

# Town Council Meeting - Tuesday, April 12th, 2022

The Town of Blowing Rock Town Council met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, April 12, 2022, 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 Doug Matheson and Council Members Albert Yount, David Harwood, Melissa Pickett and Pete Gherini. Others in attendance were Town Manager Shane Fox, Town Attorney Allen Moseley, Town Engineer Doug Chapman, Police Chief Aaron Miller, Planning Director Kevin Rothrock, Finance Officer Nicole Norman and Town Clerk Hilari Hubner who recorded the minutes.

Mon, 4/18 4:09PM • 1:34:44

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Town, pavers, greenway, construction, park, Watauga County, year, project, evaluation, property, golf carts, parkway, fund balance, speak, sidewalk, blowing, questions, council, people, rock

## SPEAKERS

Jim Pitts, David Harwood, Aaron Miller, Albert Yount, Dr. Charles Ford, Tom O'Brien, Chelsea Blount, Shane Fox, Doug Matheson, Kevin Rothrock, Melissa Pickett, Pete Gherini, Department Heads, Charlie Sellers, Doug Chapman

### **Charlie Sellers** 04:44

Thanks for coming out this beautiful evening in Blowing Rock on this Tuesday, April 12. And if you would, please let's do roll call for attendance.

### **Albert Yount** 04:54

Here

### **David Harwood** 04:55

Here

### **Charlie Sellers** 04:55

Rise for the Pledge of Allegiance

### **Melissa Pickett** 04:56

Here

### **Doug Matheson** 04:57

Here

**Pete Gherini** 04:59

Here

**Charlie Sellers** 05:31

All right, can I get a motion to approve the minutes from March 8, 2022 meeting.

**Doug Matheson** 05:38

So made

**Charlie Sellers** 05:39

Do I have a second

**David Harwood** 05:50

Second

**Charlie Sellers** 05:50

Any discussion? How do you vote?

**Albert Yount** 05:50

Yes

**David Harwood** 05:50

Yes

**Melissa Pickett** 05:50

Yes

**Doug Chapman** 05:51

Yes

**Pete Gherini** 05:51

Yes

**Charlie Sellers** 05:51

Can I get approval for minutes from the March 23, 2022 special meeting closed session?

**Pete Gherini** 05:57

So moved

**Charlie Sellers** 05:58

Do I have a second?

**Melissa Pickett** 05:59

Second

**Charlie Sellers** 06:00

Okay, how do you vote?

**Albert Yount** 06:11

Yes

**Charlie Sellers** 06:11

On the regular agenda, we did have a late change, and that was for under the consent agenda. I'm sure you all reviewed that. That contract didn't change for sludge acceptance, I guess you might say for the wastewater treatment plant. In addition, I'm going to have Shane right before public comments to make a couple of comments about the re-evaluation because there's some questions out there about that. And Shane's gonna enlighten all of us. So, if I could get approval for the regular agenda as changed.

**David Harwood** 06:11

Yes

**Melissa Pickett** 06:11

Yes

**Doug Matheson** 06:11

Yes

**Pete Gherini** 06:11

Yes

**David Harwood** 06:53

So moved.

**Charlie Sellers** 06:54

Do I have a second.

**Doug Matheson** 06:55

Second

**Charlie Sellers** 07:01

How do you vote?

**Albert Yount** 07:01

Yes

**David Harwood** 07:01

Yes

**Melissa Pickett** 07:01

Yes

**Doug Matheson** 07:01

Yes

**Pete Gherini** 07:01

Yes

**Charlie Sellers** 07:02

Okay. Consent Agenda passes. Mr. Fox, would you like to give a brief summary on the tax re-evaluation? Okay. Moving right along to consent agenda: Budget Amendment 2022-06, High Country Half Marathon and the addition of the contract with Lenoir for the Sludge Disposal. Do I have a motion?

**Melissa Pickett** 07:22

So moved?

**Charlie Sellers** 07:23

Do we have a second.

**David Harwood** 07:25

Second.

**Charlie Sellers** 07:27

We have a second. How do you vote?

**Albert Yount** 07:30

Yes

**David Harwood** 07:31

Yes

**Melissa Pickett** 07:31

Yes

**Doug Matheson** 07:31

Yes

**Pete Gherini** 07:34

Yes

**Shane Fox 07:45**

Certainly, I'd be glad to Mayor and Council. So at least once every eight years by North Carolina General statutes each county, there's 100 counties obviously in this state, they are required to do a full tax re-evaluation. So, tax appraisal, you can do it sooner than eight years, but you cannot do any longer than eight years. It has been eight years since Watauga County has gone through the re-evaluation process. So, in the last few days, everyone here that lives within the county has received their new tax re-evaluation, not their tax bill and not their tax rate, but the new valuation of their property. Again, that's done once every eight years, at least. In this case, it's been eight years. The Watauga County Tax Assessor's office actually hired an outside independent firm to come in and do those property tax revaluations. Ryan Vincent and his firm did those re-evaluations. He was here with us a couple occasions and last meeting and then he was here at the retreat. So those re-evaluation letters went out this past week. If you believe you have an error, if you believe that your re-evaluation is just far out of line, for some reason, maybe you've recently purchased your home or you've had a re-evaluation done yourself. There's a number within the letter itself to call through Watauga County to potentially file an appeal or at least start the appeal process. An important thing that's been kind of lingering out there is what's called revenue neutral. And what that means. So, when a re-valuation happens in North Carolina, the tax immunity which there's two here, if you live in the city, or in the town, you have the county and you have the Town of Blowing Rock, both have the same valuation number. But both then take what the overall percentage increase within their tax area. So, in our case, it's the town limits. And in our case, it's been a roughly a 40 plus percent increase on average. And then we have to reduce our current tax rate by whatever that average percentage is to get down to what we call revenue neutral. And that's kind of the starting point for this upcoming budget. So, 43 cents been our as has been our rate this past year, we'll have to take that down to what's a revenue neutral rate

**Charlie Sellers 10:09**

43 cents per 100?

**Shane Fox 10:10**

Per 100? That's correct. Yeah, 43 cents per 100, the county is right at 47. I think 40 and some change within that. So, both the county and the Town of Blowing Rock, based on the average increases within their jurisdictions ours, the town limit and the county's, obviously, the whole county as a whole will then take those percentages and calculate what their revenue neutral rate is, and for us will be in the low 30s. And then from there, you start the budget process like we do every year, it's just you have to present that revenue neutral rate as a separate rate to show everyone what it would be based on the average increase within that so doesn't mean your individual property average, it means as that the taxing entity as a whole, which for us is the town limits within that, like I said, on average, and Nicole's here 47%, on average was our increase that we saw. So, we'll take that into account and lower that rate down to revenue neutral, based on that 40 plus percentage, percent increase within that, and then we'll start our budget process. Budget process is completely separate from that, obviously, that's that'll be based on, you know, what will present the council over the next few weeks within that said, that do enough summary or are there some questions in that. Again, county driven so that's North Carolina General statutes, so the counties are charged with assessing those tax values, we get those values. Mrs. Hubner gets those values, and that's what we generate our tax bills off as well. So, we have nothing to do with the actual valuation itself. That's a county driven county lead gen statute required.

