

# Town Council Meeting - Tuesday, November 9th, 2021

Tuesday, November 9, 2021 2:19:51

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, November 9, 2021, at 6:00 p.m. The meeting took place at Town Hall located at 1036 Main Street Blowing Rock, NC. Present were Mayor Charlie Sellers, Mayor Pro-Tem Sue Sweeting and Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Doug Matheson, Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Fire Chief Kent Graham, Parks and Recreation Director Jennifer Brown, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock and Public Works Director Matt Blackburn, Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes.

## **SUMMARY KEYWORDS**

town, year, council, number, greene, fairway, audit, special use permit, revenues, day, state, traffic, cases, watauga county, hill, tda, week, discussed, signs, mentioned

## **SPEAKERS**

Nancy Collins, Tyler Bryson, All, Hilari Hubner, David Harwood, Nicole Norman, Steve Irace, Doug Matheson, Jennifer Greene, Evenlight Eagles, Lance Campbell, Pam Lowry, Sue Sweeting, Patrick Warren, Albert Yount, Shane Fox, Carrie Dunlap, Charlie Sellers, Kevin Rothrock

## **Charlie Sellers**

Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you for attending this evening. This beautiful evening. I tell you, I couldn't believe it. It was what 70 Something degrees today. And who would have thought in Blowing Rock? Well, thanks for coming on this Tuesday evening, November 9 2021. Roll call for attendance. All Council Members present.

## **All**

The Pledge of Allegiance.

## **Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a motion to approve the minutes for October 12, 2021 regular and closed session.

## **Sue Sweeting**

So Moved.

## **Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second?

**Doug Matheson**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Any discussion? Okay,

**David Harwood**

**Sue Sweeting**

**Albert Yount**

Yes

**Doug Matheson**

Yes

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay. regular agenda adoption there are two changes on this. North Carolina DOT That was a misprint that went out over email said spotlight Highway 321. It needs to read Stoplight 321. Also the LGC Debt Resolution that was in reference to a property purchase by the Town. We're going to have a special meeting on that issue November 23, at 5:30 to discuss to have a public hearing on that. And we'll be addressing at that time, so that will be removed from the consent agenda. Okay. So now, do I have a motion to approve the revised agenda?

**Doug Matheson**

So moved

**Sue Sweeting**

Second

**Albert Yount**

Yes

**David Harwood**

Yes

**Sue Sweeting**

Yes

**Doug Matheson**

Yes

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a motion to approve Consent Agenda.

**David Harwood**

So Moved

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second

**Sue Sweeting**

Second

**Albert Yount**

Yes

**David Harwood**

Yes

**Sue Sweeting**

Yes

**Doug Matheson**

Yes

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay. Now we're going to move into the public comments section. All right. If you would like to speak. Please give Hilari your name and address and the issue that you would like to speak on. Now keep in mind the public hearing, the Scotchman SUP cannot be brought up during the normal public speaking, will have to speak on that during that public hearing. Mr. Lance Campbell, please state your name and address.

**Lance Campbell**

My name is Lance Campbell, I live at 1177 Green Hill Road in Blowing Rock. Mayor Sellers, Town Council, Manager Fox thank you for the opportunity. I want to speak to the proposed stop sign, three way stop sign at Green Hill Road and Fairway 11 Court. I have read and re-read Mr. Karpinski summary from the Ramey Kemp Associates report and survey of last month's Town Council meeting, addressing speeding, density and safety concerns. Regarding speeding, the always stop control, stop signs, was considered as a speedy countermeasure. But the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices to reference that this traffic consultant used said quote, "yield or stop signs should not be used for speed control." Un-quote, the speed limit on Green Hill is 25 miles per hour the survey discovered that the northbound average speed was 24 miles per hour south bound it was 26 miles per hour. Let's move to safety, at the intersections and this is according to the report again, I quote, "minimum volume

criteria for the all ways stopped control device is unlikely to be met and may result in the stop signs effectively operating under yield condition, or drivers ignoring stop altogether due to low traffic volumes on the side streets." Unquote. The possibility of entering traffic encourages rolling stops or ignoring the stop sign. And there's evidence of that at Green Hill Road and Green Hills Circle stop sign that was installed on about a year ago. In other words give a false sense of security for entering traffic assuming the Green Hill Road Traffic will stop at those stop signs. Under safety, let's move to crash data. The Blowing Rock Police data report over eight years from 2013 to 2020. Discovered a single crash at that intersection in 2018 factors where it was at dawn, whether was a factor and the driver, overcorrected per the Blowing Rock Police report. I and my wife, this is my wife's hometown, we have lived one driveway away from that intersection for 24 years. We get to that driveway probably more than once. But once a day for each of us, that would be two times 365 days, times 24 years. Surprisingly, 17,520 exits from the driveway we've had no crashes, no near misses. I know the plural of anecdote is not data, but greater than 17,000 anecdotes is compelling. The report again and I quote finally, none of the intersections long Green Hill Road meet the minimum crash criteria outlined in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control necessary to warrant consideration of an all way stop control device, unquote. So in summary, Green Hill Road, it's a meandering country road. It's got beautiful tree shading, lovely Serpentina pas, and I look at it as form over function. So the Ramey Kemp Associates did not recommend it. And I respectfully do not support a three way stop sign at Green Hill Road and Fairway 11 Court. Thank you.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you Mr. Campbell. Tyler Bryson, good evening, please state your name and address.

**Tyler Bryson**

Tyler Bryson 152 Hilltop Way. Good evening. Okay, so I understand you will vote on a motion to lift the state of emergency masks mandate tonight. I'm hoping so. I strongly urge you all to vote in favor of lifting the current mass mandate. Let's let the people assess their own risk and have the freedom to determine themselves whether or not they want to wear a mask. That's all I got. Thank you

**Charlie Sellers**

Pam Lowry. Name and address please. Thank you, ma'am. Okay, Mrs. Nancy Collins. Good evening, Nancy.

**Pam Lowry**

Pam Lowry, 389 Fairway 11 Court. I hope this is the last time and I'm sure you do as well, that I'm standing in front of you. I have spoken to you several times over the past three years about Green Hill Road and Fairway 11. Unlike the gentleman who spoke before me, I pull out into an intersection where I cannot see either way. And it is extremely dangerous for my neighbors and for my family. I have listened and read carefully the report. And even though it didn't say so in the written report, the man orally say that it's a dangerous intersection. He has put us on notice that it is a dangerous intersection. And he verbally said that we needed an all way stop there. I'm asking y'all to do that. I want you to vote yes, to all way stop at Fairway 11. Though it will of course need some kind of warning sign either a signage or rumble strips or something so that approaching traffic will know that those stop signs are there. With development currently on both ends of Green Hill, our road is only going to get worse. While

the development is going to be very good economically for our town, I do want safety to be considered. It is the right thing to do for the residents of Blowing Rock and the residents of Green Hill to install this all way stop. I tell somebody the other day. I've worked on this for over three years. I don't know what else to say. And I appreciate those of you who've been communicating with me and I appreciate those of you in the audience who have helped me with this. But I'm asking you tonight to vote yes to an all way start at Green Hill Road and Fairway 11 Court. Thank you very much.

### **Nancy Collins**

Nancy Collins, 193 Edgewood Path. Mayor, Albert, David, Sue, Doug, Shane, Allen, Hilari and audience. I would ya'll tonight, if you're considering, again, the COVID the mask mandate, the mandate for employees. Can you not drop all of that COVID is not going away. COVID is here forever. It's not going to go away. We've already lost one Town Employee this year to suicide. Winter times coming, and we have been saddled with these mask all summer long. There are people that really can't take the injections, believe it or not, they really are. Go to the Mayo Clinic and you'll see. But I'm asking this is not your town, or your town, or my town. It's our it's our town. Think of everybody's lives. I know you are have said that you're thinking about the safety of this town. But think of our town, all of us that live here, not just the tourist, think of us. Take our word that we're ready for this to be over. COVID is going to be treated for years to come. Just like the flu. Because it is a flu. And I'm begging you. And I hate to grovel at your feet. But I'm asking you please take this mandate off of our employees for the testing for the injections. We all live in a free country. We live in a free country lets make Blowing Rock a free town. Please just take all of this away, and will really appreciate it. Thank you.

### **Charlie Sellers**

Thank you, Nancy. Evenlight Eagles Good evening.

