

Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission

Minutes

June 28, 2022

Members Present: Curt Andrews, Bo Henderson, Whitney Brown, & Chris Wetmore

Staff Present: Jennifer Brown & Shane Fox

Begin: 3:15 pm

End: 4:00 pm

Direction from Town Council – Mr. Fox provided background as to BRAAC and its roles. He explained that BRAAC had raised questions regarding these roles and its responsibilities to Town Council.

Mr. Wetmore opened by summarizing numerous projects from the past several years that had been referred to BRAAC and others where BRAAC was not involved at all, such as the Blowing Rock History Walk. He asked for parameters to know when BRAAC should be expected to be involved such that subjected entities and BRAAC itself could work with consistent guidelines.

Mayor Sellers expressed that he felt that the History Walk appears to have fallen through the cracks. Mr. Wetmore noted that BRAAC unanimously had supported the concept of the History Walk; however, there were issues that clearly needed to be addressed before the project should have been approved by Town Council.

Mr. Harwood stated that the Town Code is ambiguous and that BRAAC has been functioning through an accumulation of duties over the years. Mr. Andrews explained that a previous Town Manager, Scott Fogleman, had guided BRAAC to mimic Planning Board operationally. He stated that he and others were told by officials in the know that the History Walk was intentionally *not* referred to BRAAC. He noted that BRAAC is an impartial group of citizens with complementary backgrounds that is charged with researching and preparing recommendations to Town Council for projects that impact Town-owned properties and open spaces. He also stated that it has been brought to BRAAC's attention that certain identifiable groups who have once presented yet no longer present to BRAAC feel that their projects have not favored, claiming bias. Mr. Andrews emphatically explained that was not, is not, and will never be the case. No project is ever or has even been favored or disfavored. He further welcomed any such misinformed party to meet with BRAAC and with the Town Manager, and/or the Mayor, and/or any member of Town Council to discuss specific or general issues. After all, it is a fact that every project is evaluated such that recommendations reflect in an unbiased manor what is agreed to be best for the Town.

Mr. Harwood feels that BRAAC plays an important role in our community and thus needs to have a defined role in the Town Code with greater definition and clarity. He feels that Town Council needs to expect BRAAC's council for appropriate projects. Mayor Sellers suggested that Mrs. Pickett be the liaison between BRAAC and Town Council to clearly define BRAAC's role and working parameters.

Mr. Henderson reiterated that in the past and to date, only specific groups have been allowed to circumvent BRAAC's review. Town Council's defining specific parameters would go far to assure consistency and fairness to all parties. He reminded everyone that the Blowing Rock Appearance Advisory Commission is a board that is appointed by Town Council and whose members serve at the

pleasure of Town Council. It analyzes and advises. It has no and should have no final decision-making role. Recommendations are made to Town Council for review, revision, rejection, or approval. Mr. Wetmore agreed and concluded that having clear communication from Town Council to BRAAC would be a tremendous help to all.

Mr. Matheson suggested that Planning Board ask BRAAC to give recommendations regarding projects that come to them. Mrs. Pickett explained that Planning Board analyzes and makes recommendations on projects on private properties and that BRAAC's purview is and should be limited to public property and that the two should be kept separate.

Mr. Fox summarized that the Town will work with Mrs. Pickett, as liaison, to provide the Town greater clarity and direction regarding BRAAC and expectations regarding projects impacting Town-owned properties and open spaces and will bring findings back to Town Council for final approval.