And so, a lot of people calling here. I know in the last few days confused about some of the things that have been taking place, once every eight years. So, it is confusing that we don't go through it too, too often. But yeah, be glad to answer any questions if Council has any.

**Albert Yount** 11:51

I'll just say for comparison, I've got property Hickory and ours is .43 and theirs is \$1.10 cent.

**Shane Fox** 11:58

The tax rate here is considerably lower, Watauga County, currently without the re-evaluation is fifth in the state lowest tax rate. So, it's the fifth lowest tax rate in the state, currently without the re-evaluation. So, chances are it's going to be less than that, you know, maybe top two, top three, but extremely low tax rates. In comparison, obviously, our evaluation process makes up for some of that got a little higher tax value than others within that. But yeah, tax rates are extremely low in Watauga County.

**David Harwood** 12:28

So, the average rate for Blowing Rock hasn't been established.

**Shane Fox** 12:32

So, the revenue neutral rate, I'm not sure that we quite have that I would say it's around 32 cents.

**David Harwood** 12:40

No, the average percent.

**Shane Fox** 12:45

For Blowing Rock was 41 or 42 percent, I think is what the increase overall was

**David Harwood** 12:52

Okay. Thank you.

**Doug Matheson** 12:53

If you would give that total number net new number.

**Shane Fox** 12:56

The new valuation number 1.6 billion. So total new evaluations 1.63 billion. So that's a big number. That was up from 1.2 billion. So fairly significant there. And I've got a revenue neutral rate here, approximately 32% is what we'll start with,

**Albert Yount** 13:30

That does not include the new hotel.

**Department Heads** 13:34

Does not include any new hotels. So, it requires a CO prior to January 1 to be included. So, nothing that's currently under construction has been included in that.

**Albert Yount** 13:44

Do you know right off hand what Boone's is?

**Shane Fox** 13:47

No, going into the re-evaluation, they were around 1.5 or 1.6 billion. So total valuation and I haven't seen the re-evaluation numbers. Usually on average about 15 to 20%. About 15% higher than us give or take.

**Charlie Sellers** 14:03

You good Council?

**David Harwood** 14:07

Yes sir

**Melissa Pickett** 14:07

Yes

**Charlie Sellers** 14:08

Okay. Great. If the citizens do have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Council Members or myself or, of course, the Town of Blowing Rock or Watauga County. Okay. Public comments. If you would like to make a comment for three minutes. Please give your name to Hilari. Okay. Moving right along. All right, special presentations. Mr. Fox,

**Department Heads** 21:45

Department Heads Introduced new employees who have been hired within the last year.

**Charlie Sellers** 22:14

Okay, moving right along with have a presentation of Light Up Watauga. And Mrs. Pickett, would you like to introduce our speaker?

**Melissa Pickett** 22:28

Yes, I can. We have Dr. Charles Ford and his wife, Diane with us. And they have started a organization, a nonprofit called Back Our Blue, which is I'm gonna go ahead and tell you is not related to the national group. But it is a Watauga based organization that they started to back our local police departments in Watauga County. This is near and dear to their hearts because their son in law is a Watauga County Deputy Sheriff. So, this is near and dear promotion, and nonprofit to them. But I will let one of them speak.

**Dr. Charles Ford** 23:19

Thank you very much. I appreciate it. I appreciate the time. I really am very thankful for giving me the opportunity to present a plan that we have for an upcoming event in the community. And in the county. Melissa has already mentioned Back our Blue, which is a new charitable organization. It's nonpartisan, nonprofit. And the mission is to express support for our local law enforcement officers. So, it's probably appropriate that after we just introduced some new ones for me to talk about this, because you know,

they're really the people who make and maintain the wonderful community in which we live. This is Back our Blue. We're very, very much a local organization. To date we started last year and to date our major accomplishment has been for the Sheriff's Department to purchase 12 ballistic helmets for the deputies that are on patrol. And so far, that mission has been accomplished. There at least ordered, they're paid for. They just haven't arrived; it's probably supply chain. My purpose coming today is to tell you about our new mission. This one's called Burn a Blue Bulb. April 28 marks the day that Sergeant Chris Ward and Officer Logan Fox gave their last full measure of devotion to our community. As they did, we want to galvanize an overwhelming sense of support within the community. And let each of the officers that are on patrol know that we're behind them. And so, what we're doing is calling on us as individuals, as organizations, and as businesses to give a visible token of that support. And that is to place a blue light bulb, outside by April 28, in order to let them know, as the officers are driving through, that we're behind them. You know, it's very possible that even one of those officers that were introduced today could be called upon to make that same sacrifice. And so, as they are driving through town, I want them to know that we're behind them. So, what I'm doing, I'm calling on each one of us here to commit to place a blue bulb, in your place of work. And in your residence, I'm also asking the Town Council to place a blue bulb in front of the Town Council building. And I'm talking about this idea. And I'd like you to talk about this idea with the businesses in town. I think Watauga County Courthouse is probably the best example of a building that's really got the idea. I mean, they light up in blue every night. And so, I'd like us all to do that. So where do you get bulbs? Well, you can always buy them off the internet. But we've talked with New River Building Supply, and Watauga Building Supply local organizations in town, to carry them and sell them. I think it would also be a good fundraiser. And we're not going to do that at this point. Because I'm really a little bit nervous about, you know, if somebody buys a blue bulb, they're probably going to hand me a \$5 bill, or a \$10 bill. And I'm just a little nervous about taking cash at this point. You know, I want to keep our organization really above board. So, like to honor the time, but if there are questions that any of you have, I'm happy to take them. If I can't answer them, I know who can.

**David Harwood** 23:21

Thank you for your work.

**Charlie Sellers** 23:21

Thank you for coming. Council I will read this resolution and then to make it official, I think we ought to have a vote on the motion. That good enough. Mayor Sellers read the Resolution. Do I have a motion?

**Pete Gherini** 30:40

So, moved

**Charlie Sellers** 30:41

Do I have a second?

**Melissa Pickett** 30:42

Second

**Charlie Sellers** 30:43

All in favor?

**Pete Gherini** 30:43

Yes

**Albert Yount** 30:43

Yes

**David Harwood** 30:43

Yes

**Melissa Pickett** 30:44

Yes

**Doug Matheson** 30:45

Yes

**Charlie Sellers** 30:49

The Resolution passes. Thank you so very much for your hard work.

**Melissa Pickett** 31:02

Mr. Mayor, all the Council does have a blue light supplied for them. And for anybody in the audience, there are extras in the back chair you can take.

**Charlie Sellers** 31:19

Alright, thanks again, and our prayers go out to the families for their loss. Okay, New River Conservancy. Chelsea. How are you?