### **Evenlight Eagles**

Hi everyone, I always get nervous once I get up here. I live at 612 Ransom Street. So I ran into David and Doug at the post office last week. And I had sent an email out to everyone, all the Council Members asking about getting clarification on why the you know, what they felt within 166 A. I gave them the right to impose laws that were I believe unconstitutional. And also to explain the specifics of why they're declaring a state of emergency so that I could address that. And that was not responded to at all. And so I was talking to them about it. And one of the things that Doug mentioned was he thought that y'all could do anything you wanted to when there was an emergency. And so this is some constitutional law that I want to read to you. It's very quick about that. So okay, and I understand that you think you're operating in everybody's best interest, but I agree it's our town and everyone gets to make their own choices. I believe these medical mandates, all of them are unconstitutional. So The Home Building and Loan Association vs Blaisdell 1934. Emergency does not create power, emergency does not increase granted power or remove or diminish restrictions imposed upon granted or reserved power. The Constitution was adopted in a period of grave emergency. Its grants of power to the Federal Government and its limitations of the power of the states were determined in the light of emergency and they are not altered by emergency. No human being in this country can exercise any kind of public authority which is not conferred by law.

### **Charlie Sellers**

Thank you Ms. Eagles. Steve Irace, good evening. So once again, name, address.

**Steve Irace**

9239 Valley Boulevard which is the Green Park Inn and being a good boy, I'm setting my own timer. I've been here, I've owned a major business in this town for 12 years. And I've come before this board three times, asking for things and public meetings. Twice were against the fantasy hotel dreams of Steve Barker. You heard me and you granted his wishes which have now through the problems of Mr. Barker's \$12 million debt fallen through so far, thank God. The other time was about two years ago when they opened the new Speedway on 321. And I came and I objected to the speeding and the dangerous intersections created by that speeding. And again, you listen to me, unfortunately, that meeting ran 'til about midnight, because Charlie wasn't here to run them and keep things down. But the fact of this consent agenda, and I'm sorry, I didn't hear but I'm assuming the stoplight is still on the Consent Agenda. Yeah, I mean, I don't see this as an issue that has been given the proper transparency, or discussion. For instance, I knew nothing about this owning again, a major business on the corner of Green Hill, where the stoplight is going. I really think that this was done sub Rosa, and quietly, and I understand why I was a public official. Once myself, I understand why you want to hide certain things that you know are going to be controversial, and try to push them through. I don't want to say in the darkness of night, but this should not have been put on the consent agenda as quickly and easily as it was, it should have been given transparency and public discussion. And that public discussion from our point, and I will make the point that that is far from a safe intersection 321 and Green Hill, as far as I know, there has never been a traffic accident there since the speedway opened. But I still believe that there are many similar intersections with the same safety issues going all the way up 321 extension. And I think we should have had a review of all of those. It's great that DOT is going to put \$250,000 on the table. But I really think we should have had a more open discussion. Having been in public service. I know the easiest thing to do when neighbors complain is give them give them a stop sign. Because they like to give stop signs away like candy. It's no big deal. Traffic lights, though, are they create a lot of issues. They cost a lot of money. And I vigorously object as those Laurie, who said I could take her three minutes, but I'm not going to, I am going to spare you that, because she's very passionate about this, you know, when she saw people at the intersection, having a discussion, she called me and said call and see what the hell they're talking about. So I called and one of you told me that they were discussing where to put a sign. Now maybe it was a sign discussion. I don't know. But this is happening with no knowledge to us. I don't believe all of the above the Council Members. You know, we're aware of this until recently when it suddenly appears as a consent item on the agenda. And it's not right. It shouldn't be done this way. And this, this issue calls out for a proper traffic study of safety issues on that 321 speedway because people speed on it all the time and Green Hill Road is not the only one where there are safety concerns about how you get on and across it. If you go to the southbound 321, around the Hampton Inn, and you try to make the U turn and the turning lane, you can't make it without either doing a three point turn, or jumping the curb and going on the sidewalk. And this is this is not right. And we should review all of these. And I will be the first to say, if the top traffic light kills the Green Park business, which it could do. That's a price that we would all have to pay for killing a member of the public. But that's not a reason. Anyway, that's all I have to say it's on the consent agenda, I would ask that two of you, which I understand is what we need vote to take it off the consent agenda, have a review of it. A few months more to do a proper study is not going to kill the

deal. But let's see how we can best spend that money to make all of 321 safe or better. And if we need the light, we'll get the light. Thank you.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you, Steve. Council, may I respond? Is that okay?

**David Harwood**

Okay with me

**Charlie Sellers**

The reason what I wanted to say I want to reassure Steve that the Council nor myself were aware of what was going on, until about three, four weeks ago. At such time, yes, there was about three, four weeks ago, there was safety engineers out there. And I don't think any of us felt like anything was gonna take place. And but I just wanted to come up the defense of the Council because none of the Council Members were aware of this.

**Steve Irace**

I am not blaming anyone in particular. I have a hard time pulling out of that intersection when they first opened the highway. And I am not a traffic engineer, but I concluded that Green Hill is not graded properly.

**Charlie Sellers**

Well, what I'd recommend Steve off level you can see what I'd recommend is that Cullie Tarleton has an open ear. I'd recommend talking to Cullie. We've already gone over the consent agenda and has been approved. So but that would be my suggestion. Thank you for coming, Steve. Thank you, Council.

**Shane Fox**

Thank you, Mayor and Council each year, one of the more exciting times at least for myself and Ms. Norman is the annual audit that takes place. This year. Martin Starnes and Associates, just like the previous two years, conducted the annual external audit of the financial statements and policies and procedures, internal controls of the town, and tonight with Martin Starnes and Associates, is Ms. Carrie Dunlap, which is our audit manager. She's here to do a presentation, following Carrie's presentation. Ms. Norman, would also like to present a few slides here relations to the audit in the outcome.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you for coming Ms. Dunlap.

**Carrie Dunlap**

Thank you, Council. I'm glad that some people do get excited about the audit, like Shane with his background, because not very many people do. But thank you for allowing me to come share some results with you this evening. If you have any questions, feel free to let me know. A few audit highlights. unmodified opinion, that's the goal of the audit that there's no materially misstated numbers in their cooperative stuff. We really appreciate Nicole getting us everything we need timely, we were able to submit the audit prior to October 31 this year. So that was a big goal for both of us. And we're happy



that we were able to do that. The general fund increase their fund balance by \$921,000 this year. The slide mostly focuses on the general fund. So here's the general fund summary your 2021 numbers that \$10.7 That includes any transfers and proceeds, that's all your other financing sources and uses in addition to the revenues, and that increase this year, as well as the expenditures increased a little bit over the last year as well and that includes any transfers out of the general fund. The total fund balance went from \$6 million up to \$7 million, it was an increase of \$921,000. This slide shows you how much of that total fund balance is available as calculated by the LGC. So you have to back out any non spendable items you have, such as inventory or prepaids. And then stabilization by a state statute that is by law required to be restricted. So your available fund balance was a little over \$5 million, and that increased over last year by \$322,000. This is the ratio that the LGC uses to compare you to other towns have your same population group. So you take the available fund balance number we discussed and you divided by your total expenditures and transfers out also backing out any loan proceeds. So this gives you your ratio and went from 50.7 up to 52.8 this year. This is also just a graph showing you that same increase. The next three slides show your top revenues of course ad valorem taxes is the highest and it went from went from 4.4 up to 4.7, which was an increase of about \$278,000. Then next highest is your unrestricted intergovernmental revenues. And those went up to 2.7, which was an increase of \$281,000 this year. And the other taxes and license was the largest the third largest revenue, and it went up to 1.6, which was an increase of \$279,000. And this number does include all of your sales and use tax your privilege licenses and occupancy tax. The next three slides show your top expenditures and how those compared over the prior year. So the general government expenditure was the largest amount and it went to 3.2, which was an increase of \$332,000 this year. The next largest is the public safety and it had a very small increase of \$26,000. And then comes transportation, which increased slightly by \$31,000. This slide also shows you how much money is going out for debt service. And it went up by \$205,000 this year. This is a brief glimpse of your water and sewer Enterprise Fund. These are the numbers that the LGC uses to look at your enterprise funds in comparison to other similar towns with population groups. And so your the we're looking for a negative cash flow here with this top number. And as you can see, it went from 165. But it's still a positive \$20,000. So that's not concerning. And then your unrestricted cash divided by total expenses. Taking out depreciation and adding back and debt service principle, that percentage went from 16% up to 124%. And so this number, the LGC doesn't want it to go below 16%, which is roughly two months of expenditures. So that increase was definitely helpful to see. This is another ratio that the LGC uses a quick ratio, it takes your current assets and current liabilities. And so anything that went below a one and was negative is something that you would receive a comment from LDC on. So that went from one up to five, which is a good increase. And then other general performance indicators that they use to compare numbers across towns and municipalities. There were no red flags this year. So that's obviously a great measure. Things that we just discussed, like if there was a negative number, or the ratios were below the percentages they're looking for that would have caused a red flag from this LGC data input. So that's what that means. And then there's also timely audit submission, which is a goal and then stable property tax valuation and collection percentages or something else they're looking at. And then your water and sewer net income and cash to expense ratio. So there was nothing that that's actually a new requirement by the LGC this year is that your presentation has to be within 45 days of LGC submission. And they also if there were any of these indicators that popped out, we were required to present them at the meeting. So that's a good thing that I'm telling you there weren't any so. And that's all I have, unless you have any questions for me.



