenance).
- Continue with GIS (Geographic Information System) Layer Development.
- Request Planning Board to review and update the 2000 Town Parking Study.

- Proceed with the re-striping of Davant Field parking area.
- Evaluate the utilization of Town Corner Lot (Clark Street) for parking use.
- Review Outside Dining Regulations/Outside Display of Merchandise.
- Investigate ways to streamline permitting process – to include possibility of minor exterior change approval at staff and/or Planning Board level.
- Continue to monitor impacts of U.S. 321 Widening Project (work with tourism partners).

Parks & Recreation/Town Beautification Issues

- Continue current Halloween Festival but work with merchants to minimize concerns.
- Maintain current prohibition of dogs in town parks with enforcement of policy – including relocation of Pet Show to non-park property.
- Continue dialogue with American Legion on building and schedule facility improvements on Ruritan Club building (ADA ramp/vapor barrier).
- Continue to work with BRAAC on overall beautification of Town.
- Proceed with Robbins Pool Improvement Project and continue to seek additional grant funding.
- Continue P&R Master Plan implementation.

Public Safety Issues (Police/Emergency Services)

Emergency Services

- Complete construction of new Emergency Services Building.
- Continue negotiations regarding Medic Base co-location.
- Proceed with Rescue Squad vehicle ownership & insurance coverage plan in lieu of \$15,000 annual town contribution.

Police

- Continue efforts to improve noise and parking regulation enforcement.
- Consider equipment upgrades during FY 2008-09 budget process.
- Continue to set aside funds for Police Department Building renovation and conduct architectural study of old fire/rescue building for future use (Police, Recreation & PW).

Infrastructure Issues (Public Works/Water/Wastewater)

Public Works

- Continue Street Pavement Plan implementation.
- Consider equipment replacement during FY 2008-09 budget process.
- Consider PW Warehouse Renovation during FY 2008-09 budget process and follow-up on acquisition of land adjoining warehouse.
- Continue Right of Way maintenance funding (via contract services).
- Maintain special waste collection policy but improve communication to the public.
- Continue to investigate stormwater quality and quantity standards and gather comparative data from other similar cities – ordinances, organizational structure, funding, etc.
- Proceed with implementation of Stormwater Master Plan – including FEMA grant opportunity.
- Complete downtown streetscape plan for Town Council consideration (1-Streetscape – sidewalks, tree planting, amenities, etc. and 2-Underground Utilities Plan).
- Request utility providers (AT&T, BREMCO, and Charter) to consolidate/remove overhead lines where feasible.
- Pursue “Safe Routes to School” grant for Morris Street/Chestnut Street sidewalk.
- Consider paving ditches along Ransom Street.
- Proceed with American Legion Parking Facility with bid award in March 2008.

- Continue to explore partnership options in the provision of parking (school, churches, shuttle-satellite, Art in the Park vendor-satellite, etc.)

Water/Sewer

- Continue with Water/Sewer Capital Improvements Plan implementation with Phase I bid award in March 2008.
- Continue to pursue water supply and land exchange with U.S. Park Service for Town Reservoir property (work with High Country Council of Governments).
- Continue to pursue water interconnections with Town of Boone/ASU and seek funding assistance from state.
- Continue to monitor impacts of drought.
- Proceed with screening Water Plant generator and add plantings once fence is replaced.
- Develop Laurel Park sewer extension plan.
- Develop Gideon Ridge water/sewer improvement plan.

Tourism Issues

- Investigate placement of downtown public restroom facilities at Ice House, Robbins Pool and Tiller/Lane property and consider upgrade of Memorial Park restroom facilities.
- Continue Master Signage Plan implementation (include Parks & Recreation facilities).
- Schedule annual meeting with TDA to review Annual Report (March).
- Investigate the possibility of closing Main Street for an event subject to a completed business plan which addresses all concerns and all costs associated with closure (limited to no more than 1 time a year).
- Work with the Blowing Rock Chamber of Commerce on Art in the Park location options once parking facility is constructed and lease expires.
- Conduct traffic impact study of future parking facility associated with BRAHM project.

Other

- Pursue professional planning consultant services for development of a Town Center Master Plan.
- Schedule in the near future a town visioning meeting similar to Town Center sessions held in 2003 on the future of Blowing Rock.
- Contact NCDOT regarding drainage problem at Town Welcome Sign and U.S. 321.
- Take immediate action to improve public perception of building inspection office.
- Obtain UNC-School of Government opinion on conflict of interest statutes.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m. on Tuesday, January 15, 2008.

MAYOR _____

J.B. Lawrence

ATTEST: _____

Sharon Greene, Town Clerk