**Chelsea Blount** 31:49

Good. How are you guys? It's actually good to see you in person again, isn't it? It's wonderful actually. Um, so it's actually been probably before COVID that I've come to talk to you all about this project. So, I'm happy that one that I had time to make progress. And to that I can provide you with a status update, and an ask, but I'll get to that a little bit later. So just as a reminder, we have been working on a project on the Middle Fork to restore the creek, it is listed as federally impaired. And so, we took that as an opportunity to write a watershed plan and come up with grant funding to do some work out there to improve the creek and improve the water quality and protect our drinking water. And so, this was an excerpt from our plan, we identified a few sites where improvements could be made. That over there, the red line is just the impair the Federally impaired section of the Middle Fork New River. Just to show you a little bit closer, this is the project site that we're currently working on. It's been labeled section one B in our plan. So, if I say one B, that's what I mean. It's actually located on federal property, the Blue Ridge Parkway, but also on your water treatment plant property, which I will get a little bit into later. So, these are the conditions out there currently, it's really bad basically. The creek is impaired not only for benthic communities, meaning that it's not supporting the aquatic life that it's supposed to. It also is

impaired for mercury and fish tissue. And a lot of the degradation that's happening out there, it's just because the banks are completely falling in the this right here is what we call mass wasting. And the stream world, basically, meaning is contributing a lot of sediment, a lot of excess nutrients. And it's just not a healthy environment. But also, interestingly enough, that post right there is your property. And it's been getting worse and worse and worse over the last few years. A few of you have actually taken to that site, and you've seen it firsthand, it's pretty bad. So just for reference, this photo was taken in 2019, one of our first scouting outings to go check out the property and see what it was. I want you to use that post as a marker just to see how it changes through time. So actually, there we go. Yeah, so you can see we actually could walk around it back in 2019. A year later, a massive chunk of that property, your property had fallen into the river. This was just last year last summer; it was starting to take out a couple of side posts. You can obviously no longer walk around it. This was in February of this year. And this was last week. So, it's getting worse, it is actively severely eroding. And you know, in addition to our concern for the river and improving the water quality, we're also really concerned for your infrastructure. It's gonna be really, really close to the building. I know that you'll have a lot of really important things going on out there. And we don't want the river to get any closer to your building. So, oh yeah, this was just for reference, you can see how big of a change that's happened in like three years. So, this was the plan that we came up with. Just as a reminder, a few years ago, I came to you all for permission to move forward with this project. Well, we made a lot of progress we applied for and were funded \$75,000 to pay for engineering and design, which is complete. And this is what kind of came out of it. This is the engineering plan, which will replace the riparian buffer, it's actually going to realign about 1,200 feet upstream away from the building revegetate, those banks create a floodplain and some wetland opportunities out there. So, it's going to do some really cool stuff. Project status right now, like I said, the engineering design was complete that \$75,000 has been spent. Design is in hand. Also, I'm happy to report that we were fully funded for construction. So that is nearly \$600,000. For construction, we got funding from the North Carolina Land and Water Fund, and also the Federal Section 319, which is to improve impaired waterways. This is where we are right now, working with the Blue Ridge Parkway has been slow and surprising. We had some delays. But we found some really great partners at the organization now and we've made a lot of progress. But we have encountered something that we have to develop before we can start construction, which is something called an Environmental Assessment, meaning we have to hire an outside consultant to come in and do weeks and weeks months of work to compile this document that then has to be submitted to the Federal Government that then has to be submitted to somebody else. And I don't know, it's, it's a barrier. So, this is where we are right now, we are completely fully funded to break ground. But we cannot break ground until we develop this document to submit to the National Park Service so they can approve it and we can move forward. This is a timeline that we're looking at. So, we've already chosen our EA means Environmental Assessment. We've chosen our EA team. There is a guy named Jason, I've forgotten his last name right now I apologize. Who's also partnered with a graduate student from Appalachian State. And they are working towards developing this document with help from New River Conservancy. And we hope that we can finish it by Q4 of this year. So, we can submit it have it approved by January and break ground next year for construction. But again, this is a big barrier. We've spent \$75,000. On design, we have \$600,000 to spend to protect the infrastructure and improve the stream. But we're here to ask if Blowing Rock would consider funding the Environmental Assessment so we can move forward with construction. Do y'all have any questions? I know I just unloaded a lot of information.

**Shane Fox** 38:08

I think it's fair to ask. So, the Parkway is not going to contribute to this. So that's why it says here that they've made that determination. And it does obviously go through our property. So that's why the ask is coming to the table.

**Doug Matheson** 38:24

I feel like we're getting off light. When you look at the construction work that's gonna be needed back there on our property. I think we're getting off light and just being asked to do that. And I would ask you, Mr. Manager, where the money will be taken from?

**Shane Fox** 38:42

Since it's unbudgeted. We would take that from fund balance, which is our typical process. So, we would take that from fund balance, which Mrs. Norman has, I think updated you fairly frequently that we continue to obviously have better than a budgeted year. So that money would come from that.

**Chelsea Blount** 38:59

I would also like to clarify that I have asked several other entities before I came to you. I scratched at a lot of trees.

**Melissa Pickett** 39:08

Was it not some confusion and originally you thought the EA that was with the Parkway, was going to cover both of you? But then they came back and told you how you had to have your own so that is why this is coming up now?

**Chelsea Blount** 39:23

Yeah. So going back to the delays, I skipped over a lot of confusion just because it was it was tough two years working with all the partners involved in some turnover at their organization on the on the Federal level. But yeah, so the Middle Fork Greenway is also going through this property and so they're having to jump through all the same hoops that we are. The Blue Ridge Parkway at that time had not yet decided whether they wanted us because we were both trying to go through the same property if they wanted to us to submit these documents as one project or two separate projects and it first year seriously for two years, we kept getting conflicting advice. And we could never figure out a way forward. And so that is why it is coming up now. It gave us time to secure construction funding. But you know, we've only just now gotten to the point where we actually have a path forward. Like I said, I shook a lot of trees before I decided to come to you all. But that's where we are now. So, you're correct. Yeah. The Greenway is having to submit their own environmental assessment as well. So, they're having to come up with the same funding.

**Pete Gherini** 40:30

They say a picture's worth 1000 words. That picture says it all I think we need to move forward and approve this.

**Charlie Sellers** 40:39

Do you want to make a motion?

**Pete Gherini** 40:41

I will make a motion to approve the request for the \$50,000

**Albert Yount** 40:45

Second

**Charlie Sellers** 40:47

Albert seconded any further discussion.

**Albert Yount** 40:50

Yeah. Shane, I think it's an opportune time to speak in public about how our budget is on the uptake?

**Shane Fox** 41:00

Yes, sir, I believe you could define it as this, we're having a better than budgeted year, I mean, so when we put the budget together a year prior essentially, which is where we're at right now within the budget process. So, within the next few weeks, we'll present it publicly, the FY22-23 budget, and then obviously, you'll adopt that during the month of May, early June. And then as the year goes on, you know, we're all, you know, somewhat guessing at that point on how things will play out, especially after the last two years with COVID and the unknowns. And so, in the last two years, we've been able to add the fund balance, which has been a very positive thing, the audit that was just completed and presented to you all few months ago added to fund balance, and the year that we're in currently continues to, at least at this point, looks like we're going to be potentially adding a fund balance as well. So, we do have a fund balance policy of 50% of expenditures, annual expenditures, that's our policy, and we continue to maintain that percentage exceed that percentage as well within this so this would not put us below that percentage.

**Albert Yount** 42:04

Will you briefly take the wraps, off fund balance, and tell people briefly if you can what it actually is.