**Sue Sweeting**

You can send to the town in good standing.

**Carrie Dunlap**

Yes, there's no indicators I have to warn you about so

**Albert Yount**

We have established we want to be 50% or above and this puts us there.

**Shane Fox**

Yes, sir.

**Albert Yount**

What are some of the lowest in North Carolina?

**Carrie Dunlap**

Oh, there's some that I'm not familiar with them, but there's a few that someone has had to come in and take over because they weren't able to generate enough revenues to make it profitable. So

**David Harwood**

The state mandate is 35%

**Carrie Dunlap**

I think it's lower than that

**Doug Matheson**

20

**Shane Fox**

So the state prefers to see 8% from fund balance.

**Carrie Dunlap**

8% is the minimum and they want 16%. So anything above 16.

**Doug Matheson**

I got a couple please ma'am. Could you just for me to elaborate a little bit on page 158? Where it says TDA ABC audits not in accordance with standards?

**Carrie Dunlap**

TDA Is that referring to the TDA audit is only a yellow book audit, it's not a GAAP audit, I believe is What that's referring to. So with the town, anytime there's more than \$100,000 of single audit expenditures, you have to have a well, depending on the feds and the states all have different

thresholds. But the TDA, I believe, is below that audit. So that's why they're subject to a different standard, then the town

**Shane Fox**

page 158.

**Doug Matheson**

Yes,

**Shane Fox**

just a second to get that up, just to clarify.

**Carrie Dunlap**

Yeah. So it's because of the yellow book only audit, it's not required to have UG standards or the state threshold, you have to have \$500,000 of state expenditures to have a state single audit. And you have to have \$750,000 to have a federal single audit. So they're below both of those thresholds.

**Doug Matheson**

Okay. Thank you. And one other Did you find any material weakness in our way of accounting? And what about an issue of a management letter,

**Carrie Dunlap**

we did not have any material weaknesses or management letter this year. Nothing to report

**Doug Matheson**

And the management letter

**Carrie Dunlap**

We did not have to issue a management letter because that goes along with if you have findings

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you. We have a goal next year. Nicole? How are you this evening?

**Nicole Norman**

Okay, we don't usually do this, but we kind of had the thought this year, especially where when we were going into budget season, so many, especially revenues were unknown. And we were sort of, you know, wondering where a lot of things were going to end up. And so, you know, everybody's familiar with our budget graphs, you know, now we kind of use those every year to show it just a great visual of the expenditure, you know, different areas of expenditures, and what piece of sort of the whole pie. Those represent in addition to our revenues, and what sort of, Can y'all understand me, do you? Okay, I'll continue like this. And those revenues and what piece of the revenue pie those also represent. So we decided to put together this year, our graph our pie chart of our revenues, our actual revenues per the audit. So you can see property tax came in and it represented 44% of our total revenue, total revenues was \$10,742,009 68. occupancy tax, and sales tax represent the next highest areas of

revenue for us as we close the year occupancy tax was 15% \$1,000,006 665, welfare taxes 20% of \$2,000,001 92 176 and I will say those two areas were our hardest to predict. We started the year you know, really kind of trying to you know, aim low and brace ourselves in case they came in very low because early projections were telling us that but they actually came in slightly higher than usual. This is a look at our expenditures in the general fund. total expenditures in the general fund came in \$9,821,000 606. You can see general government this is our central government came in at 31%. Probably the next highest area is going to be our finance, and then Police, Fire. Parks and Rec, public buildings. I will say that I kind of wanted to preface all this by started to do a comparison to our budget kind of pie chart to our actual pie chart. And I would caution against doing that, you know, just in case anybody in the general public looks at it, and says, Oh, let me compare how we budgeted to our actuals. They're done on two different bases of accounting. So budgeting is based on the Local Government Fiscal Control Act. While our financial statements are according to Gatsby, so they're going to look different. So that's just a word of caution. If you're kind of doing that comparison, this is a look at our water sewer fund on the revenue side. So you can see water sewer Fund Revenues came in \$1,820,003 48. This is largely water charges of 49%. With sewer charges of 39%. That is the majority of the fund, we did have our impact fee charges coming up two and 3%. Those were up also in comparison to prior years. Moving on to the expense side, probably the simplest chart, which is only three departments and our water sewer fund. We have a total expenditures of \$2,055,066. That's 48%. Administration, this is where all of our debt services paid out of property and liability insurance for the fun. And then Field Operations at 16%. And plant operations at 36. So if you net, the revenues and expenditures, final revenues and final expenditures for the general fund and for the water sewer fund, that is where you can see our contribution to fund balance that Carrie mentioned earlier on the general fund side \$921,003 62. And on the water sewer side, there was a net operating loss of \$234 718. We have increased water sewer rates in response to that net operation, operating loss and we look forward to positively going forward. That's all that I have. And if you have any questions,

**Charlie Sellers**

Any questions for Nicole

**David Harwood**

Yes? Is it too early to tell our new water schedule falls

**Nicole Norman**

It is at the present moment. Next month, we will be able to tell because we're just the billing fell just a few days outside of where it did last year. So we weren't in this in line with last year because of that. But next month, we will know how that's going for us

**Albert Yount**

Did we buy any water from Boone this year?

**Shane Fox**

No.

**Albert Yount**

Did we get close

**Shane Fox**

We did not get close we discussed the possibilities I think once or twice with some drought measures but who did not be close to buying water

**David Harwood**

I've always looked at an audit as a report card. Obviously, both of you got A pluses. Congratulations. Thank you.

**Sue Sweeting**

A lot of work. Thank you.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you.

**Shane Fox**

I would add just my appreciation to Nicole for putting together this audit, putting together the work that went into preparing for the external auditors and obviously the report itself. No doubt if you go back to June 30. As he rolled into fiscal year 2020-21, July 1, 2020. We had a ton of unknowns and uncertainties at the time. That budget itself had to be challenging budgets, I'm sure with every town local government across the country to put together and to see these types of outcomes. Is a testament I think to one obviously how busy the town has been a number of folks here but through all that through the changes, to still have a clean report to have no findings to have no material weaknesses to have no management letter recommendations. And I think it's fair to say in a time in which the state is asking for those to be really clarified and really spotlight shined on those for us to have known is just a testament to Nicole and her entire staff for putting together the work that you see here. So I say thank you to them and the work that you see before you. Thank you.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you guys. Alright, moving along. Scotchman SUP public hearing. Mr. Rothrock.

**Kevin Rothrock**

We will have an opportunity for some people to be sworn in I think

**Charlie Sellers**

If you would like if you would like to speak on this particular public hearing, you would need to be sworn in

**Kevin Rothrock**

The project engineer and developer for the applicant and then maybe somebody you're exhilarated by

**Hilari Hubner**

Swore in Mr. Rothrock

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay, and the applicant and engineer need to be sworn in as well.

**Hilari Hubner**

Swore in the engineer and the applicant

**Kevin Rothrock**

This is special use permit 2021-06. We call it the old Scotchman retail opportunity there and the applicant is High Country Manor. And they're requesting a Special Use Permit to renovate the old Scotchman at 7815 Valley Boulevard for the use of a retail beer and wine shop. The parking areas being redesigned and roof has been modified along with other changes to the front facade properties own general business and is located in water supply watershed. The proposed site as a redevelopment of the former Scotchman gas station and convenience store. The property was purchased by DOT with the 321 widening project. After the road was completed the property was placed on real estate market and purchased by Britt Meadley. For the proposed retail use 15 parking spaces are required and the applicants providing 15 spaces with one of those being ADA accessible. Access to the parking lot we utilize the existing driveway cuts on Valley Boulevard but will be limited to one way traffic flow from the south end to the north. So the intersection that driveway cut nears to the light and then go out to the other side. The applicants proposing a beer and wine retail store. If the proposed use is unsuccessful. Other similar uses would be allowed in a general business district with the parking being provided. Other uses might include a convenience store, general retail with high volume traffic, which is what this has been proposed as low volume traffic which would be furniture, appliances, antiques, those types of uses. And then also office uses and staff recommends that any changes to use from the proposed beer and wine sales be allowed with a zoning permit if required parking needs are met and this is specified in condition four of the special use permit. Development of the site will result in reduced impervious surfaces through the additional landscaping placed in areas previously paved. Additional drainage pipes will be installed to pick up the water that collects in the rear of the building that had water problem back there in the past and they are going to pull that around and connect that to the DOT catch basin out on the corner of 321. As far as landscaping. There'll be at least five shade trees added to the site in addition to other shrubs and plantings to improve the property appearance from what it is today. This is a facade that is being proposed to be renovated by removing the current parapet roof and constructing a new roof. Two garage doors are proposed on each side of the building each sides of the front of the building and two shed dormers and then there'll be a middle entry structure with stone columns at the entrance. Go to the next one it shows both of those the current and then the proposed existing stone building will remain and building colors will be complementary to that stone that's there and there is a little area that where the building encroaches into the side setback on Sunset. But really they are just takinf that roof off and putting another roof back on there's no increase in square footage. So no increase in the nonconformity. I think it's a pretty good improvement over building long overdue. So with that said, the planning board recommended approval of the project as submitted and we even from planning board we worked with the architect and the applicant to make a few other tweaks to what was previously submitted. And so I think it looks even better than then what went to Planning Board draft special use permit was attached in your packet we've shown you the site plan. The draft architectural

front so at this time, I'll be glad to answer questions and the applicant and Patrick one of the engineer's is online.

