

MINUTES

Town of Blowing Rock Intergovernmental Meeting April 28, 2008

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners hosted an Intergovernmental Meeting on Monday, April 28, 2008 beginning at 5:00 p.m. at Chetola Resort in Blowing Rock. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss several shared issues of concern. Joining the Town of Blowing Rock were representatives from the Town of Boone, Watauga County, Appalachian State University, and the Town of Seven Devils.

Purpose

To address issues of major importance to the region:

1. Water Issues
2. E-911 Consolidated Dispatch
3. Ladder Fire Truck Acquisition by Boone to Provide Service to ASU
4. A consensus plan for regular meetings of the Intergovernmental Group in the future

Participants

Town of Blowing Rock

- Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Mayor Pro tem Keith Tester
- Commissioners: Bobby Ball, Albert Yount, Phil Pickett, Tommy Klutz
- Staff: Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Public Works Director Johnny Lentz, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Police Chief Eric Brown, Emergency Services Director Kent Graham, Human Resource Director Erica Cline and Town Clerk Sharon Greene.

Town of Boone

- Mayor Loretta Clawson, Mayor Pro tem Lynne Mason
- Commissioners: Liz Aycock, Rennie Brantz, Janet Pepin, and Stephen Phillips.
- Staff: Town Manager Greg Young, Town Attorney Sam Furgiuele, Police Chief Bill Post, Fire Chief Reggie Hassler, Public Utilities Director Rick Miller, Planning Supervisor Ricky Hurley and Assistant Town Clerk Kim Brown

Watauga County

- Commissioners: Jim Deal - Chairman, John Cooper, Winston Kinsey, Mary Moretz, and William Winkler
- Staff: County Manager Rocky Nelson, Assistant County Manager Deron Geouque, Planning Director Joe Furman and Clerk to the Board Anita Fogle

Town of Seven Devils

- Mayor Pro tem Richard DeMott, and Commissioner Kathy Copley

Appalachian State University

- Chief of Staff Dr. Lorin Baumhover and University Attorney Dayton Cole.
- Board of Trustees: Jim Deal - Chairman and John Cooper

Guest speakers were Debbie Hamrick, Specialty Crops Director - N.C. Farm Bureau and Facilitator Tom Westall of Lead for Life.

Desired Outcomes of the Meeting Established by the Group

- Work together
- Have honest dialog
- Establish a shared action plan
- Have knowledge of where we stand
- Good clear definition of regional water system
- Have adequate knowledge of hydrology and availability to meet water needs presently and in the future.
- Have factual information on pros and cons of what is being discussed
- Discuss plan for consolidated dispatch
- Open dialog on whether bigger is better
- Plan for the needs for the region as a whole

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Water Issues

Statewide Perspective

Debbie Hamrick, Specialty Crops Director - N.C. Farm Bureau, *Water, the Big Picture*.

- NC received on an average of 50 inches of rainfall per year, with 25% of it from tropical storms.
- Approximately 34 of the 50 inches of the rainfall evaporates.
- There are 17 river basins in the State of North Carolina and the demand for water continues to rise.
- By the year 2030, the population in NC is expected to grow to 12 million.

- Likewise, the projected water needs should increase from 244 billion gallons per year in 2005 to 355 billion gallons per year in 2030.
- The worst problems are occurring in urban areas.
- In the past 50 years North Carolina has gone from having 2% of its landmass covered with impervious surfaces to 11%.
- Potential solutions for the water situation
 - Constructing more reservoirs
 - Reducing the demand by limiting growth
 - Better conservation of water
 - Sharing water through interconnections
- Potential issues to be addressed
 - Having adequate funds to construct more reservoirs
 - Limiting use in homes – requires pricing to reflect obsessive water use
 - Getting a better handle on who uses water, including commercial users
 - Stricter reporting guidelines will be needed along with well regulations
 - Considering “purple pipe” water - using water over again before returning it to the watershed

Ms. Hamrick concluded her presentation stating members of the NC General Assembly needed to be educated by the group on what the needs are for this area.

Group Perspective on Water Issues

Boone Town Manager Greg Young

- Boone and ASU has reached an agreement to connect the water systems to allow Boone to purchase water from ASU to meet emergency needs.
- The N.C. Rural Center approved a \$160,000 grant for the cost of the project.
- Blowing Rock approached the Town of Boone regarding a water interconnection several years ago and Boone had an engineer evaluate the possibility.
- The study indicated that 7 million gallons per day are needed to meet Boone's future needs and the town is currently pumping 3 million per day. The 7 million gallons per day demand includes a 500,000 gallon per day allocation for Blowing Rock.
- Boone is trying to acquire land in the New River Basin to meet its needs for a total of 7 million gallons per day, in addition to the current authorization of 3 million gallons per day.
- A new plant and intake system is needed in the future and cost is a large factor. In the interim, a new raw water intake and high rate filter upgrades

would add an additional 1.5 MGD to its capacity at a projected cost of \$18,500,000.