**Shane Fox** 42:12

For your own personal budget, it's your savings. I mean, it's your savings account. So, for the for the town, and really any local government, North Carolina, the local government commission, so in North Carolina, it's essentially kind of our oversight committee, not every state has that it's through the treasurer's office, which is a fantastic thing to have, trust me. Anything that local government does, from the audit, to obtaining debt goes through the local government commission. And again, it's through the treasurer's office, it's a fantastic organization that really does keep their eyes on local governments. And when things happen, that are negative, then obviously they step in when need be. For our case, what they look at is obviously, how we compare to our peers, they would like to see us, you know, being reasonable within our fund balance and our overall debt and things of that nature. Fund balance as a whole, they prefer seeing at least 8%. So, if you get less than 8%, you're in trouble, so to speak. Really, as you get closer to 8%, you'll start receiving letters with warnings of the fact that your fund balance is dipping, less than what it should. 8% is a number that was developed. That's really one

month. So, if you think about it, 8% represents one month worth of savings, and ours internally, we developed the policy a number of years ago to have 50% fund balance. And again, that's 50% of our annual budget. So, if our budget is \$12 million, then we want to keep at least \$6 million in the bank, so to speak. For us that really is kind of the equation that's about the number that we do keep in the bank is give or take about \$5 million is where that's at. So that's our fund balance savings number so to speak. That's there for emergencies, if need be, it's there for COVID type emergencies when COVID hit the concern was that what if everybody stops paying? What if What if things really do stop? Property taxes may start really trickling in versus all of the taxes being paid, which is something that we're benefit here from for the most part about a 99% collection rate? What if the tourism stops? What if sales tax, you know comes to a halt? Really, for the first time at least 20 years that I've been doing this COVID was the first time that fund balance really played a important factor, especially in towns that weren't tourism related towns off the mountain saw a 40% and 50% increase or decreases in sales tax and tourism. And so, fund balance was something that was extremely important to have and a number of towns in the state have come close to faltering because of the fact they've had low fund balance. So, for us, we maintain at least 50%, that's not something that we dip below. I don't foresee us dipping below that as we move forward. So, when things come up like this ask that's not budgeted for in that original budget, which we put together around this time, you know, each year, we look at using fund balance for that. Unless there's additional revenue sources that have come in grants, things like that, that would offset those expenditures. So hopefully that answers the question.

**Albert Yount** 45:17

Thank you

**Charlie Sellers** 45:18

Okay, yes Doug.

**Doug Matheson** 45:19

Just a little two part question, for each of you. When did you say the construction would begin Chelsea.

**Chelsea Blount** 45:27

So that all depends on the development of the EA, and the speed of which the Park Service approves it also. So, my understanding of the EA process is that once we get the green light from our partners who have been wonderful more recently, they've really kind of held our hand through this process that we didn't know we had to go through. Once we get the green light from them to submit it to the Blue Ridge Parkway, they then have to review it put it out for public comment submitted to their superiors. Beyond that, I'm not really sure. But if all goes well, construction could begin after I believe a trout moratorium in April. So, it would be late spring of next year best case scenario for beginning construction.

**Doug Matheson** 46:14

Well, that brings up my other one, is there any way we can get the town crew or somebody to go down there and get that fence out of the creek and reroute that fence across the back of our property?

**Shane Fox** 46:24

Absolutely. It was out of sight out of mind, so to speak until until this conversation just recently took place. I agree it is much worse than even we realized it last time we were out there. So yes, sir. We will absolutely take care of that.

**Chelsea Blount** 46:39

To put it in perspective. The funder, the funding agency who's helped support us in this doesn't even come out for site visits anymore. He just asked to see that picture.

**David Harwood** 46:52

Yeah, can we go back to the? Yes, thank you. So, I'm trying to see this looks like it extends. Helped me out here.

**Chelsea Blount** 47:09

So 321 is right up here

**David Harwood** 47:12

Oh okay

**Chelsea Blount** 47:14

This is your property. This is where the treatment plant is. This is the 444 property that they are currently developing. And so, you can see the creek going, it's extremely thinning, this actually isn't even accurate. It's changed so much that the engineering plan is already at about an eight. So, this was the this is the current path of the creek, and the black line is the proposed realignment.

**David Harwood** 47:37

Okay, so we're, it's just extending under the Parkway,

**Chelsea Blount** 47:42

The Parkway is over here. Okay. And there is there was previously proposed work to be done, kind of. So, once you the river goes under the parkway, there's another section that was supposed to be part of this. But due to inflation, we've had to adjust our design. And so, we'll just be enhancing the riparian buffer in there with vegetation and not doing actually any construction on that side.

**David Harwood** 48:08

So how does this work with the Greenway? And does one impact the other? In terms of staging, timelines, things of that nature.

**Chelsea Blount** 48:25

I think, a lot of that timeline is yet to be determined, because the Greenway is having trouble nailing down. And you'd have to ask Wendy, I don't want to speak for Wendy. But my understanding is that they've had a lot of back and forth with the Park Service. And there's been some confusion about where the alignment should go. So, I don't think they've determined where the Greenway is going to go yet. But there will have to be some coordination between our organizations. I think the Park Service's had mentioned something about harvesting trees, when the Greenway harvests trees, perhaps we could

use them in our design. But all of that is to be determined because there's a lot at play. So, we've been working in tandem, we actually meet with the park service on a monthly basis. We call it the stream team and the green team. So, we have but we all meet together with representatives from Blue Ridge Parkway, just to hash out all of these details. So, TBD

**Shane Fox** 49:24

If I may add, so the town's part of all of these meetings, you know, the green team and the stream team, so to speak, and Mr. Rothrock may be able to clarify if I say something incorrect here, the alignment of the Greenway has yet to be determined really through 444 all the way through the Parkway. So, there's been a lot of back and forth a lot of change over the Park Service. So, this project originally had been discussed as being kind of lumped in together. And we did ask early on to separate the two projects as much as possible. This one we felt like obviously is much more of a need. Not that the Greenway is not a need, but This is a time sensitive type of thing. So, they did agree to separate the two. And the Greenway project is still continuing to move through the same hurdles that it has. The biggest issue there is crossing the parkway, and what that's going to look like whether that's, you know, going essentially over going under the parkway is where we're at right now. And we've been at that standstill for a while with the Park Service. And that dictates the rule of thumb. And that dictates the entire allotment if we're that could go depending on how far up the Park Service lane, we may have to trajectory all the way down, either way. So, there's still a lot to be had there. But meetings are continuing to occur. And anything to add there. Kevin, is that accurate?

**Kevin Rothrock** 50:42

All accurate, it's very difficult.

**Shane Fox** 50:48

So, we have asked the Park Service to move forward with this project, though, as as quickly as possible.

**Chelsea Blount** 50:55

Yeah, we had every intention of working together with the Greenway, but the timelines have gotten so off while working through this process. So, they may not be as you know, done in tandem as we had originally anticipated.

**David Harwood** 51:09

Thanks for clarifying that. And kudos on all the work you've done and the money you have raised.

**Chelsea Blount** 51:18

Kudos needs to go out to the green team. They're jumping through a lot more hoops than we are at this point.

**Charlie Sellers** 51:24

We have a motion we have a second. Any further discussion?