**Doug Matheson**

Kevin, is that upstairs or upper part going to be used as storage or anything.

**Kevin Rothrock**

No, its just going to be used like a decoration. We can confirm that, but I'm pretty sure it's just a facade to be built across the front.

**Sue Sweeting**

Is there going to be any change to the back.

**Kevin Rothrock**

No, the roof will be continuous so it's not just a parapet it will have a peak on the ridge line and go off the backside. But as far as the back painting it and stuff like

**Sue Sweeting**

Will it go all the way around?

**Kevin Rothrock**

We would certainly make them paint to be consistent across the back. No plans to add stone to the rear.

**Sue Sweeting**

Okay. And will there be tables inside? Or is it specifically you go in you buy your beer, your wine and then you take off.

**Kevin Rothrock**

My understanding is just for retail, now that they could do tasting, but they're not serving, there's no indication they are going to serve food. But if they want to tasting of wine, things like that. But not planning to be any tables outside. That's prohibited in the special use permit.

**Sue Sweeting**

What about food trucks, can you give the guidelines for the food trucks for the town?

**Kevin Rothrock**

No food trucks unless a special event a special event sanctioned by the town or approved by the town

**Sue Sweeting**

And then could Mr. Warren discuss the restrictions on the property by DOT for soil mediation

**Patrick Warren**

Yes, my understanding from all the documents that I have reviewed from witnessed, Britt Meadley purchased the property from the DOT they submitted everything to him. All of the environmental issues but there are no environmental issues on the site. Mr. Meadley's paying also part of the environmental assistants for the property at closing.

**Sue Sweeting**

Thank you

**David Harwood**

Kevin, I've got a couple of questions. Can you comment on the lighting, exterior lighting we adding coach lights or

**Kevin Rothrock**

Any lights that they add would be coach lights. It's pretty well lit now but if they need any specific lights it would be the new style coach light with the full cut off lens

**David Harwood**

The existing site lighting would be removed.

**Kevin Rothrock**

Well you talking about this old gas pump light

**David Harwood**

There's one over on the right, there's one over on the left.

**Kevin Rothrock**

Right, the one on the right that old poles, will been removed. I don't recall any other lights

**David Harwood**

I think there's another one like that on the left.

**Kevin Rothrock**

Yeah, those will be gone

**David Harwood**

What is the width of the landscape buffer at 321 and where I'm going with that, does it meet the eight foot average width

**Kevin Rothrock**

Patrick, can you comment on that question by David the width of that buffer

**Patrick Warren**

Yes, I think it averages about 80 feet. I have got a hard copy.



**Kevin Rothrock**

Patrick I'll mentioned this when you first submitted that design there was pull in spaces and we change those the parallel spaces to give some more width and we had sufficient room for an isle. Since we were going to one way we had even more so we we widen that I think it was to at least eight feet and change it to two parallel spacing

**Patrick Warren**

On property lines it averages about eight and a half at the north end and seven and a half feet at the south end. If you go to the back and the sidewall so it adds another two and a half feet to the sidewalk

**David Harwood**

Thank you, Patrick. And then there's a mechanical unit, an HVAC located in the setbacks. Are those existing to be removed? Or is the mechanical equipment going on the roof? I'm trying to get a handle on where those units are going to be located.

**Kevin Rothrock**

They can be where they are, they can be in the setback. But I think those are, Patrick could address that whether or not those are the existing units that are out there would not be

**Patrick Warren**

I would assume the ones at the south end of the building we are going to have to take up to put the storm drainage in, those units are old and will have to be replaced. Would have to check with the Architect to see the exact location of where those would go. But those current units will have to be replaced.

**David Harwood**

The last thing I had Kevin was can you enlighten us a bit on high volume versus low volume uses

**Kevin Rothrock**

High volume is just standard retail walk in lots of things, a lot of traffic

**David Harwood**

And this this would be categorized as high

**Kevin Rothrock**

Yes, this would be high. Like a convenience store so that it rates the type of parking you gotta have convenience store and there is one space for 200 square feet so it's high volume retail low volume is one for 400 square feet like big bulky items, furniture things like that people don't visit as often low volume

**David Harwood**

That's all I had Thank you

**Charlie Sellers**

Council would the other individuals that were sworn in like to say anything moving forward

**David Harwood**

Oh yes. Just as clarification the glass shown here it looks reflective but is it reflective. What is it, is it clear

**Kevin Rothrock**

I don't know.

**Patrick Warren**

I would say that is just for the rendering, but that would be clear glass

**Kevin Rothrock**

I would imagine it would be somewhat tinted

**David Harwood**

As long as it's not reflective.

**Kevin Rothrock**

Not reflective. Now this answer helps you know, it will not be reflective

**Albert Yount**

The gas tank was taken care of by DOT

**Kevin Rothrock**

The tanks were removed several ago

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a motion to close the public hearing

**Albert Yount**

So moved

**Charlie Sellers**

Do I have a second

**David Harwood**

Second.

**Charlie Sellers**

Any further discussion

**Albert Yount**

Yes

**David Harwood**

Yes

**Sue Sweeting**

Yes

**Doug Matheson**

Yes

**Charlie Sellers**

We've closed the public hearing. Do I have a motion?

**Sue Sweeting**

I make a motion to approve Special Use Permit on the old Scotchman retail as presented.

**Charlie Sellers**

We have a motion to approve as presented. Do we have a second

**David Harwood**

Second

**Charlie Sellers**

Any further discussion

**Albert Yount**

Yes

**David Harwood**

Yes

**Sue Sweeting**

Yes

**Doug Matheson**

Yes

**Kevin Rothrock**

Good. Thank you.

**David Harwood**

Good luck with your project. It looks great.

**Patrick Warren**

Have a great evening. Thank you

**Charlie Sellers**

That will look better Thank you. Under regular agenda, Fairway 11 Green Hill Road, we have a presentation I believe

**Shane Fox**

No, sir. No presentation, just regular agenda item.

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay.

**Shane Fox**

Thank you, Mayor and Council, as you recall last month October the 12th. At the regular Town Council meeting. Michael Karpinski, Traffic Engineering Project Manager for Ramey Kemp and Associates presented the results of the Green Hill traffic study. Mr. Karpinski reviewed traffic data along with a survey results and discuss the on site visits that resulted in the final report. During his presentation Town Council asked several questions. One of those in which, was if additional stop signs were to be placed along Green Hill Road and what location or locations would Ramey Kemp recommend the additional intersections stops. Mr. Karpinski informed the council that he would recommend the first location to place an additional three way stop would be a Green Hill Road and Fairway 11 Court. If you recall, his actual first location was at Wonderland Trail, and Green Hill, which is outside of the town limits within the DOT jurisdiction. So within the town limits, his first recommendation would be at Green Hill Road and Fairway 11 Court. Mr. Karpinski mentioned that he selected this location because of the similar intersection design of Green Hill Traffic Circle in Green Hill Road to Fairway 11 Court, ie line of sight traffic, etc. Mr. Karpinski discussed the terrain the number of homes located along Fairway 11 and Fairway 12. In the higher traffic counts this intersection compared to other intersections along Green Hill Road. And those factors led to his recommendation. I would add that he went further and explaining that traffic stop signs and three way stops, etc. Were not, in his opinion best utilized for speeding, but for safety measures in this case, that was why the recommendation of Fairway 11 Court similar to Green Hill Circle was a recommendation and was due to the fact that he felt like it was a safety concern for the residents pulling out of Fairway 11 Court and Fairway 12 Court. So from that last month's presentation, I present to you tonight a request to potentially take action regarding establishing a three way stop at the intersection of Fairway 11 Court and Green Hill Road. I included in the packet the study which was finalized after last month's meeting, along I put here with pictures of intersection the Fairway 11 and Green Hill Road and be more than happy to pull up the GIS or Google do not have those pictures could not get those to load if anyone would like to look at the aerial view of that, but be more than happy to answer any questions. I've also spoken to Police Chief Aaron Miller and Public Works Director Matt Blackburn about the potential of putting a three way stop here. And we'd be more than happy to answer any questions you have regarding this topic.

**Charlie Sellers**

Council

**Sue Sweeting**

Is it also are we going to ask the Parkway about Wonderland Trail and Green Hill Road.

