

## **MINUTES**

### **Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners Special Meeting - November 26, 2008**

The Town of Blowing Rock Board of Commissioners held a special meeting on Wednesday, November 26, 2008 in the Town Hall Council Chambers. Present were Mayor J.B. Lawrence, Commissioners Bobby Ball, Keith Tester, Tommy Klutz, Phillip Pickett, and Albert Yount. Others in attendance were Town Manager Scott Hildebran, Finance Officer Nicole Norman, Town Engineers Doug Chapman and Joel Whitford, Town Auditors Billy Combs and Holly Taylor, and Deputy Town Clerk Erica Cline.

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and welcomed those in attendance.

#### **FY 2007- 08 Audit**

Town Auditor Billy Combs introduced himself and Holly Taylor to the board. Mr. Combs informed Council that the Town of Blowing Rock's FY 2007-08 Audit was conducted in accordance with Governmental Auditing Standards. He proceeded to state a "clean opinion" was issued in the audit and that there were no adverse findings.

Town Manager Hildebran distributed a history sheet of the Fund Balance and stated that the Town is stronger than many cities because of the higher tax base. He also stated that the undesignated fund balance includes funds set aside for the parking study, paving, and demolition. Mr. Hildebran also stated that with expenditures increasing, the fund balance must be maintained at an appropriate level as well. He reminded the Board that the current Town Financial Policy requires a 50% undesignated fund balance.

Mr. Combs discussed other areas of the Audit, including the fund balance for the General Fund which increased by more than \$260,099 this year. The operations for Water and Sewer had net changes of more than \$839,000.

Mr. Combs also informed the board of the schedule of uncollected balance of taxes; he stated that the percent of uncollected taxes remaining from the past ten years is very low. The total property evaluation was briefly discussed, stating the Town has collected \$2,972,195 in property tax.

Mr. Combs commended Finance Officer Nicole Norman for settling in her role and having a good attitude throughout the Audit.

Commissioner Tester commented that the town public does not see how great the town has been doing with the budget and fund balance monitoring.

Commissioner Ball commented that the Town has never had a negative audit.

A motion was made to accept the FY 2007-08 Audit by Commissioner Ball, seconded by Commissioner Pickett. Unanimously Approved. **FY 2007-08 Audit (Exhibit A)**

### **Water/Wastewater CIP Phase One – Change Order #1**

Town Engineer Doug Chapman introduced himself and Mr. Joel Whitford to the board. Mr. Whitford began with an overview of the project stating there were a series of design improvements needed at the water and wastewater pump station.

Mr. Whitford gave the board a brief overview of the project, stating that a new sludge pump station is being installed by contractors Gilbert Engineers from Statesville. Mr. Whitford also advised they are five months into the year long project.

Mr. Whitford reviewed the proposed change order –

1. Sludge Pump Stations and Aerobic Digester – Elevate the Return Activated Sludge (RAS) Pump Station #2, RAS Pump Station #1, and Aerobic Digester to match the existing top of concrete elevation. \$4,426.00
2. Small Diameter Sludge Piping – Reduce the size of the 6-inch RAS, Waste Activated Sludge (WAS), and Residuals EQ piping, plug valves, and check valves to 4-inch for sludge transfer operations. \$(874.00)
3. Large Diameter Sludge Piping – Demolish the existing 10-inch RAS piping, and install new 6-inch flanged piping to increase longevity of proposed RAS pumping / piping systems. \$ 13,302.00
4. Clarifier Hoppers – Fill clarifier hoppers with gravel and cap with 8-inch concrete in lieu of a complete concrete fill. \$(2,026.00)
5. VFDs – Add variable frequency drives (VFDs) to the new RAS pumps to provide greater operating flexibility to the plant operators when the plant is not at full flow. \$4,713.00
6. Residuals Pump Station and Piping – Delete two (2) 16-inch plug valves, delete pressure relief valves, revise check valves, and revise basement piping for the residuals pump station and piping at the water treatment plant. \$(12,309.00)
7. Retaining Wall – Provide a reinforced cast-in-place retaining wall in lieu of a segmental block wall at the wastewater treatment plant. \$(1,127.00)
8. Additional time for field supervision for changes listed above. \$1,974.00

The net change order amount totaled \$8,079.00, plus a contractor overhead and profit of \$1,211.85 for a total amount of \$9,290.85. Mr. Chapman and Mr. Whitford recommended the Town consider the change order.

After further discussion and explanation Mr. Hildebran informed Council that with this change order, the project is still well within its budget.

Mr. Chapman stated that there could be millions spent on this project in time but they are only dealing with the critical needs first.

Commissioner Pickett inquired if this would affect the New River. Mr. Chapman informed that with the improvements to the sludge pump it would affect the river by reducing the solids and putting less sludge in the stream.

Commissioner Ball asked if the State comes out and monitors the amount of solids going over the hoppers into the stream. Mr. Hildebran replied that the State checks frequently and commends the Town for doing a good job.

A motion was made to accept the change order by Commissioner Yount and seconded by Commissioner Klutz. Unanimously Approved. **Change Order #1 (Exhibit B)**

#### **TDA Appointments – Chair/Member Replacement**

Mr. Hildebran addressed Council and stated that with the recent resignation of TDA Chairperson Bernie Keele the Town Council was required to designate a new Authority Chairperson. He advised that at the recent TDA Planning Retreat the Authority recommended Vice-Chair Kent Tarbutton be elevated to Chairperson.