**Albert Yount** 51:29

Yes

**David Harwood** 51:29

Yes

**Melissa Pickett** 51:29

Yes

**Doug Matheson** 51:29

Yes

**Pete Gherini** 51:29

Yes

**Chelsea Blount** 51:37

Thank you guys we really appreciate it. We'll look forward to construction.

**Shane Fox** 51:41

Absolutely. Thanks Chelsea.

**Charlie Sellers** 51:44

Okay, moving right along. History Walk. Tom O'Brien. Evening, Tom. How are you?

**Tom O'Brien** 51:56

Good Evening.

**Charlie Sellers** 51:56

How are you?

**Jim Pitts** 51:58

Good afternoon.

**Tom O'Brien** 52:02

Jim came up with me because he's gonna help me on the heavy lifting part of this, the construction part. So, we are back. I think we all visited back in February at the planning retreat and part of our presentation about the history walk. We're back today to ask for approval for phase two of the history walk. I told you last February that we wouldn't come before the Council asking for approval until David Harwood gave us the green light. David did give us a green light. And David's been kind enough to share with us the summary of the plans that had been put together by the Parks and Rec committee for the Broyhill Park. And I think that what you're gonna find, as we go through this presentation tonight, is that the history walk that we're proposing really is very complementary with the plans, its parks and rec committee has put together for that part. Some of the words that jumped out at me when I read this,

when you think about the mission that they put together for that park, relaxing, serene, calm, some of the needs for the park seating, all of those, I think feed in really well with what we're playing do with the history walk in phase two, that history walk which goes through that park. So, we're here today to ask for that kind of an agenda. I'll give you a little sneak preview, I'm going to talk to you about what it is specifically that we're asking for tell you about the current status of that. Jim is gonna step in and talk about the construction phase of this. And then we'll both answer any questions that you happen to have. So, a little over a year ago, the council approved phase one of the history walk, which are the stations marked in yellow, down Laurel Lane, and one that went into Broyhill Park. Specifically, what we're asking for today is approval of 10 more stations that go around the lake. Those first stations down Laurel Lane will be the stations that have a history pillar, once around the park will all have seating. So that's kind of where we are. By the way, one of the things you have a copy of our PowerPoint presentation prepared last Wednesday, there a couple of changes to it. So, I've rearranged some of the slides and you'll see that here's slide number two, our slot number two, but you'll see every once a while to different slides in case you're checking on that. So why are we here now and I think this is really an important part of what I had to say there are a lot of reasons why it's important, I think, to have this approved now, rather than waiting to do it later. First is this can be more cost effective. If we made this two projects, we get together a construction team, we buy the materials, that sort of thing. And then that project ends, and then we started up again, at a future date. It's more expensive. And we think this is going to save at least \$15,000 to \$20,000 by being able to do this all at one time. Second reason is, we picked the 10 topics that we thought if we only get to do 10, this tells the story of Blowing Rock history. So, we've done 10 narratives already that tell the story Blowing Rock history, but the next 10 if we're doing all of it at one time, we will rearrange the order of these, that'd be more logical, I think more entertaining, that sort of thing. And that's important to us. I think that if we installed them all today, we would wish we had this particular story, four down the line from where it was going to be originally. We think it's also going to be less disruptive to do this all at one time will take less time to get it done or less setup. I think be less inconvenient when that happens. And that's a big issue. We all know what supply chains doing nowadays, what we'd hate to do is buy materials, install a first in, and when it's time to buy materials for the next 10. They're all different. We can't get some of the things that we had before so that's important. There's one that's not on this list. And maybe the most important of all, I think everybody in here knows how difficult construction is. It's hard to find a contractor. It's really hard to find a stonemason. We have a contractor and a stonemason. They're prepared to go to work on this, and that's a miracle. Jim and his team have really done a great job of twisting some arms, getting people available to help us do this deal. So, I think that it's important that you know, we do it now and not break it up into two projects. The reasons for this, you've seen a lot of this before, but it really is going to add seating. And that's something that I think everybody has a lot of people have talked to me about the fact that we need more seating for people. It's a second, more seating, our history, bring it to life, I think a lot of people will enjoy this, this history walk educational opportunities for schoolchildren, I see them walking down in the park and reading some of this stuff, and then going back to class and talking about it. It does something for cultural and heritage tourism. And I think you know, you'll see the next slide is Roger Brooks, heritage tourism, those people bring money to town, they spend money. So, I think that's something good for us. And it's also going to draw more people off of Main Street and off our sidewalks and give them something else to do while they're in town. So, Roger Brooks study, I think all of you have seen I know all of you have seen this sustainable tourism management plan. Recommendation Number 24 gives you even more reasons why this is really something that we think will be really

beneficial for the town. You know, he mentions that heritage tourists spend more money than other people do. So, we like having them. And also, the more things you have like this, the more likely it is people are going to spend the night or spend another night in town. Status, the first 10 narratives are complete, we actually will start working with the foundry I think next week to begin the manufacturing process on that. I am very fortunate to have Barry Buxton say, yes, he will help again with phase two. And he and I are gonna write the narratives for that essay, he and I, he will write most of them. So, you don't have to worry about me being the one that writes him. And the construction, we have a contractor in place. And that's just a tremendous blessing for us to have somebody who's willing to go work and make this happen for us. The narratives that are completed, I think you've seen this list again, but the summary of the narratives that we've already written the 10 that are in place. And then each of the narratives will have a lot of words but also have pictures and these are just some examples of some pictures where we over 10,000 digitized historic photographs of Blowing Rock. And so, we pulled about 40 or 50 that we're looking at to go with these 20 narratives and this is just an example of some of the pictures that might find your way on to these plaques. We have identified some additional topics, these this is just kind of a tentative list right now of topics that we might use for phase two, Barry and I are still working out the details and negotiating on which ones we're going to do. And we actually have a list of about 20 topics that we're considering. And this just kind of a partial list of that. I am through with my part of the presentation; I'm going to pass the ball to Jim Pitts. And I'll come back up here, I'll stay close by and answer any questions that you have after Jim gets through.

**Jim Pitts 1:00:42**

Good evening, everyone. So, if you remember we had the history walk is built around a series of different columns. And the columns have some similarities, the same columns that we have at Mayview Plaza, essentially the same materials, same characteristics just a little bit smaller scale. And the intention is these columns are not really much different than this podium right here. And as an angle top, you can walk up to it, you can read the plaque on that angle top, and the plaques are 16 by 20. So, this literally is about the scale and the size of the column that exist out there. There's two, essentially two different plans, simplified it a little bit and there's option A has just the column you can see the stone will still be integrated in that column and was set back a little bit from the sidewalk. And these will largely be used only on Laurel Lane. So, Laurel Lane, there's a lot of traffic, there's a lot of pedestrian traffic, it's really a place to start in the history walk. The second is the option C, which is the column that is associated with a small area of pavers, and an additional bench. Some of those benches already exist out there. Some of them will the town be providing, and we'll add them to the design. The layout in the sequencing of this is really rather important. If it's just the first 10, you have kind of a truncated project and truncated experience. So, the sequence of history and the sequence of departing Main Street to start the trail, attracting people into Broyhill Park, creating seating stations in the park and an opportunity for just relaxation, and really just enjoying the beauty of Blowing Rock. And then exiting and migrating back to Main Street is a critical part of I think that experience and the quality of the history lesson and historical attractions that people learn about Blowing Rock. The second phase, as Tom said, is essentially you know, you have the walking phase of the trail, which is stations one through five the seating stations that the trail which are like six through six through 14. And then and then the final ones that exit and the final column will talk about Main Street Blowing Rock and the importance of tourism in our community. The steps to construction are to go under contract for installation. If you remember, the contracting entity for this will be the Economic Development Corporation which is an