**Shane Fox**

We would ask the DOT so that is the jurisdiction. I've spoken to Mr. Ray Pickett who has assured me I believe that he is going to speak to the DOT, about potentially adding an additional three way stop at Green Hill and Wonderland Trail. We did approach the DOT, quite some time ago about potentially placing a stop sign there. A lot of the same data that was presented within the traffic study with the MUTC data was also used utilized and essentially rejecting putting a stop sign there so we requested, or I request to through Mr. Pickett. Again, from a safety standpoint, the addition of adding a three way stop at Green Hill and Wonderland Trail as well.

**David Harwood**

Does the all way stop will that also include distance ahead plaques and diverst rumble strip,

**Shane Fox**

It does not currently include rumble strips, rumble strips, were a part of the Ramey Kemp report as being potential recommendations to alert drivers. We have not utilized those previously. It would require and we would establish stop ahead signs similar to what we have now on Green Hills Circle with flags located at the top of those a safe distance. Similar to again, what we placed a couple of years ago or three years ago now, at Green Hill Circle, as well.

**Sue Sweeting**

Could you indicate what the issue is with rumble strips please

**Shane Fox**

The concern with rumble strips, and this was a discussion that Ramey Kemp was one obviously it alerts the drivers to something ahead or something that's taking place there is a noise factor within the rumble strips, which is a concern at least eternally from a staff standpoint of adding any additional noise issues there. Green Hill similar in a lot of our residential roads have homes very close proximity to the road itself. And so we have not discussed in any further research any further putting those rumble strips out at this point, we have discussed adding additional signage obviously for the traffic stop and continuing to do a good job of keeping our paintings and things of that nature up along the lines, the strips and things of that nature to let folks know where the stop ahead signs are

**Doug Matheson**

Main thing through there is the lights because of the fog and like you said keeping that road striped

**Shane Fox**

Absolutely

**Charlie Sellers**

Council, would you like to make a motion

**Doug Matheson**

I would like to make a motion we put a three way stop there with signal head lights to let you know there is a stop sign ahead

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay, now your motion Doug was to have lighted signs

**Doug Matheson**

Yeah to have like what we do up here, to because you I don't think you can see it if you don't have a light. Isn't it a caution light type thing that lets you know that there's a stop ahead.

**Sue Sweeting**

Second

**Shane Fox**

We currently do not have that on Green Hill. We don't, not Green Hill Circle you mean a flashing like, similar to what we have in 321 type with stoplight

**Albert Yount**

But you have a stop ahead sign.

**Shane Fox**

We have stopped the hit signs with the flags, but not with the lights? Yeah.

**Doug Matheson**

Okay

**Charlie Sellers**

So you want to change your motion?

**Doug Matheson**

We'll go with the flags for now. I just worry sometimes about the fog up there

**Charlie Sellers**

Your motion is to approve with proper signage.

**Doug Matheson**

Proper warning of the stop signs.

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay, do we have a second

**Sue Sweeting**

Second

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay. And any further discussion

**Albert Yount**

Just want to say to Pam no matter what you say, I've missed you.

**Charlie Sellers**

Pam ain't going nowhere

**Pam Lowry**

I will just find something else. Told me one day if I was anything I was persistent.

**Albert Yount**

Yes

**David Harwood**

Yes

**Sue Sweeting**

Yes

**Doug Matheson**

Yes

**Charlie Sellers**

There you go. All right, moving right along retreat date and location. Now we were going to have this retreat in Saudi Arabia, correct?

**Shane Fox**

So each year, we are fortunate enough to have the commitment from Council to spend three days and the month of January normally. Conducting town business and discussing the upcoming year and years of information putting together our list of priorities. In 2019, the winter retreat was held at BRAHM for the first time I think and several years previous to that have been held in Asheville. And the last year we held it here at Town Hall. Obviously during COVID Things were quite different. Town staff looked at the calendars and the second week of January is a normal Town Council meeting, the third week Monday is Martin Luther King Day. And so staff would recommend the dates of January the 24th, 25th and 26th, which is a Monday, Tuesday Wednesday to hold the retreat with the location to be discussed and determined if the dates are satisfactory to you all tonight. It is a little unusual, obviously, with the election that happens every two years, not for everyone to be seated up here that will be taking place in the retreat. Some are in the audience tonight but it is important for us to go ahead and establish those dates and location if possible to obviously plan ahead for town staff preparation and then obviously for the public itself who may have to attend.



**Charlie Sellers**

Council

**Albert Yount**

Suits me

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay, David

**David Harwood**

Yes

**Doug Matheson**

Yeah I'm glad we moved it up Martin Luther King Day so they can enjoy their three day weekend.

**Albert Yount**

Okay where now

**Shane Fox**

Location would be obviously within town or we're outside of town number one and then within town we're outside of town the location to be determined at that point.

**Charlie Sellers**

We're like, Shane, take care of that. Will that be in driving distance?

**Albert Yount**

I thought you were going to have it at the Rock with the steaks ordered on you

**Charlie Sellers**

I don't think so

**Shane Fox**

If it's satisfactory to the Council, I would recommend another year at least until we move forward with having it here within the town. We utilized BRAHM two years ago if that facility is available with recommend utilizing that facility as well.

**Albert Yount**

And then all due respect. Know, you're not on Council yet Melissa, do you feel like that'll work for you. And Pete, okay. And have a motion on that one. Doug or Albert. So moved

**David Harwood**

Second

**Albert Yount**

Yes

**David Harwood**

Yes

**Sue Sweeting**

Refrain

**Doug Matheson**

Yes

**Charlie Sellers**

Moving right along COVID update ladies and gentlemen, we're going to take a short recess. 15 minutes. We're waiting on Jennifer Greene to get on so she can give us an update with the state and the county. Okay, so we'll take a 15 minute recess. So we'll be back in here about those 7:21 All right, let's move on here. Any luck with Jennifer Greene. Okay. Jennifer Greene is still in a meeting. And the Council would like her input on this and she is over the Health Department. So what we're going to do is, if I may ask the Council's permission, vary a little bit on the agenda and go to official reports and comments that would allow Jennifer Greene more time to get on. Are you all amenable to that?

**Sue Sweeting**

Sounds good

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay. All right. So we're going to go on to official reports and comments and then come back to the the COVID update. From there Okay. Let's see. Mayor, I guess I got to go first. Everyone's I guess heard Papa Joe's closed icon in the community. And I think Joe and Cindy did a great job and contributed a lot to the community. And personally as Mayor, I wish them the best. And as a citizen, I wish them the best and they will be missed. And gosh, that's you know, that's been a place has been nice to go to in the mornings and get good breakfast, but along with all the others. But that being said, On, I think it was October 21. We had the water main break on Ransom. I went down there. And there was I mean, I couldn't believe there was a river going down Ransom Street. And our Public Works Department jumped up to the plate. And Matt over public works had just been in surgery a day or two few days before that, and was recuperating. Needless to say he was out there working with the guys. And I'll tell you we have they got it fixed by early that morning, we lost about 2 million gallons of water. But we made it. And thank you to all the citizens and the businesses for their patience because it was an inconvenience for a few of them. I think Sue had to buy bottled water. Is that correct, sir? Okay. But, I mean, I our departments in our town are second to none. And I want to thank all of them, they do a great job. I want to thank all the voters that turned out on November 2, it was very good to see all the people come out and speak their piece on what in whatever manner that they so choose. And I think it's important that you do that. That's a privilege. And then last but not least, we received a letter. This is from Ralph Thoreson Thorson. And this was to Chief Miller. And it was my reasons for writing are twofold. First to formally thank police officer Daniel Harris and Sharon VanDyke for their assistance to my wife Kathy and I earlier today and secondly to recognize their department and representation of the

town of Blowing Rock, as well as the Police Department at 2:30pm. On Monday, November 1 2021. Kathy and I contact the Blowing Rock Police Department after we exited the woods following a long hike and found ourselves stranded in our vehicle alongside the road adjacent to Bass Lake. Now out of provisions and with our small dog in tow, imagine our anxiety when the roadside assistance we subscribe to told us that soon as they would be able to send someone to provide us with a jumpstart would be sometime after five. I immediately began to ask any passers by if they had jumper cables and it was not long before more than one resident advised me to call the Police Department non emergency number. When I expressed a bit of skepticism. An older gentleman his wife reminded me up here and depending on upon the circumstances or time of the year, a dead battery can quickly escalate into a public safety issue. Chief your department's Sharon VanDyke simply could not have been more pleasant proficient in determining our exact location and police officer Harris arrived and what was measurable in seconds. More so than minutes upon his or five arrival police officer Harris executed professionalism as he assessed the situation effectively had us safely on our way again in mere minutes. Chief if it is not an imposition. Please do convey our thanks admiration and gratitude to both police officer Daniel Harris and Sharon VanDyke. We honestly are not sure how things would have eventually unfolded as darkness developed in route on 221. Your department and the town's leadership not being so responsive. Had the your talent department and the town's leadership not been so responsive and competent. This gentleman is the to was with the 230 session, the FBI National Academy alumna John Hopkins University. So thank you, Chief wherever you are. Thank you officers once again.