Blowing Rock Town Manager Scott Hildebran

- An emergency water interconnection between Boone and Blowing Rock is estimated to cost around \$4,000,000.
- Blowing Rock is completing the necessary requirements for the \$300,000 grant from the Appalachian Regional Commission.
- Boone is pursuing a \$1,000,000 grant from the N.C. Rural Center, with Blowing Rock committed to funding the 100% grant match.
- Watauga County has agreed to pursue a \$500,000 grant from the N.C. Rural Center, with Blowing Rock committed to funding the 100% grant match.
- Blowing Rock has made application to the NCDENR-Public Water Supply Section- Loans and Grants for a \$2,200,000 loan to complete the \$4,000,000 total project cost.
- If all funding is approved and once design is complete, it is estimated the project could be constructed in 18 months.

ASU Chief of Staff Lorin Baumhover

- Due to recent renovation of facilities and installation of water-saving devices on campus, the university's water consumption has declined.
- ASU is not operating at full capacity – making it a possibility of selling excess water to Blowing Rock.
- ASU is only accepting 50 to 75 new students each year and large student resident growth is not expected in the next 10 years.
- Mr. Baumhover cautioned that ASU can help on an interim basis but is not the long term solution to the region's water needs. He also warned future water supply for the university could be jeopardized as well.

Jim Deal - Chairman of the Watauga County Board of Commissioners, and ASU Board of Trustees

- The university has an excess capacity of water and that it doesn't anticipate any new projects that would use up the capacity in the near future.
- Boone could probably distribute via ASU 500,000 gallons per day easily to Blowing Rock and there needs to be a solution to dispense that water to benefit everyone.

Group Perspective on Water Issues (con't)

Boone Mayor Pro tem Lynn Mason

- A new 7 million gallons per day water facility is estimated to cost close to \$40,000,000. Cost would fall on the shoulders of water customers.

Watauga County Commissioner Winston Kinsey

- Adequate storage facilities are needed before the problem can be solved.

Watauga County Commissioner Mary Moretz

- Region D Council of Governments is in the process of doing a study throughout the County assessing water quality and quantity.

Seven Devils Mayor Pro tem Richard DeMott

- Seven Devils is in the process of doing a study of their water situation and will have the results of the study within the next month.

Group Consensus on Water Issues - Short term Actions Needed:

- Determine combined and projected capacity of current water systems.
- Continue to stress conservation (investigate water efficient solutions – example: low flow toilets).
- Begin discussion with surrounding counties regarding a regional solution and grant applications.
- Unify groups to go before State Legislature to speak as one voice.
- Understand the demand – both seasonal and peak with a combination of the three systems.
- Establish standard planning criteria as defined by all parties (example: land use planning and regulations).
- Establish communication group to develop public communications plan on water issue.
- Sub-teams to be established with representatives from each entity to work toward the short actions needed.
- Teams to be formed and should meet again in the next 45 days after budget adoption.

2. E-911 Consolidated Dispatch Issue

Group Perspective on Consolidated Dispatch Issue

Watauga County Manager Rocky Nelson

- The County's Emergency Medical Service Advisory Board had met and a letter had been drafted and sent to Blowing Rock, Boone, and Watauga County asking them to examine a consolidated 911 dispatch program.
- There is potential of time loss during an emergency, as well as dropped calls.
- The advisory board wants to know if this is an issue to be pursued and if not, they can continue on to other issues of importance.

Boone Police Chief Bill Post

- He has sent a list of concerns he had with the program to the advisory board and in his opinion the total consolidation of systems would have a negative impact on the citizens of Boone.

Group Perspective on Consolidated Dispatch Issue (con't)

Boone Fire Chief Reggie Hassler

- His department had received approximately 200 calls from Watauga County and 800 calls from the town and it would be good to have all the fire calls coming from a central location.

Blowing Rock Emergency Services Director Kent Graham

- As President of the Watauga County Fire Fighters Association, the Association has expressed support for the consolidation of the Fire and Rescue dispatch calls..
- As a representative of the Blowing Rock District, all areas of the county including Blowing Rock District need appropriate representation to maintain some oversight and management of a consolidated dispatch center.

Blowing Rock Police Chief Eric Brown

- The police department needs to be staffed at all times to help people that come in with an emergency.
- The program might work for fire/rescue, but police should be kept separate.

Blowing Rock Commissioner Tommy Klutz

- Would like to see it remain as is, because the personal touch would be lost between the departments and citizens.

Boone Police Chief Bill Post

- Can this consolidation be considered for only Fire/Rescue and allow law enforcement to operate as is?

Boone Mayor Pro-tem Lynne Mason

- This is a more complex issue than time allowed for and would like more time to gather additional information and continue discussion at a later date.

Jim Deal - Chairman Watauga County Board of Commissioners

- The County is trying to respond to what the Emergency Medical Service Advisory Board recommended.
- The towns should look at consolidation recommendations and inform them if there is an interest.