LLC inside the Chamber of Commerce the whole purpose of developing into that was so we'd have a contracting entity that could operate independent of the Town of Blowing Rock. And the intention is we complete the project and then dedicate the project to the Town the Town takes over the project for maintenance and long-term care. There'll be insurance so we'll have builder's risk, insurance and the Town of Blowing Rock will be additional insured. The contractor is a bonded and insured contractor as well. So, the Town Economic Development Corporation Chamber others are all protected. The groundbreaking would occur in two to four weeks after we get approval to proceed, and the permitting is in place. The contractor is ready. The Mason is ready. Tom mentioned it I can't even tell you how hard it is to find a Mason in today's climate and environment. We think the construction period would be three to four months it won't be intensive. But it's a single Mason working on 20 different stations. And so, it'll just take some time. There'll be kind of a start and a completion, and a cleanup and a star completion cleaned up, and we'll do that 20 times over a period of several months, I think the level of interruption and to pedestrians or traffic is going to be really, really low. These are not as you can see very big the ability to stage materials in close proximity right beside each one of the columns will be able to occur, we work with Shane to try to identify a staging area for us to store some materials. And in the amount of area that's required in order to construct these is very, very small. So, we use cones and signage and other things to redirect pedestrian traffic. And the only interruption really to vehicular traffic will be during those staging moments where they just need to get materials offloaded onto this particular site. So, I think that's all we have to present tonight. We're asking for approval for the second phase, we've actually already received the bids. We're ready to execute contracts as soon as we can get approval and move forward. So, we'll be happy to answer any other questions.

**Albert Yount** 1:06:15

Do I have a motion? So, moved.

**Charlie Sellers** 1:06:19

Do I have a second?

**Pete Gherini** 1:06:20

Second

**Charlie Sellers** 1:06:21

Any further discussion?

**David Harwood** 1:06:22

There was some discussion about the exact location of the benches and the monuments and then we have we've had some discussion about sidewalks. There, some are in great need of repair, we may look at that, in terms of why you need those. This is more of a request that work with me to make sure that we don't put them in the wrong place. And we're not being short sighted about those sidewalks.

**Jim Pitts** 1:07:02

Absolutely. So, what we would agree to is we'll go out, we'll stake all the locations. As a matter of fact, we'll use multiple steaks to show kind of the scale and size of all these Shane we can get with you or whoever you designate as representative to walk around with us to take a look at that. The other thing

we've been talking about, because we heard just recently about some potential future changes to the park. And so, if you go back and you look at the monuments you know, it shows them, you know, one or two pavers off the edge of pavement. And what we're will probably do it after hearing this, this will probably push those back four to six pavers a little bit deeper. The beauty of the pavers is they're easily removed, and they're easily put back down. So, they have a lot of flexibility. If their sidewalks that are repaired or replaced, you know, we're gonna set the monuments far enough back so they won't be damaged during construction or during demolition. You can reform exactly where you want to reform, and you can be you can be very accurate with that. And the pavers can just come right back in and meet the new pavement. So, I think that's one of the beauties of using pavers it gives you lots of flexibility for things that can't be fully anticipated into the future right now.

**Tom O'Brien** 1:08:27

Yeah, and the locations of these, I think every one of you have been on walk with John Aldridge and me or something like that. The locations are still the same you saw

**Jim Pitts** 1:08:46

They're going to need to define for the builder anyway. For the contractor anyway, so it makes a bunch of sense for us to go ahead and get those done sometime before construction and do a walk through. Make sure everybody's on the same page.

**Pete Gherini** 1:09:00

Jim you were talking about the pavers, what's the expectation maintenance wise on the lifespan of a paver?

**Jim Pitts** 1:09:09

You know, it's little to none. I'm can't speak for 30 years into the future. But these are a compressed concrete paver. They're actually designed for vehicular use. There'll be put on a compacted gravel setting bed, and then there'll be laid into sand, and they'll have an edger on them that holds them into place. With just pedestrian traffic. You'd have to take a crowbar and a hammer to him in order to move him around because we'll be we'll use a special sand polymeric sand which hardens up just like mortar.

**Pete Gherini** 1:09:50

Thank you.

**Melissa Pickett** 1:09:53

This is a question more towards Council. Is this not a project that we need to put through some of our boards like BRRAC?

**Doug Matheson** 1:10:07

Most of its already been approved back in February. This is just an extension of what was already approved as far as I know.

**Melissa Pickett** 1:10:19

That's why I was asking. Because I know the first face wasn't sent through BRAAC either, so I was just asking. I was asking a question that's all

**Doug Matheson 1:10:39**

On the compression. I think you're just gonna use compacted sand. I know, some people form it with concrete, since that's not gonna be vehicular used, being this is just gonna be pedestrian, you're just using the compact sand.

**Jim Pitts 1:10:54**

Well, it'll be on a compacted engineer base still. So, we'll put down three inches of gravel base will compact that the sand is just the setting course. So over in Mayview Plaza, if I remember correctly, the pavers in the street. If you watch the construction, Doug, when we were doing that the pavers in the street are actually on an asphalt base. So, we did the demolition, we came back we poured asphalt, actually, we put out more gravel and poured asphalt and then it set on a setting bed over that asphalt. The pedestrian side of that is only on a compacted gravel and sand setting bed. So, it's pretty typical. When you're dealing with just a pedestrian situation, it would just be on compacted gravel, the sand setting.

**Charlie Sellers 1:11:46**

Alright, we have a motion, we have a second. Any further discussion?

**David Harwood 1:11:50**

I just want to personally say that it should be noted. The collaboration between the Historical Society and the Village Foundation, and the EDC it's really a wonderful thing.

**Jim Pitts 1:12:06**

And the Town of Blowing Rock. This is this is a perfect example of a public private partnership.

**David Harwood 1:12:12**

It really should be noted, and this is not a cheap project. I think it will. Having gone through the these Park evaluations and we're going to be presenting those evaluations to the Town Council in May I think that this I think your word complimentary is really a good one Tom. And so, thank you.

1:12:36

You're welcome and just food for thought. Frankly, the value of this exceeds the value of what we installed in Mayview Plaza, so it is a substantial piece of work.

**Tom O'Brien 1:12:45**

You have been great to work with so thank you.

**Doug Matheson 1:12:54**

Thank you, Melissa for that.

**Charlie Sellers 1:12:57**

Okay, we have first we have a second any further discussion, guys, gals?

**Albert Yount** 1:13:05

Yes

**David Harwood** 1:13:05

Yes

**Melissa Pickett** 1:13:05

Yes

**Doug Matheson** 1:13:05

Yes

**Pete Gherini** 1:13:08

Yes

**Jim Pitts** 1:13:14

Just anecdotally, the Village Foundation had its strategic planning session just the past year. And the whole point of that was to figure out how we create to your point, our more alignment and projects that we want to do that match those that the town wants to do. So we're looking forward to kind of getting into that process sometime this year.