### **Albert Yount**

I just like to invite everybody, this Saturday at 11 o'clock Legion building to come to the veterans day, two days later ceremony, we're going to have the gentleman named Major General Charles Swannack. He's a North Carolina native. You've all seen him on TV when he was the commander of all troops in Iraq. He also commanded the 82nd airborne, where he made more than 1000 jobs, himself. He commanded all US troops in Germany. He has been commanded of the, Arlington National Cemetery. And we're very lucky to have a gentleman like this. So I invite you all to come there at 11

### **David Harwood**

So my comments are off the cuff and I don't have anything prepared. I wanted to thank Nancy Collins and Sue Sweeting, for participating in the election last week. I appreciate your willingness to serve. And it says a lot about your character to do that. Thank you. I want to say congratulations to Melissa Pickett, and to Doug Matheson and Pete Gherini. I look forward to working with you, at least for two years. That's all that's guaranteed the right. And then I wanted to give a really heartfelt thank you to Sue Sweeting. This is my last full meeting with you. And it has been an honor and a privilege. And I appreciate everything you've done for our county and our municipality. And I really appreciate your leadership and even more, so I appreciate your friendship.

### **Sue Sweeting**

Thank you, that's sweet. Well, thank you that was very touching. Because he's on my left, and has been on my left for a long time over eight years. I want to congratulate Doug Matheson, he received the High Country Council of Governments award outstanding local elected official which is a very big deal. So congratulations Doug.

### **Doug Matheson**

I too, would like to thank everyone for coming out at the election and thank everybody for, for their participation in that. We had for the first time at ASU Leadership Breakfasts over on campus. And for the first time, it felt great. We had every one of the Town Council Members there. So Blowing Rock was well represented there. We made to get time to make some connections, it's a good time to get to talk. And with other counties, other council members, we met the new Mayor, of Boone. He's wanting to come over sometime and actually visit us and so it was a very enjoyable morning. So like I mentioned, we took down the Appal Cart signs today. So the Appal Cart's are down for this year, so we don't have to worry about that anymore. And just to let you know, I've got a I've got a League Finance Committee meeting next week. And then I got a Leage Board of Directors meeting the week after and so I'll have the reports to give to y'all in the December's meeting. David pretty much said what I was going to say, so for eight years I have had you right here and it's going to be hard to get used to so

### **Sue Sweeting**

You won't have to wear your hearing aids.

### **Shane Fox**

I did get a text that said almost so good. She's almost ready. Hopefully that's soon so I will try to give a pretty thorough update here. I didn't have a long list, I was afraid that I wouldn't get a chance to get to it so shocking enough, I'm able to go through all of it tonight. I'll start by echoing a couple comments. The water leak took place leading up to one of our busiest weekend's of the year and I think everyone was aware of that. That Thursday night, it was around 4am I think when the Public Works team finally was able to finalize the repair. It was a large main that did lose almost 2 million gallons of water and did wash out a driveway or two in the process. But a lot of things hinged on that repair obviously taking place and the timing of that from restaurants being open hotels, etc. The school itself being open the next day. So my thank you to public works as always for sticking it out literally through the night and getting the repaired on that took place around I think four or something that afternoon. So 12 hours later, it was repaired. The group did stay all night, Mr. Blackburn did stay with him after not essentially being allowed to be there on the think his third day of recovery after surgery. But just kudos to that group as always. And then thank you to everyone that obviously came out and voted. From my perspective, working with these individuals on a on a daily basis is nothing short of a privilege. And thank you Ms. Sweeting for the last two and a half years of my tenure here. Congratulations Doug and Charlie and Pete and Melissa. Look forward to working with you all hopefully for a long time. My update for tonight I'll start with saying we have discussed 321. Last month we had a petition was presented with 321 issues, speeding noise, etc. Ms. Laura Bingham and Lori Mulhern of the Green Park Inn. And I participated in a zoom call last Friday with Marquis Sail who's the director of Governor highway safety program about potentially some additional grants or some assistance that's out there that we may be eligible for. This is the same program that Chief Miller mentioned last month that we will be applying very soon for for additional officers. That's the staggered salary approach of 100% 80, 60, 40. This individual mark is L is the director of that program. So thank you for Ms Bingham and Ms Mulhern for allowing the connection and the Zoom call that took place last month or last Friday. Bass Lake sidewalk I think has been talked about for six years Ms. Sweeting I know this is near and dear to your heart. I have been assured that it will be completed prior to your exit there was a meeting that took place

yesterday with contractor we're being told that they are just days if not a couple of weeks from completion. So that would put them in line for your December meeting, potentially having a ribbon cutting. So let's keep our fingers crossed that that project will come to an end I know it's been near and dear to your heart as well. Landscaping and fire station one. Talking about projects that have been talked about for a number of years to the rocks have been delivered there in our laydown yard on 321. The landscaping should begin next week Weather permitting of course, including the flagpole as installations over the next couple of weeks you'll see some activity in front of fire station one that will include the flagpole. Mr. Yount has been talked about for maybe as long as the Bass Lake sidewalk maybe longer I'm not sure the timeline of that. So perhaps we now have two ribbon cuttings with the Bass Lake sidewalk and the fire station both being completed. Crosswalks, Greene's Construction, if you recall, was the bid winner for the crosswalks at Main Street, Sunset and 221 and Main Street along with Chestnut. Signals have been ordered shop drawings have been submitted to DOT. The projection there after our pre construction meeting is to begin that project which is a fairly short project more than likely the week after Winterfest which will be the first week in February. Start with a demo, conduit etc. being laid and installed and then concrete work just as soon as weather would permit. Again, that's a short project that would be a spring project. So completion date would be prior to obviously summer months getting here with the crosswalks signals though, are probably the longest part of that about a 10 or 12 week turnaround the signals themselves as they have to be custom ordered. Also like to mention that the ABC Board over the last couple of weeks, announced an additional \$50,000 to be distributed to the Town. Obviously, the ABC Board has had a record year like a lot of folks up here, have they continue to if you saw your staff report, topping \$300,000 In sales, which is the first time in a long time, I believe that that has been accomplished. So thank you for the ABC Board, \$300,000 last month, sorry. Yeah, it's just \$300,000 last month, but thank you to ABC Board for the additional \$50,000 distribution that took place, I believe two weeks ago now. Also like to mention on October 22, the Embers Hotel project, formerly the Rainy project did indeed follow through with the requirements and a building permit has been issued for that project as of October 22. Just a couple things, I know Ms. Greene is on here so that's exciting news. I'd like to show you just a couple pictures, if you will allow me to. I think these are two exciting things. And then we'll get on to let's see, mute Mr. Graham here. He's on there twice, some how. I want to share a couple pictures with you. So if you recall our chemical tanks here, and I realized that's obviously misspelled on here, I see now. But if you recall, this picture is a little difficult to see, our chemical tanks at our water plant had had some issues over the years, corrosion and things of that nature. This is not as bad as it really does. Look, this is caustic in some other chemicals, you know better than anyone the names of these chemicals. And this is what it can do with just a small leak that takes place. This was taken about a year ago. The second one as well, with a little sideways here, but it shows some of the leaking they're taking place. And over the years. This is what happens with caustic and some of these chemicals, Allium and a number of things at the water plant. And I did spoil it by clicking on the wrong one. But here is today's Picture. This was taken this morning at the water plant, obviously a much different picture. So this project was approved by you all. Obviously much safer. You can see the tanks, obviously here now four tanks versus two. We not in this picture, we do have a bay door there a garage door that rolls up that allows for easy access into the basement that did not exist previously was just a standard metal door. So I'll share a picture next month with the door itself as it's being completed. But yeah, unbelievable transformation, obviously to the basement of the water plant and the chemicals that are utilized to treat all of our water on a daily basis. The second piece that I'd like to share and this is

something that is brand new the TDA made a decision in the last month to purchase two cameras. So previously, the resort cams and resort cams are still in operation had been very heavily trafficked. We receive calls almost daily when the camera is down. And so the TDA had a discussion, Director Brown had a discussion about purchasing cameras, the TDA and the Town would own. And yesterday Mr. Steele and Mr. Brown climb to the roof of this building and place two cameras on the chimney, one facing on Main Street and one facing the park. And those two cameras will soon be streamed on our website along with the TDA and the Chamber website. And these are live cameras. Mr. Steele, Thomas Steel, capture just two quick snippets of what the camera looked like today. Again, it's not live but it will be in the coming weeks here is an example of the Main Street cam from today and it shows obviously the clarity of what this camera will look like. And this will be a full 24/7 Live Stream camera. So pretty impressive technology and clarity being provided here. And then the second camera if you will allow will show the park which is not something we've done previously but allows a view of our park so I think you all see the sunset there as it was going down this evening and just unbelievable setting that can be shared with our locals and tourists and whomever else out there that has access to the web.