Group Consensus on E-911 Consolidated Dispatch Issue - Short term Actions Needed:

- Towns of Blowing Rock and Boone to determine their respective interest in the Consolidated Dispatch System within the next 60 days and inform County Manager Rocky Nelson.
- County Manager Rocky Nelson to communicate that information to the Emergency Medical Service Advisory Board.

3. Ladder Fire Truck Acquisition by Town of Boone

Group Perspective on Fire Truck Acquisition

ASU Chief of Staff Lorin Baumhover

- Based on tall buildings located on ASU's campus, a new 100-foot ladder truck is needed.
- ASU requested that Boone Fire Chief Reggie Hassler review the matter.

Group Perspective on Fire Truck Acquisition (con't)

Boone Fire Chief, Reggie Hassler

- Boone Fire Department has need for a ladder fire truck to adequately protect larger buildings in the fire district, primarily on the ASU campus.
- The cost of the truck would be approximately \$850,000-\$900,000.
- A funding request will be sent to the State to help with the purchase. Other NC college towns have been granted similar funding assistance.
- Support is needed from Blowing Rock, Watauga County and Seven Devils to draft a resolution of support to be presented to the State Legislature, with follow-up contacts to members of the State Legislature.

Group Consensus on Fire Truck Acquisition by Town of Boone- Short term Actions Needed:

- Boone agreed to disseminate a draft resolution for all parties to consider.
- A plan needs to be developed for consolidated contact of Legislative members.

4 . Plan for Regular Meetings of the Group

Group Perspective on Regular Meetings of Group

Group Comments

- Meeting regularly as a group is critical for addressing important regional issues
- Quarterly meetings seem to be the most appropriate
- No matter what date is selected, there will always be individual scheduling issues

Group Consensus on Regular Meeting of the Group – Short-Term Actions Needed

- Establish a standing quarterly meeting date
- Rotate meeting locations between the group
- Send meeting plans and agenda out 2-weeks in advance
- Those participants who can attend, make plans to attend

Summary and Next Steps

- Tom Westall to summarize meeting notes and Action Plans, with support from Town of Blowing Rock
- Town of Blowing Rock to send out meeting summary and Action Plans to all participants
- Sub-Group members to be selected by each unit and initial meetings conducted by June 15th.
- Standing quarterly meeting date established for the group, based on consensus on best possible date of staff personnel from each unit

Water Issues Action Plan

The Plan

To address the High Country's short-term water issues, the group agreed to the following action plan:

- Five Action Teams are to be established to work on the tasks identified below.
- Each operating unit is to select at least one elected official and one staff person to serve on five joint Action Teams.
- Members should be selected immediately with the goal to have their initial meeting by June 15.
- Teams should establish project plans with goals, timelines and assignments to share with the total group at the next quarterly meeting.

Team #1 - Assessing Water Needs, Usage and Capacity

- Determine combined and projected water systems capacity.
- Assess the demand – both seasonal and peak with a combination of the three systems.

Team #2 – Establishing Planning Criteria as Defined by All Parties Involved

- Establish planning criteria as defined and understood by all parties including potential land use planning and regulations.

Team #3 – Investigating Water Conservation Measures

- Investigate water efficient solutions – (example: low flow toilets).
- Continue to stress conservation measures.

- Look at “Best Practices” in conservation from other communities.

Team #4 – Taking Joint Action at Regional, State and National Levels

- Plan and unify groups to approach State Legislature to speak as one voice.
- Begin discussion with surrounding counties regarding a regional solution and grant applications.
- Review national programs and potential resources that might positively impact area water needs.

Team # 5 – Establishing a Public Education Process

- Review communication resources and talent.
- Plan a communications campaign to help inform the public of water issues.
- Contact State and regional groups for resources, “Best Practices”.

E-911 Consolidated Dispatch Action Plan

The Plan

To address the recommendations of the Watauga County Emergency Services Medical Advisory Board, the group agreed on the following Action Plan:

- The towns of Blowing Rock and Boone will meet and determine their respective interest in the Consolidated Dispatch System within the next 60-days.
- They will inform County Manager Rocky Nelson of their town’s interests.
- County Manager Rocky Nelson will communicate that information to the Emergency Medical Service Advisory Board to be acted on accordingly.

Ladder Fire Truck Acquisition Action Plan

The Plan

To address the request from the Town of Boone for support for the purchase of a new ladder fire truck, the group agreed to the following:

- All units pledge to support the request for the town of Boone’s fire truck purchase with the State Legislature.
- Boone agreed to disseminate a draft resolution for all parties to consider.
- A plan needs to be developed by The Town of Boone and ASU for consolidated contact of Legislative members, regarding the fire truck purchase.

Regular Group Meetings Action Plan

The Plan

To address the need to meet regularly to address important regional issues, the group agreed to the following:

- Establish a standing quarterly meeting date.
- Rotate meeting locations between the group.
- Send meeting plans and agenda out 2-weeks in advance.
- Those participants who can attend, make plans to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

MAYOR _____
J.B. Lawrence

Attest: _____
Sharon Greene, Town Clerk