**David Harwood** 1:13:31

We got a list

**Charlie Sellers** 1:13:34

My thanks to the Chamber, the Historical Society, all those involved in the Town. Thank you. Alright, moving right along. Oh, gosh, we get to see Chief Aaron Miller again, parking committee.

**Aaron Miller** 1:13:49

I was just asking you a little update on our first parking Advisory Committee meeting. So we met it's a it's a rather large group. So we all came together, we had a little overview of what we were looking at. Some information is probably that's already been presented to council a couple of times, after our orientation, I'll call it we broke out into two different groups. So the two different groups are tasked with discussing a few issues and they have some very specific things to discuss. Some of the issues for the two groups are the same. Some of the topics that they're discussing are different. So one of the groups is basically made up of are some residents, some business owners, the Chamber, the TDA, a Council Member, that kind of thing. The second group is our churches and some of our businesses, who have larger parking areas that could be affected in the downtown area. So that's how the two subgroups are broken up. It went well, lots of good conversation, some robust conversation and one of the groups, I think it was a good start, the one of the committees will be meeting again on Thursday. Melissa Pickett is involved with that group. Correct. And that is the group of the primarily the residents, visitors and some business owners, visitors being represented by the TDA, and some other folks. And

also, almost all of our Town departments are represented on the committees as well. Parks and Rec, Finance, Police, that sort of thing. So, the other group will be meeting on the 22nd. So, Doug Matheson is involved with that group. So, there'll be working independently for a month or two. I don't expect it to take too terribly long. So, once we get some of our questions answered, the concern, rates what days per week, we want to have parking enforced and those types of things, then we'll come back together as a group and, and finalize our recommendations. Once that's complete, then we'll probably move to a more of a technical phase of the planning. And that'll be primarily made up of Staff Council representation, that that sort of thing where we start talking about specific vendors and specific types of hardware and software and those types of things. So that's where we're at right now.

**David Harwood** 1:16:37

Thank you

**Charlie Sellers** 1:16:41

Okay. Chief thank you so much. Thanks for your hard work. All right. I haven't even gone from my third cup of coffee yet. All right. Official Reports and Comments. Well. As your mayor, I would like to say our hearts and prayers go out to the Tarbutton family. Their mother did pass away the other day. And she had done a lot with Chetola and had really been a driving force in the community and her sons have taken over the reins and have done a great job. So new voting location? Well, we're not sure where it is. We've gotten a few different locations. But when I sent out from the Mayor's Desk, I sent out pictures. What's that say? pictures tell 1000 words or something of that nature. So, I'll send out pictures. The new voting location for the primary is at the Community Club Building, across from the Robins pool. There's been some debate on what that actual address is Shame that address is

**Shane Fox** 1:18:15

Not Lakeview, Lakeside Drive is the actual official so that I believe the voter card said Lakeview. Is that correct? Yes. Which is actually at the country club. So, we are getting signs put up just as quickly as we can have them shipped here to put up temporarily, if nothing else to inform everyone but it is the clubhouse is the technical name for it, which is again, a little gray building right across from the pool is the location of it. But Lakeside not Lakeview is the correct address.

**Charlie Sellers** 1:18:49

And my thanks to all of our Department Heads and Public Works and all that their efforts through the winter. They've done a great job, Councils done a great job and dealing with good things in our community. So, thank you. That's all I've got. Albert.

**Albert Yount** 1:19:12

Well, I'm just thankful winter is almost second is a question of the Manager the committee or committees relating to the outdoor dining that is ongoing, is that right?

**Shane Fox** 1:19:33

That is correct. And Kevin, if you want to add anything to that, so a subcommittee was created from the planning board, and they have met now at least twice I'm aware of is that right? They continue to meet

next steps I believe is to have some restaurant owners come in as well and speak to them, but that subcommittee is made up of Joe Papa.

**Kevin Rothrock** 1:19:55

Pete Paige, Chis Squires, Cat Perry, Brian and myself. So, they met twice, and I sent an email out today, some of the restaurant folks to spread the word, come in and meet with the full planning board next Thursday. We don't have anything written down yet. We've got some ideas, but we want to hear from them at that meeting. Just to hear their side of the issue. And then we'll take that back is to continue to work through our subcommittee and try to present something to the full board in May,

**Albert Yount** 1:20:38

Ok sounds good

**David Harwood** 1:20:45

The only more of a question than a comment? Could you give us a quick update on where we stand with Memorial Park and PartF design?

**Shane Fox** 1:20:57

Absolutely. And not to again, turn it over to Doug. But McGill has been working on that project, and can probably give you a quick update on maybe the timeline of where they see things playing out. If that's okay. I'll let Doug do that.

**Doug Chapman** 1:21:09

Since the Council authorized us to begin at the last Council meeting. We've been working on Survey and the preliminary design, we expect the survey will be done this month, we'll be working on designs, particularly in May, we'll be getting together with staff to go over what the final layout, what the layouts will look like the amenities, some probably sometime in May, with the expectation that we'll have the design complete in October, finished permitting in the November December timeframe. Take bids probably in January and be ready to start construction around February or March.

**David Harwood** 1:21:20

Perfect. Thank you thankful.

**Shane Fox** 1:21:50

So that does allow for some time during the next couple of months. As we finish up the design phase I know to tweak some things pickleball being one of those and kind of what that look like that look that may look like along with tennis courts. And that's probably our biggest question mark, so to speak

**Albert Yount** 1:22:04

In particular the restrooms, is it going to be a lead part of this or integrated all together.

**Doug Chapman** 1:22:16

We had not anticipated this being built to League standards or anything like that. But

**Albert Yount** 1:22:21

No I don't mean that, is it going to be leading the effort.

**Doug Chapman** 1:22:27

It, since the Town received the PartF, we're going to integrate all that back together. So, it'll all be done together, because that's part of the town's match.

**Shane Fox** 1:22:37

And I would add things like the finishing of the rock wall in front of the park that had not been completed, we're going to integrate that as part of the timeline as well. So, we're not being disruptive twice to the park, the poll should be coming out it's in front of or where the rock wall will be placed. As soon as the traffic lights are taken down over the next week or so. So that pole can come out. So that last piece of that rock wall on the south side will be completed not as a part of this project just during that timeline. So, we're not being disruptive twice to the park.

**Melissa Pickett** 1:23:12

Thank you. Can I bring up our other project with Chelsea?

**Shane Fox** 1:23:20

Sure.

**Melissa Pickett** 1:23:21

Okay so Chelsea is helping us with another project in town. I'm afraid Shane's going to shoot me if I don't quit bringing things to him. But I met with Chelsea, Shane and Ray and I did with two for other counterparts from New River Conservancy and we are going to apply for a 319 grant did I get that right Chelsea to work on the New River from Sunset to Chetola on revitalizing rebuilding on it. And this plays into that promise I made when we gave Chetola the money to help with the coffer dams for a long term plan. So, and my next step is to reach out to Kent and Greg and ask them to reach out to New River Conservancy and see if there's out things they can do on their side to work in their coffer dam when they get out to see if there's not some stuff, they can do on their side too.

**Albert Yount** 1:24:24

So, you got erosion control in mind?