### **Charlie Sellers**

Did you make note that these are infrared cameras?

### **Shane Fox**

Absolutely. So yeah, these cameras may be used and further investigated. I can't comment on what the potential would be for that. And then the last piece that I'd like to share is just a couple quick dates. I know some things were mentioned earlier this time of year is the busiest time of year obviously for the town and number of events and things of that nature. Obviously this Thursday is Veterans Day and Town Hall is close this Saturday at the Legion at 11am is the Town's Veterans Day celebration that Mr. Yount spoke of earlier. Planning Board normally is on Thursday, due to the State of the Town, Planning Board will now be Monday, November the 15th at 5:30. State of the Town is Thursday, November the 18th at 5:30. At the American Legion, Planning Board we'll be here as always Planning Board normally is on the 18th. It will be on the 18th is now on the 15th. State of the Town is Thursday the 18th at 5:30 at the American Legion that will be live and streamed. We will have a special meeting on Tuesday, November the 23rd at 5:30 to discuss the Barry Buxton property purchase and debt. Thanksgiving holiday for the town office to be closed is Thursday 25th and 26th. Lighting of the town is on Friday the 26th as it normally is the day after Thanksgiving. Santa's will be here starting at one o'clock that day in the park, we will have bands starting at two that will go through 6:30. The lighting itself Mayor Sellers will be at 5:30 ish like it normally is. We will have hot drinks and cider and coffee and things served versus the park because we will have activities and games in the park. There'll be served from the police department parking lot. And hay rides as well starting at 3pm. That day with games as I mentioned throughout the park at three to five, we fully expect to unbelievable crowd as it has been now for the last couple of years. With the parade concluding that weekend of activities, at least for the town's perspective, Saturday the 27th at 10am. So just note that again, as with the July 4 parade, the parade is now at 10am. Not 2pm. That allows for us to close the street to parking. The night before starting around 2am. We'll go out and start placing those cones and allow for the parade to take place at 10am. Roughly 11am We should have the street back open just like we did on July 4 weekend and open traffic and parking etc. So those are my updates and be glad to answer any questions.



**Charlie Sellers**

Okay, great. Thank you. Alright, moving back to the original agenda. Do we have Ms. Greene on the line. Good evening

**Shane Fox**

How are you? Good evening. Jen, would you like to share the screen, I've given you access to it if you would like to?

**Jennifer Greene**

Yeah, I'll just jump right in and see if you can see my screen. Thank you for having me back. I hope you all are doing well. I'm very excited to see us going into holiday season and thankful for all of our Veterans. So just want to say thank you all for having me back. I have a few slides up that show you where we are. The good news is we're heading in the right direction. We're not quite there yet. But we're certainly making some good progress. So this first slide shows you a picture of community transmission across all counties in the United States. And what's positive here is in the past, when we look at this map, it's been all red. So what you can see is that counties are starting to see a decline in their transmission. And the transmission is really measured in a couple of ways. So there's really a color coded, that we use. And there's two measures. One is the new cases that we have per 100,000 people that's to drive, the level that we are looking at like apples to apples. The other measure that you look at is some of your percent positivity tests. So these two things combined create what your level risk is and this is really indicative of how much viruses is circulating. In particular, this is over a seven day period. So it's important because it's not just looking at one day or one snapshot, but a few days over time because we know these numbers can change. Here's a closer picture. And you can see Watauga County there in red, I will say you're looking better and percent positivity among tests that are conducted, what we are still higher than we need to be in terms of cases. So I'll just remind you back here, right here. If you are looking at your case rates to be high, you're over 100 per 100,000 in the past seven days. So we're still seeing new case rates that's putting us in high transmission. I do hope that we will continue to see things go down because we have seen improvements. And so I want to make sure I give us a positive consider and we are turning in the right direction. If you look here, this is a picture of the same dashboard so you can see over time, since the beginning, we saw an uptick trending up, then down and then back up again and down. So we're headed in the right direction downward. And that's where we hope to continue to be. The more people to get vaccinated, the more we hope to see that number go down. I do think it's important to know that we're going into the respiratory virus season. More so with the instruments ahead. And so it's really important that we are cautiously optimistic. And that we're watching this very carefully, because we have seen blips that take us back up. And unfortunately, that has impacted people in a negative way. And this last go round, we've seen more people die of COVID. So this is a picture of our district. And you can see the majority of our cases have been in Watauga County, you have fewer deaths in Watauga County, but I'll say we've had to continue opportunity for people to contract them in the last few months. And we've seen more people unfortunately have succumbed to the elements of COVID, just in recent months. So we are so concerned about it. This is a picture of our active cases. So this is the active number of people who've been positive during that week. And this chart begins of September after Labor Day, and it's by week, and the colors indicate the different age groups and you can see the majority of cases in our district, and people in our county this overlap during the marketing group graphics. So the green



represents 18 to 24 year old. I'm sure that doesn't surprise anyone here that that's still the majority of cases, though that number has to dropped along with others. We're watching zero to 5, 6 to 12 and 13 to 17 year old thankfully, just recently we are now able to vaccinate children 5-11. That's been really important for us to continue to watch because we know that that's so important for those children to be able to be vaccinated. We still don't have an option for under 5, but thankfully, we do have at least have started the processes in turning that. So the good news, here is the trends going down. And you can see here is a picture of our COVID deaths in North Carolina. I think that's also if you just recall back in the German cases, this is usually what we see follow cases in Greece, deaths having it's usually right after that. And I think that's really important. That's why we're measuring cases, because so far, that's something that we see happen measures after that. So here's a picture that shows you our our deaths. And I will say Watauga County unfortunately had another death so we are at 40 deaths. We continue to see this happen. And I'll just tell you from the data that I see people who have not been vaccinated. So the good news here is we are continuing to inch up the number of people who've vaccinated in Watauga County. In August, we were at a lower rate. So the games really 4%. Since then, and I think it's just a little bit each day, I'm hopeful that we'll see a lot of parents get their children vaccinated. This newest availability for 5-11 year old, of course, all the adults have been thinking about getting vaccine or still on the verge to get vaccinated. So this is a slide you may have seen me present before but in case you haven't I wanted to find out because it's so important. I still hear comparisons of COVID and flu. And this is the slide that shows you the comparison between the two disease recording systems for flu and for COVID. And what's really important here is to note the number of deaths we have from COVID from March of 2020 to September 1st of 2021, less over 14,000 people over that 16 month period. And you compare that for the deaths, that we know from the flu. That was a little over 1,200 people over 10 years. So there's a big difference. And I think that's really critical and that's why we're continuing to promote all information, including vaccinations. So, you've probably seen this before. But the unvaccinated continues to be outlined in national and state data. This latest shows that if your unmasking your twenty times more likely to die over the vaccinated person. So I think that's really important for folks to remember the hope is that more people will ask questions you have about vaccinations, it's just incredible. So we have two key tools. And I'll just say in public health, we're all about prevention, we know that prevention, really, helps prevent us from having to be in an instant response. And we've been in both areas and COVID, if you all have to. So prevention really is linked back to the community transmission that we talked about earlier in this presentation. The CDC, really recommends you have indoor mask, wearing a mask indoors, while you're in an area of substantial or high transmission. So we are currently on high transmission in Watauga County. That's what we are really, you know continuing to promote, I know people are tired of wearing masks. And surprisingly, I'll just say, I think all of us in public health, we are looking forward to the day that we aren't all wearing masks all the time. And we also want to keep people safe. And we know that masks work. And that is why we are continuing to promote them as a preventive measure. Another key tool is, of course, about vaccination. That is continuing to be one of the most important things you can do is promoting vaccinations, screening testing among those who are unvaccinated. And anyone who is symptomatic is still a key measure is a key way that we prevent further spread because we find the virus before it spreads to others or spreads to fewer people. And in response, we also do that testing. So the second, obviously, testing still available. And thankfully, we have a lot of options that are really, we're still offering testing at the Health Department for free, we offer rapid testing, and we'll have other tests every morning from 8:30 to 10. We also do case, investigation, contact tracing to try to limit the spread.