Town Manager Hildebran also reviewed the requirements for filling a vacancy on the Authority -

- Any vacancy occurring in any group shall be filled with an appointment for the remainder of the unexpired term by the Town Council.
- The appointee shall be a voting resident and/or taxpayer of the Town.
- The appointee shall be individuals who are affiliated with businesses and/or non-profit tourist attractions/organizations that are currently active in the promotion of travel and tourism in Blowing Rock.
- The vacant term expires in 2010.

He advised that the Authority recommended the appointment of Rob Dyer appointed to the unexpired term. Mr. Dyer owns the Inn at Ragged Garden and The Best Cellar Restaurant in Blowing Rock and in Linville.

Mayor Lawrence concurred with the selection and suggested that Council clarify the taxpayer language to include joint ownership, LLC or corporation.

He also informed Council of the Authority's concern with the chair appointment and member replacement making a complete change of the board, especially with the possibility of having two additional appointments open in March 2009.

Commissioner Tester stated that the final decision is with Council and it is important they look at options to fill the vacant positions. Mr. Tester also stated that Council should get recommendations from the TDA board to keep continuity without having too many changes.

Commissioner Pickett commented that having a whole new TDA board would be challenging.

Commissioner Tester replied that the Authority is now stabilized because the Authority has taken an active role in strategic planning and TDA Director Tracy Brown oversees the day to day operations.

Mr. Hildebran reminded Council that staff would be advertising all town board appointments during the month of December for Town Council consideration at their planning retreat.

After some discussion, a motion was made to appoint Kent Tarbutton as Chairperson as well as appoint Rob Dyer to the unexpired term by Commissioner Pickett, seconded by Commissioner Ball. Unanimously Approved.

### **Downtown Retail Strategy - Process**

Mr. Hildebran informed Council that Councilmember Tester wanted to discuss a possible process for the review and implementation of the recently completed Downtown Retail Study.

Commissioner Tester stated after spending a great deal of time reviewing the Downtown Retail Strategy that he came to the conclusion that three entities have the primary roles in moving the strategy forward – Town Government, TDA and Chamber of Commerce. Based on the recommended course of action in the strategy, he identified possible lead roles for each group.

Town Government: Overall Framework, Public Improvements, Private Property  
Chamber: Retail Business Development  
TDA: Marketing

He suggested having a downtown committee made up of town government (including the Planning Board) along with the TDA and the Chamber of Commerce looking at their own individual responsibilities then coming together and discussing the strategy. He suggested coordinating and working together throughout this process.

Commissioner Tester stated if Council so desired he would accept the role of coordinating the effort. Member Klutz suggested that Council consider authorizing Mr. Tester to be a spokesperson in the matter by going to each group and discussing the joint effort.

Commissioner Tester stated that both the TDA and Chamber had found the document as a viable guide to making their decisions and said he finds that admirable.

Commissioner Yount inquired who would be making the lead decisions. Commissioner Pickett replied that Council is the final decision maker.

Commissioner Tester commented that this would give the primary stakeholders a voice and help put the focus on the business community.

Commissioner Ball commented that this would improve relations with the Chamber.

Town Manager Hildebran stated that with the proposal the Downtown Partnership would be utilized as a communication vehicle to make sure everyone is on the same page.

Mr. Hildebran also informed the Council that the TDA has endorsed this proposed approach.

Commissioner Tester suggested that Council review the strategy at the upcoming retreat and schedule a joint meeting with the TDA and Chamber following the January retreat. In the interim, Council encouraged everyone to review the strategy.

After further discussion, a motion was made to appoint Commissioner Tester as town representative to get joint cooperation from the TDA, Chamber, and Town Government for the Retail Strategy by Commissioner Pickett, and seconded by Commissioner Klutz. Unanimously Approved.

### **Other Business**

Town Council suggested thanking former TDA Chairman Bernie Keele for his service on the TDA board. Staff agreed to work with the Town Council and the TDA to honor Mr. Keele.

Mr. Hildebran requested Council feedback on upcoming Town Council Planning Retreat. He advised that staff had made contact with the Grove Park Inn and the facility is available on January 18<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> and rates would be lower than last year due to a credit owed to the Town from the previous retreat. After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of Town Council to make reservations for

the 2009 Planning Retreat at the Grove Park Inn on January 18<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Hildebran informed Council that the new Fire-Rescue Building received the Notable Volunteer Award for 2008 Station Style Design Awards in the November 2008 issue of *Fire Chief Magazine*.

Commissioner Pickett informed the board that he met with the Oasis Shriners and they expressed some concern over the limited street width available for the June 2009 parade due to the parking spaces located on Main Street. Town Council suggested that Mr. Hildebran go back and review options to better accommodate the parade.

**Adjournment**

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

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J.B. Lawrence, Mayor

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Erica Cline, Deputy Town Clerk

**November 26, 2008 Meeting Attachments:**

- **FY 2007-08 Audit (Exhibit A)**
- **Water/Wastewater CIP Phase One – Change Order #1 (Exhibit B)**