**Melissa Pickett** 1:24:29

Yes, I don't. Chelsea has lots of ideas. I don't know what to do to river, but they do.

**Shane Fox** 1:24:35

So, I might I would add that nothing is obviously done at this point what grant potentially there's not 319, there's some other grants that potentially are out there. So really exploration phase right now of what money could be out there. Then potentially apply for that money if the money is available then obviously like this particular restoration project did come back for Town Council for ultimately approval and acceptance within that so we're in the exploratory phase

**Melissa Pickett** 1:25:02

I'm finding money for us first before

**Doug Matheson** 1:25:04

Thank Chelsea again, she's been working on this. It was good to see us bringing in our new employees. I'm glad to see us get that started back. I think it helps us get to know who they are. And they also get to know who we are. It so that was good to get to, to see again. We held our High Country Council of Governments Retreat this past Saturday. The main thing that has come out of that is we're getting ready to start on our advocacy goals. Something that Representative Pickett loves to hear and see come to him. He knows it to be next year. But that is what we're working on right now.

**Pete Gherini** 1:25:55

Recently, I read an article in North Carolina business and had a lengthy discussion about golf carts on public streets. I sent a copy to Aaron, to Kevin, and to Shane, and want to thank Aaron for coming back and providing the ordinances that apply, that are probably better than most places. But I think would be a good idea, Shane, in the newsletter, we remind our local residents about what they need to have because after Aaron sent that to me, I started looking at golf carts. And I don't see any plates on them. So that might be a problem might be an issue or is Aaron still here?

**Charlie Sellers** 1:26:53

Yes. Aaron, could you speak to his question Thank you for sending me all that information. What I was saying is I went out and just observing carts driving around. I don't see any plates on them.

**Aaron Miller** 1:27:07

There's two different ways you can operate a golf car in Blowing Rock. You can either have it permitted through the police department, and we provide the sticker that goes on the windshield. Or some golf carts are equipped with the necessary equipment to be recognized by the department transportation as a low-speed vehicle. So, if it's a low-speed vehicle, but it can be tagged with a license plate. There aren't too many license plates. There a half a dozen that I know. Most just have to stick on the windshield.

**Pete Gherini** 1:27:40

Okay, okay. So, you don't think it'd be a good idea to inform the residents what they can do.

**Charlie Sellers** 1:27:48

I think yeah, I think that's a good idea. Because we do have our people coming back or seasonal. Some people are now purchasing golf carts. And so to get their tag or their license from the town to go on the windshield of the golf cart, do they bring their golf cart to the police station? Is that the process chief?

**Aaron Miller** 1:28:11

You can you can call the police station and ask us we'll come to your house; we do that a lot. We also set up two different things with the country club. Every usually in May, when Country Club clubs are coming back, we set up two days we set up in their cart barn. So probably most of the golf cart permits

that we did actually happen here in those two days at the cart barn at the country club. But when we had to come out to a residence and do it there on the site, I don't have the numbers in front of me. But last year, we had we had a very high number of golf carts that we permitted in Blowing Rock.

**Doug Matheson** 1:28:50

So, the thing is that we need to also remind them that that's only a yearly permit, right? That the \$50 that you pay is only good for this year. You need it again next year.

**Charlie Sellers** 1:29:02

So your permit is due. So get with our police department. Let's go ahead and get your golf cars registered.

**Shane Fox** 1:29:11

We'll have chief get with Nicole and put together a kind of brief article for the newsletter here soon, especially about the May dates, things of that nature. So, we'll get that put in there.

**Charlie Sellers** 1:29:21

Thanks, Pete

**Shane Fox** 1:29:30

Some have been discussed already so I won't go over those. We did have a ribbon cutting today for the bass lake sidewalk. That project started in 2014. So, it's only took us eight years to finish up about 3000 feet of sidewalk so not an overly complicated process but very lengthy process so exciting to see the E-Flap monies being put to use for those that have not heard of last eight years. That project was 80% funded through an E-Flap grant through North Carolina Department of Transportation. So, town's portion of that was a little bit more than \$250,000 for that sidewalk, including the retaining walls, stormwater drainage, and extracurriculars that took place with a lot of water and sewer lines haven't been moved as part of that process. I'm glad that that ribbon cutting finally took place. And we had a great turnout, even with a little rain that was out there. Something that failed to mention was an apologize for not doing this sooner. Arbor Day is coming up Thursday at 11. So that's actually I guess, the 14th. We're going to have just a little brief celebration in front of the park and 11 o'clock. Just take a few minutes. We're going to plant two trees as part of that. So, I apologize for kind of late notice for Arbor on Thursday, the 14th at 11 o'clock. That's the day after tomorrow. That's the day after tomorrow. That's right. I said that today. Yes. Well, I was told about it. So, day after tomorrow, Thursday. If you have time real short, brief celebration of Arbor Day there. We do have plans I know BRAAC is working on plans do a little bit more of an elaborate celebration next year with 11 o'clock in the morning. Update on the crosswalk. So, I think everybody that's been through town have has obviously been about seeing the progress with the crosswalks. We're really just about a week away from just finishing up I mean, real final touches some of the pavers still, you know, that are being cut and put back in place. Lights at Sunset and Main should be coming down just as soon as we can get ALS, the company that's the transportation company back here to take those down. But that projects just a few small days I think are a few days away. Some small items have been completed and will just add a tremendous asset to the town from a pedestrian safety and vehicular safety standpoint. Steps at the American Legion we've been talking about those failing steps at the American Legion for a number of years,

Roger Brooks has spoken to him about that work has begun. So, if you see the staging area now the American Legion, the large stone blocks that are out there steps that are out there that were should begin really in earnest over the next couple of weeks and should take about a month or so in total would get those steps replaced. And again, that's looking to the far right and American Legion those steps, those will be replaced so that works underway and voting. Early voting starts on April 28. At 8am at clubhouse Lakeside, not Lakeview. Budget process is well underway. Starting to put things together now, which is kind of the final touches so to speak. So, we're just a few weeks away from having those numbers hopefully, before you and we'll move from there into workshops and all the things that we do every year and discussion of what's needed and what some of the requests are and I'm sure we'll pull it down a little bit and move forward with that budget process. And then again, just we mentioned earlier with Taylor coming on tremendous asset having her. Just if you'll keep Tammy in your prayers as she continues to battle that's my update for the night.

**Charlie Sellers** 1:33:41

Alright, ladies and gentlemen, we are going to go into closed session. There should be no decisions made this is just strictly for information purposes. And we will adjourn from closed session and then come back into open session to close our meeting. If you've not returned, thank you for attending this evening. Five-minute break.

**Albert Yount** 1:40:07

Motion to go into closed session under NCGS 143-318.11.(a)(3) Attorney/Client update litigation, seconded by Council Member Gherini. Unanimously approved.

**ADJOURNMENT**

At 7:50 p.m. Council returned to open session. There being no further business, Council Member Pickett made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Matheson. Unanimously approved.

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

**Charlie Sellers**

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

**Hilari Hubner, Town Clerk**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Budget Amendment - #2022-06 – Attachment A**

**Light Up Watauga Resolution – Attachment B**

**Sludge Agreement – Caldwell County – Attachment C**