And of course we use isolation. Ideally, we want to prevent all of that from happening. So I'll just mention a couple of things. And this is meant to the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, which is one of the measures that are running the basis that we love. And we have a science that we're referring to about different measures that we're trying to see. Is this really working or is this an evidence based method. We know that there's been a lot of study that has been conducted. So this is just one example. And this is related to schools, I think that there are plenty of other studies around asking, and the value of asking may have a higher vacuum the transmission and permitting spread. So I'll just leave you there and let you read that if you'd like to, in the future. I wanted to mention booster shots because it's really important for people who have had Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, and it's been six months or longer, you can get a booster shots, if you would like one and you can mix up your brand of vaccine if you prefer. We have all three options available at the Heath Department. We partner a lot with a drug and some of our other pharmacies and other locations. We want to make sure we have all these options available. Hospital if you have had the Johnson and Johnson, we really recommend you get the booster shot if it's been two months or longer. You can get a Johnson and Johnson booster or you can get a Pfizer or Moderna booster and some of the initial data is indicating that Moderna perhaps would be more impactful in terms of your immune response. It's just based on the current data. Okay. I'll just mention that. And I'll say in Watauga County, we're continuing to promote Vaccines for children, very thankful to Blue Ridge Pediatrics and a lot of our schools in Watauga County for their work to post vaccine clinics and we have some starting. Also I will point out, we have this population group the Pfizer vaccine is what they are eligible for. And it still has to be given in three week increments. So you get just one, essentially, this week, we wait for you to get your second dose. And then you have two weeks after that before you're really considered to be fully vaccinated. So we still have an amount of time in our future where it's going to take a little bit more time for that population growth to be fully protected, I would say hopefully, by Christmas break we will see more children protected when they come back to school in January. Okay, I think I mentioned all of this. But I'll just remind you all we put out a weekly report. It's posted on our website, you can go there anytime and see it. And of course, we're happy to answer any questions you have, we still have a call center open taking calls in, as well. And I want to end with this to say I realize everyone is tired. And we all want to get back to normal. We're all anxious for normalcy. And I just want to say I acknowledge that. And I also hope that we don't relax too soon, because what we don't want to see is more people impacted in a negative light. We don't lose people, because we're still trying to get more people vaccinated. And, and, you know, the prevention measures work. So I'll end there. And also just say, I think you all should note that there's a lot of discussion in the public health community about how we create an environment where COVID is part of it. We're going to have COVID but we want to make it a manageable number. So it's instructive. All of us have normal. Okay, I'm going to stop there. Do you have any questions.

**Charlie Sellers**

Council o you have questions for Ms. Greene?

**Sue Sweeting**

What concerns if any do you have if the town lifted the mask mandate before Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays.

**Jennifer Greene**

I think going back to what I shared, we're still in an area of high transmission, we're walking into a season where it's going to be easier for respiratory viruses to spread. And we have environments where we're going to have more people gather together. And we also have a percentage of our population that hasn't been fully vaccinated, and really won't have opportunities to be fully vaccinated. So that would be my concern, because we don't want to see more people impacted. Because we're lifting up our prevention measures too soon. I do realize we need to have an offering up, people want to get back to normal. And I also hope we don't do it prematurely.

**Charlie Sellers**

Ms. Greene, this is Charlie Sellers, what is our current positive rate as it stands right now in Watauga County.

**Jennifer Greene**

Percent positivity is a little under 3%, which is really good news. I think what's important is that that's showing one measure and we need to look at all of it. And the other reason is how many new cases we were continuing to have. And that's still pretty high.

**Charlie Sellers**

Where are the majority of the cases we are finding at this time

**Jennifer Greene**

That's a question, so if you go back to my slide 18 to 24 year old is still the majority. However, we have a lot of people who are adults in the different age groups and 25-49 50-64, who also have a considerable number of cases.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you Ms. Greene

**Sue Sweeting**

And how long have we had that less than 3% positivity very

**Jennifer Greene**

It's not been very long, perhaps in a number of days, but not a week I wouldn't say. That number can be skewed a little bit depending on how many tests have been conducted and how many people sought testing. And it's by really, you don't want to look at any higher real numbers in isolation you want to look at a trend over time, which is why we recommend that community transmission level that CDC has

**Charlie Sellers**

Ms. Greene Charlie Sellers, again. From what I've read across the state, a number of counties, towns have lifted their mask mandates because they achieved goals of less than 5%. Is that correct?

**Jennifer Greene**

Well, I can't speak to why different municipalities decided that but I will say you're right that a goal under 5% of positivity is a good goal to have. That's certainly what we want to see. I do think again, it's

important to look at that in conjunction with a number of cases they have to just because one measure by itself is not the picture of what's going on

**Charlie Sellers**

What's the percentage of vaccinated individuals in Watauga County now

**Jennifer Greene**

I believe that we have about 54%. I'm sorry, We're at 57% partially vaccinated 53% is fully vaccinated.

**Sue Sweeting**

And I think that 5% was for at least seven days. So I think Mecklenburg was they're talking about if it's less than 5%, for seven days, they would consider lifting the mask mandate.

**Albert Yount**

What was our highest positive rate over the course of the last 18 months

**Jennifer Greene**

I have to look back. And I remember seeing the percentages in the teens, high teens consistently. I, again, I think it's one of those there can be pretty variable depending on weeks and people get tested. So looking at it over time, as we're looking at it in isolation, I would say probably somewhere over 20% at one point. But that number is variable, because if you have fewer people be tested, it can drive your numbers. We are going in the right direction. And you want to make sure that that I'm being clear about that we are certainly moving in the right direction. I just think that our cases indicate that we still have a lot of virus transmitted in the community. How many are hospitalized at Appalachian Regional right now. Do you know. I believe we have we have a decreasing number. There's, well, the last thing I've had was this morning number eight.

**Charlie Sellers**

Council

**Doug Matheson**

Doug Matheson here, Ms. Greene a couple of questions. Would you say that a lot of the high transmission rate is still due to some of the most of the clusters at ASU?

**Jennifer Greene**

I think that certainly we can see that some 18 - 24 year old are driving some of our cases. But we do have a number of cases that are we can't really put into a cluster. I would percentage share the proportion of 18 - 24 year old, it's a little bit more reasonable than it used to be in terms of whoever portion of the total cases take either 18 - 24 years versus everyone else. I do think some of the clusters that you mentioned, are certainly to those environments. But I don't think that's the whole picture. I certainly think part of it is that you're seeing adults and elderly people who are not vaccinated that we're seeing in the hospital. That's where we're seeing a lot of cases for people who are not vaccinated.

**Doug Matheson**

Other part of the question you may not man able answer, but could you tell me why the County did not take any action on mask.

**Jennifer Greene**

So I believe the County did require masks for their buildings or anywhere else. And I guess I would defer the County Manager and County Leadership for more information but I believe that is still the basis for Watauga County.

**Charlie Sellers**

Thank you from all of us we really appreciate all your hard work and what you and your staff have done over the last many months. And thanks again.

**Sue Sweeting**

Thank you Ms. Greene

**Jennifer Greene**

Thank you and I appreciate all the all the interest people had, I sincerely really appreciate that very much.

**David Harwood**

Thank you

**Doug Matheson**

Thank you

**Charlie Sellers**

Do we have someone that would like to make a motion

**Doug Matheson**

I will make one for discussion, I make a motion that we lift the mask mandate in favor of mask optional and that any other decisions going forward will still be left up to the Town Manager as he watches how the numbers change up or down or whatever, you know, we've asked him to kind of take the lead in this anyway. But I would ask that it'd be lifted.

**Charlie Sellers**

So your motion is lift the mask mandate and anything having to do with any additional decisions be left up to our Town Manager Shane Fox moving forward and then he could address Council or whatever if he needs to. Is that right, okay. Do we have a second Do we have a second No second. Okay well, then since there's no second then I guess would someone else like to make another motion or table this to a later date? Wow. Wow. It's quiet What would you like to do.

**Albert Yount**

I wouldn't want to. I hate to have to destroy your record of clairvoyance when you're before the cameras. WSOC

**Charlie Sellers**

Were they on

**Albert Yount**

I believe I heard you say that. The Council was bias towards removing the mandate

**Charlie Sellers**

No, are you talking about Channel 9.

**Albert Yount**

Yeah

**Charlie Sellers**

I said that I felt like that the Council felt like that it'd be time to remove the mask mandate. And that was the general consensus and that was strictly my opinion.

**Albert Yount**

Right.

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay.

**Albert Yount**

Without asking any of us

**Charlie Sellers**

Well you and I talked, Doug and I talked, but I did not address it with David or Sue.

**David Harwood**

Let's move ahead with our agenda. Well.

**Charlie Sellers**

So this is table that correct? No decision.

**David Harwood**

No, the motion died

**Sue Sweeting**

No

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay. All right. So moving right along. We have completed our agenda for this evening. And do we have a motion to adjourn?

**Albert Yount**

So moved.

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay. Do we have a second

**Sue Sweeting**

Second

**Charlie Sellers**

Okay, cool. Thank you guys.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

**MAYOR** \_\_\_\_\_

**Charlie Sellers**

**ATTEST** \_\_\_\_\_

**Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Budget Amendment – Attachment A**

**Tax Releases – Attachment B**

**Annual Audit Power Point – Attachment C**

**Scotchman SUP - #2021-06**